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**AN ANALYSIS OF WAR TRAUMA AND REFUGEE DISTRESS AMONG
BOSNIAN MUSLIM WOMEN: EXPLORING SOCIAL AND
PERSONAL HEALING IN THE AFTERMATH**

by

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ABSTRACT

This study is a narrative examination of the healing process in the aftermath of war trauma for nineteen Bosnian Muslim refugee women. Epistemologically informed by Feminist Standpoint Theory, a mixed methods approach of Grounded Theory, Narrative Analysis and Relational Voice Theory was used to show how recovery from multiple war trauma/violence has occurred only partially. By synthesizing theories of place identity, gender roles, and meaning making systems, the difficulties women face to integrate war and refugee experiences into social understanding is examined. Individuals in the study identified themselves as Bosnian women – culturally, nationally, ethnically, and religiously. Not only did war threaten those identifications, in some aspects, it fundamentally altered them. This paper argues that when the women were alienated from place attachments, their history and narratives were disrupted. They were dislocated from a literal space called “home” and they lost a sense of existential belonging and identity. Second, findings explicate how war and forced removals impacted familial and communal relationships. Women experienced relational losses through death and separation; they also lost the anchoring of their social identities. In exile, role expectations and demands radically shifted. Finally, narrative analysis demonstrates how traumatic events created an internal disorientation. Centralizing ethno-religious beliefs were shattered, leaving refugee women to face a crisis of meaning. Taken together, these findings elucidate how the radical discordance between pre/post-war place identification, role continuity, and cultural/religious belief systems is problematic and has made it difficult for Bosnian Muslim refugee women in the study to heal or to fully recover in the aftermath of war.

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

War is a plague that does not end when B-2's sit idly in hangers or after machetes have been wiped clean. Its damage lingers. In the last two decades, the landscape of armed conflict has shifted. Instead of clearly defined battlefields with uniformed troops, hostilities are increasingly waged upon the bodies and lives of civilians. The goal of these brutal conflicts is frequently ethnic cleansing or the forcible expulsion of the civilian population of one's enemy. When active hostilities subside, nonmilitary men, women, and children are the ones left sitting in rubble or carrying the remnants of former lives on their backs. Although war estimates are not empirically precise, approximately 90% of human casualties are noncombatants (Human Security Report, 2009; Murray, King, Lopez, Tomijima, & Krug, 2002). Of those who survive, many are left bereft and without home, seeking asylum and refugee status in other countries. According to the United Nations Commission for Refugees, there was an accumulation of 43.3 million forcibly displaced persons worldwide by the end of 2009 (UNHCR, 2010). This uprooting, coupled with the experience of terrifying war atrocity, can leave an insidious affliction or an "unsuturable wound" (Frank, 1995) on survivors. The following is a study of healing in the aftermath of war. Nineteen Bosnian, Muslim refugee women, who now reside in Phoenix, Arizona, describe the impact that the War in Bosnia and Herzegovina has had upon their lives. Their narratives reveal that healing and recovery, as traditionally understood in western trauma discourse, has not fully occurred. These women survived a multitude of traumas that were so inhumane and intimate that "to recover" their former selves would be akin to

recovering an amputated limb. For them, beliefs, relationships, and a way of life were not just shattered – they were severed.

Historical Context

Lingering animosity and deep division alienated the Southern Slavic Balkan region after World War II. Under Franz Josip Tito's leadership, however, Yugoslavia achieved relative stability and prosperity from 1943 until his death in 1980. The Socialist Federated Republic of Yugoslavia was comprised of six republics: Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Slovenia, Montenegro, and Macedonia. With a population of 4.4 million, Bosnia (BiH) was unique because the three primary ethnic groups inhabiting the former Yugoslavia were more evenly proportioned in that region: 44% of the population was Bosnian Muslim, 31% Orthodox Serb, and 17% Roman Catholic Croat (Bringa, 1995). While differing in religious tradition and ethnicity, most Bosnians did not identify themselves as Muslim, Serb, or Croat. They were fiercely proud to be called "Yugoslav."

Due to economic instability and nationalistic scrambles for power, Yugoslavia began to disintegrate following Tito's death. After Slovenia and Croatia declared their independence in 1991, full scale fighting broke out almost immediately. Additionally, in 1992, Bosnia passed its own referendum for independence. Within weeks, the Yugoslav People's Army and Serbian backed forces took siege of Sarajevo and began to ethnically cleansing coveted areas throughout the countryside (International Rescue Committee, 1997). As the armed conflict progressed, inter-ethnic division and fighting intensified between Croatia, Bosnia and Serbia unleashing a brutal war that lasted for three and a half years.

Although war may be set up as a grand scheme by the state or as the pursuit of an ethno-religious ideology, its impact is precisely human; the severity and severance that occurs is in the

middle of people's lives. In his research among refugees, it is Summerfield's (2000) analysis that, "Perhaps the primary impact on victims is through their witnessing the destruction of a social world embodying their history, identity, and living values" (p. 233). This is what happened in Bosnia. A country whose motto had long been "the brotherhood of unity" became divided by an aggressive, cruel, ethnically homogenous pursuit. In this war, the violence was intimate as neighbor turned against neighbor and colleague against colleague. Ethnic cleansing, concentration camps, and mass rape were specific tactics used to wage terror, exploit control and destroy the very fibers that made up Bosnian society. Often, the ruthlessness was not done by a nameless, faceless stranger – but by someone with whom you had once shared a cup of coffee.

By the time the Dayton Peace Agreement was signed in 1995, approximately 250,000 people were killed or missing: 85% of whom were civilians. The United Nations reported that almost half the population had been driven from their homes creating 1.2 million refugees (UNHCR, 1995). The agreement, signed by Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian presidents, essentially divided Bosnia in half by creating a Muslim-Croat Federation and a Serbian area called the Republika Srpska (Map 1). Although the Dayton Agreements (Annex 7, 1995) afforded "refugees and displaced persons the right to safely return home and regain lost property, or to obtain just compensation and all persons are granted the right to move freely throughout the country, without harassment or discrimination..." post-war realities in Bosnia were not so simple.

Many refugees faced returning home to an area controlled by a different ethnic group. For several women in my study, to return home meant to live side-by-side with the very perpetrators who used intimidation and violence to ethnically cleanse them from their communities. Serbian forces had created an atmosphere of terror by systematically raping women, or capturing men and boys and torturing them in detention centers. In Srebrenica,

7,000-8,000 male Bosnians were mass executed in the nearby mountain woods. Sarajevo – an urban center - was blockaded for nearly three years as civilians were forced to endure sniping, shelling of their homes and the destruction of their communities' infrastructure. The entire populous lived in a constant state of fear and uncertainty. Murder, separation, witnessing unspeakable acts of cruelty, and the other aforementioned atrocities have left indelible memories and a reasonable anxiety for those who survived. Why would they return to a context where their perpetrators walk the streets or where justice has not been served? From their perspective, they would be placing themselves back inside an environment of fear, intimidation and threat. More importantly, for the women in my study, their landscape of meaning – their homes and way of life – had been destroyed. What was lost could not be salvaged. Ethnic cleansing, and its accompanying horror, caused a literal and emotional uprooting that proved irreversible.

Aim of Study

Initially, I began my study to analyze war rape among Bosnian women and to explore strategies of healing in the aftermath. Stories of the brutal rape of Muslim women during the Bosnian/Serbian war had become a paradigm that mobilized a global campaign. Feminist legal scholars, psychologists, psychiatrists, human rights scholars, and activists raised awareness of the sexual abuse of women as a wide-ranging tactic in armed conflict. The rape of Bosnian women was unique not only in terms of the military structures that were created for its perpetration (such as the so-called rape camps), but also because (along with sexual violence against women during the Rwandan genocide) what happened finally received worldwide attention. Up until the stories of these Bosnian and Rwandan rape survivors became public, war rape had been considered a “normal” and unavoidable part of armed conflict. According to

general consensus “[t]he rape of Bosnian women became the most documented and investigated in history” (Valenius, 2007, p. 18). Having read transcripts of the courageous women who stood in front of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and told their stories, my research interest had been to study the transformative aspect of war rape among Bosnian refugee women who now live in Phoenix, Arizona. My original aim was not to focus so much on the stories of pain and suffering experienced by the women, but rather on their journey to transform their lives and to build a strong community in their new, adopted country.

Early on in my interview process, I realized that the themes developing in my data were not about rape survival, nor were women articulating “transformation” narratives. Although several women in my study were raped or had a family member raped during the war, those experiences were not the foci of their narratives. Instead, the stories they told were about the multiple traumas they endured during and after the war. Exposed not only to sexual violence, forced removals, disappearances and bombing raids, they had also endured hardships as refugees in post-exile. For example, out of the nineteen women interviewed, sixteen started a “new” life in either Croatia or Germany before being forced to move again and start over in the United States (See Appendix 1). They also talked about the altering of their beliefs and how their lives had dramatically changed. Central to their stories were feelings of incomprehensibility and loss instead of transcendence.

Having been influenced by the individualistic approach to therapy and the western Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) trauma theory paradigm, these women’s narratives confronted my assumptions about healing. I learned that to recover lost lives, to “transcend” and live beyond violation, to heal from physical and psychological wounds was a western psychiatric feat that I

had simplified and even perhaps romanticized. Refugee theorist Summerfield (2000) advocates a different approach to post-war healing:

[The] thrust of humanitarian interventions must be towards the war-weakened social fabric of survivor populations, for herein lie the source of psychological resilience and capacity for recovery for all. Survivors first seek to regain a measure of dignity and control over their environment and then to reconstitute the cultural, social, and economic institutions and activities that make sense to them. They are determined to preserve what they can of their culture and way of life, as these things define what it means to be human and civilised. (p. 234)

In Summerfield's paradigm, trauma healing is directly related to the social world of survivors. While I agree with his analysis, what happens to post-war refugees who do not have the option to re-connect to or re-build their communities? How do they recover? After the United Nations helped to broker a framework for peace between Croatia, Bosnia, and Serbia (Dayton Agreement, 1995), the homes of fourteen women in my study were located inside what is now called the Republika of Srpska (Map 1). It was not possible for them to reconstitute the cultural, social and economic institutions that made sense to them. The war devastated Bosnia's economy, entire communities had been destroyed, and now – whatever was left of their homes was under Serbian authority. As a consequence, the women in my study struggled to regain a measure of their dignity and control over their environment as aliens in a foreign space that was radically different from their beloved country. For these refugee women, their loss was all encompassing; a national identity, meaningful community status, relationships, and an entire way of living had vanished.

Conclusion

This study is a narrative examination of the healing process in the aftermath of war for nineteen Bosnian Muslim refugee women. It illuminates the multiple traumatic experiences they survived and examines their struggle to restore relative normality in their lives. Guided by a qualitative analysis of the women's narratives, the following five questions are answered:

- How do the women give voice to their experiences?
- What is the relationship between identity, gender, place attachment, roles, beliefs and the way the women construct “meaning” of their war experiences?
- How do individual dimensions of the women's experiences relate to their collective experiences?
- What are the themes of healing and/or transformation in the women's narratives?
- What, if any, are the residual obstacles these women face in their recovery?

Epistemologically informed by Feminist Standpoint Theory, I use a mixed methods approach of Grounded Theory, Narrative Analysis and Relational Voice Theory, to show how, from the women's perspectives, recovery from multiple war trauma/violence has occurred only partially. By synthesizing the theories of place identity, gender roles, and meaning making systems, I examine the difficulties women face to integrate war and refugee experiences into social understanding. I do this by focusing on the dislocation, separation, and disorientation caused by war and forced relocation. Individuals in my study identified themselves as Bosnian women – culturally, nationally, ethnically, and religiously. Not only did war threaten those identifications, in some aspects, it fundamentally altered them. First I argue that when these women were alienated from place attachments, their history and narratives were disrupted. They were dislocated from a literal space called “home” and they lost a sense of existential belonging and identity. Second, I explicate how the war and forced removals destroyed familial and communal

relationships. Women experienced relational losses through death and separation; they also lost the anchoring of their social identities. In exile, their role expectations and demands radically shifted. Finally, I demonstrate how traumatic events created an internal disorientation.

Centralizing ethno-religious beliefs that had served to moor these women's identities were shattered, leaving them to face a crisis of meaning. Taken together, these findings elucidate how the radical discordance between pre/post-war place identification, role continuity, and cultural/religious belief systems is problematic and has made it difficult for the women in my study to heal or to fully recover in the aftermath of war.

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Chapter Two

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

From ancient epics to modern fiction, stories of war and carnage have drawn their ink from the realities of human suffering. History is drenched in its own blood in a way that begs speculation that violence and terror may be essential to the human experience. Certainly, that has been the case for the women in my study. What they have been left to ponder is the gnawing question about what it means to be human. Although trauma can be precipitated by natural disasters, or accidents that cause death or disfigurement, the more pernicious form being studied in this project is trauma that involves intentional violence and harm; that perpetrated by the hands of others.

Under the umbrella of trauma theory there are a variety of approaches and treatment techniques to address the predictable psychological harm that occurs in the aftermath of atrocity. Although PTSD has been debated and embroiled in controversy since its inception, its relevance remains a cornerstone in the field of trauma theory. I begin this literature review with a brief description of the effect of trauma upon one's psychopathology as seen through the lens of the PTSD model. Next, I examine trauma theories that overlap but are also discrete from PTSD - Meaning Systems, Cultural/Collective Trauma, and Refugee Trauma – because these approaches shaped my understanding and analysis of the women's narrative in my study. I will also summarize how each of these theories conceptualizes the role of memory and integration, identity, and healing in the aftermath of trauma exposure.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Late 19th century psychiatric research described trauma as a wound inflicted upon the mind that was caused by vehement emotions and cognitive interpretations (cited in van der Kolk, van der Hart, & Marmar, 1996). Whether considered a “parasite of the mind” or an “indelible imprint” (cited in Young, 1995), the location of trauma had moved from the idea of an injury imposed upon the body, to one that involves memory. Although initially evaluated at Salpetriere as gendered hysteria that blocked repression and defense, Kardiner’s (1941) studies of returning veterans from World Wars I & II extended the scope of analysis and understanding. By 1980, western psychiatric discourse about trauma and its sequelae had burgeoned. Expressions of traumatic experience were eventually codified and achieved a general diagnostic acceptance in the medical field as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and given recognition in the Diagnostic Statistical Manual (DSM-III) by the American Psychiatric Association. New understandings continued to emerge in the field, and by 1994, the DSM IV provided an even broader criteria.

Characteristic to PTSD are the development of symptoms following exposure to an extreme or traumatic experience. These experiences involve: a direct or perceived threat of death or serious injury or the threat of physical integrity; witnessing an event that involves death, serious injury, or the threat of physical integrity; or learning about an unexpected or violent death of a family member or close friend (DSM IV, 1994). The person’s response to the event involves intense fear, helplessness, or horror. According to Herman (1992), traumatic reactions occur because, “when neither resistance nor escape is possible, the human system of self defense becomes overwhelmed and disorganized” (p. 34). The DSM IV qualifies traumatic events to

include (but are not limited to) military combat, violent personal assault (rape, sexual assault, physical attack), kidnap, torture, severe automobile accidents, and natural or manmade disasters.

McCann and Pearlman (1990) characterize psychological trauma as “(1) sudden, unexpected, or non-normative, (2) exceeds the individual’s frame of reference to meets its demands, and (3) disrupts the individual’s frame of reference and other central psychological needs and related schemas” (p. 10). A pre-requisite traumatic event, followed by a subset or combination of symptom types, generates the diagnosis of PTSD. These subsets are: symptoms of intrusion such as flashbacks, nightmares, or recurrent thoughts; symptoms of avoidance or constriction such as withdrawal or evading thoughts, places or activities that evoke trauma memory; symptoms of increased arousal such as hyper vigilance or irritability. Growing literature also documents the symptomatology of PTSD to include sleep problems, learning difficulties, social aggression, chronic anxiety, and memory disturbances such as dissociation (van der Kolk, van der Hart & Burbridge, 1995).

Trauma stress reactions reverberate between the body, brain, psyche, and socialization process. If suffering is not integrated, the mind and body fragment and symptoms develop making it difficult for people to resume their lives. Knit together are “persistent complex manifestations that affect psychological, social, and biological systems” (Williams, 2006, p. 322). Why do some people develop symptoms after traumatic events while others seem to adapt and move on into relatively stable lives? Vulnerabilities such as gender (Chung & Singer, 1995; Hauff & Vaglum, 1993) and past psychiatric history (Breslau & Andreski, 1995) appear to be precipitating risk factors for PTSD. However, religious faith or a sense of commitment to a political agenda can serve as buffers or protections from the exacerbation of PTSD (Paragment, 1997; Park, 2005). Gorst-Unsworth and Goldenberg (1998) found that separation or loss from

family members – which is especially relevant in the war-trauma discussion – tend to perpetuate psychiatric symptoms. Other factors such as language proficiency, age/development, and economic stability also influence how individuals are shaped by traumatic experience (Lavik, Hauff, Skrondal, & Solberg, 1996; Silove, 2004; Silove & Ekblad, 2002). I will continue to explore these issues in the Refugee Trauma section of this chapter.

Memory and Narrative

A distinguishing feature of those who meet the diagnostic criteria of PTSD is that they become “stuck” in their trauma. This experience of “stuckness” differentiates these individuals from those who are temporarily overwhelmed by an event. It is the disturbing re-living of experiences and paralyzing feelings, not the traumatic event itself that sustains complex bio-behavioral changes (McFarlane, 1988). Life for those suffering from PTSD is dominated by troubling intrusions and intense emotional reactions rooted in the previous traumatic event. Strategies to avoid thoughts, feelings or images may come in the form of drug and alcohol abuse, emotional numbing or dissociating memory from conscious awareness. A subsequent sense of helplessness and deep seated fear may alter how a person deals with stress and helps shape a view that the world is not basically safe or predictable (Janoff-Bulman, 1992). Since a precondition for personal agency and action is predicated upon a relative sense of safety, traumatized people struggle to define their needs and anticipate their futures (Herman, 1992). Erratic internal emotions and the “dangerous” external world stymie their abilities to heal and move forward.

Fear sits at the core of the PTSD trauma response (Foa & Cahill, 2001; Foa & Kozak, 1986). An extreme sense of helplessness and vulnerability is elicited by a traumatic event.

Turner (2000) noted that when the human system of self defense becomes overwhelmed, brain function shifts in a way that the traumatic experience can produce long lasting neurobiological changes or an indelible imprint. According to Freyd (1994), within the human body and brain is a blueprint that guides people when they are confronted by terror and threat. Faced with danger, the body and mind will temporarily react by freezing, numbing, detaching, and forgetting (Williams, 2006). If the defense system becomes overwhelmed and does not restore to homeostasis, the memory of the event can become embedded in a way that does not allow for cognitive integration.

An instinctive interchange between the brain and the nervous system affects memory processes, imprinting the event alongside its accompanying emotive responses such as terror, anxiety, or anger. These biological responses to trauma are complex and beyond the scope of this dissertation. However, since my study focuses on memory and healing, a brief summary of the psychophysiology of trauma is warranted. Although there are several physiological responses to trauma, I will be focused mainly on the biological interactions that effect memory. For a more extensive review on the psychobiology of trauma, see van der Kolk, 1996 and Rothschild, 2000.

During and after a traumatic experience, the Limbic System of the brain interacts with the Autonomic Nervous System (ANS) – which consists of the Sympathetic branch (SNS) and the Parasympathetic branch (PNS) – by activating the instinctive defenses of fight, flight, or freeze. The SNS is aroused during times of stress as heart rate and respiration increases or blood pressure raises. In contrast, if death is imminent, traumatic threat is prolonged and the Limbic System does not perceive a way out, it may release a hormone that activates the PNS, causing the body to go limp or stiff (Levine, 1997). These instinctive responses are not chosen; they are

reflex actions that are the body's normal, healthy and adaptive survival response (Rothschild, 2000). However, if the ANS continues to be aroused after the threat or event has ceased, the symptoms produced are called PTSD.

The amygdale and hippocampus, two areas of the brain that are central to memory, are also housed in the Limbic System. In the last two decades, a growing body of research indicates that when there is a traumatic event, these two parts of the brain are impacted. The amygdale stores highly emotional experiences such as horror and terror. During overwhelming or traumatic experiences, the hippocampus - which generally stores memory of time and space in a linear way - is suppressed. Its usual function of placing and ordering memory events becomes dormant. The intense physiological and emotional arousal from the trauma event disrupts this innate information-processing mechanism. Information taken in during the incident may become stored and subsequently blocked for adaptive integration. These experiences are prevented from becoming a memory in the past; instead they seem to float in time, and often invade even the present. Memories that become suspended, flashback in fragmented form, and resist integrating into cognitive structures are called traumatic memories (cited in van der Kolk, Hopper & Osterman, 2001).

Trauma wounds inflict the mind and create breaches in memory as well as a break in the once integrated sense of personal cohesion. Time, self, and space seem to collapse into a mental black hole and become unavailable. This "gap," however, does not sit neutrally in the mind. Caruth (1996) suggests that trauma wounds are not simple and healable. Because of trauma's intensity and shock, the impact is one of incomprehensibility. The locus of trauma is not the violent event, but rather its unassimilated nature (Caruth, 1996; Herman, 1992). This kind of wound results from an event that was experienced too soon and too unexpectedly for the mind to

absorb. Memory of it becomes short circuited; it exists but is resistant to retrieval. Caruth (1996) proposes that in the widespread and bewildering encounter with trauma – both in its occurrence and in the attempt to understand it – survivors are faced with a history that is no longer straightforwardly referential. The plumb of human orientation appears lost. The reference of these short circuited memories must be resituated or integrated into understanding.

Bal (1999) maintains that if the mind does not remember trauma because its memory is contained in an alternate stream of consciousness or because it has been abbreviated, healing may only occur when knowing and not-knowing intersect. She argues that “normal” memory is an action; a telling of a story. These narratable memories are affectively colored and easily activated. Narrative recall is a result of personal choice and control. Traumatic memory is different. These memories, especially those intrusive in nature, are endured. They are not easily apprehended – not because of repression – but because they are a form of ellipsis.

Accessibility of memory is just one obstacle in integrating traumatic experiences within a personal autobiography. For the women in my study, theirs is not a fragmented memory, a disassociated memory, or even the hardened skin of memory as Langer (1991) found in his research among Holocaust survivors. Haunting, disassociated specters from the past are not refusing to be banished from consciousness. What is problematic for these women is “what” they remember. The stories they haltingly recount are filled with extreme degradation that is precise and humiliating. Difficult to utter, the nature and incomprehensibility of their horror creates a poverty of language in the trauma recall. Herman (1992) describes “certain violations of the social compact” as “too terrible to utter aloud” (p. i). They are unspeakable.

Whether or not memories are inaccessible because of ellipsis or because they are too difficult to express, trauma healing research suggests that remembering and narrating the past are

the “prerequisites” for restoration (Bloom, 1997; Herman, 1992; Rothschild, 2000). According to Brison (2002), understanding the source of symptoms and piecing together fragments of the past requires the convergence of memory, speech and affect. However, to remember, to feel, and to speak in a language true to the traumatic experience, are formidable obstacles. Healing or assimilation may require that a survivor go beyond being a physical medium of unconscious or unspoken traumatic expression to the subject of their own narration. For some, to speak has a performative value; it unclenches trauma from the unconscious or from its power. For others, to bring voice to memory may change its substance (Brison, 1999). Perhaps a memory is set free. At other times, it may be examined for the first time. In some of my interviews, I observed women beginning to wrestle with how they made sense of their experiences – they began to analyze their own self-evaluations. For them to speak and ponder out loud about what happened gave them an opportunity to shift how they had framed personal meaning.

A trauma narrative is the struggle to find words that express what has been unspeakable. When and if spoken, the narrative itself becomes a form of witness. Additionally, a witnessing audience who is capable of hearing the trauma narrative is important in the healing process. According to Felman and Laub (1992), the story must be externalized or transmitted in order for it to be integrated in a reconstituted form. Herman (1992) contends that a survivor’s challenge is to “reconnect fragments, to reconstruct history, [and] to make meaning of their present symptoms in the light of past events” (p. 3). Further, Bal (1999) describes how a compassionate audience-witness helps to generate the kind of inter-subjective space wherein the trauma narrative can be safely spoken, pieced together and reframed. An additional and equally vital function of this dialectic is that as the traumatic narrative is being transformed, the survivor’s severed self is being socially re-membered. Herein lays the antidote which is, according to

Bloom (1997), “the capacity of human relatedness to provide the healing integration that is necessary if the victim is to transform suffering into victory” (p. 16). While I wholeheartedly agree with the need to bring voice and testimony to traumatic experience - for the women in my study, this is the source of their paradox; because what was done to them was done by human beings, human relatedness is experienced as a conundrum, not their salvation. In my analysis, I will explore, more thoroughly, how identity, meaning, and relationships were altered because of the war.

Meaning Systems

The PTSD model for understanding trauma impact is just one of several theories attempting to explain the nature and treatment of human response to severe circumstances. In the last two decades, a dominant critique of PTSD has emerged. It postulates that because PTSD is rooted in the paradigm of pathological fear, it is too limiting. Deep fear is not the only reason people end up with traumatic symptoms. When their assumptions about life, belief systems, or ways of appraising situations are undermined, this can also lead to psychological distress. Early thanatologists and psychologists such as Parkes (1971, 1988), Marris (1974, 1982), and Bowlby (1969) set the foundation for influential traumatologists (e.g., Janoff-Bulman, 1989, 1992; Janoff-Bulman & Freize, 1983) to begin exploring the impact of trauma upon meaning systems or schemas. When Cognitivists re-conceptualized the response to trauma from intense fear, helplessness and horror to that of “shattered assumptions” an entire sub-set of research, theory, and treatment developed (Dalglish, 2004). In recent years, a broad call for a more holistic approach has incorporated both an assumptive meaning/meaning systems approach along with the PTSD model.

Personal beliefs about how the world operates secure and grounds people. Meaning and purpose of existence, what to expect from others, and ways to envision the “self” are just a few of the assumptions that help to orient people as they attempt to navigate through life (Bowlby, 1969; Fox, 2002; Silberman, 2003, 2005). Largely unconscious, developed and confirmed over time, these conceptual systems both structure and guide a person’s responses and behaviors. They serve as an interpretive lens. Growing research supports the idea that meaning systems are important and supportive because they help people predict general patterns, affect emotions, and influence self-regulation (e.g. Baumeister, 1991; Pargament, 1997). According to Marris (1982) people depend upon these structures to help them “to interpret, act intelligently in and survive the events they encounter; and the stability of these structures is therefore crucial to them” (p. 54). Epstein (1985) contends that, in fact, these meaning systems are essential for humans to function in the world.

Janoff-Bulman (1992) proposed three fundamental assumptions that are held by most people; the world is benevolent, the world is meaningful, and the self is worthy. These “schemas,” as well as other cognitive constructs, order and organize “raw” experiences into coherent categories. Although relatively abstract, schemas serve as a mechanism that shapes one’s perspective and attributes meaning to events. Not only do schemas lay the foundation for a world-view, but they serve as pillars or structures of knowledge. As Marris (1982) notes, schemas “generalize order, and sustain the relationships which generate and embody that order” (p. 54). What we know and how we know is derived and shaped by what we believe and assume to be true.

Trauma, by definition, is an assault upon our basic sensibilities. According to Landsman (2002), its impact is pervasive, “altering emotional, cognitive, and behavioral experience and the

subjective experience of trauma not infrequently includes a crisis of meaning at a deep level of experience” (p. 13). In the wake of a traumatic event, people face the challenge of understanding or making sense of what happened. Since we need meaning or coherence to live our lives, “trauma becomes a crucible in which all previously held meanings and assumptions are tested, transformed, or perhaps renewed” (Landsman, 2002, p. 13). Landsman suggests that an initial need for survivors is cognitive mastery – a need to know and understand. Unfortunately, trying to form an adequate account of a traumatic event can be fraught with difficulties.

It may be impossible to piece together a coherent narrative for several reasons; lack of information, disrupted memory, or interrupted processing due to emotional distress. Logic and reason – often interlocutors of “coherent” stories – are not capable of making intelligible what is not understandable. As a result, survivors tend to form attributions and theories about traumatic occurrences (Landsman, 2002) in an attempt to “master” or explain what happened to them. They move beyond trying to articulate “what” happened, to “why” it happened to them. It is at this juncture that hints of disbelief and confusion begin to niggle at their previously held set of assumptions. What was once held to be true about the world no longer fits the experience of their lived reality.

Janoff-Bulman’s (1989, 1992) assumptive world model explores schemas especially vulnerable to the traumatic experience: “At risk in the wake of trauma include those involving personal invulnerability, a “meaningful world,” and a positive self-image; coping strategies are generated in an attempt to rebuild those basic assumptions” (Landsman, 2002, p. 89). Beliefs about justice, control, and non-randomness often fall victim because they literally break apart through exposure to trauma. This is what Janoff-Bulman (1992) refers to as “shattering”. As part of the recovery process, survivors are left to adapt their trauma experience either by

“maintaining existing assumptions unchanged in the face of and in spite of events, whose meaning might then be reinterpreted; abandoning existing assumptions completely and adopting new ones shaped by the events; or developing some kind of integrative middle ground in the ongoing negotiation between challenges and assumptions” (Coor, 2002, p. 136).

While Janoff-Bulman (1992) defines assumptive meanings as a loss of basic beliefs and convictions, Rando (1993) uses the term to attend the psychosocial assumptive world. In her opinion, what is lost are assumptions about belonging - the valuation and sense of connectedness within the world. When these beliefs are shattered a coherent self is likewise broken. Attig (2002) concurs with Rando and underscores the importance of extending an understanding of “assumption” to incorporate more than cognitive mastery. He contends that “to assume” incorporates “all that we have come to take for granted as we have learned how to be and to act in the world in the presence of those we love” (p. 58). Traumatic loss undermines “our taken-for-granted emotional, psychological, behavioral, social, soulful, and spiritual ways of being in the worlds” (p. 64). He argues against the cognitive bias in the discussion and asserts the need to rethink how to help those who have incurred significant loss. Since people learn and grow through reflecting, observation, and interaction, a part of knowledge is social in nature.

We orient ourselves within our physical surroundings, our social surroundings, individual and collective life histories, and the limits of our own capacities fundamentally and primarily through practical engagement in the world. We orient ourselves in and through the needs, wants, emotions, motivations, abilities, habits, dispositions, interaction patterns, expectations, and hopes that arise within and shape that practical engagement. (Rando, 1993, p. 59-60)

When these psycho-social assumptions are shattered, not only does the individual lose cognitive anchoring or orientation, they also lose a far more pervasive orientation that has been rooted in shared communal living. A sense of belonging, of safety, and the confidence that comes with family and loved ones has been undone. All that has been taken for granted must be considered in the healing process.

Although theoretical approaches have different explanations for the root causes of traumatic expression, the symptoms of trauma remain consistent. Losses that result from traumatic experience are profound regardless of how they are understood. In the Meaning Systems approach, etiology of the trauma response occurs when protective beliefs and norms have been shattered. The void left behind is flooded by horror. Differing from PTSD, in this theoretical understanding “traumatization is an exposure of the self in which the self fragments, loses its protective illusions and values, and hides in unnamable shame” (Kauffman, 2002, p. 206). When the assumptive world is lost, the self disintegrates and experiences a loss of control and panic because a deep deprivation of safety is experienced. Exposure to terror and peril breaches the boundary of self and inflicts a profound sense of threat. In the Meaning Systems approach a sense of personal security must be re-apprehended in order for survivors to move forward with their lives.

As one way to explore trauma’s all encompassing impact on life, Neimeyer, Botella, Herrero, Pachaeco, Figueras, and Werner-Wildner (2002) developed an ethno-biographical approach to understanding the construction of life narratives as it relates to the assumptive model. They contend that “meaning” and “meaningfulness” are what actually shapes a person’s sense of identity. The coherent sense of self-continuity can be dramatically disrupted by traumatic loss. Since narrative identity spans history and time, when trauma intersects life’s

course a “dialectic tension between continuity and discontinuity” (p. 34) in the narrative can become problematic. Caught in this tension is an awareness of what once was and what now is. Former “scripts” appear to be rendered invalid and the survivor is enveloped in the uneasy sense of being alien in a world that was once familiar. Neimeyer et al. (2002) found that an initial impulse for trauma survivors was to attempt reclaiming who they used to be. Unfortunately, “a ‘narrative rewind’ is impossible by definition, as we cannot turn back time and must instead struggle with ways of bridging what once was and what now is” (p. 34). In sum, they were especially interested in examining what personal meaning was attributed to traumatic events and how, in particular, survivors “emplotted” their loss; they ask how did individuals conceptualize this loss within their comprehensive life stories?

In the Meaning Systems model for recovery, establishing a secure place of containment for fear and panic are essential. Equally important is the elicitation of narrative – or bearing witness. To remember traumatic memory while maintaining a sense of safety can be a difficult balance to find. Kauffman (2002) argues, “When it is occurring, there is no presence at all; after its occurrence, it does not stop happening. It returns and returns, and continues to be absent. The core of traumatic loss is mysterious, dangerous, contradictory, horrific, mortifying, uncanny” (p. 3). Because the basic assumption of “I am” has been lost or disrupted, the core of a traumatic wound is recurring violence to a sense of self – or “meaning suffering” (Landsman, 2002). Survivors are left with a relentless riddle of trying to make sense out of chaos; an event where there is no rationality or meaning. The traumatic event is impossible to re-organize or frame into a coherent past, present or future temporal narrative.

As a way to keep those assaults at bay, Janoff-Bulman (1992) found that people become conservative and resistant to changing their belief systems. Instead they are inclined to hedge,

refuse to acknowledge or even reckon with the irreversibility of their losses. For example, it is not uncommon for victims to blame themselves for what happened. Although it is considered to be a maladaptive response, self-blame offers a way to hold steadfast to a belief that the world is ordered, a place where there is cause and effect instead of mere randomness. Because of this human propensity towards conservatism, clinical focus must be concerned with helping survivors face and re-evaluate their protective assumptive world, even if it causes more anxiety (Kauffman, 2002).

The tasks of cognitive mastery, as well as confronting and restoring shattered assumptions, constitute a crisis in its own right – one that is existential in nature. Defensive denial (Hoffman, 1970), trauma avoidance (Horowitz, 1992) and illusions (Taylor, Wood & Lichtman, 1983) are just a few of the adaptive and maladaptive ways that survivors confront their memories. Confusing and perplexing, the “crucible” for restoring or re-configuring meaning in the aftermath of trauma is a delicate process – one where despair or transcendence are equally plausible outcomes. Confrontation with the existential holds a danger and an opportunity in the healing process. According to Janoff-Bulman, “recovery” is expressed in an uneasy and perhaps paradoxical understanding of the world. Citing the work of Rando (2002) she argues:

The inner worlds of victims who have “recovered” now reflect an acknowledgment of misfortune, an awareness of vulnerability. These survivors know that their prior assumptions were naïve, that tragedy can strike and that no one is invulnerable. Their new assumptive worlds, however, are not completely negative... Rather, these survivors recognize the possibility of tragedy but do not allow it to pervade their self and world views. (p. 174)

In many ways, the Meaning Systems approach to understanding trauma supports my investigation of the women's narratives in my study. According to these theorists, since some basic assumptions can never be restored, individuals may be left to live in an uneasy marriage between transcendence and despair – one that makes space for re-engaging life with a stronger but more fragile understanding of their place in the universe.

Critiques of the Meaning Systems and PTSD Approaches to Trauma

A sharp criticism of the Meaning Systems and PTSD approaches to trauma is that they are rooted in a very specific socio-cultural and historical tradition (DeSilva, 1993; Mollica & Caspi-Yavin, 1992). For example, there seems to be an unquestioned assumption about what constitutes a “self” and the definition of a trauma/response. In contrast to these dominant paradigms, many non-Western cultures regard the self as expressed through social connectedness, not individualism. Meaning is not something generated within the individual's mind. It is located in a public and social realm of interaction, language, and practice. “I” is situated within a deeper sense of “we” (Bracken, 1998). Scholar and practitioner critics contend that applying an individualistic approach to healing loosens ties to home culture; to cultural views, myths, and religious idioms that may be important sustaining factors. Ignored are the collective traditional ways of healing, indigenous knowledge, and curative rituals that should be accessed and incorporated into the recovery process (Bracken, Giller & Summerfield, 1995, 1997).

In Summerfield's (1996, 1998, 1999, 2000) work with refugee populations, he notes that refugees are not interested in psychic healing. Their social reality, their family circumstances, available social networks, economic position, and employment status are the primary foci of

their healing. For these refugees, personal recovery is grounded in social recovery. Bracken (2002) maintains that recovery is not a detached process, nor does it simply happen in people's psychologies. Instead, he asserts, "It is practical and unspectacular, and it is grounded in the resumption of the ordinary rhythms of everyday life – the familial, sociocultural, religious, and economic activities that make the world intelligible" (p. 1107).

Summerfield (2000) and Bracken (2002) argue further that PTSD is just one particular way of approaching and understanding the sequelae of traumatic events. There is no such thing as a universal response to stress. It is their contention that the PTSD model, born out of an Enlightenment understanding of science and reason, fits inside a western paradigm. Almost all of their clients have been dislocated from non-western societies. Western psychiatry is predicated on the notion of individualism. Society is understood as a collection of separate individuals, each with their own intra-psychic world. These clinicians take issue with the assumption that PTSD diagnostics adequately capture the ways in which humans respond to traumatic events. The parameters limit and do not take into account, personal, social, and cultural variables. Rather, positivist psychiatry seeks to convert human suffering into a technical problem that can be understood through standardized interventions (Bracken 1998; Bracken, Giller & Summerfield, 1995, 1997; Summerfield & Hume, 1993; Summerfield, 1996, 1998, 1999, 2000).

Another criticism is that PTSD and Meaning System treatment models depend heavily on clients talking and re-framing their trauma through narration. Bracken (1998) argues that the therapeutic approach of "talk therapy" may be irrelevant in many non-western societies. At the heart of cognitive approaches to treatment is a belief in the benefits of personal reflection and the need to "process" a traumatic experience. Western conceptions view the self as bounded, unique, and the dynamic center of awareness, emotion, and judgment. As such, the independent

individual – through personal insight – alters their behavior and is capable of self transformation. According to the aforementioned clinicians, however, healing is not necessarily achieved by a therapist assisting a patient to face or remember trauma. In fact, this individualistic approach may have negative consequences since a majority of “self” understanding takes place in the context of the family and social group. In addition, distress is commonly understood and expressed in terms of disruptions to the social and moral order. No particular attention is paid to internal emotions in their own right (Bracken 1998; Bracken, Giller & Summerfield, 1995, 1997; Summerfield & Hume, 1993; Summerfield, 1996, 1998, 1999, 2000).

Regardless of the applicable limitations of the PTSD and Meaning Making models, these critiques raise concerns. If personal recovery and social recovery are inextricably linked, what happens when individuals *and* communities are simultaneously placed in harm’s way? How do traumatized individuals who live inside fractured communal realities, recover if their source for healing has been obliterated? Individuals and communities need healing in the aftermath of atrocity. In our current state of global wars and armed conflicts, soldiers are no longer “the” targets; nor are civilians. Entire peoples – their way of life, social and cultural institutions that connect them to a particular history, values, traditions, expressions of communality - are being strategically destroyed. Terror is a vehicle intended to devastate social fabric and erase a social reality (Summerfield, 1996, 1998, 1999, 2000). The idea that trauma resides solely within the individual psyche has shifted; it also suffuses the collective.

Collective and Cultural Trauma

By the end of the 20th century, trauma discourse encountered the genocide in Rwanda, ethnic cleansing and mass rape in Bosnia, and reconciling the truth of gross human rights

violations in post-Apartheid South Africa. Entire neighborhoods, communities, and nations had been torn apart by war. Traumatic events were not just being experienced individually, the impact of trauma also reverberated throughout the social, collective, and cultural dimensions of civic life. Because individuals, families, and countries are webs of historical, cultural, political, and socio-economic realities, the weight of traumatic events become dispersed throughout the entire system – from the micro to the macro levels. Therefore, according to Harvey (1996), how mass atrocity is understood and analyzed must include both the collective and personal dimensions of impact.

Collective trauma occurs when people are wrenched out of their communities, or when their communities are destroyed. Sociologist Erikson (1976) laid the groundwork for current understandings of how trauma impacts communities in his study of natural disasters in the Appalachian Mountains of the United States. There, communality was deep and fixed but it was shattered by a devastating flood. He witnessed individuals diminish as persons because their surrounding social tissue had been stripped away. They could no longer reclaim emotional and social resources. Their community had cushioned pain, provided context for intimacy, represented morality, and served as a repository for old traditions. After the flood, there was no “community.” Those who survived were a shadow of the previous collective and individuals began to exhibit symptoms similar to PTSD.

Erikson (1976) observed that most of the traumatic symptoms experienced by survivors were as much a reaction to the loss of community as to the reaction of the disaster itself. People were enmeshed in the fabric of their community. When that fabric was torn apart the flood, people found themselves exposed and alone resulting in an additionally negative social by-product. Social ties frayed further as individuals became increasingly withdrawn due to trauma

symptoms and accompanying existential fear. Thus, they became even more isolated. In this newly felt singularity and self-imposed isolation, flood survivors carried heavy loads of grief and intense feelings of insecurity. Without social support, or much personal confidence, they faced the restoration of their blighted lives alone (Erikson, 1976).

People cannot maintain a secure sense of self in the midst of an event that threatens to destroy all that has been known to them (Bloom, 1997; Herman, 1992). If the group to which a person belongs, and the values to which they subscribe can no longer be experienced as morally special, ordained by God, or history, or nature – then the individual is apt to feel adrift, forced to chart a solitary course across a largely indifferent landscape. The world has lost all its stable points of reference as the individual sits in its ruins. Survivors lose both the personal resources and social moorings to navigate their future effectively (Erikson, 1976). This case study illustrates how dissolution and/or recovery are intricately tied to the interchange between individuals and their communities. It also illuminates the needs and challenges that post-war, exiled refugees face as they attempt to move forward into their lives.

Erikson's seminal research also became the evolutionary link to current discourse and theories of cultural trauma and change. Not dissimilar to Janoff-Bulman's (1992) theory of Meaning Systems and trauma, it occurs after the blunt force of an invasive or overwhelming event impacts an inherited cultural environment. Cultures are socially shared pools of ready-made templates that symbolize, interpret, frame, and narrate. They are a "meaning system" that is held by a group that includes values, norms, beliefs, knowledge, and worldview (Janoff-Bulman, 1992). Smelser (2004) describes the obliteration or damage of something felt to be sacred and fundamental to the integrity of a society as a cultural trauma. It is particularly potent because it threatens a way of life. When Serb forces ethnically cleansed parts of Bosnia,

individuals were literally severed from their communities. Over a million Bosnians were displaced by the war (United Nations Development Programme, 1999). These refugees, spread throughout the world, were forced to re-build their lives in cultural contexts radically different from the life they had always known. In the following section, I will describe some of the unique challenges war refugees face – from their own personal traumatic responses to the demands of life in exile.

Refugee Trauma

Introduction

Refugees occupy a fragile social sphere. Their sudden departure and forced exile leaves them perpetually swinging between the past and present. They are at once socially, emotionally, and mentally oriented in their country of origin, while physically and economically located in a foreign host country. Complicated by pre-migratory traumas and experiences, this multiplicitous existence challenges practitioners and scholars to confront conventional trauma models and paradigms. While much of the early research investigating refugee trauma focused on psychiatric based research and symptomatology, the exploration of co-morbidities related to dislocation and relocation remained largely unexamined until the last two decades. Findings now indicate that the “anxieties of change” (Eisenbruch, 1991) which include dominant social, cultural, and economic shifts, play a considerable role in refugee psychosocial distress (Miller, Weine, Ramic, Brkic, Djruic-Bjedec, & Smajkic, 2002).

Many modern refugees are of the type Kunz (1981) would call “acute”. Using Kunz’s Kinetic Model of Refugee Theory, George (2009) explains that it can be helpful to understand refugee typologies within multi-tiered classifications. Kunz (1981) differentiates between

anticipatory refugees, those who foresee oncoming conflict and have the social and economic resources to leave, and acute refugees, those who are forced to flee suddenly due to the conflict. Because of the timing and disruptive nature of the acute refugees' departure, they are more likely to experience violence and witness traumatic events (George, 2009). Amongst the Bosnian refugees in their study, Miller et al. (2002b) found a correlation between proximity to and experiences of war violence and increased incidents of PTSD and depressive symptoms. While George admits that categorization can be problematic, she sees dialectic value in Kunz's (1981) classification methodology. Social, cultural, economic, and migratory factors are important classifications that help provide contextual analytics for mental health distress.

Kunz's model further subcategorizes refugees by other factors such as when they flee their home country, the cultural similarities of the country they migrate to, their economic status, the reception in their host country, culture, and immigration policies, and indicates that all of these can influence how refugees are impacted by trauma and the support they receive (George, 2009). Additionally, the physical and psychological scars of war-time traumatic events prior to fleeing can also exacerbate stressors that refugees experience during exile (Mollica, McInnes, Poole, & Tor, 1998; Weine, Kulenovic, Pavkovic, & Gibbons, 1998). Research studying several populations affected by exposure to violent political conflict and forced migration has elucidated the high risk factors involved for the development of PTSD and other forms of psychological distress (Besier & Hou, 2001; Clark, Sack & Goff, 1993; Gafner & Benson, 2001; Geltman & Stover, 1997; Michultka, Blanchard, & Kalous, 1998; Mollica et al., 1998). Likewise, according to Silove (2004), the nature and quantum of trauma, gender, pre-war psychological risk, history of mental illness, type of traumatic stress reactions experienced, and the dominant socio-cultural narrative also influences how and if exile-related stressors will exhibit.

Stressors in Exile

Research studying issues related to the mental health of refugees has been consistent in its findings. What has shifted is the once held assumption that when a refugee is removed from the chaos of war and resettled, they will show marked improvement in mental health. More current research indicates that PTSD, depression, and complicated grief may actually be exacerbated by the experience of exile (Miller et al., 2002b). Being alienated and away from the socio-cultural supports systems necessary for healing may compound rather than lessen mental health difficulties caused by war (Hunt & Gakenyi, 2005; Miller et al., 2002b). Similar to Erikson's (1976) findings, because they have lost community ties, refugees are often confronted with issues of personal identity, social identity, and belongingness. Other factors such as unemployment or underemployment, dramatic shifts in economic and community status, the inability to speak and be understood, social isolation, and the upsetting of traditional family roles may also contribute to and/or compound the psychological suffering of war (Gorst-Unsworth & Goldenberg, 1998; Miller, 1999; Miller et al., 2002b; Pernice & Brook, 1996).

Across broad areas of inquiry, several reoccurring themes elemental to refugee psychosocial distress have emerged. One of the larger themes effecting refugees in general, but more specifically to the Bosnian refugees in my study, is that of social dislocation. Along with other researchers, I found many refugees felt socially isolated in their new country; they had been literally "cut off" from their former lives. There was still a mournfulness surrounding their memories. In his study of levels of trauma and depression that Bosnian refugees living in Chicago were experiencing, Miller et al. (2002b), found that much of their conversation around grief and loss dealt with issues of social bonds and that the refugees operated within a "comparative temporal framework:"

...[P]articipants contrasted their current experience of isolation with the rich social networks to which they belonged before going into exile; the lack of social support in their present lives was seen against a prewar backdrop of close friends, family members, and neighbors to whom one could turn for assistance in times of need... (p. 345)

In an additional study of the effects of exile stressors and social isolation among 28 Bosnian refugees, Miller, Worthington, Muzurovic, Tipping, & Goldman, (2002) found similar results; issues of social isolation accounted for increased degrees of PTSD and depressive symptoms. Referencing research done by Fullilove (1996), Keyes and Kane (2004) highlight the effects of social and physical displacement stating, "...individuals who endure this situation universally display symptoms of nostalgia or prolonged grieving, disorientation, and alienation" (p. 812).

In his work with Southeast Asian refugees Eisenbruch (1991) expounds on the cognitive dissonance afflicting the refugee population. Since most refugees cannot, in actuality, return home, nor can they shed the home represented within themselves, they experience what Eisenbruch (1991) terms "cultural bereavement". Cultural bereavement is "[t]he experience of the uprooted person or group-resulting from loss of social structures" (p. 674). It manifests itself in omnipresent images, vivid memories, and guilt about the past. Refugees feel intense anxiety over disrupted social rituals such as burying and honoring the dead and sometimes view their flight as abandonment of their homeland. They are also, "...stricken by anxieties, morbid thoughts, and anger that mar the ability to get on with daily life..." (p. 674). Refugees who have fled their home countries due to unimaginable violence, are not just contending with the effects of the violence they endured, but the loss and destruction of their cultural and collective lives.

Their relationship to place and community has been severed. Such uprooting is both devastating and disorienting. As Apfelbaum (2000) explains, “Uprootings involve a separation--often an irreversible one, as in the case of genocide--from one's original personal, social, and historical groundings” (p. 1009). The social encompasses histories lived and remembered, cultural practice, and ways and means of life. For communally oriented societies, the social is an extension of the self, with the constant interaction between self and society being mutually reinforcing entities. The social is the primary orienting structure. Thereby, terroristic assaults on social structure greatly undermine foundational realities as well as serve as a locus for trauma. Refugees can literally feel as if they have lost their identity and become socially orphaned.

Symptoms of cultural bereavement often mirror those of PTSD or other related mental health disorders. However, as Eisenbruch (1991) is careful to point out, their behavior is... “not of itself a disease but an understandable response to the catastrophic loss of social structure and culture” (p. 674). It is as if refugees become socially and culturally unbounded individuals, who now lack their orientating constructs. A second major theme that emerges from research among refugees (and also relates specifically to women in my study) has to do with this loss of orientating constructs or moorings. How does one confront the meaning of genocide, mass rape, or ethnic cleansing? Apfelbaum (2000) argues that such events create a significant epistemological crisis, or crisis of human behavior, that is equally dislocating. The metaphysical and psychological consequences of gross human rights violations perpetrated onto the lives of innocent victims, “evokes the question of whether any life is at all possible in the face of such an overwhelming burden of grief” (p. 1008). She continues by noting that the realities and combination of being physically uprooted and epistemologically dislocated, undermines and even “obliterates personal, social, and collective identities” (p. 1008).

Answering the question of how people recover from the catastrophe of war is as perplexing as it is complex. It is not a discrete or linear process. As Bracken (2002) suggests, the psychologies of people are “grounded in the resumption of the ordinary rhythms of everyday life - the familial, sociocultural, religious, and economic activities that make the world intelligible” (p.17). At the same time, the consequences of traumatic experiences effect memory and alter meanings. The disorientation and destruction of up-rootedness is painful. And, in most cases, separation is irreversible (Apfelbaum, 2000). The reconstruction of a severed life is impossible. This “fact” leads back to the aim of my research study. Is there hope for healing? Is recovery possible? And if it is, what is recoverable?

In the following section I provide a brief overview of place identity theory as it relates to refugee dislocation. The disorientation and destruction caused by ethnic cleansing and permanent separation from home is one of the seemingly insurmountable obstacles in the healing process for several women in my study. In Chapter Five I return to this theoretical framework and analyze the specific ways in which women were impacted by being uprooted from the country of their origin.

Place and Identity

Refugees are dislocated from cherished space; their homes, their communities, their beloved countries. They suffer from traumas and distress, persecution and violence, loss and alienation, uprooting and violent change (Stein, 1986). Refugees are persons exposed to extremely stressful events not only when they are driven out of their homes, but throughout their displacement. For many refugees, the spaces they move into include poor housing, extremely high social-spatial density, and a lack of privacy. They also face a change in their status due to

financial dependence, loss of employment, and shifts in communal social standings. Identities once shaped and defined by space and relationships are drastically re-defined. This section of literature review explores how space, identity, and rootedness are connected in ways that deeply impact the psychological well being of dislocated people.

Fullilove (1996) integrates several theoretical models into her three definitions of space. The first meaning of space is that which is immediate and physical; an intimate section of the environment. It is a locus or “geographic center, site, situation, or location for events” (p. 1517). Space is evaluated as satisfactory if life can be sustained through access to food, water, and safe shelter. Nondiscriminatory institutional structures and policies are also significant contributors to healthy surroundings. Likewise, these immediate and intimate spaces must provide a context in which people are able to search for existential meaning. Fullilove (1996) suggests, “great settings allow for the expansion of human consciousness, creativity, and generativity” (p. 1517). Although at a very basic level physical needs must be met, space can also provide a context out of which human dignity is diminished or thrives. In the context of my research, it is important to question the relationship between thriving, healing, and place.

A second way to understand the meaning of space is through the quality of human interactions occurring in a given locale or psychosocial milieu. People are acutely sensitive to spoken and unspoken dynamics within their environment. Fullilove (1996) contends that how people treat and respond to each other is contextualized within broader social units such as the community and nation. When power differentials are misused or people are disregarded, they will not connect to each other. Distrust breeds isolation and separation. Instead of experiencing a sense of relatedness, individuals feel alienated or as Wesch (2009) suggests, they experience

a “crisis of significance.” Respect, validation, and mutuality are essential qualities of a strong and healthy environment.

Drawing heavily from geographer Passi’s (1991) place-identity model, Fullilove’s (1996) third definition of space is that is the container where life stories are held. Narratives are situated upon a stage, setting, or within a particular context. These backgrounds or backdrops are not neutral; they hold unique meaning for the individual. Place is infused with significance. How a person experiences this space is shaped by their past, as well as their current attitudes, beliefs and actions. For Passi (1991), space actually holds time; past, present and future are connected there. Place becomes a confluence of human relationship, memory, narrative, and dreams. It shapes human consciousness and provides a framework and context out of which human relatedness emerges. A unique dialectic evolves as place becomes the external reality shaping people’s existence while at the same time, it is the object of human thought and action (Fullilove, 1996).

As Hidalgo and Hernandez (2001) point out in their studies of place attachment, theorists lack a shared meaning for concepts such as place identification, place attachment, place identity, and a sense of home or rootedness. In its most rudimentary form, place identification is a person’s expressed sense of being a part of a group who is defined by a location. Place attachment, however, is generally understood as the emotional bond that people experience to a place where they feel safe, comfortable and where they would prefer to remain. It is an affective link that exists between people and specific settings. Types of place attachments range from specific sites such as houses, neighborhoods, and mosques to natural environments or even a nation. A predictor of place attachment is length of residence. As Taylor (1996) found in his studies, a sense of rootedness was based upon length of residency. Those who had a longer historical connection with a place were likely to develop a more intense link to it. This

correlation was evident in my data: the longer women had lived in a particular area or home, the greater the attachment. However, as my analysis reflects, the relationship between place attachment and place identity was severed because of violation and the violent memories generated by the war.

Place identity is a fundamental component of personal identity. It is defined as an interactive process with place in which people describe themselves as belonging to it (Hernandez, Hidalgo, Salazar-Laplace & Hess, 2007). For Proshansky, Fabian, & Kaminoff (1983) place identity is described as part of social identity. The physical world cannot be delinked from the socialization process. Different dimensions of the self develop in relation to the physical environment. Because of the fundamental connection between person and place, it has been described as a part of self-identity (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996), that increases a sense of belongingness (Altman & Low, 1992), and self-esteem (Deutsch & Hirsch, 2002.) Place is a spatial setting that has been given meaning based upon human experience and memory, relationships, emotions and thoughts. (Altman & Low, 1992).

Because people's existential realities or their identities are so intimately shaped by and tied to space, the experience of displacement and exile become traumatic events in themselves (Fullilove, 1996; Miller, 1996; Silove, 1999). Erikson (1976) and Fullilove (1996) describe the experience of forced dislocation as a rupture or disrupted sense of belonging. The reason for this disorientation is because place can serve as a reference point for self continuity. It is a compass for past action and future experience (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996). Familiarity, attachment, and place of identity generate a sense of belonging, and these become severed when people, such as refugees, are uprooted. As Passi (1991) argues, home represents the accumulation of relationship and history. When the impact of war destroys the material and relational world, the

loss is experienced as devastating (Fullilove, 1996). Research suggests that dislocation can be a primary source of poor mental health, and that refugees are at risk for depression and anxiety. Space, identity, and rootedness are connected in ways that deeply impact the emotional and psychological well being of dislocated people (Fullilove, 1996; Kahana, Harel, & Kahana, 1989; Pernice & Brook, 1996). In following section, I look more specifically at how Bosnians were psychologically impacted from being uprooted and dislocated by the war.

Bosnian War Survivors

This portion of the literature review examines a collection of research that is most relevant to understanding the unique experiences of Bosnian war survivors and most useful in contextualizing my work. It includes studies such as the psychological impact of traumatic war events on individuals and groups; the distresses experienced by refugees during exile and resettlement; and, more specifically, the healing/recovery processes of Bosnian refugee women. Additionally, methodological studies are addressed herein in order to best illustrate those qualitative methods utilized in my project. These include studies that incorporated narrative approaches to gather war-time testimonies and to analyze data on the experience of discordance between refugees' former lives and their reconstructed lives in exile.

Early epidemiological data regarding the Bosnian War's psychological impact on individuals/groups was conducted in refugee camps and shelters in Croatia (Ajdukovic, 1996; Ajdukovic & Ajdukovic, 1998) as well as in medical clinics (Drozdek, 1997; Pappas & Bilanakis, 1997; Pejovic & Jovanovic, 1996; Weine et al., 1998a/b). Although it was difficult to separate the damaging effects of displacement from war-related trauma, these studies revealed that refugees exhibited a high number of stress symptoms, and difficulties in the process of

psychosocial adjustment. Displaced refugees faced learning to cope with the loss of family members, loss of their physical abilities due to wounding (Hirsl-Hecej, 1993), loss of home, living with other distressed family members (Adjukovic, 1992; Moro & Vidovic, 1992), poor living conditions, and malnutrition (Grguric and Hirsl-Hecej, 1993). Already vulnerable to stress due to traumatic war events, these subsequent losses increased the likelihood of psychological maladaptive reactions as refugees attempted to reconstruct their lives in a foreign environment.

As a result of Ajdukovic's (1993) research findings among refugees in Croatia, he presented a comprehensive mental health prevention model predicated on the following assumptions:

(a) multiple sources of stress are present in post-war displacement; (b) stressors have a cumulative effect over time; (c) displaced people and refugees are generally psychologically healthy individuals exposed to extremely intensive stressors and therefore their mental health is at risk; (d) the displaced are not a homogenous group, but have group-specific and individual needs (e) there are groups of individuals among the displaced who are at exceptionally high risk and need special attention, for example, children and the elderly. (cited in Ajdukovic & Ajdovkic, 1993)

To best meet the psychological needs of refugees, it was critical that these factors be considered. As the war continued and research among displaced peoples in the Balkan region emerged, the implications of accrued traumas and stresses, the experience of persecution and danger, the impact of loss and isolation, along with the effect of uprooting and ethnic cleansing began to illuminate the long term psychological consequences that the war had upon people's lives.

PTSD and MDD

In its initial stages, mental health research among the Bosnian refugee population focused on posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), major depressive disorder (MDD), and the effects of wartime rape. A vast body of Bosnian war-trauma research indicates PTSD and MDD as the most frequently documented psychiatric syndromes among refugees and displaced people. One of the first studies of Bosnian refugees in the United States was conducted by Weine, Becker, McGlashan, Laub, Vojvoda and Hyman (1995). They combined psychiatric assessments and trauma testimonies of Bosnian refugees who had survived ethnic cleansing, to evaluate the level of PTSD among these newly resettled refugees. Results indicated that 65% of the participants in the study were diagnosed with PTSD and 35% were diagnosed with MDD. In a follow up study, Weine, et al. (1998a) used standardized instruments to assess and compare a study of PTSD symptoms in individuals who had recently resettled in the United States with a follow up evaluation one year later. The results of their findings indicated that while older refugees were at greater risk for prolonged PTSD symptomology, in general, the level of PTSD diagnosis and symptoms among all of the refugees studied remained substantial even one year after their resettlement in the United States. Thus, this research suggests that the effects of war-trauma are significant, causing persistent and serious mental health problems.

In addition to those discussed above, there have been a variety of other studies documenting PTSD among post-war Bosnian refugees (Ajdukovic & Ajdukovic, 1998; Carballo, Smajkic, Zeric, Dzidowska, Gebre-Medhin, & Van Halem, 2004; Foa, Riggs, Dancu, & Rothbaum, 1993; Miller et al., 2002a; Mollica, McInnes, Sarajlic, Lavelle, Sarajlic, & Massagli, 1999; Vojvoda, Weine, McGlashan, Becker & Southwick, 2008; Witmer & Culver, 2001). Other psychological difficulties stemming from exposure to wartime experiences included

depression (Mghir, Freed, Baskin, & Katon, 1995; Smith, Perrin, Yule & Rabe-Hesketh, 2001; Thabet, Abed, & Vostanis, 2004), anxiety, and somatic distress (Beiser & Hou, 1986; Clark, Sack, & Goff, 1993). However, within refugee populations, it has been difficult to determine not only the specific nature of the relationship between PTSD, depression, anxiety, and complicated grief – but also its etiology (Mollica, McInnes, Pham, Fawzi, Smith, & Murphy, 1998; Sack, Clarke, & Seeley, 1996). Losses related to war are not easily delinked from the experience of forced relocation. Nonetheless it is clear that refugees who survive war induced trauma often experience pathological levels of psychological distress (Mollica, 2001; Mollica et al., 1999; Miller et al., 2002; Momartin, Silove, Manicavasagar, & Steel, 2003).

War Rape

Another initial area of investigation regarding the Bosnian war is the critically important issue of war rape. Unfortunately, by 1993, the political “game” about the number of Muslim women being raped had overshadowed the real sufferings of those who had survived (for discussions see Nikolic-Ristonavic, 2000; Thomas & Ralph, 1994). The statistics on the number of women who had been raped (which volleyed back and forth between the Bosnian Ministry of the Interior, Serbian controlled media, and Western researchers) were argued to be either as low as 10,000 or as high as 60,000. The estimate (20,000-25,000) given in a special report made by the European Community (Warburton Mission II Report, 1993) is now generally agreed to, although UN envoy Tadeusz Mazowiecki (United Nations, 1994) stressed that no reliable estimate could be reached given the religious and cultural implications for women to come forward (Olujic, 1998; Nikolic-Ristonavic, 2000; Drakulic, 1993).

Qualitative research such as that utilizing women's own voice (via their oral testimonies) contributed to a rich body of literature regarding experiences of war rape. A majority of those narratives came from women who were raped within the first months of war, most of whom were from villages situated in the rural border areas (Helsinki Watch, 1993; Stiglmayer, 1994; Vranic, 1996). Initial research analysis was focused on patterns of war rape, rape as a strategy of war, and whether or not collective rape in Bosnia was considered genocidal (Allen, 1996; Gutman, 1993; MacKinnon 1993a/b; Nikolic-Ristanovic, 2000; Stiglmayer, 1994). Additionally, feminist researchers began to explore sexual violence and its relationship to the construction of ethnic-national agendas (Bracewell, 1996; Coomaraswamy, 1998; Hansen, 2001; Hayden, 2000; Nikolic-Ristanovic, 1999; Sofos, 1996; Yuval-Davis, 1997). At some intervals, research on the actual and specific impact that rape had upon individual women appeared to get lost inside a trans-national drive to circumvent a history of war rape impunity (Thomas & Ralph, 1999) and to redefine it as a Crime against Humanity before the International Criminal Court.

Within Bosnia itself, however, professional feminists and activists responded quickly by seeking culturally appropriate ways to support traumatized women and girls. For example, *medica mondiale*, founded in 1993, immediately began efforts to establish community-based centers that provided therapy and counseling. While war and war rape waged on throughout the countryside, *medica mondiale* networked with local health personnel in hospitals and non-governmental agencies (NGOs) to develop strategic, holistic and long-term programs that combined gynecological and psychosocial care with legal counseling. Additionally, they linked these activities to political education in order to raise public awareness about rape at the local and international level. The scope of *medica mondiale's* current analysis is wide ranging as it

expresses seventeen years of working with women and girls who have experienced sexualized violence. From their extensive practice and research, *medica mondiale* argues:

The deliberate destruction of women and girls has grave and often long-term consequences for the physical and mental well-being of the survivors. These consequences include physical and genital injury, sexually transmitted diseases, unwanted pregnancy and acute symptoms of shock, as well as long-term anxiety disorders in connection with flashbacks and severe depressions. In the long run, these symptoms often transform into a variety of physical, psychosomatic and mental disorders from which survivors will suffer for the rest of their lives.

(Hauser, 2009, p. 141)

Research and treatment among women who had been raped during the war was also conducted in neighboring Croatia. Among the first to work with women who had experienced sexual violations during the Bosnian war was a team of psychiatrists at a Zagreb clinic (Kozaric-Kovacic, Folnegovic-Smalc, Skrinjaric, Szajnberg, and Marusic, 1995). They offered free psychotherapeutic treatment to the first 25 Bosnian and Croatian women who sought assistance from their gynecological/obstetrical center. Kozaric-Kovacic et al. (1995) reported that most of the women they treated had endured multiple psychiatric traumas which made specific evaluation about rape trauma difficult to untangle. A constellation of symptoms coupled with the cultural stigma associated with rape contributed to the challenge of getting a “true” assessment. Kozaric-Kovacic et al. (1995) concluded that it might not be possible or even desirable to separate raped women from the rest of traumatized society during treatment.

Despite the entanglement of war rape with other traumatic events, studies analyzing these long term consequences continued to emerge from within the former Yugoslavia. For example, Loncar, Medved, Jovanovic & Hotujac (2006) used both the testimony method and a written questionnaire to obtain descriptions of 68 women who had been raped during the war. Women's self-report of symptoms collected during the study included how they felt immediately after the rape as well as how they currently felt. Results of this study indicated that, "Forty-four women were raped more than once, twenty-one were raped every day during their captivity, and eighteen were forced to witness rapes. Most of the rapes (n=65) were accompanied by physical torture" (p. 67). Although none of the women reported that they had a psychiatric history prior to rape, at the time of Loncar et al.'s (2006) study a very high percentage of women suffered from depression, social phobia, and PTSD. A consistent finding among these studies indicates that war rape has serious immediate and long term consequences on the mental health of women and their interpersonal functioning. Women who were raped during the war suffered multiple physical and psychological traumas. If Kozaric-Kovacic et al.'s (1995) earlier analysis is correct, the complex, multiple traumatizations of these women will not be addressed by classic PTSD diagnostics or treatments. Instead, a more integrated ecological approach that includes personal, situational, and socio-cultural factors must be considered (Harvey, 1996; Heise, 1998).

Bosnian Refugees

Refugees who are forced to relocate in another country do not simply contend with the violations they absorbed during the war. They face an often stressful adjustment to a new society with its varied language, expectations, customs and cultural values. A number of studies among Bosnian refugees (Durakovic-Belko, Kulenovic, & Dapic, 2003; Plante, Simicic,

Andersen, & Manuel, 2002; Hynes & Carsozo, 2000) characterize the initial stage of relocating as including the psychological stressors associated with recent or continued traumatization, economic plight, housing difficulty, social isolation, unemployment and family instability. In their study of displaced Bosnians who had been living in Italian refugee camps for over three years, clinical psychologists/psychiatrists Favaro, Mairoani, Colombo, & Santonastaso (1999) found these individuals at continued high risk for trauma related psychiatric disorders. Specific factors such as gender, marital status, level of education, and separation from family significantly affected the psychological status of the individuals they interviewed. Additionally, Spasojevic, Heffer, and Snyder's (2000) analysis of 40 Bosnian refugee couples living in the United States concluded that war trauma experiences, along with culture shock, adaptation, and integration into the United States, made refugee populations especially susceptible to mental health problems.

Qualitative Research among Bosnian Refugees: Testimony

Among the first qualitative analyses done among Bosnian refugees in the United States was a case study series that examined the efficacy of utilizing testimonials as a therapeutic intervention with Bosnian Muslim refugees. In their work, psychiatrists and trauma scholars Weine and Laub (1995) analyzed testimonies of newly arrived Bosnian refugees over the course of two years under the auspices of the Bosnian Refugee Trauma Program at Yale University. Their interdisciplinary team clinically assessed refugees and also provided opportunities for them to give testimony of their war experiences. Two common themes in these testimonies were "betrayal" and the "shattering of trust". Individuals had been attacked by family members, neighbors, best friends, and business partners. Their experience of harm and violation had not been done by the hands of strangers, but by people whom they had trusted. Ethnic cleansing

strategies that targeted these Muslims were not meant to just murder the physical body of individuals, but to “annihilate the intra-psychic structures of self, identity, connectedness, and the psychosocial structures of family, marriage, community, ethnicity, and nationality” (Weine & Laub, 1995, p. 252). These tactics also aimed to destroy a shared sense of multi-ethnic communality by generating enough fear so that people would flee their homes and wish to never return.

In an initial study among refugees who had resettled in Illinois, Weine, Kulenovic, Pavkovic, and Gibbons (1998) examined the testimonies of 20 Bosnians who underwent an average of six psychotherapeutic sessions. Prior to treatment, subjects had completed standardized instruments for PTSD, traumatic events, global functioning, and psychiatric history. Post-treatment assessments were given at the conclusion of the program, and at 2- and 6-month follow ups. Results revealed a significant decrease in the rate of PTSD diagnosis and PTSD symptom severity. Depressive symptoms also decreased. Weine et al. (1998b) concluded that the use of testimony psychotherapy led to improvement in psychiatric symptoms as well as social functioning.

The testimony method that Weine et al. (1998b) adopted was influenced by Agger and Jenson’s approach (1990, 1996) in their work with political and sexual violence exiles, as well as Felman and Laub (1992) and Langer (1991) who used recorded Holocaust testimonial evidence to analyze survivors’ experiences. The focus of testimony psychotherapy is different from traditional treatment approaches to PTSD which typically focuses on deactivating fear and helping individuals regain a sense of control in their lives. Driven by the theory that individual trauma and collective trauma are inter-related, testimony method is “said to work through narration of a new social context in which their remembrances can be used to develop new

collective understandings of history and community identity that can better support peace and social trust” (Weine et al., 1998b, p. 1721). Weine et al. (1998b) sought to create a different kind of psychosocial environment that would enable survivors to understand their memories within a wider political and historical context. What distinguishes testimony from other forms of therapy is its social relevance. “Its explicit aims are to move the trauma story outside of the narrowing prisms of individual psychopathology and the psychotherapeutic dyad and to reframe the survivor’s story in the social and historical context where the etiologic factor of state-sponsored violence originally took place” (p. 1725). By helping individuals see themselves in a larger narrative, a goal of the testimony method is to validate war survivors’ experiences, while also helping to support each individual’s struggle to recollect, communicate, and begin to make meaning about what it meant to survive the political violence of the war. Survivors may benefit by seeing how personal traumatic events are part of a much wider systematic pattern of violence (Weine et al., 1998b).

Weine et al.’s (1998b) adapted testimony model yielded positive results for the refugees as well as for the researchers. The use of qualitative methods provided researchers more flexibility in exploring and addressing the psychological needs within the refugee community in less constricted ways. Following the study discussed above, Weine continued to do extensive work among Bosnian refugees through the *Project on Genocide, Psychiatry and Witnessing* (PGPW) in collaboration with Heartland Alliance, in Chicago, Illinois. The PGPW team provided a specialized mental health multi-service approach that included crisis intervention, individual psychotherapy, cognitive behavior therapy, group psychotherapy, psychopharmacology, creative arts therapies, play therapy, and marital and family therapies (Weine, 2000). Influenced by the work of Holocaust survivors and psychiatrists/psychologists

Bettelheim, Krystal, and Laub, PGPW focused on narration, remembrances, reconstruction of narratives, identity, meaning and truth. For several years PGPW continued to test the relevancy of various psycho-therapeutic strategies within the Bosnian population. According to Weine (2000), the testimony model was particularly helpful because through it, the PGPW team was able to glean a rich understanding of the socio-cultural life of Bosnians, as well as the on-going sufferings within the community (Weine, 2000).

Qualitative Research among Bosnian Refugees: Families

Another way in which treatment of Bosnian refugees began to shift towards a more qualitative approach is illustrated by Weine's orientation to the Bosnian family as a site for recovery and healing. As previously mentioned, his Chicago-based team had already adopted the testimony method as a counter strategy to the dominant PTSD paradigm. Their focus had been to emphasize the psycho-historical framework of mental health care while also trying to circumvent Bosnian's general reluctance towards traditional psychological services. The individual testimonies they gathered shed light on collective experience and memory. However, this attempt at a culturally sensitive approach to mental health care only generated moderate success; refugees continued to experience immense distress despite these interventions. During this research phase, Weine (1999) observed that "the shattering of trust, so common in traumatized individuals, families, and communities, [was] pervasive in Bosnians" (p. 166). Because of the level of betrayal that Bosnians experienced during the war, alterations in their ability to experience safety and trust had significantly affected their abilities to develop secure attachments which are necessary for trauma healing (Herman, 1992). As a result, symptomatic levels of traumatic stress remained high for many refugees and their families. Weine (2000)

eventually began to believe that they had skipped over the most important aspect of Bosnian life: the family.

Because the family sits at the center of Bosnian culture, Weine (2000) believed it could become a strong resource in helping individuals to cope with the residual pressures of war and displacement. For refugees who had been severed from their former homes and communities, the family was the only remaining social institution. As such, Weine (2000) concluded that the family played a major role in shaping how survivors understood and coped with their experiences. He also realized that individual family members and the family as a unit had been traumatized:

For the most part, these are families in which every individual family member has been exposed to traumatization, though with substantial heterogeneity (e.g. fathers in concentration camps, mother and children fleeing across the countryside, men in combat, women being raped). Bosnian families are likely to be affected by one or more members who are suffering from mental health consequences. (n/p)

Weine's PGPW team (2000) concluded that if they wanted to address the mental health needs of survivors, their interventions would need to meet the real world conditions of the survivors' families. For the next several years new questions and considerations emerged regarding how the family unit shaped individual family members' experiences as well as how the individual family member shaped the family unit's experiences. These researchers began to explore family vulnerabilities and their strengths. They sought ways to support the natural resiliencies of families while also strengthening their capacities (Weine et al., 2004; Weine et al., 2005).

Between 1993-1999, Chicago, Illinois became home to one of the largest communities of Bosnian refugees in the United States (Smajkic, 1999). As such, a significant body of research and analysis emerged from the approximate 21,000 individuals who were resettled there. During the same timeframe that PGPW's work evolved among Bosnian refugees, Miller et al. (2002b) also developed clinical treatment strategies through The Bosnian Mental Health Program and the Refugee Mental Health Programs. For one qualitative study, Miller et al. (2002b) created The Refugee Distress and Coping Interview (RDCI). This semi-structured interview approach asked refugee respondents about three primary experiences: their life before the war, their journey of exile, and resettling in Chicago, Illinois. Fifteen clients from either the Bosnian Mental Health Program or the Refugee Mental Health Program participated in the project which aimed to identify and analyze exile-related stressors. Some of the strongest sources of exile-related distress included feelings of social isolation, being separated from family, the experience of severance or being uprooted from community, the loss of meaningful life projects, and poverty. Miller et al. (2002b) attributed their ability to successfully glean salient descriptors of refugee distress to the method of semi-structured interviews. Open ended questions allowed participants to identify and to explore "the ways in which prior war experiences and ongoing stressors associated with life in exile continued to exert their influence" (p. 315). Until this research project, only a fraction of the exile-related stressors that Miller et al. (2002b) identified had been given attention. As a result of their findings, these researchers began to consider different treatment strategies. They suggested a more comprehensive and integrative community-based program that would focus on reducing isolation through the development of social networks, foster ways their clients could gain environmental mastery in order to more effectively utilize

local resources, and emphasize the identification and creation of meaningful relationships and new life projects.

Qualitative Research among Bosnian Refugees: Identity and Discordance

While exploratory and culturally sensitizing qualitative research was evolving among individuals and families within the Bosnian community in the United States, narrative research among Bosnian refugees in other countries of resettlement was also emerging. For example, Colic-Peisker and Walker (2003) interviewed 60 refugees residing in Perth and Sydney, Australia to explore the processes of acculturation and identity reconstruction among refugees who had been forced to migrate. These researchers examined the specific ways personal identity had been impacted by the war due to the loss of communities, jobs, skills, language, and culture. They observed that the process of acculturation and the reconstruction of shattered identities remained difficult for the refugees in their study. They stated, “In the process of forced migration, people can lose everything that represented and anchored their social identities, leaving them temporarily reduced to just their physical selves” (p. 341). Colic-Peisker and Walker (2003) argued that without language and much personal agency, refugees felt consigned to simply being a body in their new environ. Their analysis indicated that societal, structural, and group factors determined refugee acculturation and the re-building of their identities. Colic-Peisker and Walker (2003) concluded that regardless of the human capacity or capital of an individual (e.g. their prior education, professional training, personal skill-sets), the context or landscape (host country/community) of where refugee identities are attempting to be reframed, can play a significant role in the impediment or success of the complex and challenging process of acculturation. Refugees have little control over social structures and social processes such as

language and cultural barriers, levels of prejudice and discrimination, and whether or not skills (prior certifications) are recognized. As such, these structures can either recognize or invalidate refugees' human capital. In conclusion, Colic-Peikser and Walker (2003) analysis revealed that "the influence of the receptivity of the host society has a significant impact on the processes of identity and acculturation in Bosnian refugees" (p. 357).

Another example of narrative analysis comes from violence prevention scholars Berman, Giron, and Marroquin (2006) who conducted a narrative study in Canada of refugee women who had experienced violence in the context of war. Using a semi-structured interview guide that encouraged dialogue and reflection, their sample consisted of refugees from Bosnia, Guatemala, El Salvador and Chile. All of the women had experienced direct and indirect exposure to violence. During their interviews, they "thoughtfully and sensitively" shared stories about how these traumatic war events had shaped their lives, about their efforts to re-establish their identities as refugees, and about the ways they attempted to secure their families in a new and unfamiliar country.

Similar to the women in my study, Berman et al.'s (2006) research participants described how they had lost their family, friends, and their sense of community. They, too, felt uprooted, confused and disconnected from their past. A common theme was how their lives had been turned upside down and forever changed. They felt alien and disenfranchised from Canadian culture. To reconstruct a semblance of their past, their "home[s] represented the quintessence of their culture. It is where they preserved customs, habits, and traditional ways of life" (p. 44). Another commonality was the discontent they felt between their present life and their former selves. Prior to the war, some of these women were prominent leaders in the community and held valued careers. Now, as refugees, they were living at near poverty levels, or completely

dependent upon social assistance either because their certification was not recognized or because they lacked language proficiency. Those with non-transferable occupation skills displayed a sense of resignation and were more likely to be isolated in their homes. They described feeling marginalized, secluded, and almost unrecognizable to themselves. Frequently, women in both studies reported a loss of the sense of self and identity; who they had once been was now obscure.

Berman et al. (2006) discussed the beneficial effect of using narrative interviews in their study. Women were relieved and appreciated the opportunity to bear witness to the horrors they had experienced during the war. These researchers felt that inviting women to freely tell their stories opened up the possibility for catharsis or new meaning making. They concluded that refugee women, who live in the margins of society, need a place where they can talk openly and honestly about their experiences. They do not need medication to lessen pain, but rather “social spaces and networks that can sustain the element of struggle and a belief in the possibilities of change” (p. 48).

Recent research conducted by applied sociologists Kokanovic and Stone (2010) is also methodologically similar to my work in Phoenix, Arizona. In a response to the critique against a biomedical approach to refugee mental health, these scholars analyzed the ‘social suffering’ of refugees by exploring the narratives of 20 Bosnian refugees currently residing in Western Australia. Their analysis focused on descriptions of distress that emerged from participants’ narratives. Through the use of story, these researchers found that refugees represented their suffering, not as a separate or unique event that happened in their lives. Rather, their sufferings were related to the experience of radical discordance between their formal lives and their reconstructed lives in Australia. The disruptions in their life histories required them to do

‘biographical work’ in order to retain a coherent view of self. Referencing Riessman (1990) and Hyden’s (1997) previous narrative inquiries, Kokanovic and Stone (2010) observed that individuals sought “to reconcile themselves with the change either by re-evaluating their former identity, by seeking to forge a ‘new self’ or by re-ascribing value to components of identity that existed prior to their illness (in this case ‘suffering’) identity” (p. 353).

In an attempt to offer meaningful research about the marginalized, Kokanovic and Stone’s (2010) analyzed how narratives were told and the content/themes being articulated as a way to more thoroughly investigate the agency and voice of individuals. Similar to the findings in my research, displacement and disorientation were dominant themes in their study. Refugees described the vulnerabilities they felt having been severed from a place of rich and meaningful belonging only to be thrust into a space that was foreign. One participant captured the sense of helplessness by describing “an alien landscape, which [was] rendered ominous by his lack of resources to either negotiate a pathway through or escape from it if need be. Dependent on the fidelity of strangers, he [was] thus uncertain of the landscape and of the guide” (p. 356). As such, his narrative illuminated how exile has the power to dismantle human agency by stripping individuals of protective strength, and rendering them childlike.

The pronounced sense of being alienated from physical space or landscape was also similar between our studies. The wide-open space of Western Australia was radically different from the forested and mountainous environs of Bosnia. Literal and sensual experience of earth was nothing like “home.” To the refugees, Western Australia felt empty. Within that empty space, the absence of people – who can provide emotional reassurance – was especially felt. Refugees who had once been deeply rooted in social/communal relationships, roles, and identities found themselves void of any context and support. Women in my study also noted the

difficulties of having to travel twenty miles across the urban sprawl of Phoenix just to have a cup of coffee with one of their friends. The vastness of space (both in Perth and in Phoenix) created a sense of loneliness and separation that impacted a sense of relational connection and ultimately destabilized a secure sense personal identity.

An additional theme was shared between our two studies: nostalgia for a way of life that had been severed. Estranged from the unique cultural expression and lifestyle of Bosnia, refugees were often reminiscent of the good life they had left behind. Just as Erikson (1976) found in his work among an entire community that had been displaced by a flood, Bosnian refugees now resided in places that had no reference points to render them personally meaningful. It was if forced relocation left them history-less. Who they once were had no relevancy to who they now are. Salient memories of home and longing for the pre-migratory lives is consistently found in studies of refugees (Colic-Peisker, 2005; Miller, et. al., 2002b; Skultans, 2004). For Bosnian refugees residing both in Perth and Phoenix, the discomfort of dislocation, a sense of liminality in the present, and not having a biographical context were causes for a tremendous amount of alienation and emotional suffering.

Conclusion

The empirical research on Bosnian Muslim refugees in this section highlighted both the quantitative and qualitative studies currently available. A chronological and topical review of literature revealed the evolutionary nature of research among Bosnian refugees who experienced traumatic war events and who were also forcibly relocated due to ethnic cleansing. Several studies examined the psychological impact of war and the distresses refugees experienced in exile which included PTSD and MDD. The political implications for research among war-rape

survivors, along with the psychological impact it had on women was also noted. As refugees resettled in the United States, various psychological research methods and foci were explored to enhance cultural sensitivity and relevant intervention strategies. The use of testimonies and narratives, in particular, proved useful because individuals had more freedom to speak outside the strictures of quantified parameters; data became richer and more descriptive of refugee's ongoing distress. Finally, themes in recent studies such as disorientation, dislocation, disrupted lives and radical discordance, were supportive of the findings in my work. This overview offers important insight into ongoing psychological recovery process for resettled Bosnian Muslim refugees and provides pertinent contextual material from which I will draw in my analysis.

Chapter Three

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

For over two years, I have observed and befriended several Bosnian women who have taken post-war refuge in Phoenix, Arizona. I listened to and now write about their stories. These narratives are windows into a history of war, of communal disintegration, and the challenges they face in exile. Their recollections and reflections have given me a glimpse into the ways these women attempt to make sense of the powerful forces that so dramatically interrupted their lives. At the same time, their stories provide a deeper understanding of how their ethnic and religious topographies shape the way they live and understand the world. What was said, and not said – themes and veiled references - mapped the terrain of their war and post-war experiences.

Thousands of Bosnian Muslim women were pushed out of their own homes, neighborhoods and country between 1992-1995. Some now live in the far corners of U.S. margins. Their voices are hidden. Yet, according to Weick (2000), these women continue going about their days “tending, mending, gathering, and strengthening without public praise or notice” (p. 395). They are resilient, having honed specific skills that not only help their families survive, but to thrive in the aftermath of wartime atrocity. Inside their quiet recesses, however, these women hold painful memories of the past. They also hold survivor wisdom, a kind of knowing that only occurs after living beyond a devastating and life-altering event. As I began my study, it was my hope to learn from both – their memories, and their wisdom.

As a way to begin understanding and conceptualizing their war memories and refugee experiences, I approached my interviews through the epistemological filter of feminist standpoint theory. Although it is not a uniform theory, I believe it represents a sensitive and sensitizing

approach to listening for knowledge that has been suppressed, oppressed or perhaps not yet articulated. Since its inception, standpoint theory has incited change and controversy. At the same time, its impact has dramatically shifted scientific thought and the understanding of how knowledge is produced. In the following section, I briefly outline standpoint theory's history and the important ways it integrates the relationship between voice, social location, and knowing.

Standpoint Theory

Standpoint theory developed as a critique of prevailing power systems – in this case, the Social Sciences. Steeped in Enlightenment and Modern assumptions about objectivity and knowledge production, the widespread research paradigm of Positivism had gone largely unchallenged. A cornerstone in this model of inquiry is that universal patterns or truth – “out there” – can be accessed through quantifiable methodologies, as long as the scientist remains value free or detached. Not acknowledged, however, was that these theories, methods, and concepts had been built within a world being studied while it was also being experienced. In other words, the researcher's own constructions of the world were taken for granted and had gone unexamined. “The sociologist...observes, analyzes, explains, and examines as if there is no problem in how that world becomes observable to him” (Smith, 1974, p. 9).

Early feminist empiricists began to call attention to sexist bias implicit in the social science project. Part of their criticism was that universal, essential and quantified patterns identified by Positivism were narrow and only made sense to those inhabiting a “privileged” dominant position in society. Unique or discordant variables were being left out and considered invalid. In this case, it was the lived experiences and concerns of women that had been subjugated, discounted, ignored, and even seen as irrelevant by those who defined what was

considered ‘acceptable’ knowledge (Figueria-McDonough, Netting, & Nichols-Casebolt, 2001; Haraway, 1991). The constricted knowledge being produced, institutionalized and systemized, however, was explained as normative and universal, despite its limited perspective. The danger, as Hartsock (1983) explained it, was that perversity and reality were actually made real because of the dominant group’s power to define terms of “truth” for the community as a whole. Left unchecked were male biases; left unheard were women’s voices.

As demographics within the scientific field (largely dominated by white, western men) began to shift during the 70’s and 80’s and critical theory emerged, the practice and production of knowledge within natural science came under intense scrutiny. Some feminist scholars such as Eichler and Lapointe (1985) attempted to strengthen the Positivist framework by deconstructing its unexamined biases and by adding women into the research samples. Others disagreed arguing that by merely supplementing existing ontological frameworks, the authority of traditional knowledge was simply extended. A feminist objectivity, they claimed instead, would acknowledge that truth is partial, situated, and relational. They pushed a step further by maintaining that not only was the denial of biases and subjectivity unrealistic, it was also undesirable (Bhavnani 2007; Harding, 1993; Hess-Biber, 2007). Within this dialectic and transdisciplinary exchange a unique method of feminist inquiry began to emerge. Central to the evolving discussion were questions surrounding knowing: Who could know? How did they know? And, what is the relationship between knowledge and objectivity?

One epistemological tool recapitulated by feminists to explore how knowledge is produced and controlled, was Marx’s critique of class domination. Gender and class seemed to have parallel socio-political structures; the accrual of benefits and capacity to exploit were intricately linked to those vested with power – the elite or men. Additionally, the marriage of

knowledge and power were an impenetrable means for control. This theory holds that systems and social structure literally frame what can be seen, perceived, and known. Daily experiences limit perspective by constructing a particular understanding of the world. In other words, we see from different vantage points and “what” we see is based upon where we stand. For example, seeing from the top down, is not the same as seeing from the bottom up – an assertion that stands in direct opposition to Positivism’s claims of universality and essentialism. A theory based upon standpoint and situated knowledge emerged from this discussion. As Wylie (2003) explains:

...standpoint analysis is commitment to some form of a situated knowledge thesis; social location systematically shapes and limits what we know, including tacit, experiential knowledge as well as explicit understanding, what we take knowledge to be as well as specific epistemic content. What counts as “social location” is structurally defined. What individuals experience and understand is shaped by their location in a hierarchically structured system of power relations: by the material conditions of their lives, by the relations of production and reproduction that structure their social interactions, and by the conceptual resources they have to represent and interpret these relations. (p. 31)

Feminists such as Haraway (1991), Harding (1987), Hartsock (1983) began to argue for making the lives of marginalized people the “ground” of knowledge. Instead of knowledge being abstracted from history and social life, they believed it was fully suffused within history and social life. Now, knowledge was no longer being perceived as “out there” but instead, inextricable from the experiences of individuals and their communities; it was localized. The subsequent implications for how to conduct research were immense. Former “objects” of study

were now supplanting the traditional role of knowledge producers. Or, as Smith (1974) described it:

If we begin from the world as we actually experience it, it is at least possible to see that we are located and that what we know of the other is conditional upon that location as part of a relation comprehending the other's location also. There are and must be different experiences of the world and different bases of experiences. We must not do away with them by taking advantage of our privileged speaking to construct a sociological version which we then impose upon them as their reality. We may not rewrite the other's world or impose upon it a conceptual framework which extracts from it what fits with ours. Their reality, their varieties of experience must be an unconditional datum. (p. 12)

For Smith, knowledge and its authorship, at the very least, were to be shared between the researcher and subject.

As standpoint theories continued to evolve and define, they were swept into the tide of postmodernism, post structuralism, and post positivism debates during the 80's and 90's. The doors to identify and explore other axes of power were thrown open. But the Marxist critique was no longer a satisfying one for many feminists. Contested were questions about objectivity, difference and the problem of re-universalizing. Even the very definition of "standpoint" became contentious. For some feminists, social location and standpoint did not automatically correlate. Seeing in a particular way did not necessitate understanding the underlying causes of domination/oppression. To them, a standpoint is only achieved when prevailing ideologies are no longer obscured and social analysis and political struggle is born. For others like Harding

(2004), “standpoint” was a prescriptive beginning point; by valuing the experiences of oppressed groups, an “oppositional consciousness” might emerge. Ironically, perhaps, it was an oppositional consciousness within feminism itself that the strongest criticism against standpoint theory surfaced. Black feminists argued against it saying experiences of women were being re-essentialized - as if all women, in all places, shared the same social locations or daily lived experiences. This conundrum began to polarize the conversation.

Hill Collins (1986), an influential feminist thinker, provided pivotal insight to the discussion. She maintained that African American women, for example, were unique because of their “outsider within status.” Adapting Kuhn’s (1962) sociological paradigm, she highlighted the experience of African American women as being socialized or immersed in the cultural patterns of the privileged group: a reality quite different from their everyday lives. She explained that because African American women often lived and negotiated between these two disparate social realities, they possessed insights and adaptive skills that translated into being “inside” the system while maintaining an “outside” perspective. They could understand the dominant “thinking as usual” without ascribing to it. It is their “difference” that generates a sensitivity/awareness to patterns more difficult for insiders to see. hooks (1990) called this the “politics of location”. She understands marginality as an opportunity for resistance rather than imposition. It is in the margins that new insights are gleaned or where knowledge is produced. It is also the place of radical possibility and space where resistance emerges. The consequence of Collins and hooks’ contributions to the on-going conversation in standpoint theory led to a trajectory turn toward difference and identity. A demand for inclusion – particularly of multiple perspectives - reverberated throughout standpoint theory which prompted evolution of thought and expansion of its focus and parameters. These same generative vibrations, however, created

instability within the discourse in ways that ultimately called the whole theory into question within feminist standpoint discourse.

Concerns about intersectionality and the layered and cross-cutting identities of people began to peck away at whether or not it was realistic to assume any substantive body of knowledge could come out of a seemingly relativistic stance. In an almost counter intuitive rejoinder, Haraway (1991) called for an alternative to this critique. She argued for the “epistemology” of subjective location and that “partial, locatable, and critical knowledges hold the possibility of webs of connections called solidarity” (p. 191). Haraway (1991) contended that the empirical claim of objectivity was nothing more than a ‘god trick’ (of seeing everything from nowhere and putting myths into ordinary practice). Instead, she advocated for “partiality” as the source of rational knowledge claims. Bhavani (1993) paraphrases Haraway as asserting that knowing and acknowledging limited locations is what actually creates objectivity. Harding (1993) later coined this notion as “strong objectivity.” To her, a particular location is the starting point for knowledge building because it generates less partial and distorted accounts of all people’s lives. Instead of assuming, as Positivism did, that knowledge must be consistent, coherent, and not culturally specific, standpoint theorists claimed that authors of knowledge were varied, diverse, contradictory, and at times incoherent. As Harding (1993) argued, “The subject of knowledge – the individual and the historically located social community whose unexamined beliefs its members are likely to hold ‘unknowingly’ ... must be considered as part of the object of knowledge” (p. 55). For Haraway (1991) and others, feminist objectivity was situated knowledge.

Beginning in the 90’s, new sets of questions about and within Standpoint Theory continued to emerge on the horizon. For example, should knowledge produced from specific

social locations – or any form of knowledge for that matter – be privileged? Wylie (2003) countered this objection:

The inversion thesis that underpins most forms of feminist standpoint theory suggests that, when standpoint is taken into account, often the epistemic tables are turned. Those who are economically dispossessed, politically oppressed, and socially marginalized and therefore likely to be discredited as epistemic agents – for example, as uneducated, uninformed, unreliable - many actually have a capacity, by virtue of their standpoint, to know things that those occupying privileged positions typically do not know, or are invested in not knowing. This is what equals greater objectivity produced by those who occupy a particular location or standpoint. (p. 32)

Echoing Harding (1993), Wylie maintained that objectivity is only made stronger by maximizing and drawing from the multiple perspectives of knowledge holders. It is not a question of privilege but rather gathering together more dense and complex understandings.

As debates raged between Standpoint theorists, the field was simultaneously influenced by much larger global conversations. According to Longino (1993), by the 90's, feminists, postcolonial and postmodern theorists had “shattered the chimera of unity” and any claim of truth. Post-modernism and Post structuralism’s skepticism with reality seemed at odds with Standpoint Theory’s emphasis on knowledge as situated and “perspectival.” For example, Hekman (1997) contended that asserting privileged and situated knowledge of women as “true” could not be reconciled with the need to acknowledge difference. Standpoint’s theory undermined the very essence of the feminist political agenda:

If we take the multiplicity of feminist standpoints to its logical conclusion, coherent analysis becomes impossible because we have too many axes of analysis. Ultimately, every woman is unique; if we analyze each of her uniqueness, systemic analysis is obviated. So is feminist politics; we lose the ability even to speak for certain categories of women. (p. 359)

While I understand the logic of Hekman's argument, I found Hill Collins (1997) clarification that standpoint emphasizes the "group" as the unit of analysis instructive. Groups who share similar histories often share the same location in relationship to power differentials. Smith (1997) also responded to Hekman's critique contending that there never has been "a" common theoretical or truth position. Standpoint theory is not attempting to justify feminist knowledge. Instead, she argued:

...women's standpoint returns us to the actualities of our lives as we live them in the local particularities of the everyday/everynight worlds in which our bodily being anchors us. It is this knowledge, tacit knowledge that Standpoint Theorists seek to explore. The tacit, which is often "not yet discursively appropriated" may only be known in the doing. (p. 393)

What is underscored here is relevant to my study: standpoint theory takes people's experience as the starting point of knowledge. It represents an important qualitative shift in how research is conducted. By placing value on the importance of non-dominant, non-privileged lives it also aspires to unearth subjugated knowledge from those lives. The margins, not the just the center of society, now have a chance to speak and thereby "produce" knowledge. By seeking out the hidden and silent voices of Bosnian women who quietly go about their day, I am

soliciting their personal experiences and reflections to add wisdom and understanding to the field of trauma and healing.

Because standpoint theory is my epistemological foundation, there are several implications for how I conducted my research in this project. The question of “voice” – perhaps subjugated voice – is a core concern of my research. How would I invite honest expression? What is voice; does it have multiple sounds? When silence speaks, what does it say or how would I know what it means? If, as Standpoint Theory also suggests, knowledge might still be tacit or unarticulated, how would that impact my listening? What if, as Gilligan (1982, Brown & Gilligan, 1992) realized, these women were disassociated from knowing what they know? I wondered how to hear what is indirectly said or perhaps not even known yet. Likewise, I heeded DeVault and Gross’ (2007) caution that researchers must listen “well” to themselves and

maintain reflexive awareness that research relations are never simple encounters, innocent of identities and lines of power, but rather, are always embedded in and shaped by cultural constructions of similarity, difference and significance. (p.

181)

This was particularly important for me. I was stepping into a cultural context different from my own; a world constituted by different language, customs, religious beliefs, and even notions of gender. Additionally, I was attempting to learn about a subject that is considered taboo. To “actively” listen would not be enough. Instead, reflexivity demanded that I constantly interrogate my own assumptions, question what might be considered implied understanding between women, and even confront my beliefs about the healing process. I also needed to regard the space between myself and the women differently. Nothing about me would

be neutral in the interview, from the kind of questions that I asked, to a slightly raised eyebrow in response to a perplexing answer. I entered these interviews knowing that we would co-share the interchange. Beyond what was said or not said, an additional level of subjectivity – or inter-subjectivity – would take place. This process would be dynamic; feelings would shift, questions might redefine, and knowledge (mine and theirs) could unfold during the interview. As standpoint theory suggests, co-authorship inside the inter-subjective space held the possibility for new insight but I understood the process to be a delicate one.

One of my guiding research questions was “How do women give voice to their experience?” Epistemologically, Standpoint theory became the cornerstone for this project. It honors the perspectives of individuals as a beginning point of knowledge. Standpoint theory also influenced my choice for methodology as well as the methods used to obtain my data. In particular, Standpoint’s focus on the need for neglected voices to speak and to be heard shaped and sensitized how I conceived the research process. In the following sections, I describe my design in more detail.

Method Introduction

When I started my research, I attempted to understand how women who had lived through the distresses of war, particularly war rape, made sense of what happened to them. I wanted to learn how they moved forward into their lives; if “healing” was possible, how did it occur and how was it expressed? I hoped to learn from their experiences and situated knowledge. Their standpoints were spaces of complex interconnection: Eastern European, Muslim, Woman, Refugee, and shifting class status - to name a few. In order to learn from these women, I entered their lives, their worlds, and their narratives through participation, personal

interviews and a focus group. Becoming part of communal celebrations and rituals gave me a chance to gain a more global understanding of their lives. If my only experience with each woman had been a two or three hour interview focusing on war and exile, my perceptions would have ended up being extremely skewed. All I would have known were their war survivor identities. Seeing them dance, sing, cook, engage in family life, and participate during communal prayers added a significant and important dimension to my analysis. Yet, the interviews I conducted were rich and dense. Each woman told her story differently. Some women were eloquent and dramatic - telling tales of heroism or tragedy. Others spoke in stammered starts and stops. For them, their stories were too difficult to access straightforwardly. Instead, they began with an “easy” episode before slipping backwards into painful memory. I also facilitated a Focus Group in which I observed women co-developing narratives. I was able to study how women interacted, exchanged, defended, argued, and collectively shaped the meanings and interpretations of their stories. These conversations were extremely lively and also revealed important social and cultural information.

What surfaced in my data was complex. Because of its breadth and dimension, I did not think it could be fully understood through a uniform analytical process. To gain deeper insight, I used a hybrid model for my narrative analysis: grounded theory and voice centered relational method. Although each approach is unique, they both hold a common and consistent foundation: women’s standpoints and social locations are acknowledged, their narratives serve as the data, and insights or developing theory come explicitly from their voices. Before proceeding into a description of my analysis process, I first describe my method of data collection.

Collecting Empirical Data

Introduction into the Community

Prior to embarking on my project I believed it was important to investigate whether or not the community would welcome or benefit from my research. My initial contact was through Elma Dzanic, a Bosnian student who took my *Globalization of Human Rights* course at Arizona State University. She had previously introduced me to her family in 2006. They were among the first group of approximately 7,000 Bosnian refugees who were settled by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) in Phoenix between 1992-1996. As committed Bosnian activists, they worked closely with the IRC and their home became a hub for several transitioning refugee families. Now that the Dzanic's have repatriated and the post-war migration has settled, they continue to play a pivotal cultural role in the community by organizing Bosnian festivals and musical events.

After my thesis proposal was accepted at the University of Cape Town, I began by spending time at the Dzanic's kitchen table drinking coffee with them, and asking for their reflections. Mirsad and Azra (Elma's parents) were enormously grateful that someone would want to learn more about what happened to them. Unfortunately, it was their experience that no one in the United States seemed to know anything about the Bosnian war; worse, the world community had forgotten their plight. After these initial conversations, they wisely guided and arranged for me to meet with two influential and knowledgeable people who had access to the Bosnian refugees in Phoenix: Dr. Esad Boskailo and Hodza Sabahudin Ceman. Both men agreed to be interviewed by me and serve as consultants to my research. They also gave me permission to use their real names.

Dr. Boskailo is a Bosnian refugee who currently works with PTSD patients at a Behavioral Health unit in Phoenix. Prior to the war he was a general practitioner in Bosnia for over a decade. During the war he was captured while working on a medical team and subsequently survived ten concentration camps. Upon release he worked with “Doctors without Borders” in refugee camps throughout Croatia before seeking asylum in Chicago. While going through the U.S. process of medical re-certification, he provided psychological treatment at Chicago Health Outreach for several different refugee populations, but more specifically Bosnians who were exiled because of the war. He moved to Phoenix to finish his residency; the focus of his current practice is treating trauma survivors who have manifested PTSD – specifically U.S. Afghanistan and Iraq military veterans, police officers who have witnessed or survived violence, and war refugees.

When we met, my objectives were to assess how realistic and appropriate it would be to identify or interview war-rape survivors. I also hoped to learn from his wisdom and expertise in the trauma field. Dr. Boskailo shared with me that in his fifteen years of working within the Bosnian post-war community, only one woman had ever said the word “rape” and even then, it was tucked inside a cursory comment. He did not believe I would have much success eliciting vocalized memories about rape. Instead, Dr. Boskailo encouraged me to broaden the parameters of my research and listen to stories of the multiple traumas these women had suffered. Rape was only one of many violations they experienced. This advice was not only helpful but accurate. By the time I had interviewed three women, his analysis was confirmed; I knew it would be important for me to broaden my focus as he had suggested. The agenda of the women in my study did not match the intention of my original inquiry. Although several of the women did tell me that they (or an immediate family member) had been raped during the war, they were more

focused on describing the multitude of hardships and violence they had endured. Dr. Boskailo's tutelage served as an important foundation for my study. His guidance helped me re-orient my vision and adapt to the specific needs of the refugee population here in Phoenix.

Hodza (Imam) Sabahudin Ceman is the religious leader of the only Bosnian mosque in the greater Phoenix area. The Islamic Center of North Phoenix serves as the centering point for their refugee community. The Dzanic's felt that receiving his blessing was critical. They organized my first meeting with him and also arranged for a devout, well-respected woman (Aida Slomic) to accompany me and serve as a cultural interlocutor. Although Sabahudin is fluent in English, the two of them spoke for several minutes in Bosnian before he turned and addressed me. I briefly introduced my research idea and explained why studying the challenges women face in the aftermath of war-rape was personally important to me. Once I concluded, I asked for his guidance, wisdom, and ultimately, his blessing. At the end of our discussion, Sabahudin and Aida spoke again in Bosnian. We departed without an invitation or conclusion. She explained to me on the way home that he was very cautious about my project. However, he felt concern about the significant injury and pain that continued to plague their community. The Hodza held a hope that perhaps, if women began sharing their stories with me and with each other, healing might take place. He was going to consider my proposal and also elicit feedback from other members of the Center. The next week, Sabahudin called and invited me to speak at a community-wide event at the mosque; approximately 150 people attended. After explaining to the audience why I wanted to learn from their experiences, I passed out information leaflets and invited women to contact me if they were willing to participate in my study. None of my participants called me directly. Instead they worked through Azra, Elma or Aida to set up an appointment.

Initially, I began data gathering by interviewing individuals who attended my presentation at the mosque. In all my formal and informal presentations, I had been clear that my focus was on war rape and the process of healing. When women offered to be interviewed, I chose not to “screen” them by asking directly if they had been raped. Instead, I trusted in their need or desire to give voice to their war experience regardless of whether or not they had been literally raped. The first wave of interviews was a form of intensity sampling (Patton, 2001). Understandably, many women were reluctant to step forward. However over time and as trust developed, women contacted other women who they knew had gone through similar experiences. I began to meet women through these mutual associations which generated a “snowball” effect (Creswell, 2002) in my sampling. When I began to notice patterns emerging through the Grounded Theory coding process, I also re-interviewed four women as my theoretical sample (Charmaz, 2000).

Participants

A total of nineteen women participated in the study. The following demographic chart (Figure 1) gives their age, where their homes were at the time war broke out in 1992 (and if it is now located in the Republika of Srpska), their educational level, current occupation, when they left Bosnia, and the refugee/exile journey they took upon expulsion from their communities.

Figure 1: Demographics of Participants

Name	Age	City	Education	Occupation	Left Bosnia route to U.S.
Amila	21	Prijedor; Republika Srpska	*M.A.	Student	1992, Croatia, Germany, U.S.
Enisa	82	Banja Luka; Republika Srpska	8 th Grade		1997, Croatia, U.S.
Naida	24	Sarajevo	*B.A.	Student	1992, Croatia, Germany, U.S.
Nastja	23	Derveta; Republika Srpska	*B.A.	Student	1992, Croatia, Germany, U.S.
Merita	42	Doboj; Republika Srpska	H.S.	Office Administrator	1993, Croatia, Germany, U.S.
Mujesira	73	Doboj; Republika Srpska	Associates		1998, Croatia, U.S.
Azra	52	Banja Luka; Republika Srpska	Associates	Elderly Care	1993, Croatia, U.S.
Elma	25	Banja Luka; Republika Srpska	*M.A.	Teacher	1993, Croatia, U.S.
Naida	48	Doboj; Republika Srpska	H.S.	Restaurant owner	1993, Croatia, U.S.
Mirzada	19	Teslic; Republika Srpska	*Associates	Student	2001, U.S.
Mirveta	58	Banja Luka; Republika Srpska	B.A.	Health Care	1996, U.S.
Ada	19	Sarajevo	*B.A.	Student	1992, Croatia, Germany, U.S.
Mera	80	Sarajevo	8 th Grade		1997, U.S.
Fatima	72	Banja Luka; Republika Srpska	8 th Grade		1993, Croatia, Germany
Envera	49	Sarajevo	Associates	Accountant	1993, Croatia, U.S.
Sabina	52	Sarajevo	Associates	Paralegal	1993, Croatia, Germany, U.S.
Adevija	71	Banja Luka; Republika Srpska	8 th Grade		1996, Croatia, Germany, U.S.
Aida S.	53	Prijedor; Republika Srpska	Associates	Accountant	1993, Croatia, U.S.
Aida Z.	36	Doboj, Republika Srpska	B.A.	Nurse	1995, Croatia, U.S.

*Currently working on the degree

My interviews stratified across three distinct age-groups. In my data sample this meant: 6 young adults (18-25), 8 middle age women (36-58), 5 grandmothers (71-82). Most of my research participants had left Bosnia fourteen years ago. Their ages and stages in life have radically shifted since the war. For example, young mothers who carried the burden of getting their little ones out of Bosnia alive have watched their now grown children head out the door for college or into the workplace. Because the ages had such a broad range both then and now, I was able to develop a rich and cohesive trans-generational narrative. By interlocking the unique social and familial standpoints of women, much like a jigsaw puzzle, I gleaned a more holistic picture of their individual and collective experiences. The stories they told about the war were reflective of their ages and stages of life during that time. For example, grown daughters talked about being little girls. They also remembered the behaviors and attitudes of their younger mothers during that time period. Likewise, many of the now middle aged mothers talked about losing the support of their husbands and the fear of keeping their little children safe. Since war history had shaped who they are, women also talked about how war experiences were currently impacting their lives. Like a metronome, their narratives swung back and before between then and now. I believe the shifting lens and overlay of these various perspectives added dimension and richness to my data description.

Data Gathering Methods

Figure 2: Data Gathering Methods

Type of Method	Number of Participants	Average Hours
Individual Interviews	16	1.5
Post Axial Coding: Individual Interviews	4	2
Intergenerational Interview	3	3
Focus Group	6	6

Note: All but two members of the Intergenerational Interview and one member from the Focus Group participated in the Individual Interview.

Focus Group

I began my data collection by facilitating a Focus Group which consisted of six Bosnian women. We met on two different occasions, November 12, 2008 and February 17, 2009. Each session lasted approximately 3 hours. Initially, the reason I chose to use a Focus Group was to survey general opinions, elicit support, and to develop a network within the community. I had also hoped to garner wisdom and suggestions from several “key” community leaders in how to conduct personal interviews on a subject that was considered private or taboo. To my surprise, the six women who participated in my Focus Group became more than just a source of networking or purveyor of culture. They also became my friends. The richness and spontaneity of their conversations uncovered some of my unexamined assumptions – specifically my Western Christianized bias. By observing these women talk to each other, I learned important cultural cues and how gendered space is negotiated. I came to understand, more deeply, what these women were comfortable talking about with each other, and why. For example, topics such as wartime experiences, sexuality, marriage, were not openly discussed. In the months that followed, all but one of the women also participated in an individual interview.

The protocol I developed in the Focus Group was different from how I engaged women during individual interviews. The question format was much less structured. I was as interested in *what* happened when women spoke as in their individual answers. Instead of interviewing, I chose to create an opportunity for dialogue. My primary tasks were to ask general questions, reframe, reflect, ask for clarification, and draw quieter people out. I believe the process was particularly powerful because of what happened *between* these women. As the analysis will show, the strains of history impacted each woman deeply, but differently. At times, they vehemently disagreed with each other’s assigned meanings and perspectives. Tension and

conflict quickly surfaced. Although I trust the sincerity of every woman who allowed me to individually interview them, there was a different kind of honesty and accountability that emerged through this collective process. I think the women learned a lot about themselves and about each other because the process was so dynamic. Although it was difficult to logistically administrate such a focus group, the data and insights it provided were invaluable. The following is a list of my protocol themes and questions for each Focus Group.

Focus Group #1: Theme – impact of war on women’s lives

- Could you describe what Bosnian women went through during the war?
- How did the war impact their lives? Exploration. How did it impact your life?
- Were women specifically targeted during the war – if so, why? Exploration. Do you believe you were targeted?
- How were women’s experiences of the war the same or different from men’s experiences?
- What feelings or memories, if any, do you still carry about what happened to you during the war?
- Do you think healing is possible? Exploration. What does healing mean?

Focus Group #2: Theme – shame and honor

- When something difficult or sad happens in your life, who do you share those feelings with? Exploration. How is intimacy, and/or vulnerability expressed or how are those needs met?
- Do you feel permission to tell other people what happened to you during the war? Explain.
- Is it a cultural or religious expectation to remain silent about the offenses that occurred during the war? If so why?

- Follow up: Why is there so much silence? Exploration. Shame, patriarchy, gender roles, family violence

Individual Interviews

Between January 5, 2009 and April 2010 I conducted sixteen individual interviews and five follow-up interviews. Interviewing these women to learn more about their war-time experiences was central to my data collection. As previously mentioned, I chose this method to understand, from their point of view, how the war had impacted their lives. Although my research concern was to explore strategies of healing in the aftermath of war-rape, I felt it was important to remain flexible. Because my personal knowledge was limited, I wanted women's stories to teach me what they considered "most" important in their war/post-war journeys. Utilizing a semi-structured approach to interviewing provided the kind of flexibility I needed to remain sensitive to their needs and interests. I used a protocol of six to eight guiding questions but maintained a vision that together we would share the direction of our conversation.

The following is a list of my initial guiding questions:

- Could you tell me about a powerful memory of something you witnessed during the war?
- Can you tell me about an experience that was difficult for you during the war?
- After these experiences, what did you do? Did you share what happened with your family, friends, or other women? Why or why not?
- Can you tell me about when you left Bosnian? Why did you leave, what was going on around you, where did you go?

- What role, if any, has Islam played in how you've made sense of the war's impact on you and/or your family? How did you come to understand what happened to you? Why did it happen?
- How did the war effect your life?
- What do you find most meaningful or positive in being here in Phoenix? Most difficult? Do you feel there are support systems in Phoenix for refugee women from Bosnia? Do you wish there were? If so, what would support look like?

When I began to code and analyze data, additional questions were added to test the emerging concepts. These are examples of additional questions raised during theoretical sampling:

- How did the war effect your husband and your children? Can you give me an example? How did it impact your relationship with them?
- When you were escaping the war and trying to establish a new life, what were your greatest concerns?
- What does it mean to be a "good" or "respectable" Bosnian woman? How do you think this understanding might have shaped your choices and behaviors during and after the war?

Each participant chose the location and time of their interview. All of the middle age women and grandmothers (known as majkas to their loved ones and to be referred to as "majkas" in this dissertation) invited me into their homes. College students tended to meet with me in local coffee shops or other informal settings. Each interview lasted approximately 1.5 hours. I recorded and transcribed all of the interviews.

Intergenerational Interview

When I arrived for my pre-established appointment with a majka, I was surprised to find that she had also invited her daughter and granddaughter to our interview. Out of courtesy, I adapted accordingly and shifted the questions to include multiple voices and perspectives. This spontaneous opportunity allowed me to observe a family's interactions around culturally sensitive subjects. The dynamics and their interactions with each other were very different from the Focus Group; there seemed to be more constraints. It is my observation that the women in the Intergenerational Interview were less willing to engage each other directly or to challenge differing opinions about the issues raised by my interview questions. Sometimes three different conversations were going on at the same time. They were not so much having a conversation with each other as they were talking specifically to me. Even as an experienced facilitator, these dynamics challenged my skills; it was quite chaotic. I conducted a follow up individual interview with the granddaughter (age 37) because, as a trained nurse, she offered a unique perspective; she "remembers" and currently reflects through a medical model. Her insights were invaluable to me. The length of time for the Intergeneration Interview was 3 hours. It was also tape recorded and transcribed by me.

Participant Observation

Foundational to my research was the acquisition of knowledge regarding the distinctive "cultural" characteristics within the Phoenix Diaspora. In an attempt to dispel quick stereotypes of a culture or group of people, I spent over a year participating and observing a sub-set of approximately 200 members of the Bosnian Diaspora community. I think it is practical to draw some general conclusions about "Bosnians" but very specific distinctions do exist. For example,

a few women commented about the differences between women raised in villages or in the cities (village women were described as more “backwards” and less educated). Those who were religious Muslims as opposed to “ethnic” Muslims had unique characteristics, too. The Muslim/Islamic distinction, in particular, seems to socially divide this community. People were especially quick to offer categorizations or judgments about people who did or did not drink alcohol. I discuss the ways in which Bosnian Muslimness is contested more thoroughly in Chapter Six.

To deepen my understanding of how repatriated Bosnians in Phoenix live, believe, and interact, I attended rituals, social events, and informal gatherings. By participating in community life as a process of inquiry, I attempted to develop relationships with these women in a genuine way. As Brown and Gilligan (1992) advocate, I wanted to be collaborative and approach them as authorities of their own experiences. I hoped to share in the everyday lives of women so that they would become “real” to me instead of simply an object for study. Fifteen women invited me into their homes. I met family members, helped prepare and eat Bosnian food, saw how artistic expression and symbols were used as decoration, observed interactions across gender lines, and enjoyed listening to the singing of traditional folk songs. I also made several visits to the mosque and observed communal prayers. On the first Sunday of each month, the mosque extends prayers into a pot-luck dinner. I attended three of these ritual prayers and meal times. Over the course of time, I began to visit people just to visit, listening and laughing as they shared stories from their lives.

While I believe my attempt to develop genuine relationships with these women was fairly successful, there were still several power differentials at play. These included research/subject dynamics and the fact that I speak English as first language while they speak it as a second

language. In spite of these inherent tensions, I tried to make my encounters as relationally equitable as possible, one where the exchange was mutual. For example, I hosted a dinner, which was followed by the second Focus Group, in my own home. Nonetheless, I struggled many times with feelings of voyeurism, and often questioned why I was probing into the most private and intimate spaces of people's lives. I counteracted these concerns by sharing from my own life experiences and pain. To express "woman to woman" became a moral demand; how could I ask anything less of myself for a community slowly opening itself up to me? As a result, data collection was a difficult emotional experience, both for me, and for my participants. Each interaction felt personal because it was personal for everyone involved.

After an interview or key event, I recorded my observations and personal reflections in an audio journal. Observation records also noted non-verbal reactions and environmental or other contextual factors that would not be audible on tape (Morse & Field, 1995). As research progressed, these personal reflections helped support the reflexive nature of my study (Lipson, 1991). They "archived" my evolving learning process. Through them, I was able to observe how my assumptions and awareness shifted over time. I drew from these records during the analysis phase of my research to fill in gaps or to add rich description to the text. Although the data collection phase of my project is finished, I continue meeting with and enjoying these very remarkable women. I am grateful for the unexpected and delightful friendships that have developed.

Translation

All interviews and the Focus Group were conducted by me with the assistance of a bilingual, female Bosnian interpreter (Elma Dzanic). In general, women spoke in English.

However, when emotions escalated (particularly during the Focus Group) it was natural for them to slip into their first language. None of the majkas were fluent in English. They could understand me but had a difficult time expressing themselves in a second language. They answered almost exclusively in Bosnian. Emmel (1998) suggests that the only way to ensure translation accuracy is to use different interpreters to check recording tapes against transcripts. Although each of the women in my study was able to confirm Elma's interpretation, I chose to validate her translations by using a "blind" or secondary interpreter from Arizona State University – Nastja Cigic. She was a teaching assistant in the Language and Literature Department. When there was a discrepancy, I asked them to negotiate the variation (Brislin, 1970).

The more significant differences between what was said and how it was translated took place when a woman spoke for an extended period of time. If they did not take a break, Elma tended to re-state in generalities. To her, it was cumbersome and disruptive to re-iterate word for word, especially if it was an emotional segment of the narrative. This summary mode of interpretation often left out information that would have been lost to me had it not been for a secondary interpreter. As Crabtree and Miller (1999) suggested, having two women assist in the translation of my data allowed interpretation to be tested for consistency and also the use of colloquialisms. Nastja's deliberate and verbatim translations filled in valuable "tidbits" of information, many of which were very descriptive. The off-the-cuff comments or social idioms that passed between Elma and the interviewees added rich color and dimension to the narratives.

A summary translation is just one reason why using a translator in a research project can be problematic. Another tension is that because the translator essentially interprets the voices of those who speak, another layer of subjectivity is added. Additionally, their literal presence might

challenge the ethics of confidentiality or potentially threaten the psychological safety of those being interviewed. Because the theme of my research was sensitive and deeply personal, I took all of these considerations into account prior to planning my methodological design and approach. An obvious dilemma was that if I did not use a translator, whose voices would be lost? Most certainly, the entire sub-section of older women could not have been included in my data set because I lacked facility in Bosnian language. I came to the conclusion that my research goals outweighed the aforementioned concerns. There had already been too many losses in these women's lives for the lessons within their stories to be additionally lost.

What I did not anticipate, however, were the cultural barriers that I would have encountered had I not utilized an interpreter. Regardless of their English language facility, all of the women wanted Elma to attend their interviews. They felt more assured by her presence because they knew her. Since Elma's family played such a pivotal role in the re-settlement process of Bosnian refugees in the greater Phoenix area, over the years all of these women had been in and out of her home. They have watched her grow up (or grew up alongside her) and they trusted her. Equally important was the kind of support she gave to me. Because Elma spent her adolescent years in the United States, she possesses an understanding of both cultures. She was able to build linguistic and social bridges between me and each woman. For example, if I asked a question during the interview that Elma did not think the participant understood, she would immediately advise me. Her interpretations ended up being bi-directional and helped generate critical knowledge that I would have missed without her cues.

Ethical Considerations

Kvale (2007) asserts that ethical considerations imbue the entire research project. First, researchers must ask whether or not the theme of study will improve knowledge and practice in the field. Concern about project design raises questions such as how will consent be informed and confidentiality maintained? Or, how might the process of data collection impact the subjects? Additionally, careful consideration must be given to the transcription process, the translation debate, and whether or not modes of analysis adequately represent the perspectives of participants. For example, how will the interviews be reported? This concern especially raises the issue of voice: whose and which voice will ultimately be heard? Finally, how knowledge is validated and verified also has ethical implications.

With the exception of confidentiality and consent, as well as the potential psychological impact on the women, these questions and concerns have already been addressed in this chapter. To summarize, I verified with the community that the theme of my study was relevant to them. The Hodza, in particular, felt my research might itself begin a healing process in their community. All interviews were based upon voluntary participation. In my attempt to address the ethical considerations of the interview practice, during information meetings and public presentations, I explained the protocol, described some of the questions, and shared my vision for the project. Before each interview began, I re-explained to the participant the nature of my study and the kinds of questions I would be asking. I gave them a Confidentiality Consent form to read and sign if they agreed to the interview. Because English is a second language for a majority of the women, I also read it out loud. Elma translated the form into Bosnian for the older women. (See Appendix #3 for Confidentiality Agreement.) In order to protect privacy and confidentiality, all but one woman gave me permission to use their first names and the first initial

of their surname. Each woman chose the location of their interviews. I wanted them to define interview space in a way that made them feel most secure. Some of the women felt more comfortable having family members nearby, while others seemed at ease being completely alone with me during the interview.

In my experience, interviewing women who have survived seriously traumatic events requires even more serious consideration as the ethical implications run deep. My questions could lead them back into feelings of shame, fear and suffering. To remember might create emotional distress or even re-traumatization. In preparation for this possibility, I developed a network of professional/psychiatric professionals who were willing to assist me. However, once the interviews began, I quickly learned that most of the women were apprehensive about mental health and psychological services. As a way to remain sensitive to their cultural and spiritual practices, I identified and located three women who serve as informal leaders at The Islamic Center of North Phoenix. They were very supportive and offered to listen to or pray with the women I interviewed.

My most fundamental ethical consideration was shaped by Gilligan (cited in Kiegelmann, 2009). Her conception of the ethic of research is relational – one that involves respect, honesty, and not betraying a person's trust. At the same time, it is an attitude or an intention of reciprocity; that together with our "subjects," we join into a process of discovery. To experience relationship with the women in my study meant sharing my life with them, to meet them as a woman, not simply a researcher. In terms of my specific research objectives, it also meant that I needed to stay open and flexible. I had to be willing to give up control over the outcome of my study. I needed to be willing to change directions or move in a direction that I had not anticipated if that is what honoring their narratives required.

Methodology 1: Grounded Theory

Grounded theory was the first theoretical approach I employed in my data analysis. By following its steps, I remained focused on the voices and perspectives of each woman, and a theory emerged. In this next section, I briefly describe the history of grounded theory and how it was used as a starting point for the analysis of my research. Although I will be more explicit in Chapter Four, the grounded theory approach used in this project was a hybrid model. I used the constant comparison procedures of Glaser and Strauss (1967), remained open to the generalities of coding and labeling (Glaser 1978), but also explored concepts reflecting the social psychological focus of the women's narratives (Charmaz, 2000; Clarke, 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In the next chapter, I more thoroughly illustrate the application of grounded theory to my specific data set.

Grounded theory is exactly that; a theory discovered through the systematic obtaining and analysis of data. The "ground" is the data itself. In my project, the women's narratives served as that ground. Through a highly structured and constantly comparative analytic method, theory is generated. Theory making is the process of analysis and it is the outcome of analysis. Glaser and Strauss (1967) developed Grounded Theory methodology as a response to their dissatisfaction in using purely positivistic approaches while trying to understand the concept and process of dying. The strictures of quantifiable research hindered rich and dense analysis about people's experiences and feelings. Although the two men came from different philosophic and research traditions, the techniques and procedures they co-developed can be adapted to fit a variety of epistemological and methodological frameworks. From his training at Columbia, Glaser proffered the systematic approach of positivism. Strauss, influenced by the Chicago School, integrated field research and symbolic interactionism into the methodology. Together

they laid a foundation that has since been adopted into several disciplines such as nursing practices (Benoliel, 1996), family studies (Rose, Mallinson, & Walton-Moss, 2002), trauma healing (Draucker & Martsof, 2008) and feminist research (Kearney, Murphy, Irwin, & Rosenbaum, 1995).

Fundamental to grounded theory is an attempt to understand the complexities of people's lived experiences within a particular social context. Grounded theory analyzes social relationships and the ways individuals understand and bring meaning to their realities. According to Glaser (1978) people are particularly sensitive to how structural and environmental shifts impact social processes. Political dynamics or religious rhetoric, for example, can create contexts that influence, and at times, stifle human goals and psychological processes. Similar to standpoint theory, this approach posits traditional knowledge as relative and contextual. How individuals and groups interpret meaning is influenced by their socio-cultural environment. Grounded theorists are interested in investigating these processes especially as they relate to people's reflections and conscious choices. In this study, I sought to learn from each woman how they came to understand their pre and post war experiences. How they reflect upon and define their situation is a social process because it is shared and articulated through interacting with and engaging others. I also analyzed strategies they used to cope with multiple traumatic experiences. Denzin (1992) might describe these experiences as "epiphanic"; a social crisis that ruptured the routines of life in ways that destabilized and forced a "radical re-definition of self" (p. 26). I was particularly interested in how their relational roles (such as women, mothers, friends, daughters, wives) were impacted or if they shifted during this rupturing and re-stabilization process.

Within the grounded theory paradigm, researchers begin with a focus, accumulate data, and then analyze it through a complex process of coding and categorization. The standard for rigor is established through firmly established coding steps. During this constant and comparative process, a theory begins to emerge from the data itself. In general, three types of coding (open, axial, selective) take place. Although I will describe them sequentially, Charmaz (2000) points out that they interact cyclically throughout the analysis process because new data is constantly being compared with existing data.

During the first phase of open coding, transcribed data are broken down into units of meaning, and labeled. There are different schools of thought on the appropriate size of data units ranging from line by line (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) to several pages (Fassinger, 2005). I used a few sentences or a short paragraph for my unit of analysis. Once units are coded or labeled they are interrogated as researchers “tack” back and forth trying to identify similarities and differences between concepts. This is the first step in the theory building process. Codes are compared and contrasted within each specific interview, and also between interview sets.

The second phase, known as axial coding, provides a structure that begins to put fractured data back together by developing relationships among “robust” codes that eventually form into categories. These categories are further explicated for interrelationships, which is the next step in the theorizing of data. This is done through the constant comparing of these categories with (a) subcategories, (b) new categories, (c) the density and complexity of properties, and (d) disconfirming data (Fassinger, 2005). A conceptual “axial” or hub centers constellations of subcategories. It is at this point that textual analysis moves to a more abstract level. To help me identify and order variables that represented the scope and dimension of each concept, I also drew informal illustrations.

The final stage of analysis, selective coding, involves the creation of a substantive theory. At this point in the coding process, a core story emerges and begins to generate a theory that answers the question, “What is going on here?” This is done by identifying an integrative core category under which all sub-categories can be subsumed into an explanatory whole. Strauss and Corbin (1998) describe a substantive theory as including an “asset of well developed categories that are systematically interrelated through statements of relationships into a framework that explains some relevant social, psychological relationship.... The theory also answers “who what, when, where, why, how, and with what consequences an event occurs” (p. 22). Unlike Glaser, who believes that at this point, what emerges out of the grounded theory is “capable of explaining phenomena” (cited in Clarke), I think there were too many complexities of interconnections and subjectivities to fully grasp the intensity of war and post-war trauma healing by simply interviewing 19 women. To aid in theory generation, I compared the emergent theory with existing research in the field. Concurring with Clarke’s (2005) assessment that descriptive theories about my topic already exist, I returned to a close examination of the literature on feminist relational theory and trauma theories because I believed it would strengthen the elaboration of my theoretical framework.

The last step in the grounded theory process is to present a theoretical framework. Fassinger (2005) suggests this is done by including extensive quotes from participants to demonstrate the grounded theory as highlighted by their life experiences and unique voices. She discusses the latitude in how the product of investigation is represented with variances to include lists of propositions, visual models, narrative summaries, or composite stories. To illustrate the grounded theory that emerged from my data, I identified several representative stories out of the

multiple experiences of the nineteen women in my study. My analysis (Chapters 4-6) offers a contextualized explanation of the grounded theory that emanated directly from the data.

Various criticisms and accolades have emerged from both outside and within grounded theoretical scholarship. Arguably, the most prominent conflict surfaced between the originators of this theory - Glaser and Strauss. After introducing grounded theory in 1967, Glaser and Strauss continued to develop and apply the approach. In the early 90's, their perspectives regarding theory generation divided sharply (Glaser, 1992; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998). Glaser criticized Strauss and Corbin (1990) for over conceptualizing the model. He argued against their intricate process of coding because it specifies rather than generalizes, and forces data through preconceptions and analytic questions. Strauss and Corbin's rejoinder was that Glaser's model left out the complexity and variability involved in the phenomena of human action and subjectivity. The intricate steps in their coding process allow them to hear and represent the voices of interviewees as accurately as possible. Sociologist Charmaz (2000) critiques both sides of the debate for being "imbued" with positivistic assumptions. She argues instead for a constructionist orientation to grounded theory. I support her emphasis on integrating the constructionist perspective of multiple social locations because my epistemological position is that knowledge is dynamically and dialectically generated. Although there is not space in this project to elaborate, other criticisms of grounded theory include the fragmentation of data (Charmaz, 2000), the unwieldiness of data (Rennie, 2000), the process is insufficiently rigorous (Fassinger, 2005) and that emergent theories are infused with bias because codes are conceptualized by the researcher (Woolley, Butler, & Wampler, 2000).

Admittedly grounded theory is a highly subjective process because of the possibility of multiple interpretations of the same data. There is not a "right" way to interpret because "all

readings are temporary, partial, provisional, and perspectival – themselves situated historically and geographically” (Clarke, 2005, p. 8). At the same time, analytical fit can be assessed along with a theory’s relevance to the field. Insisting theory is derived from the ground of data, acknowledging my own subjectivity, and taking the aforementioned standardized steps for grounded theory research helped to assure the justifiability of my interpretations and that the locus of knowledge came from the voices of women in my study.

Methodology II: Narrative Analysis

Narrative analysis is another way to approach qualitative interviews that also honors the unique standpoints and perspectives of women’s life stories. I chose a secondary methodology and method because some of the “stories” that I listened to demanded closer attention; how they were told, why they were told, as well as the actual content seemed particularly unique and compelling. To apply grounded theory to them would actually deconstruct their meanings. Large sections needed to be analyzed instead of comparing and contrasting discrete codes. The meanings of these stories would get lost if fragmented. In this section, I briefly describe the historical underpinnings of Narrative Analysis.

Narrative theory is a robust field with several methods and conceptual approaches. For purposes of this study, I chose the model offered by Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg and Bertsch’s (2003) Voice Centered Listener’s Guide (also known informally as The Listening Guide). Originally, Gilligan’s research focused on listening to the silenced “voices” of women (1982). As her theory emerged, she also noted that women’s ways of knowing and their practices were unique from the dominantly understood male ethic of justice (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). Instead of identity being shaped by individualism, women’s development seemed to evolve through a

variety of relational attachments. As a result, Gilligan et al. (2003) maintain that women have a multiplicity of voices. Their analysis rang true as I listened to the women in my study. Thus, I chose to apply this framework it as an additional overlay to grounded theory. In the following section, I begin with a description of narrative analysis followed by a more thorough examination of the voice centered relational method.

Introduction to Narrative Analysis

Since the advent of the narrative turn within the human sciences, a variety of approaches to understanding personal experiences and oral story have evolved. A consistent thread throughout the development of these theories is the interest in how storytellers interpret the world, how they experience it, and their implicit moral tales of how the world “should” be. Narratives represent storied ways of re-presenting and making sense of the past. At a basic level, the “teller” is trying to impose order on memories by constructing a narrative about them. Interestingly, even though these stories are drawn out of the past, they are not just about the past. Narratives also constitute real time or “reality” (Sarbin, 1986; Bruner, 1990). How stories are constructed reveal what individuals think about themselves as well as the context in which they live and breathe. By listening carefully, we step through a narrative window into personal experience and human agency foregrounded by contemporary beliefs that attribute meaning and shape understanding. We hear how narrators evaluate themselves but we also hear how they perceive being evaluated by their social world.

To have a “personal narrative” is a fairly new social phenomenon. As Modern theories and Positivist modes of inquiry began to lose their ‘imperious demands,’ their unchallenged frameworks of meaning were also replaced (Riessman, 1993). Worldviews were no longer

dominated by some form of truth. When migration patterns shifted, people were impacted by urban life and all the diversity that came with it. Individualism and existential predicaments around questions such as the meaning of life emerged. Dissolution of traditional strictures paved the way for personal reflection and insight. Individuals no longer sat inside “a” story but were freed to explore and discover their own. Sarbin (1986) and others argue that this post-Modern ontological shift actually offered a new way of being. Ordinary and marginalized people began to gain a “sense of experience, claim identities, and ‘get a life’ by telling and writing their own stories” (Langellier, 2001). As a result, we have now become a storied people; we are the stories we tell and that are told about us by others (Bruner, 1985; Gergen, 1984; Polkinghorne, 1988; Sarbin, 1986).

Narrative literature and research burgeoned because of the influences of Postmodernity, contemporary identity movements, and the battle between quantitative and qualitative research camps. Social scientists in general and qualitative researchers in particular became interested in “narratives” because through story, they learned how people made cognitive and emotional sense of the events impacting them. Narrative analysis, then, focuses on the storied nature of the self and is useful in research “precisely because storytellers interpret the past rather than reproduce it as it was” (Riessman, 2002, p. 704). Narrative is the unit of analysis because “truth” can be found in the shifting connections storytellers forge between their past, present and future. By using this framework, I was able to hear as women moved beyond a simple reporting of historical facts to the interpretation of what happened to them, and how those events disrupted and re-shaped the course of their lives.

Most narrative analysis has as a general reference point, the work of Labov (1967). A pioneer in the field, Labov developed a method of narrative analysis from a seminal study of

how ordinary people structure story. His description of narrative developed out of stories told by African American informants in Harlem during 1960-70's. Through specific analysis of speech, Labov noted that these spoken event narratives had a "clausal" structure. Narrators consistently oriented, created "complicating" actions, evaluated, and explained what happened in ways that shaped or shifted meaning. It was Labov's analysis that illustrated the link between narrative explanations and the social effects of storytelling (Labov & Waletzky, 1967). Although a variety of approaches now exist in the narrative field, many scholars continue to treat a narrative as a discrete unit of discourse, one with a beginning and an end. Talk is organized around an event as the teller recapitulates what happened. There is also a general agreement that narrative events are "distinguished by order and sequence" and located "temporally and spatially" (Edvardsson, Rasumseen & Riessman, 2003). Linguistic devices adopted by the narrator such as intonation, pitch, and pauses are also noted. In the past several decades, the field of narrative inquiry has expanded to include thematic, structural, interactional, and performative typologies of analysis.

In this study, I adopted Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg and Bertsch's method for discovering and analyzing women's narratives – The Listening Guide (2003). Their multi-layered listening approach not only tracks narrative structure, it also seeks to distinguish the multiple, contrapuntal, counterpoint voices – or the different voices – within the narrative itself. The following section is an explanation of their theoretical position and method.

Voice-Centered Relational Method

Carol Gilligan's (1982) seminal study of gendered ethics, moral reasoning and identity development infused the idea of "voice" into feminist scholarship. Although it took several years to formalize, the method was finalized in The Listening Guide (2003). Gilligan's theory of

voice and resistance, connectedness and disconnectedness generated a radical shift in psychological research. The “voices” of girls and women in her interviews challenged the dominant categories of ethical and psychological theory (Freud, Erikson, Piaget, Kohlberg). “...[A]t the critical theory-building stages of psychological research, psychologists had made a huge methodological error” (cited in Kiegelmann, 2009). Essentially, Gilligan argued that the “voices” of women had been left out of the samples. She found that because women start with a different premise when approaching a moral dilemma, their ways of seeing and experiencing had been silenced by prevailing assumptions and methodology. Largely due to her analysis, the literal voices of women began to challenge and shift psychological and ethical theory. A new or different way of speaking about the self, morality, and relationships emerged (Gilligan, 1992).

According to Gilligan (1992), when most women face dilemmas, they start with an assumption of relational connectedness – an ethic of care. This form of ethical expression places emphasis on responsibility to others and is characterized by self sacrifice, goodness, and nurturance. What she suggested stood in sharp contrast to Kohlberg’s theory of moral development in which a sense of duty prevailed. Instead of an ethic of care, his paradigm was predicated on an ethic of justice – an expression of autonomy based upon abstract principles that emphasize individual rights. What she realized was that when women were measured against Kohlberg’s male-biased model, they were deemed inferior in their moral development. According to his theory, caring for interpersonal relationships (Stage 3) was a lower form of moral expression in comparison to a social contract focused on individual rights (Stage 5).

Feminist Philosopher Alison Jagger (1992) agreed with Gilligan’s critique of Kohlberg. She claimed traditional ethics valued masculine traits like independence, domination, autonomy and war over feminine traits such as interdependence, connection, sharing, emotion and nature.

Rights, rules, universality and impartiality were more favored than women's ethical positions that emphasize relationships, responsibilities, and partiality. Therefore, to squeeze women into a paradigm of moral development defined by and elicited by men was to essentially silence their voices. Like Jagger, Gilligan (1992) argued against this notion of traditional ethics by advocating that women be understood in their own terms; they are "different." Women bring a unique voice to the human experience. Valuing and recognizing women's practices as distinctive instead of "underdeveloped" not only liberated but become a source of empowerment for women.

According to Balan (2005), it was Gilligan's research into women's ways of knowing that paved the foundation for feminist understanding of morality.

Gilligan's work initiated a critical change, highlighting new ways of perceiving, new ways of listening, new ways of thinking about how gender influences moral and ethic responses emerged in the field. For example, the inter-relatedness of hierarchy and power became more illuminated. Gilligan's analysis revealed the tensions women face in patriarchal systems where honor and shame may carry with them a threat of violence (cited in Kiegelmann, 2009). This is pertinent to my study as Bosnian refugee culture is still characterized by more traditional and patriarchal gender roles. Gilligan's work regarding how stories and memories are understood is also relevant to trauma study. Because narratives are interpreted and told within a cultural framework, if the "telling" might negatively impact relationship, women may falsify their stories or lose their ability to tell them accurately (cited in Kiegelmann, 2009). This potential social bind made assessing ethical care concerns, and listening for relational dilemmas, an important focus in my analysis.

The Listening Guide

Gilligan's definition of "voice" developed over time. In her early work it was understood as 'that which is silenced' but as Brown and Gilligan's (1992) research evolved, additional meaning was attached to include: "the inner psychic world of feelings and thoughts" (pg. 19); the full authentic expression of the feminine self; and the object of oppression or that which is suppressed. Voice was not only an embodiment of the inner world; it was also an expression of culture and relationship. Voice depends. It is affected by whether or not it is being accepted or heard. Therefore, the feminine voice is multiple. Sometimes it is strong, other times it is depressed and diminished. Similar to music, it has "range, harmonies, dissonance, distinctive tonalities, key signatures, pitches, rhythms" (Gilligan et al., 2003, pg. 157). They theorized that by listening to voice on multiple levels, the inner world of a person can become more revealed.

Eventually, *The Listening Guide* (2003) emerged as a way to distinguish and attend the variant voices in women. An amalgamation of theories influenced its evolution; feminist theory, relational psychological theory, psychoanalytic theory, literary theory, and music theory (Gilligan et al., 2003). As earlier noted or implied feminist/relational theory (Gilligan, 1992, 1993) suggested that women's identity and ethics are shaped by and through relationship. Psychoanalytic theory focused on the 'layered nature of the psyche' (Gilligan et al., 2003, p. 157) and recognizing mental constructions that develop over time. Literary theory, a form of reflexivity, asked the listener to attend their own reactions by noting feelings and reactions when the narrative is being analyzed (Gilligan et al., 2003). Finally, theories of music, resonance, counterpoint and fugue, were adapted to more finely focus the human ear to the literal sounds of the narrator. Ultimately, the goal is to listen, to hear, to reach beyond words being said to that which might be hidden, unspoken or even disassociated (cited in Kiegelmann, 2009).

The voice centered relational method has been used and adapted in several studies including Paliadelis and Cruickshank's (2008) research among nurse managers, Bryne, Canavan, & Miller's (2009) analysis of high school 'early leavers', and Mauthner and/or Doucet's (1998, 2000, 2001) sociological analyses of parenting. Because the method has some flexibility, it crosses disciplines and theoretical positions in a way that allows unique samples and individual goals of researchers to influence how it is utilized. Originally a three step listening process, Mauthner and Doucet (1998) extended the method into four or five distinct readings for their research goals whereas Brown (1997) emphasized one particular step to focus on gossip or 'put downs' within interviews of poor, working class, white adolescent girls. For purposes of my study, I followed Gilligan et al.'s (2003) The Listening Guide by incorporating all three steps described below.

In the first step of The Listening Guide (2003), specific attention is given to the basic elements of the story, asking: what are the main events, who are the actors, what is the plot, what are the sequences of events, and is there is a protagonist/antagonist. *What* stories are told as well as *how* they are told is also important. Listening for repeated words, themes, metaphors, key images, the unspoken, ruptures and gaps in the narrative, even where the voice trails off, can be instructive in helping to understand who is speaking and what cultural/social forces shape their story-telling. At the same time, the listener is tracking her own emotional responses to the speaker and locating herself theoretically as she deciphers and interprets the narrative. Gilligan (cited in Kiegelmann, 2009) believes this enhances objectivity by "...not avoiding relationship but paying attention to relationship, not silencing yourself but distinguishing your voice from that of the other person, not ignoring the surrounding culture, but being aware of how it might affect the conversation" (p. 6). By highlighting reflexivity as an essential step in the listening

process, Gilligan maintains we are more likely to discern the boundary of the speaker's narrative from our interpretations of those narratives.

In the second reading, "I" or the spoken, first person voice is tracked. Particularly interesting or puzzling sections of the interviews are first identified, and then the listener/reader pulls out all I phrases (subject/verb) that occur within that sub-section. During her research under Gilligan, Elizabeth DeBold discovered that often these I-statements can fall into a poetic cadence or what she called "I poems." At times they can be remarkably revealing "picking up an associate logic that runs under the logic of the sentence and capturing what people know about themselves, without being aware of communicating it" (cited in Kiegelmann 2009, p. 6). As an example, in one section of my interview with Mirzada, the "I poem" revealed her reluctance to recall a violent event that took place one night when her dad was away, fighting on the line. It also describes the wound it left in their lives:

I was born in Teslic

I was young when the war started

I don't remember many things

I remember when we escaped Teslic

I remember a Croatian man who let us hide in his cabin in the woods

I, I, I, don't remember much

I just remember nights were really bad

I don't understand why my dad gets drunk

I don't feel comfortable talking about the war

I don't feel comfortable talking about it

I'm ashamed

I have something to hold back

I just

I don't

I just don't want to open up to people

I don't know

I don't feel comfortable talking to people about the war

I just feel ashamed of something

I remember saying goodbye to my dad most of the time

I don't remember him coming back

I remember saying goodbye to him all the time

I remember that me and my brother would stand on the chairs to say goodbye

I think my mom is more paranoid now

I feel bad but

I feel frustrated

I believe she is a scared person

I don't think I am close to my mom

I don't feel comfortable talking to her

I have bad anxiety.

I think, I think, I think the number one side effect that war has is anxiety.

I was, when the war started,

I was really little.

I have, uh, a problem where my palms get really sweaty, like out of control sweaty – and my feet, too.

I stand like this for five minutes, my hands will drip like water

I developed this during the war

I was really little

I was really scared.

I used to scream all the time

I would stand in the corner and scream and scream and scream.

I developed this during the war because of some trauma happening

I get nervous

I get a little scared

I freak out and my hands tell me

I am scared

By attending to the “I” statements in this section, the silence in Mirzada’s story became more revealed. During her interview, she was very uncomfortable and tended to stammer or go off topic. Dropping out all the additional text helped me better hear the emotions that may underlie her resistance to remembering: anxiety and fear. I also noticed more specifically her disclosure of how the war impacted her father (he gets drunk) and her mother (she is paranoid) as well as how it impacted herself (I am ashamed).

In the second step, additional focus is given to the shifting of pronouns from ‘I’ to ‘we’ or to ‘you’ which can signal how the speaker experiences her agency (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998). By actively focusing on the pronouns, sometimes what is emotionally or intellectually difficult to admit to (but is already known) may be revealed to the listener/reader. It can also signal the social location of the speaker. All of these ways of listening, from plot, to sound of voice, to use of pronouns, to silence - provide a multi-layering of voices and perspectives. We learn not only how the speaker perceives the world, but also herself.

Gilligan (cited in Kiegelmann, 2009) believes the third step is the most creative because the researcher listens more intuitively to the contrapuntal and counterpoint voices. They begin to distinguish which voices speak “[t]o the research question... [b]y identifying their characteristic features (passive or active voice, first or third person, distinctive images or metaphors, emotional tone)” (p. 7). How the voice interplays with different voices in the narrative – from alignment to distance – is analyzed. This method invites acute listening to a multitude of sound from the same narrative material. In the end, a choir of voices has emerged which becomes the basis for composing analysis.

One drawback to this method is the amount of time it requires. In larger studies, it could take months to systematically conduct several listenings/readings to each interview. In my case,

I decided to focus detailed attention on just a few of my interviews. However, that meant selectively focusing on some women's narratives and not on others. Also, I found myself making decisions on where to place focus because within the interview itself there are so many issues to explore and so many voices to attend to. While I think selective focus may be inevitable, it is still important to recognize and acknowledge it as a limitation. In the end, however, I believe the merits of utilizing The Listening Guide (2003) far outweighed its constraints. Listening this attentively and intentionally embodied respect for the women in my study. I became more astute of the complexities and multiplicities of their standpoints and voices. I heard them more deeply. Secondly, submitting to the rigor and discipline of each step helped me circumvent the risk of simply confirming what I already know. It also helped me better distinguish the difference between my interpretation (or voice), and the voice of each woman.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I explored how knowledge is generated through subjective, partial, and non-privileged social locations. Additionally, I described the ways in which I designed both my methodology and analytic methods - to retain a clear focus on the subjugated, discounted, or not yet articulated voices of women who live in the margins of U.S. society. Finally, it is important to note that I recognize the limitations and benefits of incorporating Standpoint Theory, Grounded Theory, and Voice Centered Relational Method into my project design, and assert my belief that integrating these theories and methods has best served my attempt to hear differently, to hear well, and to honor the narratives of these women.

Chapter Four

DISLOCATION (IDENTITY AND SPACE)

Introduction

When the war in Bosnia broke out in 1992, a richly diverse cultural tapestry began to unravel. For the people of Bosnia, their lives changed in unimaginable ways. Within minutes, hours, and weeks, many of them lost everything. They were severed from homes, careers, families and communities. An immediate exodus began as non-Serbs were systematically uprooted from their former lives by Serbian militia. The objective of this chapter is to analyze how the severance from cherished physical space impacted the identities and healing process of the women refugees in my study. Attachment to their geographic and individually defined space and its inter-relatedness to their place identity continue to be a source of unabated tension. For purposes of this study, I define place identity as an expression of attachment to a specific space that connects emotionally, physically, and cognitively with an individual or group or individuals. The space itself serves as a repository for memories, relationships and emotions, all of which give meaning and purpose to life. In the following, I investigate the women's journeys from their original home in Bosnia, through their subsequent displacement by the war to their newly found "homes" in Phoenix, Arizona.

Kunz's (1973, 1981) realist approach to displaced people distinguishes refugees from immigrants. He contends that because their movements are compelled by qualitatively different motivations, they stand as distinct categories. Refugees are forcibly displaced from their country of origin whereas immigrants are voluntarily drawn or pulled to another country. Kunz (1973) argues that in fact it is, "the reluctance to uproot oneself, and the absence of positive original motivations to settle elsewhere, which characterizes all refugee decisions from the voluntary migrants" (p. 130). Not only are refugees forced to leave their homes, many are also often

forced to live the rest of their lives outside the country of their origin; they cannot return. This compulsory displacement creates social, psychological, and economic tearing that factor into the healing and resettlement process of these individuals.

Apfelbaum (2000) contends that psychologists have failed to adequately incorporate the harsh realities of dislocation into theories of trauma and healing. The profound social and psychological consequences of being torn from space and community have been largely ignored. In Fullilove's (1996) research on the psychiatric implications of displacement, she begins with the basic proposition that psychological well-being and a sense of belonging, depend upon strong relationships and nurturing environs. The corollary proposition is that when there is disturbance in these person-place relations, mental distress or psychological disorder may follow (p. 1517).

In light of Apfelbaum (2000) and Fullilove's (1996) analysis I propose that identities and healing processes of the Bosnian women in my study are shaped by interactions with the world around them. Attachments to their homeland, the forces that uprooted them, and their experiences in asylum through resettlement have all had a profound impact upon their lives. To analyze the space-related themes that emerged in the grounded theory of my data I asked several questions:

- What did "home" mean to the Bosnian women refugees? How did they relate to space prior to the war?
- How do the women perceive their attachment to Bosnia?
- What caused their displacement? Why were they displaced?
- How were they uprooted?
- After the onset of war, what kinds of spaces did they move through and how did this impact them?

- When they finally relocated to a new home in Phoenix, how did this new space compare to what they had left behind? What challenges did they face?
- How does current place identity and place attachment compare/contrast across age groups?
- What are the psychological consequences brought about by uprooting?
- How does their past identity attachments to Bosnia affect their healing processes?

This chapter is an analysis of Bosnian women's voices in my study who survived forced uprooting, severance and eradicated communities. Their accounts capture the de-structuring of immediate and intimate space, as well as the painful, disorienting effects of being cut off from one's personal, social, and historical groundings. Ultimately a part of their personal identity was severed. I present stories that the women related to me about their pre-war lives, their experiences in transit as refugees in Croatia or Germany, and about their lives as repatriated citizens in Phoenix, Arizona.

Pre War Bosnia

- *What did "home" mean to the Bosnian women refugees? How did they relate to space prior to the war?*
- *How do the women perceive their attachment to Bosnia?*

Although macro political forces began to shape and intensify ethno-religious identities after President Tito's death, there was a cadence to life that formed the character of every day experiences on the local level for the Bosnian women in my study. It is important to note that while rural realities were quite different from those who lived in larger cities such as Sarajevo, all of the women I interviewed came from urban areas, Therefore, I confine my analysis herein to a broad understanding of how life was experienced in cities and towns prior to the war. I explore

these pre-war realities because the past is often the framework from which current experiences are evaluated and compared. Events that create dislocation are temporal. Refugees are born out of a conflicted history within a particularity of context. Research indicates that to understand the experience of exile, it is important to know something about life prior to this exile, because it becomes a central referencing point for refugees as they evaluate current life experiences (Eisenbruch, 1990; Miller, 1999; Miller, Muzurovic, Worthington, Tipping & Goldman, 2002).

Consistent with Manzo's (2003) definition, women used the word *home* to imply both an attachment and relationship to place, people, and culture. Its meaning was not simply confined to their dwelling place. As Saegert (1985) suggests, the idea of home has a more active relationship with physical, social, and psychological spaces around the women in my study. Seamon (1979) describes at-homeness as "the usually unnoticed, taken-for-granted situation of being comfortable in, and familiar with, the everyday world in which one lives, and outside of which one is visiting" (p. 70). Home is literal and figurative, concrete and deeply spiritual. To be "rooted" signified a deep emotional bond to the physical environment (including soil and land) as well as to shared culture. For these women, home was a metaphor for shelter and safety, and it was a metaphor for joy, celebration, and comfort. The word also connoted public places such as cafes, parks, and sacred structures (Low, 2000).

Prior to the build-up of hostilities within the Federation, the women in my study described life in the former Yugoslavia as bucolic. There were snow capped mountains and verdant forests. Little villages dotted the countryside. Rivers flowed abundantly. Sarajevo was described as a "jewel" with cobblestoned streets, charming cafes and old-world Moorish architecture. Minarets speckled the skyline. Social life was full of merriment that included sharing Turkish coffee, dancing, and singing traditional folk songs. As Enisa (82) describes:

Banja Luka is great and nature bound, [the] Vrbas [river] flows through the city, which is a sight to see! Before the war, I was very healthy. I would swim half the canal and back. I had no sickness. Life was good. I had wonderful girlfriends, Vera, Mara, and Dusanka. We took care of each other – I did not know who Vera, Mara were - their ethnic group. We never talked about that. One was Croatian, and two of them were Orthodox. We got along great before the war; we were the best of friends, and even traveled together.

A steady theme which emerged from the data explaining why life was so “good” in Pre-War Bosnia was the pervasive idea that the women had “a sense of togetherness” regardless of “ethnic” identity.

Historians Donia and Fine’s (1994) research supports this finding. Unlike a culture of “ancient ethnic hatreds” that U.S. political leaders such as President Clinton (1993) espoused regarding Bosnian inter-cultural interactions, these scholars document a long standing tradition of tolerance and coexistence in Bosnia, one that is centuries old. According to Donia and Fine (1994), in the late 1980’s, Bosnians were caught in the cross-hairs of two expansionistic neighboring states (Serbia and Croatia) and were unfairly entangled inside ethnic tensions not traditionally exhibited within its border. They argue the “[t]hroughout its long history (medieval, Ottoman, and modern) Bosnia has had its own very distinct history and culture, and this culture has been shared by people of all its religious denominations” (p. 7). This distinctiveness continued throughout the centuries and evolved into a special character of and empathy among the people. Several women in my study described a multiculturalism in which no one cared whether or not you were a Muslim, Serb, or Croat. Mijka Mera (80) shares this sentiment in her interview:

Before the war, we always had this sense of togetherness; we were community. We worked together, we respected each other – whether it was Ramadan or Christmas, or Orthodox Christmas, we even respected each other’s holidays. If you didn’t smoke, the person around you wouldn’t smoke. There was such a high respect for one another and one another’s culture. We lived together like this for many years. We never divided ourselves, we really respected our togetherness.

Bosnians shared the same language and a shared historical past. A sociological study of social tolerance in the former Yugoslavia indicated that out of the six republics, Bosnia was the most ethnically diverse and the most tolerant (Sekulic, Massey & Hodson, 1994). According to Donia and Fine (1994) the only difference was religious background and its connection with ethnicity. Because Yugoslavia had been a secular communist state for over 50 years, however, religious identification was not particularly strong. People crossed religious divides; they celebrated each other’s traditions. Inter-marriages were quite common as were abiding friendships. Neighborliness and community were experienced and promoted as centralizing cultural values.

For the women I interviewed, life in Bosnia was ideal. They enjoyed a comfortable lifestyle and standard of living. This coincides with Andjelic’s (2003) assessment that the economic development plan of Tito brought success and a level of prosperity. He claims, “Bosnia was a unique republic in the Yugoslav federation. Great improvements in the conditions of living, industrialization and economic development of a once very backward and rural community, created positive popular feelings towards the system and especially towards Tito” (p. 18). Though realities such as high inflation and a crumbling economy during the 1980’s were

occurring, the women in my study described stability and economic security. Nastja's (23) recollection is an example of this claim:

My family lived a good life in Bosnia. My grandfather was a music director and an economist. My grandma was a teacher. My mom was a lawyer – business law. My dad was also an economist. We were very liberal. Every religion is intermixed in our family so I have a very open perspective. I respect each and every religion although my family wasn't religious. We never went to mosque. We had an “intellectual” background. My parents grew up under Tito and loved him. They loved the kind of government that he ran. It was quite a different time and experience for most people. Most people don't understand the form of Communism we had in Yugoslavia – they think of it like the Soviet Union. We were very happy in Bosnia before the war came.

The Bosnians in my study enjoyed life. They held a distinctive pride in their culture. It is within the framework of this beloved culture that their identities were rooted. As place identity theory suggests, these women identified themselves as being “Bosnian” (Hernandez et al., 2007; Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996). They were not from Bosnia, they *were* Bosnian. They belonged to Bosnia, they belonged to their city, they belonged to their neighborhood, they belonged to their family, and they belonged to a particular place called home. Nested inside this ever narrowing concentric circle of belongingness was a specific idea of relatedness to space and community.

“Place” brought definition to these women's identities. Although I will speak more specifically about kinship and identity in Chapter 5, it is important to note here how vital the

concept of home (property) was, and perhaps still is, to a Bosnian woman's sense of self. This value was evident in Bringa's (1995) ethnographic research in the 1980's where she found the notion of "home" as occupying a central place in Bosnian culture; identity was synonymous with home and land. Anthropologist Olujić's (1995) underscores this connection by describing the historical psychological relationship to land as

a fundamental trait in the whole conscious and subconscious behavior of the Balkan peasant. Land is considered a sacred thing. The importance of land is seen in the plethora of linguistic terms that differentiate land by its use, size of the field, how the soil is cultivated, and overall quality. (n/a)

Consistent in my interviews with the majkas and middle age women in my study were nostalgic memories of the communities and homes that they lost. Central to women's pre-war stories were their lives within their homes and communities. They talked about their gardens, kitchens, copper plates and even little coffee cups. They reminisced about neighbors and friends. I emphasize the special value placed on their identity-relationship with these spaces because their psychological connection to the literal land of Bosnia made the severing that occurred due ethnic cleansing all the more painful for them. Their "good lives" abruptly changed with the advent of war.

Forced Relocation

- *What caused their displacement? Why were they displaced?*
- *How were they uprooted?*

Refugees are forced to move. They flee homes and communities and face an uncertain future. As stated previously, to be displaced is a complex phenomenon and refers to both a physical movement and a sense of being socially out of place. It is a process that moves individuals from a space of rootedness and home, into a completely unfamiliar physical and cultural context. As place identity suggests, typically, people feel emotionally attached to and identify themselves with this space and want to return. However, my analysis suggests that for all of the middle age and majkas in my study, this was not the case. Although they ached and longed for their homes, they would not return to them due to the negative emotional experiences and memories that are associated with these places. For the women, forced displacement seems to have invoked a sense of liminality; they do not comfortably identify with being a United States citizen, but at the same time, they can no longer feel at home in their old homes.

Sixteen of the women in my study permanently lost their homes because of the war. An important observation in my analysis concerns the women's decisions regarding the act of fleeing itself and the routes taken. Though all but two of my participants were forced to flee from the places they loved, there was a difference on how they fled, and whether or not they were fleeing to a specific place. Three trends emerged from the data: (a) some women fled instantly. They abandoned their entire lives within seconds. There was not time for a plan or a sense of destiny, (b) some fled instantly but they were able to locate with family and relatives either in Croatia or Germany, (c) some were put in convoys to Croatia.

In general, the speed and method by which they departed from their homes was contingent upon location; the women were affected differently respective of which part of Bosnia they resided. In brief, Serbian militia and Serbian backed forces used different strategies to ethnically cleanse. Some cities and villages were utterly destroyed. The aim was to rid the

area of all the non-Serb inhabitants and to eradicate their sense of place attachment. Other cities were attacked, but infrastructures were largely left intact because the Serbians planned to inhabit the space and claim the area for the Republika of Srpska. To illustrate these differences, I draw from five women's recollections of their departures in the next section. Two were from Doboj, three were from Banka Luka, and two took a convoy out of Sarajevo. I chose these because they are indicative of the different ways women in my study were forced to flee.

Leaving Instantly: Doboj

Doboj was in a strategic location during the war. Serbian forces began their occupation in early May, 1992. Two women in my study, Naida (48) and Merita (42), were living in the city when the war began. They were fortunate to have escaped when they did, as shortly thereafter the city was cut-off and bombed, a process that continued over the next three months. Its trapped citizens endured torture, rapes, and beatings. In May 2010, the current mayor of Doboj, Obren Petrovic, testified to witnessing these events before the ICTY in the trial of Mico Stanisic and Stojan Zupljanin who were accused of murder, persecution, and deportation of non-Serbs. In his testimony he confirms Naida's and Merita's account that on May 2, 1992, members of the Red Berets or the Special Operations Unit took over the local police station. They forcibly entered homes of Croat and Muslim families to pillage, beat, and terrify the residents (Saric, 2010). As stated in the following excerpts, these two women left within moments of the complete siege of their city. They fled from a home filled with their life possessions and a place of security without even a way to legally identify themselves. What they did carry with them was a devastating sense of vulnerability.

Naida was uprooted in a moment's notice. She literally had seconds to leave. This is how Naida describes her departure:

My husband used to own an export business. One of his employees, a good friend, was a Serbian. He used to tell my husband that the war was coming, and they were going to kill him and our family. He said it was going to be very, very bad. My husband didn't really believe him and asked him "Why? Why would the Serbs want to kill us?" His friend told him it was because we are Muslim. Well, it happened! On the way to work in early May, my husband's friend saw the Red Brigade. They were taking over a hotel. He saw some of the soldiers digging trenches and a bunker. And then he noticed guys on the streets with machine guns. When he got to work he told my husband to "Go! Run!" So he hurried home and got us. We ran out the door. I didn't take my wallet, my license, anything. We just ran. Within one hour, the entire city had been taken over. We got out just in time. It was second May.

Merita was also from Dobož. In this section of her interview, she describes the events leading up to her hurried departure. Merita was evicted from her home by Serbian neighbors who she considered to be best friends:

They were my best friends, and they betrayed us. They took our house from us. I didn't know this at the time, but on that day - at five o'clock in the morning they were rounding up every Muslim or Catholic person. Serbs were bringing in all the men by machine guns. They had to report to the station. I'm so glad my husband was already on the line by then. Five o'clock in the morning. At my

house? Six o'clock in the morning my friend comes over with the baby – she's a Serbian. And she says, do you have any milk? And I go, "Of course I have, come you know, let's go drink coffee and I will give you milk." She came in, and the very same day – she took my house! She and her husband told us to leave in five minutes because it was now their house and their country. He was wearing a Yugoslavian military uniform and holding a gun. Of course I'm going to leave! What else can I do? I had to pack in two seconds – no I didn't even have two seconds to pack. I just had to leave. I grabbed my two daughters and jumped in the car.

Fullilove (2001) describes this kind of rapid dispossession as "root shock": when people experience an immediate tearing from the grounding of their communities, the "accompanying psychological trauma, financial loss, and rippling instability – produce a rupture in the historical trajectory..." (p. 78). This coincides with the previously mentioned research that Erikson (1976) conducted in the United States. If people suddenly lose their homes and their connection to space, they can lose a unifying force that their surroundings have had upon their lives. In her earlier work, Fullilove (1996) described "place" as a geographic centering; a place that is meaningful, that promotes unity, and provides space for connections. For Merita and Naida, their uprooting was so swift and unexpected that they still experience incomprehensibility about what happened. Naida was tending to household chores when her husband burst through the door. It was a day like any other day. Five minutes later, she was running through streets lined with Red Berets, hoping to survive. Everything was left behind. All was lost. To this day, she has never returned to her home.

Leaving with a Plan: Banja Luka

Five women in my study were from Banja Luka. Kris Janowski (cited in Sudetic, 1994), spokesperson for UNHCR in Sarajevo described it as being one of the worst places in Bosnia for human rights abuses. It is the second largest city in Bosnia; during the war it was of extreme strategic importance to Bosnian Serb forces (Helsinki Watch Report, 1992). Banja Luka housed a contested major military complex that prior to the war was maintained by the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA). Serbian forces had successfully apprehended the stronghold with most of its equipment. Additionally, Banja Luka was a major thoroughfare for goods and services transported between Serbia and Serbian occupied territories. Because of its economic and military importance, the Serbs were highly motivated to protect the integrity of the city. Instead of mortars and bombs, they used terror and violence to cleanse Muslims and Croats from the area (Helsinki Watch Report, 1992).

The war evolved insidiously in Banja Luka. It grew over time. Croats and Slovenians, displaced during their wars in 1991, had fled into this northern Bosnian city after Serbian military and paramilitary systematically expelled non-Serbs from their homes in the occupied areas of Krajina and eastern Slavonia in Croatia (Helsinki Watch Report, 1992). Mervita (58) describes how they came:

Once the wars in Slovenia and Croatia began, all kinds of people came to Banja Luka. During the war in Croatia, their police would come and tell them they had 24 hours to leave the Republic. Everybody came into Bosnia with a story. These refugees came in all kinds of ways. Some people walked, others had cars. People

who came from farms even rode their tractors. Everyone moved into my town because we were so close to the border on the west side.

When Slovenia and Croatia declared their independence from Yugoslavia, war broke out in their territories leaving thousands of civilians displaced. Because of Banja Luka's relative position to Slovenia and Croatia, by the end of 1991, the city was packed with refugees. Tensions were already high in the city because Serbians had taken control of institutional infrastructures; Muslims were being systematically discriminated in the workplace and losing their employment. By the early months of 1992, some local Muslims were being forcibly removed from their homes. Before long, Serb military and para-military were dominating the streets. Over the next three years, Croatian war refugees along with local non-Serbs were systematically cleansed through persecutions that included:

torture, murder, rape, beatings, harassment, *de jure* discrimination, intimidation, expulsion from homes, confiscation of property, bombing of businesses, dismissal from work, outlawing of all scripts except the Cyrillic in public institutions, and the destruction of cultural objects such as mosques and Catholic churches
(Human Watch Report, 1994, p. 1).

Initially, cleansing in this city was not as acute as what took place in Doboj. Still, when families left their homes in Banja Luka they too had little more than a couple of suitcases to show for their former lives. Mervita's description of how life in Banja Luka changed and the subsequent departure of her sister illustrate this similarity:

Then the war began. My sister and brother-in-law Azra and Mirsad had a wonderful life. They had a café bar. All the people in Banja Luka knew who they were. We had such great friends. We would spend evenings singing music to guitars. None of us wanted to leave our homes. But when the conflict got worse, we sat down and talked. Mirsad was gray after so many months in the civil services. He was probably the only Muslim there and he was very scared. Little Ben (Azra and Mirsad's son) was getting picked on at school for being Muslim. He would come home crying. Even first graders were being targeted. I told Azra and Mirsad that they had to leave. I was scared, too, because I had a crazy Chentik (term used to describe Serbian nationalists) husband. But I knew my son was safe, he had already escaped. That was my biggest concern. By then, I didn't really care what happened to me. But I told Azra and Mirsad that they had to leave because of their children.

The Serbs were beating people. They'd take Muslims to old army hotels not too far from our house. They found a Muslim friend of mine hiding, and they beat him until he died. I asked Azra how she could live with herself if something happened to Mirsad. They had to go, but it was very hard to see them leave. I wanted to go with them, but my Serbian husband was abusive and controlling. He wouldn't allow me to leave even though he knew I wasn't safe as a Muslim.

As the war dragged on, the conditions in Banja Luka got even worse. We didn't have electricity. About every two or three weeks we would have one hour of electricity to do our wash. We had some propane and sometimes I would cook a

little when I got home. People bought, stole, and took wood to make a fire in order to warm their homes. I didn't even know how we would eat. I had lost my job in 1992 because I was Muslim and couldn't find another way to make money. When Azra and Mirsad left a few months later, I was able to take over their café bar. If my friends came into the bar, I would call them by different names to keep them safe. Chetniks came into the café bar from the line. They had beards, they were messy and dirty. They had bombs, snipers and guns on them. It was crazy. These guys weren't normal. If they asked me for a drink I'd just give them one...

Mervita's account is confirmed by the Helsinki Watch Report (1992) observers who were able to enter Banja Luka after Serbian paramilitary forces had blockaded the city. When they arrived they witnessed paramilitaries roaming the streets with rocket-propelled grenade launchers, AK-47's and Scorpion automatic pistols. Light artillery was placed in several areas throughout the city center and some streets had been sealed off. All six of the women in my study who were from Banja Luka remembered the process of Serbian terrorization that held both the city and its people captive.

Elma (25), who was nine at the time, adds some details to her Aunt Mirveta's recollection of what happened in their family:

We left in April or May – just as the war started. My dad and mom left because of their concern for our safety. Plus, my dad was being heavily targeted because he was Muslim. My mom was really worried that he'd be taken away – so she wanted us to get out of there as fast as possible. We were a Muslim family, and if you had a chance to get out, you left.

I remember very vividly the three days before we left. It's weird how much detail I can recall. The night before we left there was no electricity. We were packing, and all the family came over to help us. We sat in my grandma's living room, and I remember my mom trying to put me in bed so I'd go to sleep. I wouldn't sleep because I knew something was going on. I remember we just had one or two candles because you didn't want to draw attention to your home. The entire family was there. We were trying to figure out what to pack. We couldn't take money, and you really couldn't take any possessions or jewelry – anything that was meaningful. My grandma figured out a way to hide some things by unhemming a lot of my skirts and then hemming money into them. My grandpa put a lot of money in my shoes and Ben's shoes – under our soles. It was this whole strategic process of trying to figure out why you might be stopped, how to get safely out of the country, where the key meeting points would be, and who would be meeting us there.

I just remember how intense the discussions were. The next morning it was raining really hard. We got on the bus at the bus station, we had our passports out – it was my mom, my dad, my brother and me. We left with two suitcases in our hands. Everyone was crying. But at least we knew where we were going! My aunt lived in Croatia, and we were going to stay with her.

When Elma's family was cleansed from Banja Luka, they had a plan. They made passage to Croatia where they stayed with family for a year before moving on to the United States. Although they were able to carry a couple of suitcases with them when they crossed the border,

the majority of their valuables were left behind. Most salient to Azra (Elma's mother and Mervita's sister) was abandoning their café bar. As previously noted in Merivta's excerpt the café had become a space of community and friendship. It was also a symbol of their life's work. When they left Banja Luka, they literally handed the keys of the bar over to Mervita with nothing in exchange. All of the dreams and investments embodying that space disappeared.

Enisa (82), the oldest woman in my study, also lived in Banja Luka when the war commenced. She was eventually forced out of her home, too. Like others, she was able to pack and take some of her belongings, but time and a few boxes did not offset the trauma of losing her home. During our interview, she expressed continued sadness over being displaced from her cherished dwelling. Still living inside the original apartment she was moved into by the International Rescue Committee (IRC), it was important to Enisa that I understand the differences between this place and her home in Bosnia. In fact, she pulled out an album to show me pictures of her apartment in Banja Luka. She was forcibly evicted by Serbian militia:

The biggest shock for me was to have to leave my own home. I became so stressed out. I cried all the time because I was leaving my beautiful home. They forced me out. The hardest part of the war was leaving my apartment. We had to move into a filthy messy place with bugs – it was chaos. I couldn't wait to get out of there. Leaving my home is what killed me. Killed me to the core. That's when I began to get sick.

When Enisa was expelled from her home, she was sixty-six years old. She had lived in that space for over thirty years. She knew its every nook and cranny. Like most Bosnian

refugees, she did not have a choice of whether or not to stay. Her voice was painful to hear, especially, when at the end of her interview she talked about her death:

I am thankful to be safe in America but it is such a different way of living. It's been a big change; the atmosphere, the food, the land. I am very sad that I have to die here. My children tell me, "Mom, sky and earth – ground.... are the same everywhere." But it isn't the same to me. My home is Bosnia.

According to Fullilove (1996) belonging and a sense of security that comes with being rooted in a particular context may be fundamental to psychological well being. As Enisa illustrated, her sense of belonging was so disrupted, and the loss of her material and relational world so devastating, that it "killed her to the core." It is as if she experienced a soul death. Years later, as she prepares for her physical death, the mourning of being uprooted from her community continues to haunt her. She cannot bear the thought of her remains being placed in the soil of another country. Enisa's sentiment is illustrative of what happens when people are cut off from place-referent continuity. When she lost her home, she lost a space of mooring or anchoring. After be expelled from Banja Luka, Enisa made her way to Croatia where she lived with family members for a year. Eventually her two sons, who had been granted refugee status in Phoenix, were able to sponsor her re-location to the United States.

Convoys to Croatia: Sarajevo

Of the women in my study, five of them were living in Sarajevo when it was taken siege by Serbian forces. On May 13, 1992, Children's Embassy Charity organized an evacuation of approximately 5,000 women, children, and elderly persons. The convoy consisted of

approximately 1,000 cars, vans, and several busses; they headed toward the port city of Split (Helsinki Watch Report, 1992). Although the relief group had obtained guarantee for safe passage, Serbian military stopped the convoy mid-transit and held the occupants hostage at a nearby sports arena. For three tense days, these people were detained until their release was negotiated through Bosnian officials. This event is illustrated in the following two accounts. The first is told through the eyes of a little girl, the second by a middle aged woman who had been a practicing lawyer in Sarajevo. I include these narratives to both describe another way in which severance from home and place occurred, and to illustrate the kind of spaces the women moved through (and into):

Naida (age 7 at time of the event):

I have powerful visual memories of being stopped during the convoy by men wearing black socks over the heads and holding machine guns. They stopped cars randomly. There was a lot of shooting. We were put in a sports arena near Ilidza for about 3 days, and they'd just walk around us with their guns and harass us. I remember it being dark and scary.

My mom went through a lot as far as leaving. I remember when we started driving out of the country that she barely had her driver's license. The car was a stick shift and she could not get it to go. It was just stalling, constantly stalling. I think she was just so afraid. When we got to Split that night, a family took us in. They helped us a lot. After Split we went to Polce which was more like a refugee camp. We lived together with my aunt and cousins in a tent-like structure for several months.

It is a very small town. My mom ended up working night shifts all throughout the whole week in a bakery just to support us. My aunt would work day shift so at least somebody could be with us during the day. She was just exhausted. I remember that. My mom was just always exhausted.

Sabina (age 38 at the time of the event):

I had to leave my husband behind. They were only allowing women and children to leave the city. I climbed on the truck but we were detained just outside the city. After some negotiations, soldiers finally let us go and we made our way up to Croatia. It was such a long and difficult journey. We ended up being taken to the coastline and from there, took a 45 minute boat ride to an uninhabited island. That's where I stayed for the next 7 months. When we got there, it was about midnight – and I was exhausted. All I wanted to do was lay down and rest. But there had been some kind of miscommunication and the refugee site wasn't prepared for us. They were expecting old women and men. Instead – a whole boatload of mothers and their children arrived. They didn't have small baby beds – nothing for our children. It was terrible. The island was completely barren. The officials basically dumped tents down in a field. It was full of thorns and thistles. I remember having to jump off my army cot right into my shoes so that my feet wouldn't get cut. My baby had to sleep in the same bed with me – and I was always worried about rolling over on him. There was no water, no plumbing, or electricity. We only received one meal a day – usually it was just a bowl of soup.

I have asked Allah to forgive me. I was nursing at the time, Teri. I wasn't given enough food to produce milk for my baby. So I decided to eat the special portion of his baby milk and food that had been given by refugee assistance. It was the only way I could produce enough milk to feed him. Food was scarce and I was desperate. I am ashamed and sorry. But my boy lived.

The night before Sabina left Sarajevo by convoy, she was a practicing lawyer. Her social status within the community was high, and her income level was middle to upper class. Life for Sabina was not only connected and meaningful, it was also comfortable. As trauma theory suggests, trauma is an assault upon basic sensibilities. Its force is pervasive because its impact is so global. Trauma events challenge behavioral, emotional, cognitive, and social experiences of individuals (Landsman, 2002). Coherence and a sense of meaning are essential for healthy lives, but trauma unhinges or uproots people from those necessary securities. Sabina could not make sense of what had happened to her while sitting on a cot off an uninhabited Croatian island. In our interview there was evidence that she still struggled with the incomprehensibility of such dramatic and sweeping changes in her life. Nothing made sense to her anymore; there was no logic, no reason, no plausible explanation for what happened. She could not *will* an understanding of what is not understandable. After leaving the island, Sabina continued with her infant son to Germany where she lived in a rape survivor community until reunited with her husband four years later.

Coughlan and Owens-Manley (2005) describe the transitional period for refugees between their displacement and resettlement in a final destination as being in limbo. All of the women in my study were forced to flee. Eight women left on a convoy or deportation bus, two women fled instantly, nine women were able to make a plan, and one woman escaped through

enemy lines (which I discuss in the Chapter Five.) They evaded paramilitaries who looted, burned, and pillaged their communities. Some were menaced by roving Serbian militia prior to the departures, while others looked up the barrel of their guns as they were being transported to the border. It was through these violent and unpredictable circumstances that women began their journeys.

Displacement: Croatia

- *After the onset of war, what kinds of spaces did they move through and how did this impact them?*

Whether by foot, car, or convoy, sixteen women and families in my study made their way to Croatia before being moved on to their first asylum stop in Germany. In my analysis, three patterns of migrations emerged: (a) some stayed in Croatia for 7-9 months before moving on to Germany, (b) some stayed in Croatia for approximately 1 ½ years before moving to Germany, (c) some stayed in Croatia for less than six months and then flew directly to the United States.

Colic-Peisker & Tilbury (2003b) assert that this transitory period time in a refugee's journey is critically important because a sense of additional victimhood can be experienced. Having already lost a sense of control over the lives, this transient state increases a sense of vulnerability and loss (Fried, 1963). Refugees are literally at the mercy of local and State officials for their survival. An accrual of continuous movement through various places can lead to what Colic-Peisker and Tilbury (2003b) describe as a depletion of emotional coping resources. The stabilizing reference points that Erikson (1976) referred to in his work have been destroyed. Because refugees are always "on the move", they cannot re-root. They live in a restive state. Additionally, with each subsequent move not only do they lose more personal and social

anchoring points, they gain deeper disorientation. For example, in order to become gainfully employed, some women I interviewed were required to learn, Croatian, German and eventually English within the first four years following their dislocation. The constant shifts between cultures, languages, dwellings and strangers is exhausting and confusing. It is not until after refugees have been given legal residence rights that there is enough stability to begin rebuilding their lives.

All but three women in my study began their journeys as refugees in Croatia. The conditions that they lived in varied. Six of the women stayed in some form of refugee encampments such as vacant hotels, sports arenas, gymnasiums and tent cities. Facilities were described as cramped and overcrowded. Although life was much more secure there than in Sarajevo or Banja Luka, conditions were still very uncomfortable. Women reflected upon the uncertainty of their lives during that timeframe. They faced predicaments like the lack of privacy, finding work, or learning about the whereabouts of family members. Adequate housing, nutritional diet, and medical care were no longer assured.

Out of the sixteen women who spent time as refugees in Croatia, nine were able to stay with relatives during this transitional time. For example, Naida, Merita, and Ada lived together with their extended family:

Naida (48) :

We didn't have enough beds for everyone, but that was o.k. My brother was really, really good. He had eight kids of his own, but he never asked any of us to leave. Since none of us could work, he even took care of all that mouths that needed to be fed. He never told anyone to leave.

Merita (42):

I left my house with my two kids. Nejra was three years old, Elma was just born. I said “Nejra, go down in the back seat, go down. Hold your sister down because they are shooting us with sniper.” And I was just praying that God wouldn’t let anything happen to us because if we were killed, no one would know what happened to us! I drove us out of the country to Croatia. We lived with my sister-in-law until my husband came off the line.

Ada (19):

First we went to an island that’s part of Croatia. We were there with my mom’s mother-in-law and her kids. We only stayed for a little while because it didn’t work out for us there. We ended up going to Dubrovnik. Nothing happened to us, but we did have Muslim friends that lived on the same street. They had raids and other traumatizing things happening to them. We stayed to ourselves – my mom and me, my cousin, his aunt, and my aunt. The five of us were together the whole time and nobody really came in or out. We were stuck in the house – and there was constant fear of something happening because we were Muslim. Muslims were getting persecuted in Croatia, too. My mom and my aunt did everything in their power so that we didn’t feel the effects. But I don’t remember us being happy.

While Bosnia became a killing field, its border state Croatia was transformed into a refugee camp. In 1992, while attempting to meet the needs of its own 265,000 war-displaced citizens, Croatia received an additional 330,000 refugees from Bosnia. The 1992 Helsinki Watch Report estimated that care for the combined total of war refugees during this same year cost Croatia \$66 million a month. By mid-July of 1992, Croatia announced that it was closing its borders to Bosnian refugees. In some towns, refugee populations equaled or surpassed that of local residents. The country simply could not afford to care for more displaced persons. Regardless of its decree, thousands of refugees continued to cross Croatia's borders over the next two years. As a result, approximately 12% of Croatia's population was made up of refugees or displaced persons by the end of 1994 (UNHCR, 2000).

UNHCR operations led the way for humanitarian assistance for the Bosnian refugees. They coordinated relief efforts to save lives and reduce suffering through secondary agencies such as Red Cross, Caritas, and Merhamet (UNHCR, 2009). A major objective was to find secure and adequate housing for bereft individuals and families. These organizations attempted to direct refugees into private homes in hopes that they could stay through the harsh winter months. However, economic strains, along with the challenges of adequately housing large amounts of people in small spaces, led some host families to request the re-accommodation of their refugee guests to other locations such as hostels, vacant hotels, barracks, and camps.

As stated previously, the flow of refugees into Croatia quickly overwhelmed the country. Because of its inability to deal with the increasing numbers of dislocated people within its territories, Croatian officials began transporting arriving refugees to other European nations, many of which were reluctant to admit entrance. According to Helsinki Watch (1992), it was "only after Croatia stated that they would leave refugees at their borders did Europeans begin to

accept a minimal number” (p. 97). When the war commenced, women in my study shifted from living in a state of stability to utter chaos. They survived difficult if not intolerable conditions in Croatia. Now they were forced to move yet again.

Country of First Asylum: Germany

As part of its humanitarian efforts, the UNHCR sought international burden sharing for the overwhelming needs of Bosnian refugees. The UN Refugee Agency assisted the Croatian government in seeking solutions for thousands of displaced people by either helping them repatriate to Bosnia, or to transferring them to an alternate country. By October 1992, UNHCR made special provision for the most vulnerable refugees; those who were not able to return to their homes. Between October 1992 and December 1994, the program resettled approximately 30,000 persons in other countries (UNHCR, 2009, p. 2).

Eight of the women in my study came to Phoenix by way of Germany (see Appendix 1). Most of them lived there for at least two years, some for as long as five years, before being forced to choose between returning to Bosnia and applying for asylum in the United States. Their experiences in Germany were varied. For Naida (48), being a refugee in Germany was humiliating:

The war killed my life. I had the best lifestyle before the war. I was an agent for Puchon, a fashion house. We sold shoes from Italy, England, and France. In Europe, clothes really matter, even shoes. I made good money because my city was small and we were one of the only fashion stores. My husband was even able to buy a Mercedes. The day before we left, my husband landed a big contract in Munich. It was going to bring us ½ million in paper. Don't get me wrong, it's

not about the money or power – it's about providing a normal life for my children. It's about building a certain kind of life, career – and then having it taken away. We had to start all over and become homeless. I'll never forget when I was a refugee in Germany. I can't speak German so it was hard for me to find a good job. I ended up being a house cleaner. I cleaned in silence. I'd clean this one lady's house two times a week. It was a very clean house. I'd come in and wonder what I was supposed to do. When I moved to Germany, I had just one shirt. I'd wash it each night and put it on in the morning. I never told people that we didn't have money. Some people talked about us not having money. I hate those pigs. That was private.

The juxtaposition of having once driven a Mercedes to now washing out a solitary shirt every night before going to clean someone else's house the next day was difficult for Naida. Her social identity did not match her experience in this space. There was no continuity.

Amila (21), however, holds great affection and cultural identification with Germany. In an earlier part of the interview, she described her attachment to Germany and her strong desire to return. She spent most of her elementary and junior high school years there. So strong is her affiliation to Germany that she is currently finishing a Master's in the German language and plans to return as a teacher. Below, Amila describes various shifts her family made in order to accommodate their displaced status and attempt to regain equilibrium in their lives:

Germany was the first place we tried to re-build our home. After my mom's parents were marched out into the woods, they were sent to a refugee camp in Croatia. We were able to get them out and they came to live with us in a one

bedroom apartment. There were eight of us living there and my little cousin was born there, too. That was a really tough year because we were all living in such a small place. Everyone was dealing with their own issues from the war. We were emotional, stressed out, and living on top of each other – with a crying baby! Finally we were able to move into separate apartments

Initially my family moved into a complex with another Bosnian refugee family. It was kind of an interesting relationship. They seemed to have a little loyalty to us but at the same time, they wouldn't let us use their bathroom. The place where we first moved was literally in a basement. All we had was a sink. We didn't have a toilet or shower – so we had to use the other family's bathrooms for the first couple of weeks until we could get into a real apartment. Sometimes, when we'd knock on the door, they'd say, "You can't use it right now!"

I don't connect that much with other Bosnians. Refugees that came through Germany usually stayed all together in these little houses like dorms. They didn't settle in because they believed they'd be returning to Bosnia. My family, on the other hand, went straight to getting an apartment and building a new life. We thought Germany was going to be our home. My mom enrolled me in German public school so I immediately began learning the language. Most other Bosnian children didn't learn German and didn't make German friends. I didn't have a single Bosnian friend; they were all German friends. Germany was my new life, my new home. My parents stressed that a lot. They wanted me to fit in, to excel, and to develop normally. That's why I'm not so much tied to the Bosnian

community outside of my family. We stayed in the same general neighborhood and started rebuilding our lives. We lived there for almost five years before Germany decided to kick most Bosnian refugees out. We were forced to leave. I was really sad.

Although women in my study were grateful to be away from the chaos of war, and harbored in a safer environment like Germany, they continued to face disruptions, uncertainty, and disillusionment. This discomfort of transience was compounded with their inability to find adequate employment. Any financial savings they had prior to leaving Bosnia had dwindled into nothing.

Merita (42), her husband, and their two children were reunited in Croatia after he had fought on the line for several months. They moved on to Germany to find employment. In the following excerpt, Merita reflects upon the economic pressures they experienced as refugees in Germany and how it impacted her personally:

After I left with the children, I drove to my sister-in-law's house and stayed there for three months by myself. Fadil stayed to fight in Bosnia. But when he got to Zagreb, there was no work. We couldn't stay there so we decided to move to Germany. I didn't want our children to suffer. When I got there, we rented our first apartment. We had nothing. Absolutely nothing. First, you have to give a down payment for the apartment – and that was the money we had saved. If you aren't making money, what good is it? Money melts. So all the money we had, disappeared. I said, "Oh my God, Fadil, - we don't even have cups to drink water from!" But he was calm and told me we had money enough to buy food. He said,

“We’re going to go buy food, and we’ll buy those little yogurts – and they will be our cups for coffee until my next paycheck.” I looked at him, and I looked at my kids – and said, “Oh my God, we had everything and now we have nothing. I want to kill myself.” And I meant it. He talked to me and said – “Look. All of this is material. See our kids? They are alive, you are alive, I am alive! We can do it again Merita. This is not worth killing yourself over. I know that it hurts that they took our beautiful house. But that house will never feel like home to them. It will not be blessed. They aren’t going to be blessed – they will suffer. But we’re healthy. We’ll re-build!”

Germany ended up being a transit station for most Bosnian refugees. During the war, it had given refuge to 350,000 Bosnians, the largest number of refugees in any European country (UNHCR, 2000). However, it was not long before the Bosnian guests became scapegoats for Germany’s internal woes which included popular fears that foreigners were overrunning the country and the rising rate of unemployment. By 1996, the interior ministers of the German government made a joint decision to send Bosnian refugees back to their homeland. They forcefully repatriated a thousand Bosnian refugees in 1996 and then started a large-scale repatriation effort that lasted through 1998 (UNHCR, 2000). Those going to an additional country (USA, Canada, or Australia usually), those severely traumatized, or those in need of medical attention were allowed to stay. Only the most vulnerable were allowed to stay. The acceleration process for repatriation had serious ramifications for the women in my study as 60% of Bosnians in Germany were being forced to return to enemy-occupied space: specifically, to Serbian held territories in the Srpska Republic (Bloch & Levy, 1999). As mentioned earlier, fourteen out of the nineteen women (see Appendix 1) in my study had been ethnically cleansed

from that area. Regardless of the trials and tribulations they had withstood as refugees, to return to their homes was now unthinkable. Home was no longer safe or tranquil, it had now become dangerous and foreboding.

Resettlement: Phoenix, Arizona

1995-1998

- *When they finally relocated to a new home in Phoenix, how did this new space compare to what they had left behind? What challenges did they face?*

Post-migratory stressors have recently been recognized as potentially traumatic experiences (Masic, 2000; Miller et al., 2002b; Pernice & Brook, 1996). For refugees who have already lived through multiple traumatic experiences due to war, conditions in the host country can either facilitate or hinder the success of refugee readjustment. Research indicates a correlation between psychological distress and the additional burdens refugees face such as unemployment, barriers to work and social services, loss of careers, lack of proficiency in language, and the loss of accustomed social roles (Miller et al., 2002b; Pernice & Brook, 1996; Weine, 1999). The women in my study had suffered multiple and sustained traumas throughout the war and the transitions that followed. The accounts that follow describe the tensions they faced upon arrival in Arizona.

The majority of women were relocated to Phoenix between 1995-1998. Those who came in the early years were settled by the International Rescue Committee in apartment complexes where Serbian and Croatia refugees were also housed. When talking about their transitions in Phoenix, they described the disorientation of going from a mountainous and fertile region to an

arid desert. They reflected upon the challenges of living inside urban sprawl, and trying to create an entirely new life in a place where they could not speak the language, read, or write. They noted the difference between Bosnian culture and U.S. culture. Finding meaningful work was also a focus.

From my analysis, I suggest there were two primary factors that seemed to shape the women's initial impressions of their new home of Arizona. The first factor was an idealistic expectation. These women had been living in limbo in Croatia and/or Germany. They were excited to arrive at a place where they could finally settle. The United States had promised them temporary residence status and given them seven years to apply for full citizenship; it was the land of opportunity. Phoenix represented a stable, new beginning. Second, the women's pre-war social and economic class status in Bosnia also shaped their reactions to and possibly their dreams regarding their new lives in the U.S. The lifestyle from which all of these women had come from would have been considered "middle class" by U.S. standards. How they imagined "home" was rooted in a historical notion and experience. Prior spatial experiences were intertwined with hopes and expectations. Their houses and neighborhoods in Bosnia served as a frame of reference for their expectations. Twigger-Ross and Uzzell (1996) suggest that a sense of "identity continuity" from the past to the present is an important component of emotional stability. What the women in my study immediately confronted, however, was a radical difference in the social, cultural, and economic context from which they came to that which they entered. Instead of the anticipated stability, they experienced further discontinuity and dislocation.

To illustrate this jarring difference in space and location, and its impact upon the women, I provide one excerpt that illustrates this transitional moment in rich detail. Elma (25) was twelve at the time, but her memory of what happen remains vivid.

I'll never forget the moment we arrived in Phoenix. We landed on August 31st, 1995, at 7 pm at night. It was really hot. Burning hot. We thought we had just walked into a sauna. It wasn't possible that we were standing outside in that kind of heat. We were so excited about being in America. We believed that the move might actually be good for us. God only knew where they'd be placing us – we might have really nice beds and food! We were moving, we were changing, we were anxious and nervous. We'd come over on a plane with a bunch of Bosnians. All the way over we exchanged stories; it was really exciting. When we landed we were full of anticipation about where they were going to take us. We actually felt hope! We weren't at a loss. We were moving into a community with other Bosnians that we could relate to, who could speak our language. The person that waited for us at the airport was a person who works for the IRC and they were Bosnian, too.

It wasn't as stressful until we got to the apartment. They placed us up in northwest Phoenix in a really run down and poor apartment complex. They gave us one mattress. They didn't even give us sheets. It was a pee'd on mattress from Goodwill. We walked into the apartment and cockroaches scattered everywhere. They equipped us with a couple of frying pans, and stuffed our fridge with food. All the food was Safeway brands. There was no Coca-Cola, just Safeway Cola.

What really offended my mom was that they put lunch meat in our fridge and it was ham. We can't eat ham. They also bought us pork hotdogs. They put in cheap food. That's not the way to welcome people into your country. We couldn't eat any of it. We walked into a dirty apartment with a pee'd on mattress, a couple of frying pans, and a fridge full of food we can't eat. It was furnished, but the furniture was really old and grey. My mom sat down and started bawling her eyes out.

I remember sitting down next to my mom. I had this profound moment – it was like, this is my time to be a grown up. It was the first time I felt my mom couldn't be there for us. She had been strong in Croatia, but she was just not strong enough for us now. She had broken down. We're in this strange, unwelcoming home – it is dark, the furniture was grey, the walls were smoked up, and the carpet was dirty and soiled. I picked up the broom and started sweeping. I tried to clean up the kitchen and kill the roaches. I said, "Mom, we'll have better – I promise. It will get better." I'm saying this to my mother and I'm twelve years old. I don't remember being freaked out, I don't remember crying, I remember saying, "Mom, it'll be o.k."

Prior to the war in Bosnia, Elma had a chauffeur who picked her up from grade school. As stated previously, because of the family's café bar, her parents were held in high esteem within the community; they were intimately connected with family and friends. Within two years, all of that was lost. Uprooted, displaced and relocated thousands of miles from their country, they sat inside a squalor that was supposed to be their "new" home.

As part of the post-migratory process, in addition to being forced to leave their home and country, Bosnians faced new employment challenges and demands in a strange cultural setting. As Kunz's (1973, 1981) research indicated, because these were 'acute' migrations, the experience of displacement was likely to be experienced stronger because refugees did not choose to leave their homes. When they fled, they did so without funds or belongings. In her research among Bosnian refugees in the United States, Franz (2005) found that while resettlement programs were extensive and offered a variety of services, refugees were pushed into early economic self-sufficiency. The women in my study had three months of minimal subsidy but were then cut off from any financial assistance. Without language facility, the emphasis on rapid employment pushed them in low paying jobs and they soon found themselves facing impossible odds to make ends meet. Thus, my findings are well reflective of those in Franz's (2005) research. Brief narratives are provided below to illustrate this point.

Mervita (58):

We were in a tiny apartment. My husband and I slept in the living room. We gave our son the only bedroom; at the time, our rent was \$500.00. It costs a lot to live. I found a job cleaning rooms at a hotel. I was so tired. I've never worked harder or been more tired in my life. I had to go to work because the government stopped giving us money. Since I didn't know English, I had to clean. I'd come from work very tired. Our bed was the sofa, and my husband would watch TV until 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning – and I had to get up at 6 to go to work. After months of working that hard, I could barely walk. I became very skinny because I

was cleaning eighteen rooms in the hotel. I was an awful job, the worst job – Oh my God. I should have tried to find work in a kitchen instead.

Nastja (23):

I think the Bosnian refugees came in waves. When we got here, we had to cope by ourselves because some of the connections weren't practical. There wasn't public transportation. Support services were downtown. Plus, in the U.S. there is more of an emphasis on independence and self-sufficiency. You don't get that much support as a refugee. I think you get a month or two financial aid but you have to find a job right away.

Naida (24):

The IRC gave us two months of food stamps. My mom refused to shop during the day because it was so embarrassing to her to use food stamps. The Fry's grocery store near us was open 24 hours. She'd wake me at 1 o'clock in the morning. Me, my mom, and a couple of other women in the neighborhood would go over and shop for our food so no one would see us. We'd pay with food stamps, and then come on home.

We had to shop for our clothes at Goodwill [second hand clothing store]. When you put all these things together, it was very difficult for my mom. We come from a prideful culture. It was such a blow for her to buy children used clothes and shop at Fry's in the middle of the night because of being too embarrassed of using good stamps. This was a time of deep struggle for my mom.

According to Breakwell (1986, 1992, 1993) continuity and self efficacy are two principles that shape how individuals experience their accommodation, assimilation and evaluation of social space. Evidence that continuity, or having control over the maintenance of a sense of personal sameness is vital for stability and psychological well-being. Fried (1963) found that loss of personal continuity due to unwanted and uncontrollable change in the physical environment could lead to long term grief and loss reactions. Alongside Erikson's (1976) study, their work illustrates how the principle of spatial continuity can help elucidate the psychological issues surrounding forced relocation.

Self-efficacy, as defined by Twigger-Ross and Uzzell (1996) is "...an individual's belief in their capabilities to meet situation demands. It is used as a measure of personal agency" (p. 208). They argue that feelings of efficacy are maintained when the environment supports the person's everyday lifestyle and needs. In the early years of settling in Phoenix, women in my study found it very difficult to carry out their responsibilities as wives and mothers. Middle aged mothers, specifically described the unmanageability and threat to their personal agency because of economic and cultural vulnerability. Paying bills and learning the language were the two most salient tensions that the middle age and older women described. Juggling full time work alongside the traditional demands Bosnian motherhood placed upon them was also a focus of their concern. The early years of transition were not easy for these women. All of them spoke of the kinds of personal and family adjustments that were required. They had to deal with initial negative impressions of place and the realities of U.S. culture that did not measure up to their dreams. They reported a range of emotions from confusion and disappointment to being thankful for their safety and security. Overall, however, resettlement for these women involved a loss of status and downward occupational mobility. The quality of their lives had been deeply

impacted. To recreate a sense of rootedness or to establish a home as metaphor for joy, celebration, and comfort seemed near impossible.

2008-2010: A Brief Developmental Analysis

- *How does current place identity and place attachment compare/contrast across age groups?*

The Majkas or Grandmothers

Attachment and adaption to place as it relates to identity varied among the women in my study. A woman's age and her developmental (life) stage were two of the most differentiating factors in how she responded to the traumatic events of war and relocation (these findings are consistent both during the war experiences and at present). Resettlement has been particularly difficult for the majkas (the grandmothers). These women came to the United States after their family members had settled in the United States. No longer employable, all of them were place-bound and dependent upon their children for transportation and economic security. They were isolated and socially alienated from their friends. Their primary interactions were among family members or other refugees. As a result, they continued to have difficulty with the language and negotiating U.S. culture. During the intergenerational interview, Aida (36) described her grandmother (Majka Mujesira) this way:

My grandma lives inside this apartment all day. She has no place else to go.

Losing her home was hard, hard, hard. Her neighbor took it over. They had been neighbors and friends for years. You have to know, Teri, that our culture is very communal. It's not like here where people move in and out. You grow up in our neighborhoods and you stay there. It was such a betrayal to her. Leaving Bosnia

was devastating. Now, we all go to work and she sits here by herself. What's become important to her is watching the news and TV channel in her native language. We bought a satellite so she could stay connected. When we get home, or if something big happens, she'll tell us what is going on in Bosnia. Her life still centers around memories and that sense of connection.

Mujesira (73) sits alone for six hours a day. "Home" is now a sprawling apartment complex just off a major highway in Phoenix. She lives with her daughter, son-in-law and two grandchildren. When she looks out the window there are no cobble stoned streets or chestnut woods. Not a single minaret interrupts the skyline. All she can see are more clay colored apartments, exactly like the one in which she sits. There is literally no spatial link between where she spent sixty two years of her life and now. Instead of home being a place as of succor, her dwelling has now become a place of drudgery.

In contrast, Majka Fatima (72) is younger, more mobile, and less dependent upon her children for economic support. At the end of her interview she expressed deep gratitude to God and to America for providing a safe refuge from the war. However, the circumference of place-identity leaves her with the angst of existential displacement:

Fatima (72):

I will never heal; people my age, my generation will never heal. The younger ones who have come here and been born here, that's a different story. But we will never forget. My sons, and us older ones will pay the consequences. We had to leave everything behind, our homes, our communities. The way I've tried to find peace is to preoccupy myself. I find friends, I go out, I swim in the pool during

the summer, and I exercise in the morning. All of these things take my mind away from the memories. Some of us older Bosnian women get together once a month.

I feel very betrayed by the war. I feel disappointed in the friendships that I thought I had – the strong friendships. I would never go back there to live. Never. I'm too scared. I visited last year after being away for fourteen years. I was very nervous. I didn't see anyone, not any familiar faces. I just saw strangers. Everything has changed. My family isn't there, it is no longer my country. It is no longer my home.

Fatima has strong place identification, a deep sense of place identity – and an immense attachment to a memory of home. For her, however, even though the physical space still exists, the spiritual and psychological realities have changed. She has become alienated, separated, and rendered an outsider from her home.

The Middle Aged Women

The middle age women in my study were also very attached to Bosnia, but did not hold a similar, fatalistic resignation about their futures. Their emotions were still strong and passionate about having been forcibly relocated to the U.S. Some expressed a longing for or mournfulness regarding the lives they had lost, while others carried indignation for the political implications of their loss. Merita appeared to be the angriest woman in my sample.

Merita (42):

I am angry that I have to leave my house. My sister lost everything. My mom and dad lost everything – after thirty or forty years. I'm angry. And I will never get over it. Never. No matter what, I will not ever mix my life with Serbians again. I don't need them as friends. I don't need them in my family. And my kids know that if they ever, ever have close friendship with them or God forbid starting dating them, they are done with me.

My husband asked me if I wanted to go see my house. Why? To see my next door neighbors? You know I can't keep my mouth shut. And I can't. If I went there and saw them, I would tell them what I think about them. I would never go back there!

Dixon and Durrheim (2000) critique place attachment theory as not locating emotional relationships to space within a larger socio-political context. They argue that a proper understanding of people's emotional relationships must be contextualized and politicized for adequate analysis. Merita's extended family was from Tuzla, a city that was decimated by the war. Several members of her family were murdered and raped in that space. In an earlier part of her interview, she expresses frustration at the inadequacy of the justice system and the reality of having to live with such inconsolable grief. No matter how attached Merita is to her motherland, its landscape remains an irreconcilable social and political fact that continues to haunt her. She lives with the paradox of the fact that Bosnia was her home, is her home, yet will never again truly be her home. These psychological and emotional complexities illustrate the on-going ways

in which people negotiate their identities with space even when it is located a few thousand miles away.

In the following narrative segment, Azra (52) reflects the kind of ambivalence most the middle age women in my study expressed about their new lives in the United States. She is thankful to be away from the instability of the war, but she is cognizant of how it changed the quality of her life:

If the war hadn't happened, life would be simple. We were so happy before the war. I had a beautiful home and my café bar. Now, we have so much conflict and tension in our family. It is much more difficult. If it weren't for the war, I wouldn't be facing these conflicts. You know, you never get "better" from the war. I'll always live with the war, Teri. Maybe when I'm busy during the day, I don't remember what happened – but it never goes away. No pill is going to take the war away from me. I always tell people, you can take a pill and relax for a little while but the next day, you still wake up to the memories and to your reality. I think it is important to stay focused on my life, my children, my family – and to learn how to breathe easier. I have worked hard to make a decent home. Right now, I am happy with my job. I work with old people from ages 90-100. Even though I don't get paid much, I really enjoy helping them and I find it meaningful.

Azra is a repatriated citizen of the United States. She is relieved to be away from the scourge of war and living inside a stable environment. Along with the other women, however, she recognizes all that was lost and left behind. She expresses nostalgic longing for her beautiful home and way of life. These refugee women fully understand the impact and weight the war

placed upon their lives. They continue to feel how it severed them from their Bosnian identities. The women in my study seem to hold an emotional paradox: they are so grateful to the United States for granting them safe refuge, but there is despair that they are now one of its citizens. They miss a sense of belonging, and the place they call home.

The Younger Women

The young adult women had quite different responses from the other women in my study about place identity and place attachment to Bosnia. These distinctions are not arbitrary. Having spent all of their late childhood and adolescent years being socialized outside the boundaries of Bosnia, their affiliation to their homeland was mixed. Place attachment may imply a sense of rootedness and place, but for some of these women, it represented parochialism instead. For them, mobility brought freedom, opportunity and new experiences alongside the uprootedness and loss.

Nastja (23) is a junior at Arizona State University. She came to the United States after spending five years as a refugee in Germany. She and her mother fled to Croatia when she was three. Because of the war, Nastja has lived most of her life outside the borders of Bosnia. Many of her family members still live there; she has been fortunate to visit a few times. Nastja is quite articulate about her affinity to the United States:

I am very Americanized. I have to be honest and say that I'm not very connected to the local Bosnian community here in Phoenix. When I visited our family home in Bosnia two years ago, it was really eerie. The only real direct taste of culture is through what my parents taught me and the kind of values I grew up through. I wouldn't be the person I am today had I had stayed in Bosnia and grown up there.

I would have resumed my life, living in a small city. There's a small part of me that's glad, in a way, for the war. I wouldn't be here with endless opportunities in my life. I wouldn't have had the same kind of freedoms as a woman – to pursue my career. It would have been more traditional. I probably would have married earlier, whereas now, I'm more liberal. Here in America, there's a difference. As a woman, if you want something, you work hard for it, and show your talent – you will be rewarded.

The theme of acculturation was pronounced in all my interviews with the young women. Elma, Mirzada and Naida each talked about how they felt trying to please their parents while also fitting into the social customs and expectations of their American peers. Often accused of becoming “Americanized” their families put heavy social constraints around them. These women also described the continued expressions of Bosnian culture within their home. They only spoke Bosnian to their parents, meals were still traditional foods, and parents tended to socialize with other Bosnians; by in large, when they were not in school, these women lived inside a re-situated microcosm of Bosnia here in Phoenix.

Naida (24):

My mom doesn't want me to date outside my religion or nationality. Well, what does that leave me? There aren't a lot of choices. I'm an educated woman. I'm not going to step down just because a guy is Bosnian – to satisfy mom. They want me to keep Bosnian culture alive. It is very important to them and something they want me to strive for. They don't want us to adapt to the American culture. My mom always calls us Americanized.

Elma (25):

My parents have always tried to keep the celebratory part of our culture alive.

There is this sentiment that if you couldn't live life in Bosnia, we could figure out how to re-create it here. We've always been committed to keeping pieces of our culture alive. We still play music, we barbecue, we sing our songs and dance.

You've seen, we beam Bosnian television through our satellite dish. God – we even have a picture of Tito on our wall!

Elma's reflection illustrates place referent continuity which Korpela (1989) describes as:

The continuity of self experience is also maintained by fixing aids for memory in the environment. The place itself or the objects in the place can remind one of one's past and offers a concrete background against which one is able to compare oneself at different times... This creates coherence and continuity in one's self-conceptions. (p. 251)

Just because the Dzanic's (Elma's parents) were forced to leave Bosnia did not mean they were no longer Bosnian. They were determined to keep claim on what had been revoked from them by the Serbians and to bring up their children in a culturally consistent way. This same dynamic was prevalent throughout the households in which all of the young women in my study resided. Living inside dual worlds has not been easy for them; neither was the transitory nature of their developmental years. My analysis revealed that as a result of the displacement and mobility in their lives, these women have not identified with any one space as home.

Amila (21):

I have been back but it's not the same. It's the same, but it's not the same. I don't feel a sense of home there anymore. Everything looks the same but it is more fallen apart – and it feels like something is missing. I can't quite put my finger on it. Germany feels much more like my home than Bosnia does now.

But I am American, yet I'm not. It's all so very confusing.

The young adult women in my study moved through three or four emotionally potent spaces during a very intense time of their social identity development. Bosnia, Croatia, Germany, and now the United States are the spaces that hold pivotal life stories. Their current attitudes, beliefs, and actions describe a confluence of these experiences. Although they are clearly more rooted in the United States than their mothers and majkas, these women still physically look, speak, dress, and behave as an outsider to their contemporaries. They were shaped around a Bosnian family table but also in the hallways of Croatian, German and U.S. schools. I suggest that their ambiguity around a definition of home and attachment is a reflection of their ability to combine the positive aspects of place attachment and mobility with a more complex worldview. Their identities are dense and multifaceted; a reflection of old world values and post Modern constructs.

Conclusion

- *What are the psychological consequences brought about by uprooting?*
- *How does their past identity attachments to Bosnia affect their healing processes?*

Research indicates that psychological well being is correlated to a strong, well developed relationship with space that is nurturing (Fullilove, 1996). A sense of belonging brings unity, meaning, and anchoring to people's lives. Belonging evolves through the experiences of attachment, familiarity, and identity. What I have attempted to describe in this chapter is how, for the women in my study, place attachment, place identity, and an idea of "home" were impacted as a result of the war. I argue that for some, being uprooted and dislocated left ineradicable marks upon their psychological well-being and identity. For others, while the impact has not been as severe, space and its relationship with identity continue to be sources of tension and disorientation. Place attachment to Bosnia and being severed from the connection of its past, present, and future has impacted all of their healing process to varying degrees.

My analysis strongly suggests that place mattered to these women, but in different ways. For the majkas and middle aged women, place meant attachment, security, home, continuity, and community. Majkas talked about their roots; theirs was an especially strong and long lasting emotional attachment to a specific locale. Losing their homes and deep sense of connection within the community was a source of significant and continued pain. They expressed nostalgia, disorientation, and alienation. The middle aged women also mourned the loss of their identification with home and community, but they spoke through a more politicized anger. They have moved on, but in a defiant fashion. Because all of the majkas and middle aged women experience place-identity and place-attachment to Bosnia, they expressed an uneasiness or ambivalence about being in the United States. None of them identify with U.S. culture, and yet they were thankful and relieved to be here. Even though they miss home, long for home, and wish they could go home, none of them will. The homes they once knew are gone. Even if the structures such as a house, sidewalk, café, and park remain, the spirit of the space has changed.

The scent of Serbia now fills those places and renders the sense of past unity and multicultural respect null and void.

Thus, for the majkas and middle age women, being rooted meant having a deep bond to a place that was highly specific and literally irreplaceable. Home, neighborhood, region, and country were all involved in their definition of place. They felt a sense of security, belongingness and social identity within a local, place-based community. As they spoke about relationships, they were tightly bound to other individuals. Their biographies, experiences and emotions were tied to Banja Luka, Sarajevo, Prejidor or Dobož. Most of these women had spent the entirety of their lives within 50 kilometers of where they were forced to flee. Home was rivers and trees. Home was snowcapped mountains. Home was Cevapi (traditional meat dish) and cigarettes.

As stated, though all of the women were forced to leave Bosnia, there was a variance in regard to be uprooted. For the oldest women in my study, their lives had been severed or cut off at the roots. They expressed despair, despondency and resignation. For them, psychological or spiritual healing cannot occur. They will likely live out the remainder of their years in the United States and know that their bodies will be buried in soil that is not their own. There is no bond, attachment or identity connection with the United States. Because of what happened in Bosnia, they are permanently and psychically dislocated from their homeland. Middle aged women were more variant in their responses. While they shared melancholy for an aborted life, for some there was a persistent resentment about what had happened to them during the war. It was as if they wanted nothing to do with a space that still so definitively defined them. These women are the ones that carried the most burdens. For example, Ada's (19) description of her mom mirrors all of the younger women's reflections about their mothers:

My mom was really impacted by the war. I consider her generation the lost generation, because well, for her, she lost everything. It wasn't her fault. And she had to start all over again. She did everything she could so that my life would be o.k. Since the war, all she's done is sacrifice to make others happy. She's lost so much because of the war.

They worked hard to rebuild their lives. As I will explore in Chapter Five, they did so on behalf of their children and to support their husbands. Their needs and desires were set aside out of duty, love, and kinship.

Finally, for the younger women in my study, place holds a different significance. Their sense of home is liminal; they are neither from the United States nor from Bosnia. At the same time, for these women, space or locus represents opportunity for freedom, knowledge, and the possibility of transcending the past. They are not bound to the same traditional strictures of their mothers. The young adult women talked about a desire to re-connect with their roots in Bosnia. All of them have visited Bosnia within the last two years; most of them are even willing to live there for a time. None of them plan to give up their blue (U.S.) passports. Space in Bosnia represents history, family, culture and early childhood. However, their memories are vague. Although recollections of fleeing are filled with terror, the predominant emotion they expressed for Bosnia was affection. Place in the United States represents personal development and freedom. They are schooled and focused on careers. These women hold the strongest attachment to the United States, but it is still not thick. They seem to be seeking equilibrium in their social identities by retaining ethnic/cultural affiliations as hyphenated Americans (Bosnian-American).

Chapter 5

SEPARATION (IDENTITY AND RELATIONSHIP)

Introduction

Accounts of the atrocities waged against individuals, families, and communities in Bosnia during 1992-1995 are numerous. Although many people endured harsh living conditions, little to no access to health care services, and the destruction of their beloved properties, what may be more difficult for them to grasp is the rupturing that took place within the fabric of their relationships. Civil war is particularly shattering because it disassembles family and communal structures causing immense social disruption (Ghobarah, Huth & Russett, 2004; Harvey, 1996; Sideris, 2003; Summerfield, 2002). The impact of war upon families is felt most intimately. Gender roles, family structures, and parenting tasks are undermined by poverty, death, dislocation, physical health and mental distress (Cairns, 1996). The complexity and interplay of such stressors, alongside a lack of social resources to cope with them make psychosocial adjustment difficult for those living in exile. Postwar realities confront refugees with a myriad of tasks, one of which is re-building social identities and social expressions that make sense to them (Summerfield, 2000). For the women in my study, this was one of their most salient and yet unresolved challenges; the way war had redefined their identities as women, as wives, as mothers, and as children. The objective of this chapter is to analyze how the war impacted women's identities, women's roles and subsequent healing processes.

Bosnian Women's Identities and Roles

Identity theorist Stryker (1980) defines identities as “‘parts’ of self – internalized designations [that] exist insofar as the person is a participant in a structure role relationship” (p.

60). Social identities are self-meanings that subsequently derive from these role expectations. Through shared social gestures, roles develop that carry with them shared behavioral expectations. According to Hunt (2003), family, community and culture bring shape and definition to these roles. The self is a “multidimensional construct whose structure reflects the institutionally differentiated nature of society” (p. 72). In other words, social groups attach particular expectations to certain positions (Stryker, 1980). Lawler (2003) elaborates by suggesting that the enacting of individual roles is largely shaped by social structures or patterned regularities.

To understand the challenges Bosnian refugee women faced during the war and post-war transitions, it is important to situate them in the context of cultural assumptions and values related to gendered roles. Although for purposes of this project the analytical and historical scope of women’s roles in Bosnian is limited, it is necessary to provide a general overview of the cultural legacies that shaped how these women conceptualize their roles in order to contrast their current social context in the United States. As Azra (52) described:

Being a woman in Bosnia is entirely different from being a woman in the United States. In the U.S. women have so many freedoms; they can go into a bar by themselves, they can have a drink with people. Personally, I don’t like to behave like this. I like to be with my husband – probably because I was raised this way. We must respect the men. I really like being with him and feel more comfortable when he is around. In Bosnia, we were raised to believe that we should be with our men. Some of my Bosnian friends have changed since being here, but not me. I was raised this way and I prefer it.

During this portion of the interview, Azra contrasts how wives and husbands in Bosnia relate to one another with her perception of how they relate to each other in the United States. She also notes that while some of her friends have culturally assimilated, she actively chooses not to. Azra prefers the Bosnian expectation of her role and position as wife. She appreciates being with her husband and as we will see later, she enjoys serving him.

Bosnian culture is essentially communal (Bringa, 1995; Weine et al., 2004; Weine et al., 2005). A review of the literature on the social positions of women elucidates a “traditional” kinship patterns called *zadruga*. Lockwood (1972) described a *zadruga* as an extended family household which ideally contained “a man, his wife, his married sons with their wives and children” (p. 58). Before the war, especially in rural areas, property, livestock and land was held through patrilineage. Additionally, it was the oldest male who directed and defined women’s activities (Robertson & Duckett, 2007). A well defined division of labor included mothers caring for children, preparing food, and maintaining the home (Bringa, 1995; Lockwood, 1972). Although the term “*zadruga*” has been argued to be a nationally held ideal or myth (Todorova, 1997; Vittorelli, 2002) elements of this traditional kinship arrangement and understanding were evident in my data. For example Sabina (52) said:

We were raised to respect our husbands, our fathers, and older people. We respect older people by making sure they are taken care of, and it is important to be proper. We never use the pronoun “you” with them. If they come to the house, you must get up and give them a proper Muslim greeting – peace be with you. If my father told me to do something, I did it, even after I got married. It was disrespectful to argue with him. He had the last word. If he said, “Sabina, go clean the bathroom,” I’d say, “OK”, and go. I’d never tell him that I had other

things to do, or that I'm tired. No. If he asked me to go to the store or do anything, I'd obey him. He never ordered me around angrily, but I don't remember him saying please. If he said, "Give me the plate", I'd just jump and give it to him. No comments, no arguments.

Helms (2003) contends that it is unfair to generalize "traditional" kinship and gender regimes because such traditions "varied widely over space and time and have been transformed by and incorporated into the changing social, economic, political and demographic realities of the past century" (p. 46). Often these norms are described as "backwards" or tribal (Denich, 1974; Vittorelli, 2002) which simplifies, categorizes, and often "others" descriptions of the Balkans (Helms, 2003). Many feminists take issue with role theory for similar reasons. They argue that it perpetuates sexist stereotypes and encourages researchers to think within those stereotypes (Epstein, 1988). Connell (1987) contends that role theory can be a form of social determinism that actually traps individuals within stereotypes stressing.

Regardless of whether or not the *zadruga* is a social myth or perhaps perpetuates a "traditional" kinship stereotype, a cooperative and kinship structure existed and continues to express itself in Bosnian culture (Denich, 1974; Lockwood, 1972; Robertson & Duckett, 2007). Patriarchal values and patrilocal (a social system in which a married couple resides with or near the husband's parents) practices (Halpern & Anderson, 1970) reinforce the subordination of women. Denich (1974) described the reinforcement of subordination through ritualized acts of deference such as women remaining quiet, kissing the hands of males, or eating separately from them. Reflections from each sub-set of women in my study describe similar expressions of service and gender expectations:

Fatima (72):

But let me tell you – before the war, people always thought a woman should be below a man. She had to be submissive. There were a lot of cases of domestic violence. A woman was scared to leave, to disobey, to do anything wrong.

Azra (52):

I treat my husband the same way I treated my father. I serve him. I serve my children, too. At dinner, I put their plates on the table and at the end, I take the plates back off the table. To be a good wife and mother, it means to cook. My job is to cook, clean, serve people, wash the clothes, ironing – that's what we women in Bosnia do. My father made my mom stay home. She had a career, but he told her to quit her job. He told her, "I work for the money, but you are here to serve. You are to do everything; raise the children, cook, clean – from morning until midnight." I remember that my mom washed and ironed every day because she had three kids. She used to iron until after midnight. My dad expected everything to be perfect. That's the way it still is in Bosnia.

Naida (24):

In Bosnian culture, a common factor is that the guy is the dominant figure in the household. My dad's side of the family came from a rural area. He moved to Sarajevo when he was fourteen. His sister, my aunt – who lives here now... she got married to a guy from that village. To this day, my uncle still has the top hand over everything. She doesn't get to touch the money, she doesn't get to make any

decisions, nothing, nothing. She's pretty much there to cook and bring in the money if she works. She can't even get a driver's license.

Although urbanization, socialism, and the war altered *zadruga* and kinship patterns, values and customs of family arrangements persist (Bringa, 1995). While women are often measured by and confined to domestic and childrearing responsibilities, male gender roles are expressed in the public sphere and as authority figures. They do not engage in "women's work". In my first focus group, the women opened up our discussion about women's roles this way:

Azra (52): In Bosnia, the man is on top.

Mirzada (19): He is the provider for the house. That's the way it is in Bosnia. Men provide for the house and women stay home.

Aida (53): I disagree.

Mirzada: It is mostly like that!

Aida: I have a job. Some women go to work....

Mirzada: That's true.

Aida: But when I come home from work, I still cook and clean up.

Mirevta: The man doesn't do too much. Nothing. Nothing.

Although there was some conflict about whether or not Bosnian men are still the sole providers in the home, there was no argument about their assistance in helping with household chores. In my visits to several Bosnian homes, I consistently observed this dynamic. For example, all meal preparation and clean up was done by women. Additionally, they served others first; at times women sat in the kitchen and away from the table to eat. When dinner was over, typically the men in the household went to another room or to the patio to smoke and converse while the

women did the dishes. It did not appear that these customary roles were problematic or resented. Similar to Franz's (2003) findings in her research among Bosnian refugees, the women in my study realized the need to adapt and socially negotiate a new environment in the United States, but they continued to define themselves through family relations, culture, and religious tradition. Their self-understanding remained tied to a modified *zadruga* pattern.

Connell (1987) raises an additional feminist critique against role theory by explaining the need to explore the larger societal controls such as rewards and/or punishments for maintaining certain positions. Because of the social dimension of role theory, Connell (1987) contends there is no such thing as voluntarism or the general assumption that people choose to maintain these customs. Although some of my data concurs with her assessment (which I explore further in the next chapter), this was not the case for the women in my study specifically as it related to being wives and mothers. As much as these women joked and teased about their subservient roles, it is important to note the ways in which they also participated in these gender ideologies. For women from the former Yugoslavia, reputation in the community and self-identity are related to hard work and the sacrifices they make on behalf of their families. Olsen (1989) found that the most respected and admired women in the community were those who were perceived as virtuous, self-sacrificing, and worked tirelessly on behalf of their loved ones.

Simic (1983) contends that in Bosnian culture, there are incentives for upholding patriarchal order. In her research, she found women arguing that they were not disadvantaged, but in fact wielded great power through their households. Toward the end of my interview with the Hodza, he illustrated this kind of matriarchal power via two common aphorisms:

We have a couple of jokes or sayings in Bosnia – but they hold truth. One is, the man says, “I’m the head of this family” and the women, they say, “Well, I am the

neck.” Or the second one is, the man says, “Oh, everybody knows who wears the pants in this house.” And the wife says, “And everyone else knows who tailored those pants.” Even though they are saying that as a joke, I believe there is truth to these sayings.

Helms' (2003) research findings suggest that “[n]ot only were women’s nurturing roles a path to power in the family, but women also gained moral authority as respectable, diligent/valuable women by demonstrating their self-sacrifice and dedication to their families” (p. 50). This was a consistent attitude among the majkas and middle age women in my study. In my interviews with them, they emphasized their children’s education, economic aims, and searching for better homes. Although middle age women, in particular, described the post-war exhaustion of combining their household responsibilities with the necessity of working outside the home, there was a sense of pride expressed in their gendered roles especially as it related to motherhood. They seemed reluctant to relinquish the moral power tied to their social positioning.

In my interview with the Hodza, he described the expression of moral strength and courage of the women at the mosque:

Most of the women in my community were strong, they went through war hardship, were physically abused. If their husbands are alive, they are the ones who carried the men. Not the other way around. They are the ones who energized their husbands. In general, it is the wives that boost the families.

I don’t believe you’ll find women who will talk about their personal war experiences. Yes, they might be willing to reference their experiences if someone talks about how hard their life is. They’ll say, “well you don’t know how hard

life can be....” But you’ll never hear them share casually about their experiences. It is more important to them to strengthen their husbands. They don’t want to complain. I’d be surprised if you had any woman in this community actually tell you what happened to them. They don’t want to be labeled as the person who couldn’t deal with the pain. They want to be seen as a strong person – not as weak, vulnerable, or crazy.

The Hodza is signaling the ideal that he and members of his community hold regarding a “good” Bosnian woman. They are strong, they are hard working, they are quiet and they focus on the well-being of their families. For women acculturated in Bosnia, the relationship between identity and family gender roles is significant. Being a “good” wife and/or mother almost characterizes what it means to be a woman. For them, identity is defined through familial relationship. The majkas and middle age women in my study knew who they were because they were wives and mothers. However, ethnic cleansing and the circumstances of exile destroyed the family systems they once knew. A rupture occurred within the expression of zadruga because extended families and neighbors were pulled apart. As major social structures dissembled or were demolished, gender role expectations were subsumed by the pragmatism of what it took to stay alive.

War’s Impact upon Relationships

War undermines the foundation of family and community life (Summerfield, 2002). As a consequence of the ethnic cleansing that took place in Bosnia during 1992-1995, hundreds of thousands of people were forced to leave their homes. The United Nations Commission of Experts (1993) described the means of rendering Bosnian areas ethnically homogenous to

include murder, torture, arbitrary arrest and detention, extrajudicial executions, rape, sexual assault, and confinement of the civilian population, deliberate military attacks or threats of attacks on civilians and civilian areas, and wanton destruction of property. A study among refugees in Croatia conducted by Ajdukovic and Ljubotina (1995) revealed that 80% of the inhabitants' homes had been destroyed. Over half of those interviewed had been exposed to a direct bombing and had lost everything that they owned. Family members and friends had died; loved ones were wounded, others had been separated or even disappeared. Many had witnessed relatives being abused and murdered. People who had survived multiple traumatic events faced the difficult prospect of healing without the support of their kinship ties because their family members were either separated from them or dead.

Death

The brutal Bosnian war included sieges, ethnic cleansing, sniper fire, mortar attacks, and artillery fire and took a large human toll throughout the countryside. By the time the Dayton Agreement was signed, between 150,000 and 250,000 Bosnians were killed or missing (Bisogno & Chong, 2002; Matul & Kline, 2003; World Bank, 2002). The World Bank (2002) estimates that the number of Bosnians who were wounded ranged from 200,000 to 400,000. In my interviews, women consistently accounted for deaths of their family members:

Beba (49):

A lot of people were killed and died in my family. Seventeen on my mother's side. My grandfather, my mother's dad, and seventeen other close family members. They lived in Foca.

Mera (80):

In the 7th month, '92, I lost a nephew who I loved like my own son. I lost my brother the same day. Of course I don't want to remember that. You won't believe me. My brother was fifty-nine when he was killed, my sister was sixty-four. I lost two nephews and a son of a nephew. I remember the loss. These are the memories that I carry with me. I can't put them away. They are very hard to deal with.

Adevija (71):

You can never forget, good times let alone bad times. My brother disappeared. I never found out what happened to him. Another lost an eye in Banja Luka.

Mujesira (73):

I lost a lot of relatives – an uncle, a son. One of my relatives was beaten so badly his brain start coming out of his skull.

Fatima (72):

One morning my brother-in-law was leaving home to go somewhere. He heard screaming and gun shots coming from a neighbor's home. He went to help the couple, but they were already shot. And then, as he was trying to help them, he got shot. We found him on the street. He was killed trying to help them.

Few things in life are more painful than the death of a loved one. The universal and personal response to these losses is grief that even in the best circumstances can dominate one's emotional life for years to come. Death caused by this war was not the best of circumstances; family members died violently. How does one mourn the simultaneous loss of seventeen people? Those who survive the death of a loved must come to terms with the death itself. They may also have to make sense of the manner of death, as well as the day to day consequences of being without that person. These women continue struggling to come to terms with deaths that were so violent, deliberate, and widespread. Research indicates that it may take a survivor even longer to deal with the loss if they are simultaneously dealing with other concerns such as dislocation, psychosocial stresses or other losses (International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies, 2005). Complicating "normal" grieving for the women in my study are the compounding multiple stressors, multiple traumatic events, and multiple losses. Additionally, roles and relationships that had so defined their identities were destroyed or significantly altered. In a "traditional" zadruga, not only is family an extension of self, it is also the source of security and support. As Herman (1992) and Summerfield (2002) suggest, recovery from trauma takes places in the context of safe relationships. These women were separated or severed from their loved ones.

Not Dead but not Present

Not only were family members killed, but because of sudden and/or forced locations, they were also separated. Aida's (36) following reflection synthesizes how several women described the global destruction of their extended family life:

The war ripped apart our family. The greatest impact on all of us was psychological damage. We lost friends and we lost family members. We became separated and scattered through different countries. We weren't able to call each other, and were worried about one another. We didn't know where some family members ended up, whether or not they survived, what had happened to them. Before the war, we were very connected because we came from a small town. But then, all of a sudden – we were torn apart. I remember we waited and waited for news about my uncle who was fighting on the line. None of us knew if he was dead or alive.

In this passage Aida also references the same concern that many women in my study recounted: waiting for news about the whereabouts of their fathers, husbands, and sons. During the war, Muslim men were being targeted by Serbian forces. The ICRC estimated that of 18,000 missing persons during the war, 92% were men (cited in Carpenter, 2003). Many were forced into hiding, conscripted, killed as soldiers, or placed in detention centers. As a pattern, the Bosnian Serbian Army separated women and children from men – permitting them to flee on foot or by convoy out of conflict zones. In many cases the males left behind were summarily executed (Helsinki Watch 1992/1993). Although no fathers or sons were murdered in my study, fifteen out of the nineteen women had men in their biological families detained, go into hiding, fight on the line, and/or were separated from them due to the war.

Absence of Sons and Fathers

The absence of men in a patrilocal culture is especially felt because of their traditional and protectorate roles. Vulnerability, as a result of separation, was a strong theme throughout my

interviews. For example, the majkas described a dependence upon their sons, or expressed the fear they felt because of their absence:

Adjevija (71):

Four men came and took my son away. I didn't see him get beaten. I wasn't at home when they came. My son lived with me at the time. Afterwards, he left and went into hiding. We were left alone and Sabina (daughter-in-law) was pregnant. I was very afraid when we fled. I just prayed to God.

Fatima (72):

I was very afraid when we were left alone after my sons departed for Germany. They had to leave or they would have been taken to a detention center. We were so afraid of the neighbors. One man would get drunk and sing Serbian songs and threaten to kill us. We didn't see our sons for over a year.

Enisa (82):

In Banja Luka – the kids lost their jobs because of being Muslim, they stayed inside their apartments. They were hiding and couldn't venture out. I stayed at my home, and they would stay at their homes. We rarely saw each other because they couldn't come over. Once, Fudo was coming over to see me to bring firewood on the bicycle. I had no electricity and had to start fires to keep warm. He was bringing wood to help me. But they caught him and took him to jail.

These women were in their early 60's when the war broke out. Their grown sons were the age of assuming social prestige and authority in the community. Through zadruga and kinship patterns it would have been customary for these men to physically and economically support their aging mothers (Simic, 1983). The elderly mother-son social role expectations were unhinged because of the war leaving these women exposed to the dangers of ethnic violence. In the absence of their children, the women in my study felt fearful and threatened. They were not psychologically prepared to live isolated from their protectorates nor did they have the financial means to support themselves.

The young women in my study who were children during the time of the war spoke vividly about the absence of their fathers. Additionally, five out of the six women in this sub-set witnessed harms done to their fathers. Similar to Green & Kocijan-Hercigonja's (1998) research findings of Bosnian families during the war, these children had been directly exposed to shelling, grenades, rockets, and armed militia. They had also been forced from their homes and often witnessed the destruction of their communities. Worse, the young women in my study witnessed threats or acts of sexual assault, physical assault, wounding, and/or killing of members in their kinship networks – including family members, friends, and neighbors.

Elma (25), who was 8 at the time of this incident, continues to feel anguish and responsibility for what happened to her father during the war:

In my town, the Serbs had a list of all the names of men that were Muslim, and where they were located. Every night they had what we called a "red van". It was filled with police officers and they would go on raids, picking up men and finding them in their homes. Most men knew this was happening so they would hide. But they would pick up men and then take them to concentration camps.

All the kids in the neighborhood played outside in the same area where my parents had their bar. Another friend owned a bar across the street. Everything was in the vicinity – it was like a small farmer’s market, so we played in that area. Our parents would tell us “if you see the red van, or hear a siren, run through the streets and scream red van!” My dad had a hiding place right underneath a meat market. The guy had a kind of sword space, so he would let my dad hide there because he usually worked nights. I saw a red van and I started yelling red van red van! My dad heard me and started running away. That first time he managed to hide – but he was later caught. I didn’t witness my dad get taken away. When he was, I wasn’t outside playing. That was pretty significant for me because I felt a sense of guilt that I hadn’t been out there to warn him about the red van. To this day, I feel haunted that I wasn’t there to protect him. He would not speak about what they did to him, but he came back home a different man.

In an interview between journalist Biljana Gagula (1999) and war time mayor of Banja Luka, Predrag Radic, the infamous “red van” was referenced. It was a vehicle used to pick up Muslim and Croat men and transport them to detention centers where they would be beaten or killed. Before Elma’s father was picked up, she had previously witnessed their neighbor being pulled out of his home and forced into the van. In that scene she describes how the man was dragged out of the house in front of his wife and children, beaten severely and then thrown into the back of the red van where several other bleeding men were confined. To Elma’s horror, she was not there when the van came for her father; she was unable to protect him. What happened between Elma and her father is another example of how roles and identities shifted or collapsed during the war. Instead of being protected by a parent, Elma assumed the responsibility of

protecting her parent at the age of eight. This also illustrates the complexities of psychological healing. Though Elma is clearly not responsible for the harm done to her father while he was in detention, she continues to blame herself for not being more diligent.

In the following passage Mirzada (19) also references the vulnerability she felt because of her father's helplessness and because of his absence. When the war commenced, her family lived in Teslic. During June 1992, a rogue band of Serbian "red berets" later known as "Mice" entered their small town. They took over the police station and began rounding up Bosnian men. They beat prisoners with wooden clubs to the point that "Teslic policeman were running away in order not to watch the spectacle" (Popovic, van der Haiden, & Novine, 1999, p. 1). In the aftermath of this initial blood orgy, eighteen of the prisoners were executed in the nearby forest of Klupe. Beatings and executions lasted for another twenty days until police from neighboring cities Dobjo and Banja Luka intervened (Popovic, et al., 1999.) Mirzada was four at the time:

Right when the war started, the Serbians used to go from house to house and take men to the concentration camps. They'd beat them and then let them go. A group of men took my dad. He doesn't talk about what happened, but sometimes I hear him talk on the phone with his friend in Norway. They get drunk and talk about the war. They picked up my dad and investigated him and then beat him at the police station. There were big cuts on his back. I remember a lot of blood. My mom would wash off his back with alcohol. I was so afraid. He wasn't part of the army at that time but he joined when we moved to the cabin. Once he was in the army we never saw him. We were always alone. Nights were really bad. I couldn't go to sleep because of all the gunshots. I could hear them pass by the house; I'd hear explosions, too. I have a lot of anxiety now. I sweat to the point

of dripping. My mom thinks it developed during the war when I was really little. I used to scream all the time when there was gunfire. I would stand in the corner and scream and scream and scream.

These young girls experienced vulnerability and threat because their fathers were either defenseless or not present to keep them safe. Emotional distance was another psychological by-product from the breakup of family ties during the war. Four out of the six young women in my study were separated from their fathers for an extended period of time. Naida (24), who fled with her mother in the convoy out of Sarajevo, was separated from her father from the age of 8-11. In her interview, she reluctantly talks about the emotional distance that occurred because of the war.

After Croatia, we went to Germany. My mom is a fighter; she got through a lot. And my dad, I don't know exactly what happened. He stayed back, I don't know what he did. I just know he doesn't like talking about it. It's a taboo subject. It's just basically not talked about. I know my dad actually taught people how to shoot. My mom briefly mentioned what he did during the war. He educated guys on how to figure out distance and how to shoot a target. He also worked with radio stations and was able to figure out how to stay in contact with us. We were apart from my dad for four years. Honestly, during that time, my dad – I feel badly saying this - became alien. It was very difficult to see him again. It took me a long time to feel comfortable around him again.

Ada (19), who was also in Sarajevo when the city was besieged, was seven when she and her mother escaped. Her father also stayed behind to fight on the line. To this day, she is not

sure what happened to cause his permanent separation from their family. During the interview she was clearly uncomfortable and reticent to talk about his disappearance from her life. In Ada's mind, she lost her father because of the war:

We thought that we'd only be in Croatia for a year. My dad was in Bosnia in the army at the time. After a few months he was discharged but he never came to find us. Something happened, but I'm not sure what. He called and asked my mom for a divorce. I didn't have any contact with him until just a few years ago. I heard he was living in Austria. I saw him two years ago and that was really the first time in fourteen years, so... We don't really talk. I'll get a text message for my birthday or something like that. This isn't something that is easy for me to talk about.

In her work among refugees in Croatia, Ajdukovic (1996) observed that the most significant stressors for displaced children were the loss of family members, separation from important family members, the loss of home, and living with distressed adults. For the younger women in my study, ordinary care giving relationships were profoundly disrupted by the war. Many lived in highly unpredictable environments without the secure psychological attachments of their fathers. They also absorbed the impact of their fathers' absences upon the lives of their mothers. Their mothers' roles shifted dramatically when their fathers went into hiding, disappeared, or fought on the line (Farhood, Zurayk, Chaya, Saadeh, Meshefedijan, & Sidani, 1993; Pavlish, 2005). These mothers, who already lacked control over their lives, were forced to navigate life without their traditional supportive family milieu. Ultimately, the impact of war

reverberated throughout the entire family constellation by shifting roles and altering familial relationships.

Strain on Mothering Roles

The aim of this next section is to analyze how the war shifted maternal roles and impacted the mother-child (daughter) dyad. Significant research has been conducted that suggests children are particularly dependent upon their mother's response to trauma. They are attuned to her psychological state of mind, and seek cues about her ability to protect their vulnerability (Bowlby, 1973; Qouta, Punamaki, & El Sarraj, 2005; Yule, 2002). In such desperate times, many Bosnian mothers struggled to provide adequate care and psychological support for children because of their own trauma. Children were also being confronted with the numerous losses and traumatic experiences related to the war while at the same time they faced the challenges of growing up (Ajdukovic, 1996). Garbarino, Dubrow, Kostelny, and Prado (1992) noted that as war progresses, a vicious cycle can burden a mother-child dyad: the more a child needs their mother's protective shield and support, the less a distressed mother is able to provide them safety. An emotional bond evolves between the parent-child that is characterized by reciprocal worry about each other's well-being, security, and vulnerability (Quota, Punamki, & El Sarraj, 2005; Wagner & Reiss, 1995). This mother-child dynamic surfaced in my analysis.

As the war evolved, and areas were ethnically cleansed by the Serbians, all of the women in my study experienced traumatic events. Simultaneously, they lost their traditional support systems; they were pushed away from all that they had known and thrust into flight. With their children in tote, some mothers sat on packed convoys intermittingly stopped by Chetniks. Gold jewelry and heirloom keepsakes were strategically used to bribe the guards who stood in their

way. When physical or sexual violence occurred, even though they were terrified, these women attempted to hide what was happening to quell their children's fear. Amila (21) described how her mother protected her from witnessing a mass murder on their Red Cross bus from Prijedor to Croatia:

We were packed into the buses. Periodically soldiers would come just to harass us. We'd give them gold, or cookies – and say, “do you remember having these cookies as a little boy?” One soldier said, “Oh, yeah. My grandma used to make those.” And he left us alone. They'd look at rings – especially gold, because money didn't have any value. We gave away a lot of our gold. Since we knew they'd take it from my grandmothers who were staying behind, they gave us all of their gold – and we put it in bags. A lot of the soldiers were malicious. They'd take a lot of guys off the bus; if anyone said anything to them, BAM – they'd shoot them. I remember seeing people lined up in front of the bus on one of our stops. That's when I got very scared. I remember the soldiers waving guns in front of them. My mom pulled me away and closed my ears because then they started shooting people randomly. People on the bus started throwing up. It was awful.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (1997) documented a final wave of mass expulsions of non-Serbs from the city of Prijedor in October 1995. Warlords had taken over the area through systematic policies of ethnic cleansing which included concentration camps, pre-mediated slaughter, and retaining total control of key economic infrastructures and humanitarian sectors of the community. Not only was Amila's family expelled from their home,

they were also forced to pay their own transportation fees to the Serbian controlled Red Cross. The UNHCR (1997) documents that these buses were repeatedly stopped and that people were harassed, robbed, and in some cases, pulled off the buses and summarily executed.

Maternal Reflections

Mothers and their children were vulnerable as they made passage through enemy territory to various refugee holding spaces. These mothers experienced tremendous fear while simultaneously trying to protect their children. Children experienced a similar level of terror while being acutely aware of their mothers' responses. After analyzing my data through the grounded theory approach and identifying the core themes of the women's narratives in the study, I looked more specifically at how middle age women reflected upon themselves as mothers. I wondered how they perceived, interpreted, and evaluated the embodiment of their motherhood during such a chaotic and terrorizing time. Highlighted in the following sections are self-reflections from three mothers and narrative segments from daughters about their mothers. These selections elucidate the on-going challenges women face in their recovery from the war.

Aforementioned episodes illustrate women's personal resolve on behalf of their families. What has not been explicated, however, are the confessions and self-evaluations of their experience of motherhood. I chose to re-analyze three mothers, Beba, Sabina, and Azra through The Listening Guide method (see Methodology II section in Chapter 3) because they spoke at great length about the struggles they faced as mothers during and after the war. In unique ways, they were each mindful of the mother-child reverberations of distress. Though the onslaught of war menaced these women in terrifying ways, they were dismayed and irresolute about their vulnerabilities and reactions; reflections expressed rumination and remorse. I believe they

continue to be ambivalent because their self-measurement was found lacking against an ideal of motherhood.

Beba (49)

Beba and her daughter Sanja were trapped in Sarajevo when the siege commenced. They had been unable to leave the city during the convoy. Sarajevo's subsequent blockade and relentless bombardment from the hills lasted from April 5, 1992 to February 29, 1996. In Bassiouni's (1994) Report to the United Nations Commission of Experts, by as early as 1994, 10,000 persons had been killed in Sarajevo (including 1,500 children). He estimated that in the course of the siege, approximately 329 shell impacts occurred per day, with a high of 3,777 shell impacts in mid-July 1993. This shellfire caused extensive damage to the city's structure, including civilian homes and cultural icons. Over 10,000 apartments had been destroyed, and over 100,000 were damaged.

Beba described one scene in which she and Sanja were trying to escape their apartment complex after it had been "occupied by Chetniks for thirty days." The men had "played with her" and she decided it was better to die than to be re-captured. Bassiouni's report confirms her following account. On June 22, 1992 Serbian forces launched an attack on the city, in which nine people were killed and eight-seven were wounded. The first mortar fell in front of a bus full of civilians. It was followed in quick succession by at least six more shells. The city centre was filled with people who were trapped in narrow streets while bombs exploded overhead. Beba recounted:

After being occupied in our apartment for thirty days, my daughter and I escaped.

I was determined to get her away from those soldiers. We ran over the mountain,

across “mrma” but made a mistake and went directly into the Chetnik’s hands. They were waiting for us. They let us cross, but when we went into the neighborhood – they forced us on to the army reserve buses. They took us into the center of the city. We came to an old part of the city, Marin’s castle – and there a grenade fell right in front of our bus. It caught on fire so we had to jump out. We ran to a building – an old clothing store. There was glass all over the floor. And we entered the building. Just as we went inside, a grenade fell into that building, and it went up into flames, too. People started to run – but they didn’t know where to go because there were grenades blowing up in all directions. Everything was in flames. There was fire all around us. Grenades kept falling and falling. The city was on fire.

Although Beba and Sanja’s first escape attempt from Sarajevo was not successful, this segment highlights the intensity of violence that Beba faced as a single mother. It also illustrates her courage and resolve to find security for Sanja. Beba’s entire interview focuses upon what they survived during the siege and how they got out of Sarajevo. She told an escape narrative. As I re-listened to her interview during the analysis phase, I heard two specific voices: determination and capitulation. In the preceding segment, Beba’s voice was resistant, confident and strong. There is no fear as she recollected running through bombed out buildings and artillery fire. Instead Beba expressed fierce resolve in her determination to slip through the Yugoslav People’s Army encircling the city.

The following winter, Beba and Sanja attempted their second escape. This time, their plan was to run across the Sarajevo Airport in the middle of the night. Beginning in July 1992, the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) had arguably been controlling a neutral area

on the airstrip between Serbian forces on one end, and the Bosnian-held territory on the other end (United Nations Protection Force, 1996). Beba and Sanja's plan was to navigate the narrow alley between these territories to reach their freedom. Just before recounting the following narrative section, Beba had described how she and Sanja had been found by UNPROFOR half way across the tarmac. A family of five had been ahead of them. One of them accidentally tripped the spotlights. The entire airstrip was lit up, and they were caught. Beba and Sanja crouched behind a snow bank and watched as this family was instantly shot down by Serbian militia. When the United Nations sent a response team out to pick up the bodies, they found Beba and Sanja hiding. The men ordered them to stand up, but Beba refused. She was certain the Serbians would execute them on sight. This infuriated the UN soldiers, and they began repeatedly kicking Beba and her daughter. Eventually the two were picked up off the ground and thrown into the back of the transport truck alongside bodies of the dead family. Although UNPROFOR could have taken Beba and Sanja across to the Bosnian free-zone, the soldiers returned them back to the Sarajevo side instead. By then, Beba was so terrorized, that she decided to abort their plan:

I was surprised my friend – the news reporter from Sarajevo who had arranged for me to cross – was still waiting. Just as the UNPROFORs dumped us out of their truck, he had turned to start back home. He thought we had made it safely across the runway. I could no longer stand on my feet. My heart was beating horribly fast. I thought that I would collapse from lack of breath right there. I told him that I no longer wanted to run, that I was staying in Sarajevo. He didn't let me. He kept saying, "Beba, come on. Everything will get worse and worse. Get out now when you have already left. Don't come back." He convinced me again by

promising that he would also run across with me, even though it was forbidden. He took my daughter, and we started back across. He told me to follow him – but ½ across the runway there was a prickly barbed wire. The UNPROFORs had placed it there in case individuals tried to cross – so they'd be caught on the wire. Like the family who went in front of us earlier that night, if you got caught in the wire, the flares would be activated and the lights would illuminate that we were there. In the moment when they were passing the wire, my daughter, she had on a parka, her jacket got caught on the wire. I saw it and thought this was the end. Now it's over! My friend was able to rip a piece off the sleeve, which remained stuck on the barbed wire, so the flares were not activated. But as they passed the wire, I had already begun to lose myself. I no longer had control. I couldn't breathe, my heart felt as though it was giving out. In front of them was a trench. I don't know how they managed to get in it. I can't remember. But it must have been 20 meters deep. Once you enter it, you have to run through it and climb out on the other side into free territory. But if they catch you in it, you are still in enemy hands. I saw that they had gone inside the trench – maybe about 50 meters. I fell. I just couldn't. They managed to climb up to the free territory – but realized I had fallen. So my daughter started screaming, “Mamma, mamma, mamma!” They kept telling me to climb up, but I couldn't stand on my feet anymore. I was beside myself, and I couldn't climb. They called me again, saying “Climb up! They'll catch you! They'll catch you!” And my friend saw that I truly couldn't move, so he jumped down, carried me, and lifted me to

safety. I don't remember much after that. All I know is that we went, and I fell. I just wasn't strong enough.

Beba's decision to escape Sarajevo bespeaks her resolve to survive. As a mother, she is willing to risk everything in order to find safety for Sanja. It is this determination that deploys Beba and her thirteen year old daughter into a dark and unknown journey. With almost no money in her pocket and very little sense of direction, she sets out into the night. Terrified, she clutches her daughter's hand and makes a run across a frozen airstrip. Beba's recounting of what happened on the tarmac was particularly difficult for her to share. Through intermittent sobs, she described immense and paralyzing fear. In this scene she panicked, her heart raced, her legs gave out, and her will to live dissipated. Beba referenced feelings commonly associated with traumatic experience. She was overwhelmed and incapacitated. As a listener, I was amazed by Beba's immense strength – but she did not acknowledge it. Instead, she cried; her pain was inconsolable. During this segment of her interview, a counter voice emerged. Instead of expressing determination, here she capitulated. As she explained what happened that night and the following two days, her tone softened; she became almost inaudible. Several times Beba mentioned her lack of memory, of becoming paralyzed, and not being able to collect herself. As she recounted those events, it was as if Beba was back on the tarmac; she was inside the IMPROFOR transporter; she had fallen down in the trench. She became increasingly fragile as the shame of her vulnerability was exposed.

Beba was one of the first refugees to land in Phoenix. Soon thereafter, she and Sanja became activists for Bosnian refugees. They assumed leadership for resettlement processes under the auspices of the International Rescue Committee for Arizona. Yet years later, she expressed deep and unresolved pain from her own traumatic war events. At the end of our

interview, Beba mentioned that I was the first person she had told about the story of her escape. The other Bosnian women in audience during our interview – who had known her for years – were speechless. They had never heard this story. Beba had not been ready to recount what happened for over fifteen years.

Though Beba has re-created a new life in Phoenix, unprocessed fear and shame tether her to the past. By the end of our interview, she appeared to be very vulnerable and lost inside painful memories. The dilemma that seems to beset Beba's healing process is her own self-evaluation; she failed to live up to her ideal of being a strong and protecting mother. Beba did not perceive herself as being courageous in the face of terror. Because of self-blame and its resultant shame, she has not been able to move forward in her healing process. Although Beba survived starvation, forced occupation, sniping, mortar shells, and several near death experiences, she did not recall her courage in those moments. She did not honor her strength in refusing an order to stand up on a lit airstrip. These moments of bravery do not "trump" the five minutes on a dark wintery night, when she fainted in terror and, in her evaluation, became helpless in front of her child. What Beba remembered was failing to live up to her aspirations of being a strong and resilient mother. She "just wasn't strong enough."

Sabina (52)

As mentioned earlier, Sabina lived in Sarajevo; she and her infant son managed to escape the city via the convoy. Although she didn't want to go into detail, Sabina told me she was raped by Serbia militia along the way. Eventually, she and her baby were sent to a refugee camp on an island off the coast of Croatia. They lived there for seven months before being granted refugee status in Germany. While in Germany, Sabina stayed in a therapeutic community for Bosnian

women rape survivors until she was reunited with her husband. As part of her therapy, Sabina participated in round table discussions twice a week with others who had experienced similar sexual violence. During those sessions, women were invited to share their memories. Sabina described her visceral reactions to hearing other rape stories: her body shook; she had nightmares; she felt constant nausea, anxiety, and extreme fear. In her four year stint in Germany, Sabina also produced 35 gall stones.

Sabina cried and her voice faltered throughout our interview. Like Beba, she continued to negotiate significant residual pain from her traumatic war experiences. As I analyzed and listened for the contrapuntal and multiple voices in her interview, I was struck by the sound of profound sadness. Unlike Beba, I did not ever hear determination. Instead, I listened to resignation and a sense of hopelessness. Sabina expressed deep pain about her rape but her most dominant emotions were grief and shame on behalf of her son. She spoke about him several times during our interview. In this section of her narrative, Sabina revealed self-judgment:

I was reunited with my husband in Germany. The Bosnian military told him to return to Sarajevo after our visit but I told him it was not possible for me to go on without his support. Plus, he hadn't even seen his own son in four years! I convinced him to stay. Ten months later, my second child was born; a daughter.

My heart is broken. I am beside myself. I believe the war destroyed the relationship between my husband and our son. They never bonded. When our daughter was born, it seemed like he felt so sad about what he missed out on with his son that he paid more attention to our daughter. To this day they remain

extremely close. And, to this day, he and our son almost never speak to each other.

My son is seventeen years old. He's very bright. All of the teacher's tell me what a wonderful student that he is. But when he comes home – he becomes withdrawn, depressed and silent. I can't even get him to come out of his bedroom. I think my sadness and anxiety came out of my nipple and into his mouth. I fed him grief that has shaped who he has become. He is sad because of me.

In the immediate aftermath of her rape, Sabina was left alone with her infant son. Instead of being surrounded by a safe and loving social support such as her husband, family, and friends – she found herself on a desolate island without adequate food and water. She was alone. As she reflected back upon that time, Sabina believed the sadness and anxiety resulting from being raped was released from her body into her son's mouth while he suckled. Now, because he is a depressed and withdrawn teenage boy, Sabina believed it is the impact of her disgrace that shaped and robbed him of life. She blamed herself and her shame for her son's mental health. Although Erikson coined the term "generativity" in 1963, Harvey (1996) later described it as the process in which people's experiences – including loss and stress – are given to future generations. In Sabina's opinion, this was the war's legacy in her life. The indignity of being raped, of suffering for several months in isolation on an island, of having her family splintered apart for several years – the accrual of these events, and the reverberations of violations remained intimate and on-going for her. Instead of being able to shift the onus of war's impact upon her life to its rightful place (those who brought her harm), Sabina assumed responsibility

for her son's pain. As a mother and as a woman, she "should" have been stronger. It was her fault; he was mirroring the same depression and isolation that she felt on the island. Sabina seemed resigned that the relationships within her family have been essentially altered. After all that has happened to them, there was no hope for recovery or happiness.

Azra (52)

Most of Azra's interview revolved around motherhood. In my analysis of her interview, I noticed consistent reference to the sacrifices she made on behalf of her children. Azra exemplifies the Hodza's definition of a "good" Bosnian woman; she is strong, hard working, and completely focused on the well-being of her family. Over the months and years that I have spent in her home, I have observed Azra's tireless efforts in serving her husband and children. Not only does she love being a mother, it is central to her identity. She works full time, not as an expression of emancipation, but to support her family. As Elma (her daughter) recounts:

Over the years, my mom was always there, taking care of things. My dad is not the most resourceful man in the world, nor is he a proactive individual. He did not rebound from the war too well. My mom's been the one that's gone to bat for all of us. When we finally moved out of the IRC's housing in '98, it was all my mom's doing. She bought us our first home. My dad would say the same thing. She was driven to find us a good place to live, to have her children succeed, to make sure my dad was o.k. She was the one that went into Room Store and argued with their sale's people for three days so we could get our first furniture on credit and a \$3,000.00 discount. She always found her way.

I spent five hours of formal interview time with Azra in which we explored the impact of war upon her life, specifically as it related to her family. There is little doubt in Azra's historical persistence on behalf of her children. This was her dominant voice throughout our interviews. Currently, however, there is tremendous anxiety and emotional instability in the family due to recent kinship shifts. Both children recently moved out of the house, and Azra's beloved mother passed away back in Bosnia. These significant changes have had a deep impact on Azra. Loneliness and depression have plagued her. As I listened and re-listened to our evolving interviews, over time I noticed that a quieter more uncertain voice had also emerged. She became more tentative and less insistent about her mothering. Perhaps because of her current emotional vulnerability, she was more reflective about her psychological impact upon Elma during the war. In our final interview, she revealed the following:

Elma became very nervous because of the war. Even after we escaped, she wet her bed for many years. We even took her to a traditional healer a few times. The line never came to Banja Luka, but all the refugees from Slovenia and Croatia swelled our city. It became full of the military. We had a curfew at 10 pm. We had to stay in the house, there was no electricity. We had to use candles. Everybody pulled inside to stay safe. We were so scared. If someone knocked on the door after 10 pm, it was very bad. No one was allowed outside except for Serbian soldiers – so we knew who was behind the door. They would drag people out of their houses at night and take them to concentration camps. Every night was so scary. Elma remembers those nights very vividly. It stays inside her.

Elma went through more than her younger brother. She remembers everything about the war. I think the hardest thing for her to go through was leaving Banja Luka. We were all very emotional. The bus left at 5 a.m. We put three little suitcases onboard. We hoped that we'd be coming back. Everybody was there. My mom, my dad, and my sister – we were crying, they were crying, the kids were crying. Ben just thought we were going to Croatia for a vacation, but Elma knew better. She felt it. She was very sensitive to my pain and fear. I was so stressed out. It was so hard for me to say goodbye to my sister and mother.

I cried every day while we were in Croatia. Because of the war, I wasn't able to hear from my family so I didn't know how they were doing. Finally, after three months, my mom got papers to come into Croatia. She went from Serbia to Hungary and then into Croatia. She got a new passport and was able to go stay with my brother in France. I was not able to connect with my sister because there were not phone lines between Bosnia and Croatia. After 1 ½ years, I heard that a man on the island of Pero had a radio station. It was possible to call him, and then he'd call Banja Luka. We couldn't talk like a conversation because we had to listen, talk, listen, talk – but at least we could hear each other's voices. So I used the public phone and called through the radio station to my sister at the café bar. Elma was with me. When I heard my sister's voice, I became so emotional that I fell down. I was able to talk to all my old friends at the bar. After we hung up I became hysterical. I cried all night after that conversation. And Elma did, too. She went through so much. Teri, I didn't realize at the time. I should have saved her from all those emotions. Sometimes it isn't possible. I feel sorry that she

saw me like that and had to go through that with me. I put a lot of stress into her life. Ah, but what could I do?...

Much like a confession, the small episodes that Azra revealed here were full of personal evaluation. Instead of being the persistent mother, she revealed an anxious mother. She recalled and described her high level of distress. Like Beba and Sabina, Azra eventually reflected upon how her emotions and vulnerability impacted her child. Unlike the other two women, however, Azra vacillated between feeling sorry and feeling justified; her humanness was being measured against her ideals of motherhood. As she measured, Azra seemed to give herself a little more permission to be imperfect in comparison to Beba or Sabina. There was less pain inside Azra's ambivalence about her role as a mother during the war. Nonetheless, she was still dogged by an ideal of being a "good" mother. There was no doubt that the war put a severe strain on the expectations she held of motherhood. At the end of this segment Azra's question seemed to invite me to either support her dilemma or to validate that she did the best that she could during such difficult circumstances. She was looking for external validation for an internal quandary.

Beba, Sabina, and Azra were ordinary women; so were the other mothers. They were human, frail, scared, vulnerable – and immensely brave. Unfortunately, ambivalence has been sewn into their memories by threads of self-judgment. They feel guilt. They feel shame. They feel vulnerable. They feel uncertain. Their inability, at times, to adequately care for their families is understandable. Deep seated fear surrounded split-second decisions that were rooted in the realities of chaos, personal danger, lack of support, and economic hardship. In the midst of enveloping distress, however, these women continued to wake up in the morning, tend their children's needs, and overcome the insurmountable demands of each day. While the destruction of war had victimized them, they did not respond as helpless victims. Somehow, despite terror

and shock, they exercised personal agency throughout the war. They struggled to be faithful to their understanding and ideals of motherhood. Listening to their memories, it was difficult to imagine how they could have better maintained personal equilibrium during such overwhelming experiences. With very little individual or communal resources, they did the best they could. They moved through debilitating fear and grief in order to protect their children from the same excruciating pain. This story, however, is not the one they tell themselves. In their reflections, they were not perfectly resolute survivors or formidable mothers. Because their identities are defined through familial roles and a cultural understanding of motherhood, these mothers assume responsibility for the residual psychological/emotional damage in the lives of their children. What remains unsettled in their healing process is how to negotiate their role ideals with the realities of how they (sometimes) behaved during the war.

From Mother to Daughter: Reflections of their Children

Fourteen years after the war, the Bosnian refugee families in my study have moved into patterned routines. They continue to face familial stressors and residual mental or physical distress related to the war – but economic hardship is not as paramount. Most of the children (who are now young women) are busy completing university degrees, or have already been graduated. They have moved into their own homes and have started building families. The sacrifices their mothers made are being expressed through the success and progress of these young women's lives. In astonishing ways, their mothers were able to transform war's death and destruction into new life. These same mothers, however, still bear the psychological and social branding of their traumatic experience. For some, the war left an impact on emotional intimacy. Additionally, economic burdens placed upon refugee and immigrant mothers tore away at their

cohesive family structure; forced to work several part time jobs or night shifts meant less time with their children. Lastly, anxiety, grieving or deep fear continues to plague their lives. In this next section, daughters reflect upon how they perceive the war to have impacted their mothers and their current mother/daughter relationship.

Naida (24)

Naida is finishing her Master's degree in Engineering at Arizona State University. As a woman, she represents the small minority who made it into this traditionally male dominated discipline. ASU's Ira Fulton Schools of Engineering is one of the country's top ten engineering research programs. During our interview, she gave credit for her academic success to her mother's support:

Education has been one good thing about coming to the United States. I'm not sure I would have gotten this far in Bosnia as a woman. I know part of my drive is to satisfy my mother. She always says, "We came here for you to get educated." So I've been trying to satisfy her and to get A's and to be that 4.0 student. It is still a big part of our relationship, even to this day. I feel like she won't be proud of me if I do anything less than the highest standard. When I was in high school, she was very protective. Education became very important to me. I wanted to get straight A's. I worked hard for those grades. But I was also socially lonely. I wanted a best friend, but I didn't fit in. I didn't dress swanky or put on lots of make-up because my mom wouldn't allow me. I wasn't even allowed to have a cell phone. Wow. I mean, this was in 1999-2000, and I didn't have a cell phone! My mom was very careful about who I could be friends with.

Naida referenced the kind of structure and protection that her mother placed around her life. She also noted a high level of expectation from her parents that she succeed in school and enter a strong career path. Naida felt an obligation to live up to her mother's expectations, in part, because of the kinds of sacrifices her mother had made on her behalf.

Prior to the following segment in our interview, Naida described her mother's wartime and refugee behaviors in heroic terms. Although her mother was "afraid" and "exhausted", she protected her daughter, went through a lot without the support of her husband, and was a "fighter." She made substantial sacrifices for the well-being of her children. Naida's current reflections of her mother, however, are ambivalent:

One thing, I don't know if I want to blame this on the war or if things would have turned out differently –but my mom was never there. I think she regrets that part. It is really hard to talk to my mom right now. To sit down and be really open with her, just talk to her – like you see on the TV how kids talk to their parents. I honestly don't talk to my mom that much. Neither does my sister. I think she was never really there. It's not that she didn't want to be there, it's that she didn't have a choice. Either you are going to survive somehow or you're not.

She wasn't physically around me. Half the time she was gone, working, and trying to make a living. Or, she was usually sleeping. That's what I remember from Croatia. In Germany it was the same thing. She worked for money under the table work. Her day was constantly filled. Both of my parents are really hard workers. They want to gain something, they want to get somewhere. I think they were trying so hard to provide so that we didn't feel left out. We had left our

country and they didn't want us to feel like we were 2nd class citizens here. They wanted to make us feel as much a part of the society as every other kid out there. But I think they forgot about the emotional part and my mom is having a hard time dealing with that right now. She's trying to talk to me but I have such a hard time opening up to her. I don't know if you want to call it being honest with her and I've been trying. I haven't really talked to my mom, ever - in a sense. I mean, besides happy talk, we don't really talk. Unless it is some kind of happy news like "I did this, I did that, it's great news, something that will make you happy", we don't really talk about sad stuff.

One of the greatest challenges refugee parents face is the weakening relationship with their children. Choi, He, and Harachi (2008) found in their study among Cambodian and Vietnamese immigrant families that parent-child bonding can be significantly disrupted because parents may not be as present or capable of providing a continued source of stability and support. "[R]efugee families face challenges to reestablish family roles and patterns in an unfamiliar society with a new language and socio-cultural environment" (p. 93). In Naida's case, the traditional mother-daughter relationship was undermined by unfavorable economic challenges, social isolation, and the fragmenting of their family. Naida spent four very difficult childhood years without her father, and essentially without her mother. Because of the war, she was deprived of her mother's formative role in her life. Repercussions of that deprivation continue to cause a strain in their relationship. Naida did not know how to re-negotiate an emotional relationship with her mother after so many years of physical and emotional distance. She described the sadness and loneliness that imbues their relationship.

Ada (19)

Ada and her mother were in Sarajevo prior to the onset of war. Together, they made their way to Croatia and then on to Chicago, Illinois where there was a growing Bosnian refugee population. Although Ada's mother was a medical doctor in Bosnia, she was not certified to practice in the United States. Ada describes her mother's dilemma:

My mom was 35-36 when she came over to the U.S. It was tough to start over at that age. She told me, "I can either be a maid – because I don't speak English – or I can do something that I know how to do, and that is to be a doctor." So, she decided to become a doctor. First she had to learn English, and then she had to go back to school to be credentialed. I remember her taking a million tests.

Throughout our two interviews, Ada's admiration of her mother – both then and now – is consistent. It is clear that she experiences her mother's behavior as reliable and comforting over the stretch of years.

The relationship that my mom and I have is a very strong one, much stronger than most people have with a parent. Had there been no war and displacement there would have probably been more fighting/bickering and lack of compassion on the part of both me and my mom - something that is most likely typical for the average American mother-daughter relationship. I feel that all the struggles we have faced, we have faced together. Of course, she had a heavier burden – the weight of raising a child and reaching her professional goals were all up to her. During the war, we were in Croatia without family, without support, and peace

did not seem possible. I can only image the stress she had to endure. When we came to the US we were never meant to stay but like many life changing moments you never do see them coming. It is true that during the first ten years of post war life there was much stress in the family, but looking back now it doesn't seem all too bad. I remember the hours and hours my mom would spend at the library. Some days I would bring her lunch, other days I would just drop in to say hi. Even at that young age I felt that it was me and my mom against the world. She studied and worked so she could give me everything and even more than what she had. She wanted me to be the best I could be. No matter how busy she got I was always the central part of her life. She would even bring me into work sometimes and introduce me to people. Because my father was not around, I tie my personal attributes to her because it has always just been me and her. When I look at her life, I see a person who has done everything in her power to give me everything. She could have easily given up as many people did, but instead she fought. I look at this and it makes me want to fight, never give up. She taught me that nothing is beyond my reach no matter how distant accomplishments may seem.

Eventually, Ada and her mother moved to Phoenix, Arizona. Her mother is a practicing psychiatrist for the Veteran's Association, and works with soldiers and trauma victims. Ada witnessed the strength and resilience of her mother; she acknowledged the kind of struggles her mother faced, and the kinds of sacrifices made on her behalf. As noted in the previous chapter, Ada was also reflective about how deeply her mom was impacted by the war and recognized that her mother "lost everything." Even with the loss and the long hours her mother spent away from the home, somehow their mother-daughter relationship was strengthened and empowered

through the adversity. Ada's interview was full of thankfulness for her heroine mother. Because of her mother's love, she experienced safety and a deep sense of belonging despite being uprooted from their lives in Bosnia.

Mirzada (19)

Mirzada is the only young woman in my study who stayed through the entire war. She was four when the Serbians took over her town. After Mirzada's father was detained and beaten in Teslic, he moved them to a remote cabin in an attempt to keep them safe. For the next two years he slipped in and out of their lives because he fought for the Army of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (ARBiH). As she described it, "he would return in the night, and be gone the next morning". Mirzada, her mother, and younger brother were left alone in the cabin for weeks at a time. Unfortunately, as I mentioned in a previous excerpt, they did not stay hidden. The war found them. Being caught in the crossfire of "the line" was especially impactful on Mirzada and her mother. They were vulnerable in an isolated cabin surrounded by menacing forces. Dark memories haunt both women. Although Mirzada references a night of violence that occurred in their home, she was not willing to discuss it in detail. What she does describe, however, is the way her mother changed. She became overly protective and hyper-vigilant. "She didn't sleep at night" and "she was afraid the soldiers would find us again." These deep seated cautions and fears seem to continue plaguing her mother, even fourteen years later:

I think my mom was deeply impacted by the war. She has become really paranoid. I feel bad for her but sometimes it gets very frustrating. She's always scared something is going to happen. She even worries if I go to the store. She's

paranoid about my safety and freaks out. She's constantly scared. She has a driver's license but won't drive. She's scared something might happen. And she hates it when I drive. She's not quite as fearful for my brother but he just goes to school and to soccer practice. Plus, she's stricter with me. She's always worried that something is going to happen. I'm not close to my mom. I just don't feel comfortable talking to her. She is still crazy from the war.

Mirzada has spent most of her life living with a distressed parent. Ajdukovic and Ajdukovic (1993) argue that during war, adult members of displaced families are exposed to multiple stressors. In their research among families during the Bosnian war, they found that displaced adults “frequently display anxiety, depression, anger, aggression, alcohol abuse, suspicion, somatization, or “escape to illness” and sleeping disturbance” (p. 845). Along with financial instability, loss of social support, and feelings of helplessness, these negative cumulative effects in adults create disturbing consequences for their children. Results from their study indicated that “children’s general stress index was correlated with several aspects of their mother’s ability to cope” (p. 850). Mirzada described war scenes that took place during the ages of four through seven when she would have been very dependent upon her mother’s response to trauma. She was attuned to her psychological state of mind, and sought clues from her mother to know how to respond. Because of what happened during the war, and the impact of war-violence in her mother’s life, Mirzada revealed that she has a Generalized Anxiety Disorder. Her doctor links this condition to early childhood trauma. Mirzada explained (and I observed) that when she is anxious, her entire body perspires and drips with sweat. Not only does she struggle with anxiety and excessive perspiration, Mirzada’s relationship with her mother has been impaired due to the war. She lost the protective support of a healthy mother-daughter

relationship which is important during significant childhood/adolescent developmental years.

Her mother has not yet been able to overcome the distresses of the war and continues to struggle with psychosocial adjustment.

Elma (24)

Garbarino et al.'s (1992) research indicates that during war, the emotional state of a mother is the main intermediary between a child's psychological functioning and a traumatic experience. A mother's subjective experience and emotional expression influences the ways children will cope with distress. In Ajdukovic's (1996) study, she interviewed adults who had experienced multiple traumatic experiences and found that they had a reduced capacity to meet the needs of their children. "Multiple losses (the loss of family members, home, friends, social status and material self-sufficiency) as well as the loss of a common life-style" (p. 34) accumulates within refugees and affects them for long periods of time. Refugees face numerous difficulties in managing the evolving complexities related to war and post-war adaptation. In the mother-child dyad, stress and distress can become dialectic (Quota, Punamaki, & El Sarraj, 2005). This dynamic seemed to exist between Elma and her mother, Azra. Both women talked about the reverberations that took place between them during the war. Azra would panic, and then Elma would panic. Azra would cry, and then Elma would cry. Azra felt terror, and then Elma felt terror. They became emotionally fused as the war progressed. In the aftermath, a persistent bond continues to define and exasperate their relationship today. Love and devotion are clearly articulated between these two women, yet they are entangled in ways that seem to also cause agitation and distress. For example, although Elma is now twenty four years old, her mother continues to worry when she does not answer her phone:

Azra.

Having Elma move out was very, very difficult for me, too. The death of my mom was also extremely painful. Elma was always such a support for me. She goes all the way through my heart. I always think of her. If she doesn't call me on the way to work, I get very anxious. I know that's not good. I'll call her, and if she doesn't pick up – I'll call Timor (partner) to make sure she's o.k. She used to get very frustrated when she'd be out on dates or with her girlfriends on the weekends. I'd call her 20 times during the night. I'd leave a message, "Elma, if you don't call me immediately, I will call the police."

Elma. (In a separate interview)

My mother drives me crazy! She is constantly anxious, constantly panicked. On Friday night, she must have called me ten times to find out where I was. How embarrassing! I'm a grown woman. I finally turned my phone off!

In Elma's interview, she described her mother as independent, strong, determined, sacrificial – and able to absorb blow after blow. She also talked about how often her mother would panic and cry during the war and their early refugee experiences. It is almost as if Elma had two different mothers. In this next section of narrative, Elma expresses her current concern; now that she has forged out on her own, how will her mom adjust?

Since the war, my mother has been driven to take care of our family. Not until recently has that drive changed focus. Now that I've moved out, graduated from college, and making good money is she wondering, "What do I do now?" Ben's

got a job and is making great money. Now she doesn't quite know what to do. She's working in an assisted living home, so even her employment is about helping others. It's all about taking care of others, and she's good at it. She's finally realizing that she doesn't know how to take care of herself, though. Before the war, she did. She had her monthly pedicure. She got her hair done and her clothes specially made. But the war changed everything. We became first in her life. She'd pinch pennies to make sure we were taken care of.

My mom has aged significantly in the last two years. She looks terrible. When I stop by to see her I say, "PLEASE do not walk out of the house without putting make-up on." Her face is just really droopy. The bags under her eyes are very puffy and black. Her skin is starting to sag under her chin. She looks so worn down. That's a drastic change - just in the last two years. I think right now that she might be doing some serious soul searching. I hope that she is; I worry about her. I hope she is trying to figure out who she really is, because I think that she's been so many things to other people that I don't think she's been there for herself. She has progressively changed and become sadder. I think her memories of the war have been suppressed for years because it was all about surviving and moving on. Now she has all this empty time on her hands, and she remembers.

When the children were dependent, Azra was clearly guided by her role as a mother. She was driven and resourceful on their behalf. The children have left her home and that part of her identity does not bring as much definition to her life. In reciprocal fashion, it is now Elma who worries about her mother. Life decisions such as where to buy a home, where to go to graduate school, or when to have children are tied to the feelings of her mother. Elma worries about her

mother's health, she is concerned about her parent's marriage, and she continues to take responsibility for negotiating her parent's legal affairs because of their impaired language abilities. Elma vacillates between frustration and exasperation, to a deep and abiding concern for the welfare of her mother. She roots this anxiety back to the war:

I believed my mom was always going to protect me. War makes people question their beliefs and whether or not they have the human strength to endure. It was during the war that I saw – for the first time – fear, vulnerability, and anxiety in her. I had never experienced her as weak. But she wasn't sure she could endure. I had a deep fear of losing both my parents because I was so close to them. I don't think I made a conscious decision at the age of seven to take responsibility for them – but I did....

Elma witnessed her mother panic several times during the war. This is not surprising given the amount of strain Azra was facing. Unfortunately, an imprint or image of her mother's anxiety seems to remain in Elma's psyche. Terr (1990) found that emotionally immobilized adults are unlikely to give children what they need – which is a sense of safety. He maintains that without an adult's help, children who go through traumatic experiences cannot recover. Azra was not able to guide Elma well through the terrors of the Bosnian war. What has happened between these two women, as a result, is an on-going sensitivity and constant worry about each other's well-being.

This compilation of daughter's reflections indicates the persistent and wide scope of war's legacy. To heal from harm or to transcend trauma experience may not necessarily mean being freed from injury. Psychological and social wounds are particularly difficult to recover

from because they are not as easy to identify as a broken arm. They do not heal in the same direct way. Some emotional wounds will not emerge for several years - they lie in wait. Additionally, these kinds of injuries are not just personal in nature. They do not solely reside within the individual; they also spill out between people. For several of these daughters, the relational or inter-subjective space between them and their mothers is fraught with war's shadow. War changed the definition and strength of their mother-daughter relationships. In my analysis, young adult women did not describe their mothers as invincible or larger than life. Instead, these daughters seem to sensitively couple the paradoxes of their mothers' fear and vulnerability alongside courage and tenacity. They also recognized the sacrifices their mothers made on their behalf as well as the costs of the war upon the quality of their mother-daughter relationships.

Conclusion

Two major conclusions can be drawn from the analysis discussed herein. First, the impact of war upon the lives of women in my study cannot be understood apart from the intra- and extra-familial processes in which they live. Women's identities were undermined by the demanding shifts that took place in their roles as mothers, wives, and daughters. Traditional *zadruga* patterns were destroyed because extended families were forced apart through death and separation. Significant changes in culturally based practices, values, and family structured occurred. The subsequent and complex psychological challenges stemming from traumatic war experiences intertwined with mental distresses associated with living apart from kinship while these refugees faced tremendous economic, social, and familial adjustments.

Second, pre-war social identity and role expectations play a continual role in self-appraisal during flight and in the course of adaptation to life in exile. For most of the women, the

interplay of these stressors upon their healing processes led to variant but unresolved intrapersonal and interpersonal tensions. Some women struggle with guilt and shame for their vulnerability and emotional reactions to personal trauma. A “good” Bosnian woman is always strong. These women assume tremendous responsibility for how their reactions impacted family members. Because their perceptions led to self-recrimination, some mothers in my study remain trapped by gendered ideals and unresolved grief. Additionally, the quality of their intimacy continues to suffer; their relationships are laced with anxiety, emotional distance, frustration, or profound sadness. What remains as an impediment in women’s healing are the lingering negative emotional and psychological strains that continue to plague and reverberate through their family relationships.

Chapter Six

DISORIENTATION (IDENTITY AND BELIEFS)

Introduction

In this chapter I am going to show how being a Bosnian Muslim shaped the identities of the women in my study. I do this by briefly describing the multifarious formations of Bosnian Muslim ethnic, cultural, religious, and national identities. This complex history has generated a variety of definitions, and what it means to be a Bosnian Muslim remains contested within the refugee community in Phoenix, AZ. I describe paradoxical behaviors I observed, and also how “Bosnian Muslimness” was challenged by sharing an illustrative segment of dialogue between women in the Focus Group. Next I explore meaning making and coping theories as they relate, particularly, to a Bosnian Muslim theodicy (religious way of understanding the nature of suffering and evil). I analyze various strategies that women used to cope with traumatic war events such as conserving pre-trauma religious/spiritual beliefs, transforming pre-trauma religious/spiritual beliefs, or staying internally suspended because experiences and religious/spiritual belief systems had not yet been reconciled. As a result of analyzing how being a Bosnian Muslim broadly shaped beliefs and subsequent coping strategies of these women, I conclude that religious/spiritual beliefs significantly impacted their recovery processes and will discuss these findings in detail.

Three themes emerged from my analysis that illuminate the continued challenges Bosnian refugee women face in their healing process: how being severed from place and attachments impacted their identities (identity and space); how shifts in gender roles and expectations forced women to adapt or re-negotiate their identities (identity and relationship); and how beliefs and learning to cope were shaped by a specific ethno-religious meaning system

(identity and belief). This final chapter explores the internal worlds of the women in my study, specifically how being a Bosnian Muslim shaped their beliefs and appraisals regarding what happened to them during the war. Ten of the women described themselves as religious or “practicing” Muslims. Three of the women described themselves as religiously nominal Muslims who celebrated holidays and prayed occasionally. The remaining six women in my study identified as ethnic Muslims who were also atheists (See Appendix 2). Regardless of their individual beliefs, all of the women, to varying degrees, stay connected to the greater Bosnian community by celebrating Islamic holidays and participating in rituals or programs hosted by the Islamic Center of North Phoenix (mosque). This mosque serves as a dynamic cultural and spiritual hub among the refugees in my study.

Although research indicates that religious and spiritual beliefs and practices can be a source of coping for many refugees who have been forced into exile, contemporary considerations among scholars and policy makers tend to neglect the ways in which these belief systems shape emotional and cognitive healing processes (Gozdziak & Shandy, 2002). In those instances where religion is considered, it typically receives attention for its role in conflict, violence, and the politicization of identity (Sells, 1996; Zolberg, Suhrke & Aguayo, 1989). An emergent theme within the study of religion, spirituality, and refugees is the role religion can play in coping with trauma. Studies focused upon suffering that include religious/spiritual beliefs and practices have been particularly relevant to the debate between trauma-based Western approaches to PTSD and indigenous approaches to healing (Gozdziak & Tuskan, 2000; Mabe, 1994.) Studies also indicate the importance of spiritual beliefs in coping during the resettlement process as refugees face significant adjustments due to differences in values, social norms, language and other stressors (De Voe, 1997). Additionally, research reveals that having access

to a place to gather and worship in the new host country can provide a sense of ethnic maintenance and psychological support (Krulfeld, 1994). Being able to share with others who have a similar ethnocultural background can offset the social isolation that often generates refugee distress (Miller et al., 2002).

Gozdziak (2002) argues that religion and spiritual beliefs operate in compelling, competing, and contradictory ways in how they shape the experiences of refugees. Beliefs can serve as a source of resilience but they can also impede internal integrative processes. This was true for the participants in my study. For some women, religion and spirituality played a role in reframing their suffering and making it more bearable. By appraising the war through a meaning making coping system that had been influenced by Bosnian Muslim beliefs or by turning more deeply to specific religious practices, some women were able to alleviate distress and find a level of internal peace. However, others were not; they continue to ruminate because of the disjuncture between what they believe(d) to be true, and the level of violence that impacted their lives. The war remains incomprehensible to them. Another contradictory pattern emerged through my data analysis. For some women, being able to participate in Islamic religious rituals at the mosque has played a stabilizing role; deepening their faith through the discipline of practice has helped them negotiate changes brought about by displacement. Other women, however, either lost their faith in God or they became spiritually ambivalent. Their “practice” has become minimal or extinct.

Definitions of Identity

A compelling and competing way that religion operates within this refugee community has to do with definitions and identity. Because the mosque remains a place for community

building and group affiliation, individuals with differing levels of commitment to Islamic religious devotion come in regular contact with each other. During their interviews, some of the women reflected upon an underlying social tension. The relationship between their Muslim identity and religious authenticity was contested. The following segment of narrative dialogue from my Focus Group illustrates some of the ways in which Bosnian Muslim refugees construct and challenge their ethnic and religious identities. The conversation going on between these women sheds light on the tensions and paradoxes that emerge whenever being “Muslim” is evoked. Religion and ethnic culture were often conflated, and sometimes difficult to distinguish among women in my study. It was not easy to decipher the differences between being a “religious or practicing Muslim” and an “ethnic Muslim.” Even within this small group of women, there was conflict over definitions and spiritual expectations:

Azra: We are all Muslim, but not of us were raised as practicing Muslims. Aida is a Muslim, she practices. Bosnian Muslims are mixed. It is how you understand Islam. Like some people are Muslim but they weren't raised as practicing Muslims. Aida is a Muslim, she practices.

I was raised Muslim, but I wasn't raised Muslim. I was raised ½ to practice, ½ not. So really, I am Muslim in general, but there is a spectrum of Muslims. How Muslim you are depends upon how practicing you are. Sometimes I have felt judged because I am not Muslim enough. That's why I don't go to the mosque – even though I pray and observe Ramadan. The really religious women in my community don't accept me.

Aida: No, no, no. You are talking wrong. Because we are, all of us are Muslim!

Mervita: No, I'm not Muslim like Aida is Muslim.

Elma: Me either.

Azra: No no no, let me explain to you, Elma, don't mix that words. Muslim. You are born a Muslim. We are all Muslim. Everybody is a Muslim, but you are not into Islam. There is a difference. Aida is Islam. You are $\frac{1}{2}$ Islam, I am $\frac{3}{4}$ Islam, but everybody is Muslim, just not religious. She (Aida) was born religious. I was raised in a family that was Communist. My cousin was raised in a Muslim religious family.

Mirveta: Then why are you $\frac{3}{4}$ Islam now? Why aren't you still a communist? Why are you following Islam now? It's because you got married!

Azra: I am devout during Ramadan, but I know women who are more religious than I am, like Aida.

Aida: Stop putting me on a pedestal. There is a spectrum of practice among Muslims. Some people are farther ahead of me.

Mervita: It takes too much time to be in Islam. All of it just takes too much time, like praying five times a day.

Aida: I would love to have numerous conversations with you about what you just said. You have an upside down complex. For people who are religious, to pray is

the utmost importance. To practice comes first before anything else. I'm not criticizing you Mervita, I'm just telling you how important it is to pray. People find the time to pray. God knows my own husband and son don't do this, but I do. There is nothing more important than getting up in the morning and being thankful for being alive. Everything else is easy after that.

Mervita: Why should I get up in the morning and thank God that I'm alive?!

Alive to suffer?

Elma: Suffering....

Azra: Yes, we've suffered!

Aida: Thanks be to God for suffering.

Mervita: What? Why do you say thank you? For what? This hard life?

Aida: It could be harder, Mervita. Why are you so sinister?

Mervita: You want me to say thank you to God for this life? I'd say thanks to God if I wasn't born. Really! Especially because I'm a woman. Just think of the war and all that happened to us. Being born a woman is a curse.

Azra: I agree. What happened to us in the war is unforgiveable.

Definitions, terms, and expectations varied greatly between these women. It was an emotionally laden part of their conversation and filled with strong opinion. Three prevalent themes emerged in this excerpt that ran parallel with "problems" women articulated during

individual interviews: What it means to be a Bosnian Muslim, the nature or meaning of suffering, and how Bosnian Muslim women spiritually understand and cope with the particularities of their plight. Although religion and spirituality played contradictory roles for the women in my study, these belief systems continue to be powerful factors that influence their coping and healing processes. In the following section, I briefly explore the history of Islam in Bosnia and how religion and ethnicity were conflated. It is not meant to constitute a comprehensive treatment of the intersection of ethnicity and religion in Bosnia. Rather, the purpose is to serve as a general overview of the complexities within the formation of a Bosnian-Muslim identity in order to understand how ethnicity and spirituality can impact post-trauma healing processes.

Formation and Complexities of Bosnian Muslim Identity

The origins of Bosnian Muslims can be traced back to the mid- to late-fifteenth century (Malcolm, 1994). Their ethno-religious and national identity, along with other ethnic groups in the region, was shaped and defined by successive empires. The Bosnian Muslim trajectory was influenced primarily by the Ottoman Empire's expansion into Southeastern Europe. After the Battle of Kosovo in 1389, the authority of Islam in the Balkan region was significant and continued for more than a century thereafter. The conversion of one South-Slav ethnic group during this time period marks the ethnogenesis of Bosnian Muslims. The broad remnant of this region's Islamization is now uniquely manifested both culturally and religiously (Malcolm, 1994).

The Ottomans not only provided the impetus for Bosnian Muslim nationhood, they created a governmental framework that cultivated this identity. Within the Ottoman Province of

Bosnia, populations were delineated by religion rather than tribe or ethnicity. By utilizing the “Millet system”, various religious groups were able to organize into self-governing communities. Additionally, religious affiliation prescribed legal standing within the empire. This religio-political structure laid the groundwork for overt expressions of nationalism in the succeeding centuries – though the non-Muslim population would take the lead (Malcolm, 1994). Due in part by the Austro-Hungarian takeover of formerly Ottoman land in the Balkan region and the rise of competing national groups in the region, Bosnian Muslim nationalism remained fairly dormant. The new Christian empire expanded into the late nineteenth century which fueled both Serbian and Croatian nationalism while marginalizing adherents of Islam.

The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (Yugoslav Federation) was declared in 1918. For Serbians, the creation of this federation restored a Serbian medieval empire that had existed prior to the Ottoman conquest. It also marked a successful achievement of becoming independent from the Austro-Hungarian empire. After WWI, the area known as Bosnia descended into chaos (Sudetic, 1998). Wedged in between Croatia and Serbia, Bosnia and Bosnian Muslims became relegated as pawns in Serbian and Croatian power plays. As Naida, a middle age woman in my study put it “the Croats had Croatia, the Serbians had Serbia, Muslims had nothing. We were sandwiched in between.” Friedman (1996) noted that Bosnian Muslims in the interwar period in Yugoslavia were ambivalent, with widespread violence and intimidation – particularly by the Serb Orthodox population who were pressuring the Muslims to align themselves ethnically with Bosnian Serbs over Bosnian Croats. They chose, instead, to remain committed to a greater Yugoslavia while ultra-national posturing began to surround them. During WWII, the unresolved maelstrom of contending ethnicities were swept up into larger German and Italian occupational forces which provided a forum for historical revenge to be re-

enacted between Bosnian Serbs, Bosnian Muslims, and Bosnian Croats. According to Bringa (1995), more citizens died at the hands of fellow Yugoslavs than were killed by Germans or Italians. Approximately 1.7 million died, largely as a result of competing ethnic and national agendas.

In the aftermath of WWII, under President Josip Tito's leadership, Yugoslavia was consolidated into six republics: Slovenia; Croatia; Serbia; Bosnia; Montenegro and Macedonia. He ultimately denounced the Soviet Union, and created a communist state outside of Moscow's influence. The socialist system that Tito created allowed for a much larger degree of local decision making than other Eastern-bloc Communist countries. However, Islamic institutions in Bosnia came under attack under the Yugoslav Communist government. Although Islam was not forbidden, the government took specific measures to secularize a national communist identity. According to Sudetic (1998), mosques and other religious institutions were closed down. Children could not be openly taught their religion. Publications of Islamic books and training of Muslim teachers were restricted. Islam did not regain any form of self-regulation until the 1954 law on the freedom of religion. Even Muslim practices such as women wearing veils were outlawed. In her interview Sabina illustrates this privatization of faith:

I was born in Foca by a father who did not believe, he was Communist. But my mother did. I was raised during Tito's rule when Islam, at best, was tolerated. It was o.k. for us to practice in private, but public expression or going to the mosque was taboo. I learned my faith through my mother's example. She taught me how to pray and fast. Otherwise I would have never learned. I am so thankful to her for my heritage.

Because Bosnia was so ethnically mixed (due to its history and relative proximity between Croatia and Serbia), the expression of national (Yugoslavian) belonging rather than ethnic identity flourished as a result of Tito's policies. Neighbors and friends did not know each other's ethnic or religious backgrounds. This was especially true in urban centers (Al-Ali, 2002; Bringa, 1995). But by the mid-1960's, Serbians had lost their dominance in much of Bosnia's political and economic life. They were no longer the republic's largest ethnic group. Tensions grew between Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats as each group attempted to take ethnic ownership of Muslims in order to enhance their political strength. In response, the central committee of Bosnia's Community Party officially recognized Bosnian Muslims as a distinct nation, and by 1971, they held their own unique census classification (Sudetic, 1998). With this recognition of statehood, Bosnia Muslims began to assert their exclusive heritage. They were given privileges which indicated to the rest of Yugoslavia that Muslims were not just to be tolerated - they were considered a valuable part of Yugoslavia. According to the 1981 census, almost two million people within Bosnia identified themselves as Muslims. Anthropology scholar Bringa (1995) explains,

although the official Titoist understanding and definition of "Muslim" was based on historical Islamic legacies, Bosnian Muslims were discouraged from experiencing the dynamics and relevance of Islam in their everyday lives and as a community. An important aspect of religion, and of Islam in Bosnia, is that it defines Bosnian Muslims in relation to Serbs and Croats. Islam sets them apart. By practicing Islam people become and experience themselves as different. (p. 197)

She is suggesting that while Tito validated Muslims, his rationale was political expediency, not religious sensitivity. Regardless, Muslim religious ethics, practices, and symbols began to factor into competing collective cultural and political practices in Bosnia. What Bringa (1995) concluded was that, as a result of Tito's policies, Bosnia Islam attached people to two symbolic communities. On the one hand, there was the cultural heritage, sets of practices and moral values the bond people together within the Bosnian Muslim community. They identified as "Muslim" as opposed to Catholic or Orthodox Bosnians. On the other hand, being Muslim united them with a transnational *ummah* (religious community) worldwide. Bringa's (1995) research indicated that Bosnian Muslims held a much greater attachment to the "Bosnian" distinction of being Muslim than they did of being part of the larger Islamic tradition. By the time Tito died, Bosnian Muslim national identity was not merely a religious affiliation (Friedman, 1996). National, ethnic, and religious identification had become entwined. Friedman (1996) contends that many Muslims followed their religion not from religious impulses but from the aspiration of forming their own cultural and national distinctiveness.

Over time, culture, nationality, and religion have blended into what Bringa (1995) coined "being Muslim the Bosnian way." Bosnian Muslimness expresses through culturally shaped social identity, spiritual values, and/or religious ritualistic practices. To understand what it meant for these women to "be" Muslim was difficult to ascertain. There was no simple answer. Some women were deeply devoted to religious practice; others rarely attended the mosque but described themselves as having deep faith. Angell, Dennis and Dumain (1998) provide a helpful framework for the distinctions and overlap of the concepts: religion, spirituality, and faith:

Spirituality refers to our intrinsic, built-in, human need to find meaning and purpose in our lives and to have a relationship with something outside of and

larger than ourselves. Faith is our capacity to utilize knowledge, experience, and belief to maintain our clear hope for the future; Religion is the more doctrinal, tangible, ritualistic living of our faith and spirituality. Together they form a threefold unity that provides us with a form of resilience that is personally and socio-culturally founded. (p. 617)

Although Bosnian Muslimness was socio-culturally founded, its definition and expression was uniquely and personally defined by each woman in my study. From the onset of my interviews, it was apparent that spiritual, ethno-religious beliefs, faith, or some combination therein shaped most women's appraisals of what had happened to them. For example, in Enisa's interview, she reflects upon her understanding of what it means to be Muslim. Within this quote she describes behaviors and values that may be guided by a theological paradigm, but not necessitated by one:

You are born a Muslim, and you are a Muslim, until you say you are not. I can't say whether someone is a good or bad Muslim. Our religion is not public. You can practice in your house or the mosque. It doesn't matter where you pray. It is best to pray five times a day. We also fast. In our culture, it is important to treat everyone respectfully. We were taught to honor one another. It bothers me when I hear people trying to separate being a Muslim from religion. I've never done that. My Islamic religion is real and not separate from my skin. We have a lot of people who don't practice, but that doesn't mean they don't believe or that they aren't Muslim. We don't know what goes on beyond closed doors. It is a very

big sin to call someone out – or to describe them as a bad Muslim. Each person to their own – because it is between God and them.

For Enisa, “to practice” seemed to be related to ritualistic behaviors such as praying and fasting. However, “not practicing” did not negate someone from being Muslim because they could still believe and hold specific values. Her conception of what it means to be a “practicing” Muslim was similar to fourteen women in my study. In my analysis, what ritualistic practice meant to them was specific and defined. Personal devotion was measured by whether or not you prayed five times a day, fasted during Ramadan, attended monthly services, and performed Sadaka (giving to charity). Islamic or spiritual beliefs, however, were much more diffuse. In my entire collective experience with these women (including interviews, Focus Groups, observations, participating in religious/cultural celebrations) only one woman (Aida) quoted from the Qur’an or the *hadith* (a report on the sayings or actions of Muhammed or his companion, along with traditional Islamic teachings). Yet, many were clearly guided by their faith. God was very important to them.

It was an analytic challenge to distinguish whether women’s appraisals came from a religious or a cultural/ethnic meaning system. Because of the unique historical way in which ethnicity and religion came together in Bosnia, I conclude that the two were not separable. Observations made over the course of two years illustrate this complexity. As part of my interviews, I visited fifteen Bosnian homes. I also attended social gatherings such as birthday parties as well as religious services at the mosque. During this time I entered a variety of social contexts as well as literal space that was constructed around their unique Bosnian identities. It was not uncommon for me to see a picture of Tito on the wall, next to a bookshelf holding a Qur’an. In fact, draped over one very large portrait of Tito were Muslim prayer beads. I

witnessed the quiet prayers of women around the dining room table, as their husbands and sons sat out on the porch drinking a beer and smoking cigarettes. During my interviews I sat between symbols of Communism and Islam, and inside social rituals of prayer and of imbibing alcohol. Despite these seeming paradoxes, each of the individuals gathered around me were fiercely devoted to their identification as a *Bosnian* Muslim.

Al-Ali (2002) found in her research among refugees in London that some Bosnian refugees perceived themselves as part of a larger Islamic faith community while others insisted that they were uniquely European in their expression of faith. How women in my study identified and interpreted being Muslim was similar but much more weight was given to being European. Those who attended the mosque regularly and described themselves as devoted to their faith had a higher identification with the Islamic *ummah*, but they still maintained their culturally ritualistic practices as Bosnian Muslims. None of them attended other mosques in the greater Phoenix areas. Some would drive over twenty miles and past three mosques in order to attend Bosnian prayers. With this strong identification, however, came some tensions. Naida, who is a young adult still living at home with her parents, captures some of the entanglement that this community feels – both internally, and within the external Islamic *ummah*:

My parents feel very judged for being religious, for being Muslim from within our own community. When they go to mosque, they are judged by non-practicing Muslims. They are asked, “Why don’t you drink? Why do you go to the mosque during Ramadan every night? Why do you fast? Don’t you think that’s being too religious? And then, there’s the other side. They are judged for not being Muslim enough. We especially felt that when we visited the mosque in Tempe (city where Arizona State University is located). It is mainly Egyptian there, and

they don't think we're good Muslims because they know that some Bosnians drink, eat pork, and that many of our women don't cover (veil).

This excerpt and the observations made during my data gathering phase, shed light on the paradoxes subsumed in the definition of Bosnian "Muslimness." Within the larger *ummah*, the Bosnian refugees in my study do not feel as accepted, nor do they comfortably identify with a more "Arab" expression of Islam. During the first Focus Group, Merita described her discomfort with being stereotyped:

When we were forced out of Bosnia, we didn't have another country to go to. We couldn't go to Turkey or the Middle East, because we're not even close to them! There is nothing the same between us. I hate it when people put me in the same group with Middle Easterners. We're so different. I've told my kids a million times that if they even try to date someone from the Middle East, I'll kill them. They have no respect for their women. I'm sorry, I know that sounds terrible, but it's true.

Merita's sentiment was shared broadly throughout the women in my study. A Bosnian expression of being Muslim, in their opinions, is different. At the same time, as noted by Naida, there are also internal tensions that seemed to be rooted in the ethnic versus religious identification of what it means to be Muslim. Within this community, religion does operate in compelling, competing and contradictory ways.

In the preceding section, I described the history and the complexities of being a Bosnian Muslim to underscore the analytical challenges inherent in trying to understand how the women in my study evaluated, appraised, or made meaning out of what happened to them. Some women

attributed the war to God. They were able to reframe traumatic events and conserve their previously held meaning systems. Other women expressed internal disorientation; their global beliefs and assumptions had been shattered due to the war. Were meaning systems and assumptions bound to a particular theological paradigm or were they bound to a cultural value system? The answer is both. All of the women in my study were socialized within the context of a Bosnian Muslim community in which religious, ethnic, and national beliefs/values reverberated. In the following section, I re-introduce the theoretical Meaning Systems model from my literature review. I broaden its scope to include an ethno-religious meaning making model as described by both the religious leader (Hodza) in this community and the women in my study in an attempt illuminate the intra-psychic and/or spiritual dilemmas they continue to negotiate.

Meaning Systems

Introduction

How beliefs are formed is a largely unconscious process that develops over time. Socialization influences such as familial values, culture, ethnicity, nationality, and religion shape and contribute to evolving belief formations. Personal beliefs eventually merge into mental schemata or conceptual systems that guide people's responses and behaviors. These meaning making systems serve as an interpretive lens that help individuals make sense of the world, predict general patterns of what to expect from others, and how to envision or understand identity (Bowlby, 1969; Fox, 2002; Silberman, 2003, 2005). Meaning systems serve to ground people because they help interpret the world in ways that orient them as they navigate through life (Baumeister, 1991; Eidelson & Eidelson, 2003; Fox 2002; Pargament, 1997). According to

Marris (1982), people depend upon these structures to help them “to interpret, act intelligently in and survive the events they encounter; and the stability of these structures is therefore crucial to them” (p. 54). Epstein (1985) contends that, in fact, these meaning systems are essential for human to function in the world.

As a pioneer in the study of psychological trauma, Janoff-Bulman (1992) proposed three fundamental assumptions that are held by most people; the world is benevolent, the world is meaningful, and the self is worthy. These “schemas,” as well as other cognitive constructs, order and organize “raw” experiences into coherent categories. As Marris (1982) notes, schemas “generalize order, and sustain the relationships which generate and embody that order” (p. 54). What we know and how we know is derived and shaped by what we believe and assume to be true. This is particularly relevant to trauma research because trauma, by definition, is an assault upon reason. According to Landsman (2002), its impact is pervasive, “altering emotional, cognitive, and behavioral experience and the subjective experience of trauma not infrequently includes a crisis of meaning at a deep level of experience” (p. 13). After a traumatic event, people face the formidable challenge of trying to make sense of what happened. Landsman (2002) suggests that because individuals need coherence and meaning in their lives, “trauma becomes a crucible in which all previously held meanings and assumptions are tested, transformed, or perhaps renewed” (p. 13).

Frankl (1959) advocated that a foundational motive for human beings is to discover meaning and value in their lives. Through analysis of his therapeutic work among Holocaust survivors, he came to the conclusion that having a strong sense of meaning or purpose was essential to surviving trauma suffering. The challenge post-trauma, however, is making intelligible what is not understandable. Trauma violates or shatters beliefs because what was

once held to be true about the world no longer fits the experience of a survivor's reality.

Individuals and communities are left to appraise the event by answering questions such as "what happened?" and "why did it happen?" The level of distress a person experiences is related to the congruity between how they make sense of what happened to them in relation to their prior meaning/making belief system and goals (Janoff-Bulman, 1989; Park & Ai, 2006; Park & Folkman, 1997). If there is a significant level of discrepancy and distress, reappraisal of beliefs and a process of coping will occur.

Janoff-Bulman (1989) theorized that global meaning systems consist of beliefs, goals, and subjective feelings. *Global beliefs* are the centralizing lens through which people interpret their experiences of the world (Janoff-Bulman, 1992; Silberman, 2005). Beliefs such as fairness, personal control, predictability, a benevolent God, and sense of security are some of these core schemas. *Global goals* are those ideals towards which people work to realize or maintain such as healthy relationships, knowledge, economic security, and accomplishments (Emmons, 1999). Subjective feelings of meaning refer to Frankl's (1959) definition; a person's sense of purpose in life occurs when they are able to realize their future goals or ultimate concerns (Baumeister, 1991; Emmons, 1999). A traumatic event can destabilize this entire system because of its intensity, shock, and incomprehensibility (Herman, 1992). When this happens, individuals move into a process referred to as "coping".

Religious Meaning Systems

Religion is a unique meaning system because as "a process, [it is] a search for significance in ways related to the sacred" (Pargament, 1997, p. 32). The sacred is a divine force (God, higher power, the transcendent or holy) that is perceived to be worthy of respect. This

force can be a distinctive resource for significance and meaning in people's lives. For purposes of this study, "religion" will be used in a broad sense. My definition includes religious practice, teaching, and rituals as well as personal expressions and feelings of spirituality – and in particular, personal beliefs about the sacred. McIntosh (1995) argues that religion serves as a global belief that informs perceptions about the world and the nature of reality, while also generating aspirations for the self and how to interact with others. From the everyday to the extraordinary, religion can provide motivations, prescriptions, and guidelines for how to understand and navigate through life (Spilka, Hood, Hunsberger, & Gorsuch, 2003). It can prescribe what people should strive for as well as the road to take to reach those goals (Pargament, 1996). Because religion can serve as a foundation for global beliefs and goals, it may play a critical role in the coping process in the aftermath of trauma (Park, 2005). For many people, religion is a theological orientation or paradigm that shapes their understanding of the world, and that can make reality – particularly suffering – understandable or even bearable (Pargament, 1997).

Analyzing religious beliefs is important to my study because, as Pargament (1997) contends, extreme or traumatic events generate times of internal crisis. As such, the role of religion, and religious beliefs, are put to the test. Trauma is "the ground where religion meets crisis" (Pargament, 1997, p. 3). During the horrors of war, the human condition is exposed to its most brazen and/or most vulnerable form. The women in my study were unsuspecting of how their lives would change at the hands of the Serbs. They faced a level of violence that was impossible to absorb; it destabilized their ways of believing. The myriad of traumatic events that these women survived forced them to stand at a crossroads for understanding and making

meaning. Analyzing their coping and appraisal strategies illuminates if and/or how religious resources were utilized.

People are considered religious when the sacred shapes their deepest values and when the sacred is invoked to help support or maintain those values (Pargament, 1997). Research indicates that religious beliefs and values often influence the ways in which people appraise critical life events (Pargament, 1997; Park, 2005). Spilka, Shaver, & Kirkpatrick (1997) found that most religious people use religious explanations to characterize why people suffer. They hold a “lay” theodicy, or a defense about the nature of evil and divine punishment, in an attempt to give explanation for why a “good” and all-knowing God permits evil (Furnham & Brown, 1992). For some adherents, religion can provide answers to questions that might be the most unanswerable. Through an attribution process which “consists in part as an individual’s attempt to understand events and interpret them in terms of some broad meaning-belief system” (Spilka et al. 1997, p. 156) religion is often invoked in causal attributions. Very early into my interviews, I heard the emic perspective of how several women conceptualized their suffering as a spiritual experience. A particular way of thinking about God and divine will seemed to consciously and unconsciously shape their assessments. Although casual attribution was frequently given to God, how the women coped or found significance varied.

Meaning Making and Coping Theory

Meaning making and coping are interrelated. Both refer to the restoration of global meaning after it has been violated by a traumatic life event. Some theorists (Horowitz, 2001; McIntosh, Silver, & Wortman, 1993) describe this as rumination or an unconscious effort to incorporate stressful events into pre-existing cognitive structures. This process can become

problematic because to make meaning often involves trying to integrate what defies logic. Previously held “problem solving” or riddling strategies do not usually resolve the question of “why” traumatic events happens. Coping, in these situations, involves a great deal of intra-psychic processes because only through cognitive adaptation will individuals be able to transform the meaning of such a stressful experience. As Park & Ai (2006) suggest,

Traumatic events must be “processed” in order for individuals to recover, but this processing must involve eventual making of meaning, including emotional engagement with traumatic memories along with reframing of the trauma to come to see it, and its implications in a different and more acceptable way. (p. 394)

Several theories explain the complexities involved in coping with suffering and making meaning after traumatic event (Aldwin, 2007; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Lepore, Ragan, & Jones, 2000; Nolen-Hoeksema & Larson, 1999). Park and Ai (2006) integrated numerous coping and meaning theorists into a meaning making model of coping. It incorporates Janoff-Bulman’s rich definition of meaning systems (global beliefs, global goals, subjective feelings) while integrating the concept of coping by way of appraising and attributing meaning. In their model, analysis of how the meaning of an event is evaluated is linked to causal attributions about why it happened (e.g. God’s will, fate, chance) and the subsequent decision regarding what can be done to cope with the event.

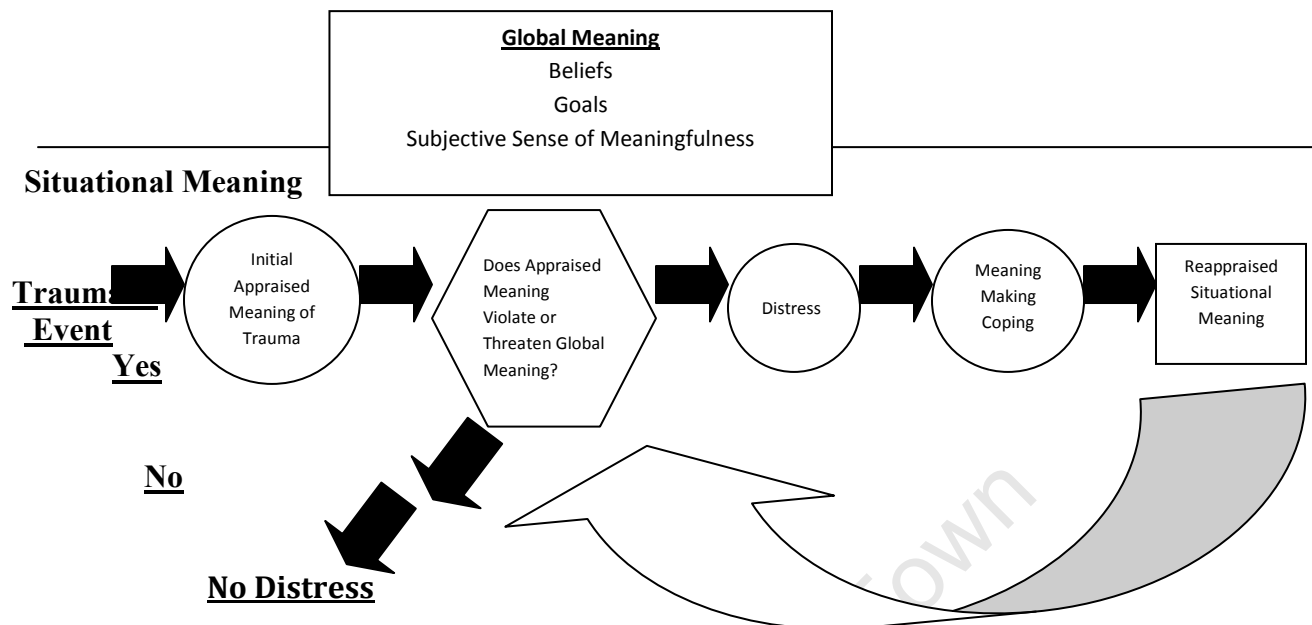


Figure 3: Schematic of global meaning (above) and situational meaning making (below). Park & Ai, (2006).

Coping refers to the search for significance in the wake of an external or internal crisis, or time of transition (Pargament, 1996). Park and Ai's (2006) meaning-making coping model suggests a correlation between the level of felt distress and the discrepancy between the initial appraisal and global meaning. When there is a great deal of discrepancy, individuals experience a loss of control, predictability and incomprehensibility. To cope, the discrepancy between the initial appraisal and the global meaning system must be reduced. In order to decrease their distress, women in my study faced either changing their views of how they understood what happened, revising their beliefs and goals in order to accommodate the new information, or both (Parkes, 1993). This coping model posits that ultimately these shifts will lead to an adjustment in the level of distress evoked from the event. The psychological by-products will be reflected in lower levels of depressions or higher levels of subjective well-being and stress-related growth (McIntosh, Silver, & Wortman, 1993; Park, Cohen, & Munch, 1996; Park, 2005).

Meaning making coping models are often described as an attempt to cognitively “work through” an event (Creamer, Burgess, & Pattison, 1992) or coming to see it in a more positive way (Pearlin, 1991). It may also involve shifting initial appraisals and making them more benign (Baumeister, 1991). Park and Ai’s (2006) theoretical approach emphasizes the dynamic and interactive relationship between meaning making and coping – and is particularly relevant to my study because in many circumstances, what bewildered the women was not reparable or solvable. Their level of distress was immense. They were faced with the difficulty of decreasing it by altering some part of their belief system – either the initial appraisal or their global beliefs. Pargament (1997) contends that because religious beliefs are basic and relatively stable, when people confront a crisis, they are more likely to fit perceptions of the situation into their pre-existing beliefs than to change their religious belief system. In a study done by Park (2005) she found that in order to sustain religious beliefs, individuals reappraised traumatic events in somewhat convoluted ways. At times, protecting their pre-trauma beliefs was more important than facing the possibility that those assumptions might be wrong.

Pargament (1996) suggests that individuals draw from two types of coping mechanisms: conservational or transformational. Conservational coping seeks to preserve or protect cherished meanings. This mechanism appears to be the first and strongest tendency when people face discrepancies between initial appraisals and global meanings. They cling to significant values or beliefs whether they are related to self-understanding, culture, or even God. Conservational coping strategies employed may involve religious prevention, religious support, ritual purification, or religious reframing. However, there are some times when protecting or preserving what is deeply cherished is no longer possible. When this happens, coping moves from conserving the past schemata to transforming it. New beliefs or sources of understanding

must be found to replace what has become obsolete or irrelevant (Pargament, 1996). Rites of passage, religious conversion or self-surrender may be used as transformative coping strategies. Once transformation occurs and new beliefs have replaced the old ones, however, individuals move back into conserving and protecting the way they see and understand the world.

A Bosnian Meaning Making Coping Model

Since all of the women in my study have either a cultural or religious connection to the mosque, I chose to interview Hodza Sabahudin Ceman (spiritual leader the mosque) as part of my research project. In particular, I wanted to learn his understanding of Islamic theodicy. Through observation, it is my perspective that the Hodza's influence is respected and highly regarded in this community as well as throughout the United States. In 2009, Sabahudin was elected General Secretary of the Islamic Association of Bosniaks in North America. He holds the highest level of religious leadership in the country for the association. In the course of his teachings and programs, the Hodza wields tremendous influence. He shapes the way people who attend the mosque believe in God and perceive the world. As such, he was in a prime position to offer his theological perspective and religious attributions regarding the events before and after the Bosnian war.

Teri: There are a couple of things I'd like to get your input on as the Imam of this community. One has to do with God's plan or the path and submitting to the will of God. It has been a theme that has showed up in my conversations - especially for the older women and the middle aged women. It is part of the way they think about moving forward with their own lives after what happened to them. They believe the war was God's will, and this is his path for them. Could you tell me

about the Islamic teaching about the path, and then how you think about it – especially for those who have really been harmed?

Hodza: I'm glad that most of those who you have had contact with are seeing it that way. We believe that for most of them, that helped them – that type of approach. In Islamic teaching, it is embedded that (Arabic) there is nothing that happens outside of God's will. One of the chapters I spoke recently about - God says (Arabic) nothing happens without God's permission. So no calamity, nothing happens without God's permission. And then the verse goes (Arabic), those who believe in God will find strength in their hearts. Most of our people, I believe, hold on to this truth in order to deal with the traumas that they went through.

I believe that what happened during the war was pre-destined. One of our articles of faith is to believe in predestination (Arabic). We believe everything is predestined by God. When I say that, that doesn't mean there is no responsibility for us or that if everything is pre-destined by God we don't have to do anything. It's not like that. We need to put in our effort; we need to do as best as we can, to be just, to be fair, and to obey God. Now God will test us. To go back to what happened in Bosnia – there are even three different approaches or opinions about that. One of them is that what happened was a punishment because we were disobedient to God, and we went astray. What happened to us during the war came as a punishment for our disobedience.

The second approach is that the war was a test to us; to test how patient we are, how steadfast we are, how much we can persevere through the trials of this world.

And the third one is that the war is even a reward. The reason why some believe this is because if someone dies for the sake of our religion, or in defense of their home - and if they are killed unjustly, they died as a martyr. For those, there is a reward in paradise.

All of these ways of believing, especially for elderly people, help them to cope with everything that happened to them. In knowing some of the sisters who went through those horrible things - that's what kept them sane, kept them in control, or helped them bear the pain. Not only what they went through but all the family went through, all the loved ones that they lost, all the children that they lost.

There is a saying of hadjith that anything that is good, is from God. Anything that is bad is from evil. In this aspect, anything or all of the hardship, all the turmoil or calamities that happen, we believe they are from God. Because God doesn't want anything bad to happen to us. It is our understanding and it is our actions that bring us to certain levels of the hardship. In that aspect, blaming God, or thinking that it is God who is wanting bad to happen to us, that he doesn't love us - we do not see it that way. God loves us but we are the ones who seek or attain or want the calamities. Either he is testing us, or sometimes it is believed that if God punishes us in this world, there will be relief from the hereafter.

Teri: How do you avoid blaming the victim, blaming women for things that happened to them?

Hodza: I do understand that aspect, but I don't believe it is seen or portrayed like that. The victims or women who went through that, I don't think they believe it that way. They believe this is predestined by God to happen.

Teri: I am getting confused. It was "bad" what happened to them, and you are saying when something bad happens to us it isn't from God, it is from ourselves or from human nature.

Hodza: We believe that anything that happens to us doesn't happen by accident. It is permitted by God, even if it is bad. Anything bad that happens, it happens with the permission, not the will – not that God wants that to happen. It says in the Koran, sometimes when you think something is good for you, it is bad for you. Sometimes when you think something is bad for you, it might be good for you. We are not the ones who have ultimate knowledge, to know or see things. We are limited. And we're all going to have trials and tribulations in our lives to test our faith and our belief in God.

In the previous excerpt, the Hodza described his understanding of Islamic theodicy. "Nothing will happen to us except what Allah has decreed for us: He is our protector: and on Allah let the Believers put their trust" (S. 9:51). Muslims believe in Al-Qadar, which is Arabic for divine predestination. As the Hodza indicated, this does not mean that human beings do not have free will. Rather, Muslims believe God has given them the ability to choose the right or wrong path. On the final day, each individual will be judged and held responsible for their

choices. Al-Qadar includes four beliefs: God knows everything. God knows what has happened and what will happen; God has recorded all that has happened and that will happen; Whatever God wills to happen will happen, and whatever God wills not to happen will not happen; and God created everything (Denny, 2010). Although for Muslims predestination is an article of faith, how it is theologically understood is contested and the various debates are beyond the scope of this paper. For purposes of my analysis, I relied on a more generalized understanding of predestination as described by the Hodza in our interview.

How the Hodza Sabahudin Ceman described his understanding of Islamic theodicy ran parallel to many of the women's perspectives in my interviews. At the foundation of their global meaning system was an understanding that God is an all-powerful, all-knowing creator who sustains, ordains, and judges the universe. God is omnipotent and all-merciful. This theological belief system is translatable into Janoff-Bulman's (1992) assumptive paradigm that is held by most people; the world is benevolent (God is caring), the world is meaningful (God is intentional), and the self is worthy (God has a plan for each person). Women considered suffering and evil in the context of God's power and mercy. Suffering was purposeful regardless of whether it was rooted in a test of faith or a painful result of sin. Prior to the war, sixteen women held the position that God was in control and that God has a divine path for each of them. If this global meaning system is held there can be only one conclusion; nothing was accidental about what happened in Bosnia during the war. As vicious and incomprehensible as it may have been, the war was predestined by God.

In varying ways and to varying degrees, sixteen out of the nineteen women in my study ascribed some kind of meaning for the war to God. To help understand "why?" they turned to their Bosnian Muslimness orienting system and translated concrete experiences into meaning.

For some women, conserving their beliefs was particularly important and shaped their meaning making coping strategies. As the Hodza suggested, believing and trusting in God's divine plan helped them cope. Faith provided an answer that helped them to stay sane, feel a sense of control, and bear the pain of trials and tribulation. Their desire was total submission to the will of God. For other women in my study, however, the opposite response occurred. If the war was God's will, they refused to submit. Their global belief system was radically altered or transformed. Any previously held belief in God was destroyed. The "if" "then" coping paradigm led them back to God, but not one they wanted to believe in anymore.

Conservation and transformation are the two general ways in which religious people cope with distress caused by the disparity between what they believed to be true and the realities confronting them after a traumatic event (Pargament, 1996). However, in my data, there was a third sub-set of women who were not either/or; they did not conserve beliefs or transform them. Instead of coping or working through, their meaning making remains suspended and they continue to ruminate in an attempt to understand what happened to them. These women have not been able to change their global meaning system nor have they found a way to change their appraisals. They are left holding beliefs that are incompatible. In the next sections, I provide examples of each religious meaning coping method: conservation, transformation, and suspension.

Coping via the Conservation of Meaning

Traumatic events that women in my study experienced during the war (e.g. rape, ethnic cleansing, physical assault, murder of loved one) caused tremendous distress. Prior mental schemata could not adequately explain the level of brutality that they experienced. In their

appraisals, long held and cherished beliefs were threatened in a way that generated dismay, disorientation, or perhaps even violation. To protect and preserve their global meanings (the world is benevolent, the world is meaningful, and the self is worthy), several women used conservational coping strategies. They chose to adhere to values and beliefs that they held to prior to the war by coming to understand what happened through the aforementioned theodicy (see Appendix #2) Some of the strategies they employed were religious reframing, religious support, and ritual purification.

Reframing God: Fatima

According to Capps (1990), “virtually every religious system offers its members a set of cognitive reframing mechanisms to help individuals conserve a sense of meaning in life in the face of what may seem to be senseless, unbearable, or unjust” (cited in Pargament, 1996). To “reframe” essentially means to re-interpret the sacred, the person, or the situation itself. For analytic purposes, I employed Park and Ai’s (2006) model to study how women processed and coped with their distress. The following is an excerpt from my interview with Majka Fatima. The conservation coping strategy that she utilized was to reframe the sacred. Fatima became quite distressed during our time together. At one point, she had to take a break and go outside for awhile. It was my interpretation that Fatima’s dominant emotions during our interview were anxiety and fear. The level of her physical agitation, the amount of her cigarette smoking, and her need for a break from the interview alerted to me to the kind of internal distress she was likely experiencing. Remembering, for her, was clearly painful.

One of my strongest memories is when soldiers surrounded the apartment building. Some would stand on the balconies and others would be at the doors.

They would do raids. They'd come inside our homes and beat us. There was no way out – and they had machine guns. We lived on the 12th floor.

Once they came knocking on my door and my two sons were inside. I had built a clothes armoire and hid them in there during the raids. That day, I was so afraid for them. If they had gotten caught, they would have been taken to the concentration camps in Manjaca. They had to listen while we were beaten by the soldiers.

When the Serbian militia transported prisoners, they would pack buses by piling prisoners on top of one another; they would pack them really tight. Just like Nazi trains. Then, they would drive them around all day. How far is Prijedor to Manjaca? Two hours? They would torture them by keeping them thirsty. They couldn't even breathe. Militia would ride them all day long and by the time they would arrive, they'd be dead from starvation and thirst. Sometimes they would take them to the camp, other times, it was just a cruel joke.

One afternoon I was at the bus station in Banja Luka. I saw soldiers open up the doors to a bus, and the men spilled out on to the ground. The Serbs gave children weapons and told them to beat the men. They beat the prisoners over their heads with automatic weapons – and these were ten and twelve year old kids! Those children were laughing at the men!

How could this happen?! How could children hurt these already half dead men?

My brother was leaving for work. He passed by a home where the people were screaming and then shot by Serbian militia. He tried to help them, but the soldiers killed him, too. My husband found him dead on the street.

Fatima's narrative began with a description of how the war had encircled her. There were constant raids and rapid construction of concentration camps throughout her region. A Helsinki Report (1992) determined four camps existed near the town of Prijedor: Termokerm, Trnopolije, Omarska and Manjaca. "Termoker and Trnopolje were located near a railroad station in the town of Prijedor" (p. 47) where 100-200 Muslims remained detained and in deplorable conditions. Fatima watched as these camps were constructed and then filled with men from her community. She lived in constant terror for herself, and for her grown sons. What she witnessed did not fit within her global meaning system; seeing men herded on buses like cattle, and then watching as children laughed while butting them over the heads with rifles confounded her ability to meaningfully appraise. Prior to the war, Fatima believed the world had a moral order. Now there was none. Those in positions of power mocked the fragility of human life while seemingly innocent children jeered and participated in what Glover (2000) called "a festival of cruelty". Even her brother, who was trying to help his neighbor in distress, was shot for his kindness. The scenes Fatima recounted brought shape to the intense bewilderment that overwhelmed her sensibilities. She did not understand how her community of neighbors and friends – a place that was once so full of peace turned against itself.

There was significant distance between what Fatima previously believed and her appraisal of what she witnessed which cause distress. To cope or to make meaning, she referred back to her global meaning system. Although she continued to be vexed and said, "I still don't

understand what happened” she later attempted to make meaning by employing a religious reframing of the Sacred.

Before the war, I sensed that people were starting to get jealous of each other. There seemed to be an obsession of wanting and having – and that everyone needed a car, everyone wanted a vacation home, even at the expense of other people. I feel that the Dear God said that everyone needed to calm down. He wanted us to be smarter about life. That’s how I understand the war. God disciplined us. We aren’t supposed to reach too high but to keep steady in the middle. It is important to maintain humility. He allowed the war so we stop being so selfish and arrogant.

That God’s divine hand was present during the war was important for Fatima. As I analyzed how she attempted to cope with what happened, by attributing the cause to God – even though it is a negative notion – a punitive God allowed for the possibility that there was still order and control in the world. If, in the future, she (and others) live within God’s will, his wrath can be avoided. Pargament (1996) supports this proposition, explaining the belief in a punitive God may be preferable to an even bleaker alternative – the idea of a world without God, one in which there is no explanation for the bad things that happen and one in which life has no meaning at all” (p. 225).

Fatima felt (and continues to feel) vulnerable. To believe in a God who is in control of her life may bring a quieting solace that she needs after surviving so much terror. Given the amount of distress she exhibited, however, I wondered how much she really can or does trust in God’s divine control? Fourteen years later, she continues to be plagued by pervasive anxiety.

To integrate her experiences during the war with a belief that the world has order and meaning has been internally complex. Fatima's coping strategy was to reframe her understanding of God in an attempt to conserve or protect what she believes to be true. Whether or not she was successful is arguable.

Religious Support, Religious Prevention and Reframing the Situation: Aida

In the following narrative segment, Aida, a middle age woman and highly respected spiritual leader in her community, described how she understood God's relationship in her life. Unlike Fatima who chose to reframe God, Aida used three different coping strategies: to seek religious support by trusting in God, to actively prevent harm by staying on the right path, and to reframe her family's relative safety by attributing it to the honorable bloodline of her grandfather:

My faith has helped me through the war. Maybe it is just the way I was born. I've always trusted and had faith in God. My parents taught me to believe in Him. They told me God would help me if I was faithful and relied on him. I must stay on the straight path. If I am on the right way, I don't need to worry – he'll protect me.

Aida looked directly to God for her support. She was raised to trust and to rely on God's guidance. Aida collaborated with God. Since not all negative events can be avoided, she sought God's wisdom in helping her cope and make sense of calamity. At the same time, she coupled her reliance on God with active prevention practices to avoid transgressing from the path:

I don't want to think about people who God didn't protect. That's between them and God. I need to stay focused on my own path. I'm not being selfish. I know myself better than anyone. I know who I am and what I do, good and bad. I can't speak for others. I don't know their hearts, but I know mine. I know my right way. I was not taught to be scared of God or that he would punish me. That's not why I stay on my path. I stay on the path because it brings me peace.

Aida's global meaning system was undergirded by a God who protects her "if" she was faithful. To receive God's protection, her goal was to stay on the right path. As a result, Aida's subjective experience has been peace and harmony. Although her husband was detained at a concentration camp during the war, she did not see or experience any personal violence. Aida was disturbed or uncomfortable trying to reason through why some women were harmed but she was not, the way she ultimately copes with this distress was by reframing the situation:

I'm the type of person who always looks for a reason behind why things happen. Even things that happen to me, there's an explanation. There's a belief that we've held since WWII that things done – even by our grandparents - can show up as a consequence on to the grandchildren. What you do may not yield consequences on you, but it will on your children. During the Bosnian war, the Serbs would cross over the Dringa and rob people's homes. They'd take what was pillaged and put it in their homes, so their children are growing up with things that carry consequences. It is stolen property, it is not *halal* (permissible or clean by Islamic law). This will come back and haunt their lives.

During WWII, it was just the opposite. My mother's father was guarding a train station. Serbs in the area were being victimized in masses by Bosnians. A POW train came through Brcko to pick up the Serbs in that area. Fellow soldiers started talking about going into their homes, raiding them – and taking the valuables left behind. My grandfather refused. I believe his moral choice has been what has guided our family through the years. He was a man of good, honorable deeds. His spirit has carried us through very difficult times. My sister was in BRCKO when everything was happening – and they didn't touch her. Everyone made it out of Bosnia safely. It reminds me of the lineage of Jesus and Mohammad – good blood passes through their line into their clan. In those stories, even if something bad happened to the tribe, someone was able to escape and their bloodline continued forward. It was protected by God. God carried their line forward. I believe that is what happened in my family.

I want you to understand that I don't think what happened to women is their fault. But I do believe something led to their harm – why it happened.

Looking back on why she and her extended family were not physically harmed during the war, Aida concluded that there was a reason: God was not only protecting them, but God was extending a blessing for the good deeds of her grandfather. Aida framed this memory as her grandfather being tested for his faithfulness. It is because he obeyed the will of God that his bloodline was protected. None of them suffered significant personal violence. Now, she believed that by staying on the right path and being diligent in her devotion, she would avoid future punishment for sin. What remained vexing for Aida was the shadow this belief system cast upon people in her life who were violated. The implication was that if they were harmed, it was

an indication of punishment. When I questioned her, she was uncomfortable thinking that God may use rape, or murder, or ethnic cleansing as a way to chastise. I interpreted her avoidance of pondering that question (because it is between them and God) as a coping mechanism that allowed her to conserve another belief which is that God is loving. Aida seems to have made an uneasy peace but one that has helped her move through the distresses of war.

Religious Purification: Elma and Naida

When people transgress or sin, virtually every religion provides a mechanism to cleanse them of their impurities (Pargament, 1996). Through these rituals, impurities and sinfulness are removed and the relationship between the individual and the divine is repaired. These rites may include confessions, baptisms, oil, fire, or even some form of punishment or atonement. Their performance may offer individuals a sense of relief or release – a way of coping with a difficult event. Pargament (1996) contends that “purification rituals may serve important psychological as well as spiritual functions” (pg. 221). The person may experience peace and a respite from their distress. The following is a conversation between Elma and Naida. They are discussing *salijevati stravu* (to pour/cast horror). While some consider this ritual “folk Islam” others view it as a traditional healing practice and divination that is accompanied by Muslim prayers and teachings from the Qur’an (Bringa, 1995 p. 215).

Elma explained: The (diviner) melt small pieces of metal over fire. It becomes literally liquid metal and then they put a pot of water over your head and say a prayer. Next, they drop the liquid metal into the water. Depending upon what it turns into, if it breaks apart, or if it comes together – the diviner reads it and gives instructions.

For me, it would always form but all of these needles would come out. One time, my mom sent me with my little underwear and my little clothes to the Imam to do this ritual. The clothes help. Essentially we have a belief that when fear enters you it's like prickly needles. Fear completely prickles your body. It is like you are pin cushioned with fear. What they are trying to do through this process is literally pull the fear out of you, like draw it out.

But it's fear. Some people believe it could be evil spirit or sin, and this ritual can draw it out of you. At one point in time my anxiety and night terrors were so bad that the Imam said it was very deep. It was so deep in my heart that he literally - he just could not get it out. I went through several processes.

These healers can sense where fear is on you clothing, that's why my mom sent them along. I went through the entire process several times. They would bath me in holy water, and I would have to drink a little bit of it at night. Both my dad and I went through the ritual. My dad had inherited a lot of fear and anxiety, and I had a lot of trauma when I was in Bosnian – like bombs and guns. I had inherited a lot of my dad's fear and anxiety so I had a lot of trauma.

Naida: My ritual was similar. The healer did it over my head, my heart, and my feet. She put the water over each area of my body. I was sitting up, and she covered me up with a red cloth. Even my face was covered. She brought the pot to my feet and melted it three times. She drew out my terror.

I still have the metals, and you know – I think that is still the problem. When she gave me the metals, I was supposed to sleep on them, which I did. But then she asked me to go to a running river and throw them in. I've never thrown them down the river. So I think that's why.... I've been trying to find someone else to go back to do it, because it really calmed me down. I have really bad anxiety, and I still do now. It is starting to come back to me again.

Elma: A lot of people have gone through this ritual post war. My dad went through it after the war because he was really messed up. My grandma really believed in the ritual so my dad went through it numerous times as I did with him. The two of us were really traumatized and it really helped us a lot. He's whacky whack. Completely whacky job (means crazy). He carries a lot inside of him from the war. He doesn't talk, he won't talk about it. He did the ritual because he does believe that it is part of the Islam, part of our Islamic tradition or our faith and because my grandma really wholeheartedly believed in the ritual. I really believe in it because it helped me, a lot – and I think it has helped him, too.

Although many people seemed to dismiss this practice as “illiterate” because it mixes Qur'anic knowledge with non-Islamic folk beliefs, nine women in my study privately admitted to having gone through this ritual, too. Clearly, *salijevati stravu* alleviated distress for Naida and Elma. Both of them experienced terror, anxiety, or sin leave their bodies; the ritualistic act which included prayers, the reading of scripture, and a casting out of horror brought them solace. Although the distance between their global beliefs and appraisals may not have shortened, other aspects of their global meaning system were met. Global goals (mental/spiritual health) and

subjective feelings (experiencing calm) were realized through this coping process. For both of these women, they experienced release and a sense of healing. Although contested within the Bosnian Muslim religious community, among several women in my study, *salijevati stravu* was considered a deeply valuable spiritual ritual that purified and released them from terror.

Coping via the Transformation of Meaning

At times, traumatic events may generate such a significant discrepancy between global meaning and the appraisal of what happened, that individuals are no longer able to hold onto preexisting beliefs and goals. Janoff-Bulman (1992) suggests that in these critical moments fundamental beliefs about the world or the self alter drastically. For example, some individuals may appraise God differently (e.g. cease to believe in God, see God as less powerful and Satan more powerful) or they may appraise themselves differently (e.g. see self as sinful, not in control). Another coping strategy may be to pledge more devotedness to the Divine (Emmons, Colby, & Kaiser, 1998). Finally, when some people experience extreme stress and have difficulty coping, they may undergo a radical religious conversion (Paloutzian, Richardson, & Rambo, 1999). Their new found alternative framework of meaning may answer the unsolved questions left from their old paradigm.

Most of the women in my study used conservation coping strategies to preserve their beliefs. Six women, however, made a more radical transformation within their religious meaning making system. Two women went through an intensified form of conversion (Rambo, 1993). They became more devout, passionate and committed to Islam. Three women turned away from the practice or belief in Islam altogether. In all of these cases, each person's theological

orientation changed because of the war. To illustrate both forms of transformation strategies, I chose two examples from my study.

Intensification: Sabina

Post-traumatic experiences can provoke deep, life-meaning questions – a time when spiritual and religious beliefs are reassessed. Because trauma shatters assumptions, Doka (2002) considers one of the most significant tasks in the recovery process to be the reconstruction of a faith/philosophical system. As a meaning system, religion is “global” because it encapsulates many sub-sets of belief such as the nature of evil, divine justice, moral order, and the human condition. Similar to a hanging mobile, if you touch one part of the system, the rest of it will react.

Although Sabina was “Muslim” prior to the war, she went through an intensified conversion process as part of her coping strategy. She is one of the women who experienced direct sexual violence against her body during the war. The “assault” was complete and intimate. It was not just against the beliefs she held to be true, but against her body and spirit, too. Her recovery has been slow and painful, but it is clear religion has played a positive role in her healing process. She believes that faith and the support of her religious community have given her strength to begin working through what happened.

If it were not for my faith, I would be dead. I would have killed myself. I became a totally different kind of Muslim in these past several years. Before the war, I considered myself a Muslim, but I didn't practice. After what happened to me, the only way I could survive was to turn to God. This faith community is all that I have. Even though I have never shared directly what happened to me, I've

received so much support and encouragement through friendships with these women – by worshipping together.

I don't believe my soul will ever heal from what happened to me. I pray every day for personal forgiveness and for God's strength. And I also pray that those who brought me so much injury will experience the same amount of pain. I hold no forgiveness in my heart for them; there never will be.

What happened to Sabina was not just incomprehensible. It was unforgiveable. She was adamant in her refusal to forgive, it was an insulting concept. Sabina talked about an unresolved tension that she lived with; the need for justice and moral order even though she knew there would be no justice nor order for her. How she was wronged cannot be made right. To bring solace, Sabina prays that God will reconcile her torment. She also prays that God will administer divine justice.

Sabina expressed tremendous grief. She still mourned. Her loss was felt profoundly; the injury she carried was a soul wound. Sabina cannot imagine ever healing. In her opinion, the best she could hope for is to learn how to live better with her pain. Sabina held a steadfast almost unwavering faith in God. During our time together, she was assertive, passionate and even political about her religious convictions. At the same time, she still appeared to be haunted with existential examination.

The war showed me that there are good people and evil people. How could they have done these things to us? How!? Aren't we from the same mother and father (Adam and Eve)? We believe in so many same things. Why? I saw with my own eyes – Serbian priests and bishops blessing machine guns and praying

that God would give them back the land of Bosnia. Why did this happen? I do not understand. Is this what it means to be Christian?

The complexity within Sabina's questions illustrates how sub-sets of beliefs (the nature of evil, divine justice, the human condition, etc.) relate to and impact each other. Although the level of her devotion to God has radically deepened, she has not been able to reassemble beliefs about justice and the human condition in a way that brings respite. It is as if one part of the mobile holds all the weight (God) while all of the other parts continue to cast dancing shadows against the wall. My interpretation is that Sabina attributes what happened to her during the war to human forces. There was no mention of God's will or her spiritual path. As I analyze the meanings she has made, the question of predestination or lack of divine intervention on her behalf was strangely absent. Nonetheless, Sabina expressed genuine thankfulness for God's hand in her life. She has been able to (partially) cope with what happened to her during the war by transforming its meaning through an intensified conversion process.

Converting: Aida and Naida

To convert is derived from the Latin term to turn or to turn about. According to Paloutzian, Richardson, and Rambo (1999), conversion can refer to both secular processes and theological notions of a person's orientation to God, a community of faith, and/or moral action. In the Hebrew tradition, the term usually refers to a person within the Jewish community "who violated fundamental principles of their covenant with God, either in moral or theological wrongdoings" (p. 1051). When they repent, they feel sorry for those violations and turn from them. Although to define conversion is a complex psychological, sociological, and anthropological quandary, it is generally understood as a religious change "that occurs in a

dynamic force field of people, events, ideologies, institutions, expectations, and experiences” (Paloutzian, et al., p. 1052).

Rambo (1993) suggests three descriptive conversion typologies: tradition transition (changing from one religion to another); institutional transition (shifting from one religious subgroup to another within the same tradition); or intensification (becoming more passionate, devoted, or committed). While Sabina chose an intensification coping strategy to make meaning of the war, Aida and Naida transitioned from Islam to science as the foundation of their global meaning system. The events of the war profoundly shook their understanding of God as creator and sustainer of a meaningful and comprehensible world. They faced what Geertz (1966) called a crisis of interpretability.

Aida: I’m not a practicing Muslim. I was born into it, but I don’t practice anymore.

Naida: I believe there is a God, but I’m not religious. I don’t have faith anymore. I was religious before the war but after what’s happened, no way.

Aida: I believe there is a scientific explanation for everything.

Naida: I do, too.

Aida: In our culture, just saying your name defines your ethnicity. It doesn’t matter whether you practice or not, we were born into being Muslim and punished for it. My parents didn’t have strong religious beliefs because they grew up under Communism. Religion was suppressed. We loosely followed some of the traditions. I think people believe when they get older. Or they turn to faith when

something bad happens like rape or dying. In my case? Just the opposite happened. I disbelieve now. Why believe in a God that allowed the war to happen? I'll respect, but I will never believe.

Naida: It's hard to understand the war. One of my friends thinks the Orthodox are just savages. They came into our town and tried to kill all of us. We were so afraid – everybody was terrorized. Most Serbians hate Bosnians. There was a small percentage that weren't part of the war, but most of them felt they needed to kill us. We were being punished for being Muslims. And they did this as Christians. No... I don't have faith in God anymore. Why should I? He didn't protect us.

Prior to the war, Naida and Aida held a basic belief that they were part of a larger divine plan and that God was benevolent. They were not particularly devout in practice, but they had faith and identified as Muslim. As I analyze their statements, it appears that they interpreted God as having violated fundamental principles of God's covenant with them instead of the other way around. The war was a moral and theological wrong done by the Divine. If it was God's will for them to experience this level of violation, reason posed a demanding question: Why would they continue to follow this kind of God? It was also reasonable for them to wonder why God did not protect them as the Serbians slaughtered their way through the countryside. The crisis of interpreting their experiences of the war led both women to abandon Islam as their orienting meaning system. How they perceived what happened to them during the war was a kind of evidence or testament to the nature of God. Their preference was to re-appraise their trust and faith in God and convert instead, to science for their source of meaning, belief, and value. There

was no indication of residual distress around the concept of God during this portion of the interview. They seemed to have found a form of peace by reassembling shattered assumptions into a global meaning system founded upon reason.

Suspension in the Coping of Meaning Process

Much of Janoff-Bulman's (1992) assumptive meaning and Horowitz's (2001) stress responses theories have guided research into the extensive, long-lasting and severe reactions to trauma. The shattering of global meaning can lead to depression and anxiety (Nolen-Hoeksema & Morrow, 1991) and cognitive disruptions such as ruminations or intrusive thoughts that impair or impede an individual's adjustment (Horowitz, 2001; Shaham, Singer, & Schaeffer, 1992). A major task in the recovery process is to reestablish viable and coherent beliefs about oneself and the world. These researchers suggest that cognitive reworking is usually accomplished by repetitive cycling of intrusive thoughts and denial (rumination), which eventually shift (through conservation or transformation) into a stable and viable belief system. In cases of severely negative experiences, however, cognitive integration can be extremely difficult.

Horowitz (2001) proposed and Tait & Silver (1989) later argued that sequela resulting from traumatic events may be due to an individual's difficulty in working through distressing thoughts. They are not able to renegotiate their experiences and appraisals into a viable cognitive framework. Ruminating or the cycling of intrusive thoughts may eventually lead to PTSD symptomatology or long term distress (Lepore, Silver, Wortman & Wayment, 1996; Miller, Rodoletz, Schroeder, Mangan, & Sedlacek, 1996). In their study among incest survivors, Silver, Boon, and Stones (1983) found that many women were unable to make sense or meaning out of the event or to understand why the incest had happened. Years later, these women

described their memories as being as intense, disruptive, and disturbing; they had not found a way to process them. For some individuals, to ruminate is a coping strategy that leads to re-appraisal and meaning making. For others, however, to ruminate may lead them in a circular and internally incessant maladaptive cognitive process that eventually leads to depression, anxiety, and more distress (Bifuloc & Brown, 1996; Beck and Clark, 1988; Nolen-Hoeksema & Morrow, 1991).

In my analysis, I found that the impact of evil and subsequent suffering continued to be a source of unrest for many of the women. Even those who successfully used conservation coping strategies to make meaning continued to partially ruminate and express distress over some aspects of their war experiences. As it relates to suffering and God's will, the older women were particularly able to articulate a well-defined theodicy that aligned with the Hodza's theological paradigm. However, the virtue of being able to fully surrender to God's divine path appeared to be problematic. Four of these women had not found a way to transform their prior religious belief systems nor had they found a way to change their appraisals. Unable to cope or work through memories, their ability to make meaning remains suspended and they continue to ruminate. The beliefs they hold are incompatible.

Suspension: Majka Mera

Majka Mera's story and her interview are provided below in order to illustrate this concept of rumination and how such irreconcilable beliefs impact many of the women. Mera is an honored elder in the community. As a child, she was part of a *zadruga* (traditional kinship pattern) that was very active religiously and politically. She established this framework at the beginning of our interview by describing how her brother had been martyred for his faith in

WWII. She also recalled how her father hid a Jewish family in the basement, and kept them safe from the Nazi occupation. Mera is devout in her practice and provides strong leadership at the mosque. She has taken an active role in the community and is considered wise among the women. When the war commenced, Mera lived in Sarajevo with her extended family. Instead of getting on the convoy leaving Sarajevo, she packed up her two daughters and granddaughter and sent them on to Croatia. As she put it,

I stayed because my son stayed. I wouldn't leave if the whole world was leaving.

Two of my son-in-laws couldn't leave, my nephew – my husband were all forced to remain. I stayed to take care of them.

Mera's identity as a mother clearly defined her decision to remain behind with the men. She stayed throughout the entire siege and personally witnessed extreme levels of violence. The way in which she constructed her narrative was unique to that of other women. Mera knitted together episodes around various themes. In between these episodes she gave no personal appraisal or evaluation but rather moved on to the next set of stories. Mera's narrative was also full of descriptive pictures – from walking in the dark fetching cow milk to seeing a small child being shot in a stroller. She told these stories while speaking with hushed sentences, a few tears – and even terse moments of anger as exemplified by a raised voice and tensed muscles. At one point, she was so angry I thought she might even stop the interview.

Immediately after she explained why she stayed behind to take care of her son, Mera shared a memory of another boy. This child, however, had not been protected by his mother:

I saw his right arm and his left leg; I still remember the boy. I was visiting my son at the hospital. He was doing his clinical trials there in order to become a

doctor. During the war, sometimes, he would work nine days in a row. Once, when I went to see him, I visited the children's wing. I still remember seeing the boy's face. He had lost his right arm and left leg to a grenade. My son would tell me stories of how he had seven people on his team who worked around the clock, helping children who were being pulled out as the grenades fell. He told me they would sometimes throw up while doing their surgery because of how injured the children were. I will never forget the eyes of that child. He just stared at me.

Mera struggled to integrate why children were targeted during the war. As a mother who protected and defended her family, she expressed disbelief that any human being could single out a child with an intention to harm them. To witness violence against such innocence was a direct assault on her global meaning system. In this moment of the interview, she was both distraught and angry. Without explaining her emotions, she continued on:

One day my son said, "Mama, the children only have transparent slices of bread to eat. The hospital can't feed them. Even the tea doesn't have sugar in it!" So I fell (became distraught). There was a woman who lived nearby. She led a cow down from the mountain. I went to her and asked if she could give me some milk so that I could take it to the hospital for these children. It wasn't uncommon for people to wait the entire night to get milk from her. She told me that if I would come at 4 o'clock in the morning to be first in line, she would give me some milk. So, I went at four, waited for her to milk the cow, carried the milk home and then boiled it. I made salty locume. I don't know if you ever eaten one. They are wartime manilice or war cookies. They were nothing; I used a little water, a little

zetina, a drop of sugar and some jam. I would make these little cookies and take the milk really early in the morning when it was still dark, to the hospital so the children would have something extra to eat.

It is often said that belief is known in the doing, by how we live our lives. In other words, our lives are confessional. Mixed inside Mera's narrative of disbelief was evidence of what she also believed. She was a determined makja who stayed behind, even when women and children were evacuated out of Sarajevo. Mera described how she walked the dark morning streets to get a bucket of milk for children who lay injured in the hospital. She scraped together lard, flour, and eggs to make "war cookies" to feed empty stomachs and bring cheer to listless children. Mera believed in compassion and mercy. Just as Allah sent his messenger Muhammad as the Mercy of the World (Qur'an 21:107), Mera extended sensitivity to those who were suffering around her. She expressed her faith in a very concrete way. How she treated children was different from how the little boy with no arm and no leg had been treated. Next she told two back to back stories of other children in her life:

I have a lot of love for kids and animals. I still feel very sad for all the children who lost their lives during the war. There was a neighborhood next to my home with very tall apartment buildings. They were kind of in a square and almost touched each other. They were really tall so you couldn't really see into the square they surrounded. There was a small playground in the middle of the apartment buildings where all the children played. But the apartment complex also had the best underground hiding spots in that neighborhood. The Serbs set up a secret radio station inside one of the apartments and reported coordinates.

There was a little girl I knew who lived there. When I sat outside on the playground with the children, she would talk to me. She kept telling me that she heard something inside one of the apartments. Well, the Serbs ended up dropping a grenade directly into the playground off that apartment balcony. The shutters on my windows rattled it was such a big explosion. At once there was screaming. [Her thoughts outloud:] What is it? How!? [She was told:] A grenade fell. It killed seven children, 26 were wounded. The little girl, Amina Kasmoo, she was caught in the shrapnel. She had to be evacuated to Jordan where they pulled shellings out of her. She survived, but now she is blind in one eye.

What happened to those people who dropped the grenade on those children?!

Even my husband's brother's two year old son was taken to a children's hospital.

He was in a stroller. His parents were trying to get him down some stairs. You know how you have to prop the stroller on its back wheels as you go down?

There was a sniper who shot at my nephew. In the same second he was tipped back in the stroller and lowered down the first step, a bullet hit him. If he had been upright and still on the top landing, it would have gone through his heart. Instead, it grazed him through here (points to the skull above the ear). It broke his bone and lodged in his head between his skull and brain. He's fine now, but he had to go through a lot of rehabilitation. He didn't have brain damage but it is still lodged there.

Throughout my analysis of Mera's narrative, I looked for themes, but I also listened to her silence – what she was not saying. The stories she reassembled in our interview revolved

around community, compassion, respect, and dignity. What she experienced and witnessed during the war stood in direction opposition to the values she assigned to humanity. Embedded in these stories was her sense of truth. Mera slowly built a case against the despicability and disgusting nature of the war. I interpret her trying to make meaning by attempting to reframe understanding of what it meant to be human. She questioned the human capacity to do such evil. Hers was a spiritual narrative; one in which she queried the essence of the human condition.

Unfortunately, there has been no peace or resolution for Mera. She has not successfully “coped” or brought meaning back into a coherent belief system:

I could return to Sarajevo today. We fixed our house; it had been struck by two grenades. We fixed it, and I even have a place to stay. But I can't even venture outside to buy bread without seeing the grave markers of my nephew, my grandson from my sister, my sister, my brother. No. I will not return. I don't want to remember.

Talking is reliving a burden. It is not a release like the American psychiatrists say about psychotherapy. I say this again. In my family, I have 8 healers (doctors). They can't find a solution (cure) for me. And to this day, my intestines speak (expression meaning that she has an upset stomach when she recalls her past)... That's how my grandson says it; the intestines speak. To this day, they groan, and to this day my stomach doesn't have peace. Nothing exists. They would give me a star from the sky if it would help, but the stomach is upset and it won't stop. Why do I need to remember, to relive? I cry. Why do I need that? My soul hurts....

For Mera, suffering was complete; it resided in her body. Throughout the interview she spoke of her stomach and heart. Her soul was a “room” where pain had congregated. Like Sabina, she also described a soul wound. To her, there was a difference between bodily hurt and a soulful hurt. I believe Mera’s pain was deeper than what a body can absorb because the loss she experienced was spiritual in nature. Mera continued to grieve over the loss of a changed world. Her life in Sarajevo and the communal warmth and joy she experienced as being a Bosnian Muslim had literally died. I observed sadness and mourning not only by listening to her stories and watching her cry; hurt resided in her slumped shoulders and dejected body posture. Mera continued to grieve over the loss of a changed world.

Bowlby (1980) argued that grieving involves confronting recurring thoughts about what has been lost. He maintained that only when an individual “can tolerate the pining, the more or less conscious searching, the seemingly endless examination of how and why the loss occurred... can [she] come gradually to recognize and accept the loss as in truth permanent and that [her] life must be shaped anew” (p. 93). If this line of reasoning is true, then it would seem that Mera would be well on her way to recovery because, as she put it, “I can’t put these memories out of my mind. I constantly think about the war.” If Bowlby (1980) was correct, Mera’s repetitive and persistent thought process would have led to her adjustment of loss. Instead, she continued to suffer what appeared to be a prolonged grief.

There is a fine distinction between the conscious processes involved in grief work and when an individual ruminates (Stroebe, 1992; Treynor, Gonzalez, & Nolen-Hoeksema, 2003). Grief work has been understood to be a confrontation and adaptive process that ultimately leads to positive adaptation. Rumination, however, has been theoretically and empirically related to poor mental health outcomes (Nolen-Hoeksema, 2001; Nolen-Hoeksema & Davis, 1999; Nolen-

Hoeksema & Larson, 1999). Instead of moving an individual “through” their grief, rumination can be a way to avoid what is simply too painful to confront. The reality of the loss may feel too negative or overwhelming to face. In my opinion, where Mera appeared to be stuck was in trying to figure out the human condition. Her entire episodic narrative was one “human” story after another. Countering each chapter of human destruction was a chapter of human compassion. The paradoxes she continued to struggle with revolved around humanity and human dignity. For over fourteen years, Mera has been ruminating, trying to integrate beliefs that will not align. I didn’t hear her questioning God, but rather Serbians. Were they human? If they were, how could they do such things? Were they not all part of the human community? She was merciful. Why were they not merciful?

The behaviors Mera witnessed did not fit into her schema or definition of humanity, and the meaning she gives “being human” appears resistant to change. It may even be a guiding ideal. How Mera behaved during the war and the kinds of sacrifices that she made likely reveal the expectations she may have of others. Perhaps consciously or unconsciously, Mera did not want to adapt or redefine her understanding to match reality. To do so might feel more threatening than living with unanswered questions. Prior to the war, embedded within her global meaning system was a notion that she was a part of the human community. Human dignity was respected, and there was an understanding and regard for the fragility of innocence and vulnerability. Her experiences during the war shattered those assumptions. Now, the vivid memories she described illustrated her continued and profound dislocation. If human beings can do these types of despicable things to each other, what does that say about being a human being? Mera’s circular ruminations may be a way for her to avoid facing a difficult answer.

In our interview, Mera spoke often about her spirit or soul. It was as if her soul had lost its home. I found it interesting that her interior world seemed to parallel her external world. Mera still had a home in Sarajevo; but for her, it symbolized loss and death. She has chosen to avoid it and instead, lives in a make-shift sense of “home” in the United States. Mera’s soul could also go back to her pre-trauma cognitive template “home”. However, I think she is wise enough to know that to do so would be naïve. Another option would be to reframe her understanding of what it means to be human; but that appears to be too difficult. Mera has chosen to stay suspended and live in a contorted understanding that is riddled with paradox. For now, her spirit remains restive as she continues to ruminate.

Conclusion

Beliefs are parts of our Selves that are often hidden or shielded from view. They are designed and woven together over time and experienced in the subconscious mind. The construct of belief systems are themselves paradoxical: they are delicate but hardy, true and false, they are internal but express externally, some are factual while others may be symbolic. The entirety of the Bosnian war was an onslaught upon the assumptive meanings of these women. Much of their unexamined but deeply felt beliefs were torn apart. In their attempts to cope and reconstruct a coherent belief system after previously held assumptions were shattered, several women were able to conserve their belief systems, while others were not. Some beliefs were simply too delicate, and did not survive. Other beliefs emerged resilient and hardy; resistant to transformation. In the follow excerpt, Nastja described returning home a few years ago. I find her illustration a strong metaphor for how beliefs for the women in my study were impacted during the war:

When I visited my home town, I think three or four years ago, it was the first time I had gone back since I was three years old. It was very odd, very eerie – I don't know how to describe it. Over a decade later, there were houses that had been rebuilt. Others were brand new. Some of the houses still have gunshot holes. And there was even a bombed out house that had a tree growing out of it.

When belief systems are impacted by trauma, they re-emerge differently. Some beliefs can be rebuilt over time. Other beliefs are completely destroyed; brand new ones must be built. Beliefs can suffer as wounds that will not heal, but somehow – they manage to survive. But there are also stable beliefs. They are resilient, strong, and stretch up through broken dreams and lives. Although religion and spirituality played contradictory roles for the women in my study, these belief systems continue to be powerful factors that influence their coping and healing processes. The ways women attempted to understand the nature of suffering, and to cope with war trauma were unique but they did share a common belief. It was very resilient and strong – stretching up and through their broken dreams and lives. They are arguably and proudly Bosnian Muslims. Nothing can take that away from them.

Chapter Seven

CONCLUSION

Healing and recovery among refugee populations in the aftermath of war trauma is an area of research that has burgeoned in recent years. There are important political, social, communal, and personal implications for individuals and families who have been displaced and forcibly relocated due to armed conflict. Interest in the psychological sequelae of war (and the additional stressors of exile) increased during the latter part of the last century, giving rise to terms such as ‘post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)’, ‘major depressive disorder (MDD)’, and ‘complicated grief’ (Kokanovic & Stone, 2010). While this increase in awareness of post-trauma psychiatric sequelae has boosted research in the field, it has also led to increasing medicalization of the problem. Within the psychiatric community, the predominant view is that PTSD is a medical disorder characterized by a particular psychobiological dysfunction (Stein, Seedat, Iversen, & Wessely, 2007). However, among some psychiatrists, sociologists, psychologists, and anthropologists, a growing body of work argues that there are limitations to the medicalization of distress. Human suffering cannot be quantified, reduced, or fully understood by a precise medical equation (Bracken, 1998; Bracken, Giller & Summerfield, 1995; Summerfield, 1999, 2001).

The subjective experience of traumatic events and subsequent expression of symptoms vary greatly between individuals and across cultures. Not all of the psychological pathologies of war trauma and forced dislocation fit PTSD criteria. As such, there has been an increase in research among medical anthropologists (Kleinman, Das, & Lock, 1997), psychiatrists (Summerfield, 1999, 2001; Weine et al., 2004a/b; Weine et al., 2005), and traumatologists (Janoff-Bulman, 1992; Kaufmann, 2002; Landsman, 2002) which focuses on different

approaches to healing, specifically as it relates psychic pain and suffering. Instead of psychobiological dysfunction, these notions of suffering are located in the context of an individual's history, as well as in broader cultural, national, political, and religious landscapes. Qualitative methods used in these studies have validated individual voices while also elucidating the complexities of distress. The nature of human pain has thus been explored rather than quantified which has led to rich information about recovery processes in the aftermath of trauma.

This dissertation is a narrative study which examines how nineteen Bosnian Muslim refugees have attempted to cope and/or recover from their experiences during and after the war. It was conducted in three phases. First, I spent six months as a participant observer in the local Bosnian community, in order to gain better understanding of and sensitivity to Bosnian culture, as well as to the intra-cultural nuances within the Bosnian refugee community in Phoenix, Arizona. This included participating in cultural events, informal visits with families, and attending religious services at the Bosnian mosque. Next, I conducted sixteen individual interviews, five follow-up interviews, an intergenerational interview, and facilitated two Focus Groups over the course of the following nine months. Within the framework of grounded theory, I did constant and comparative coding analysis between interview data and watched for emergent and consistent themes. When a core story developed, I selected five of the interviews that were especially illustrative, and investigated the narrative data more rigorously by using The Listening Guide. Three themes developed during the analysis portion of this study that illuminate the continuing challenges Bosnian refugee women face in their post-war healing process. From the grounded data of these women's interviews, I argue that the relationship between identity and space, identity and relationship, and identity and belief significantly impacted the recovery process of each woman.

The first theme explored was how being dislocated from place impacted women's identity and their healing from war trauma. Through a conceptual focus on place, this research calls attention to a little studied topic among refugee trauma research: how being severed from "home" effects displaced people. Within the narratives of these women, the experience of being uprooted from place attachments emerged as a central site of continued struggle. Drawing from Passi's (1991) and Fullilove's (1996) theories of place identity and place attachment, I initially analyzed how women related to "space" in Bosnia. I found that their relationship to the country had been intimate. It was not just a geographic center or site for events, rather being Bosnian gave them a historical context and existential meaning. Rivers, mountains, folk music, minarets, and the strong smell of Turkish coffee were sensual expressions of a place that had shaped their histories. Bosnia was not just a backdrop. It was the setting upon which their individual lives had been grounded. Their personal identities were calibrated to the land of Bosnia and to being Bosnian. They knew who they were *because* they were Bosnian.

"Home" for the Bosnian women in my study was both literal and figurative. When they talked about their houses, women reflected upon critical dimensions of daily life such as safety, comfort, and social support. At the same time, "home" also represented a place where they felt significant and emotionally attached. Prior to the war, life in Bosnia was depicted as being ideal. These women felt secure. They had cherished dwellings, clearly defined roles, and extended families to draw from for support. Thus, emotional and physical "place" was tied to kinship and traditional social patterns that reinforced their sense of purpose, relationship, and being Bosnian. When they reminisced, it was with affection, longing, and nostalgia. Women's roots reached deeply into historical and socio-cultural space; their identities were anchored in that environ.

Therefore, when war commenced, the strategy of ethnic cleansing did not just “move” women from their homes. Ethnic cleansing fundamentally dislocated them from their lives.

When the women in my study were forced from their homes, the destruction of their immediate and intimate space was painful and disorienting. They were literally cut off from their personal, social, and historical groundings. Narrations of their departures remained suffused with a sense of incomprehensibility. For example, some of the women left within seconds of Serbian militia surrounding their city. They took absolutely nothing from their former lives with them as they fled. Other women left sons and husbands behind in Sarajevo, and wound their way in a snake-like convoy to the Croatian border. In tow were their children and a couple of suitcases. Along the way, they faced chaos, violence, rape, and murder. All of the women in my study left their homes permanently; spaces of memories, locations filled with expressions of their histories and lives. They also left behind physical, emotional, and social security. What they travelled towards was a new life that would be completely severed from their past. Most of them were not able to return to their homes because of the adverse territorial conditions resulting from the Dayton Peace Agreement, or because they had nothing to return to; their homes had been destroyed or confiscated.

Women in my study survived different war-time experiences and varied exile patterns. Eventually, they each made their way to Phoenix and began to re-establish their lives. All of the middle age and older women in my study faced rebuilding a sense of home in an environment which bore no resemblance to their past and among strangers who spoke with a different tongue. Despite the challenges they faced during and after the war, these women managed to create a replica of home, a place that comforted them, and reminded them of where they came from. Most of these refugee women lived in modest dwellings, often in situations that represented a

considerable downward shift in social status from their lives in Bosnia. Their apartments offered but a mere image of their former lives. Pictures of Tito hung on the wall, Bosnian folk music played in the background, and the smell of *burek* (traditional pastries) baking in the oven filled the air. Regardless, they made it clear to me that this was truly not their home.

The loss of their former lives continued to bring grief reactions to many of the women in my study. The “majkas” (grandmas), have found the transition particularly difficult. Having spent over 60 years of life in Bosnia, their place attachment was affixed. Knowing that they will never return, each of the majkas seemed to express a mournful resignation. They did not believe their souls would heal and they held no vision for a new life in the United States. Similarly, the middle age women in my study also remained significantly attached to Bosnia; however they were not as fatalistic. They had moved forward, not out of desire but for pragmatic reasons. Primarily driven by their roles as mothers and wives, these women have attempted to forge new identities in the United States. Nonetheless, during our interviews, they recognized the disjuncture between who they were in Bosnia (and the kinds of lives they led there) and who they are in America (and the kinds of lives they lead here). They remained angry at the injustice of being uprooted. Their daughters, who were partially acculturated in the United States, expressed a mixture of sentiment. These younger women felt relieved by the freedoms ensured to them as women in the U.S. context. At the same time, they had also experienced the immense impact and losses that their families absorbed because of the war. They, too, continued to identify as being Bosnian.

Ultimately, for each of the women in my study, forced displacement had invoked a sense of liminality; it was as if they belonged nowhere. They were not at home in the U.S., but Bosnia was no longer home either. Although nostalgia for “home” was a strongly felt and expressed

sentiment, memories of that home were clouded by the deaths and hardships they had survived. These women knew that to return to that pre-war figurative home was impossible. The Bosnia they had grown up in was different now. The paradoxical relationships within their place identity (being Bosnian but now a U.S. citizen) and their place attachment (Bosnia is home but not home) along with being ethnically cleansed from their homes had created an unsutured wound. It was not possible for these women to be reconciled with what they had been severed from.

A second theme that emerged in my analysis of narrative data was the ways in which war impacted relationships and affected the identities of women, specifically their gender roles, family structures and parenting tasks. Ethnic cleansing, war rape, and the chaotic, unprovoked violence against civilians disassembled familial and communal social structures causing immense disruption. One of the most difficult healing tasks these women faced was relational. Loved ones died, long term separation occurred, as well as dramatic shifts in their roles as mothers and wives. For these women, post-war realities included grieving relational losses, as well as finding ways to rebuild social identities that were cohesive, meaningful and expressive of their historical biographies. To understand how these historical biographies had been shaped, I began my analysis by exploring the ways in which culture, nationality, religion, and family brought form and definition to the various roles women played in their communities prior to the onset of war.

Although to generalize may simplify or categorize social identities, it was nevertheless important to investigate the context of cultural assumptions and expectations related to gender roles – especially because the distinction of being Bosnian was so salient for the participants in my study. For example, a unique traditional kinship pattern (zadruga) shaped (and continues to

shape) the behaviors and values of the majkas and middle age women interviewed.

Responsibilities in this familial arrangement are gender specific. Women's roles encompass caring for the children and tending to the details of the home. Prior to the war, as a cultural norm, the most respected and admired women in the community were perceived as virtuous, self-sacrificing, and those who worked tirelessly on behalf of their loved ones. While feminists may argue this cultural framework is one in which women are subordinated, research indicates that women willingly participated in these gendered ideologies. For some, the social incentives for upholding patriarchal order granted them prestige as well as moral power within the family. During the data gathering phase of this project, these same cultural patterns, behaviors, and beliefs were observed within refugee families now repatriated in the United States. Interviews also revealed that external and internal emphasis on being a "good Bosnian woman" remained strong.

As previously mentioned, war undermined the foundations of the zadruga through death, separation, and the destruction of entire communities. Significant changes in culturally based practices, values, and family structure occurred. Complex psychological challenges stemming from traumatic war experiences intertwined with the mental distresses associated with living apart from kinship as these refugees also faced tremendous economic, social, and familial adjustments. Women's identities were impacted by the demanding shifts that took place in their roles as mothers, wives, and daughters. In particular, the dramatic upheaval of being uprooted placed tremendous strain on mothering roles. Already vulnerable from surviving traumatic events, many of these women were pushed out of their traditional roles and into that of becoming protectorates and bread winners. Daughters were also forced to assume new roles to offset

changes within inter-family dynamics. For example, younger women highlighted taking on the worries and responsibilities of protecting their parents.

The injuries of war do not solely reside within the individual. When people are injured, the physical, psychological, and spiritual harms they absorb have relational consequences. In my analysis of the mother-daughter dyad, some of these consequences were revealed. When mothers reflected upon their behaviors during the war, and as refugees in Croatia, they expressed remorse and continued regret. Unquestionably, cultural, ethnic, and religious gender role expectations had shaped their internal responses and subsequent coping strategies. These women measured themselves as mothers against the cultural expectation that they be strong and sacrificial – to set aside their needs for the well-being of their families. Under the immense strain of war, however, they had at times felt afraid, anxious, vulnerable, paralyzed, and/or depressed. They had become personally overwhelmed by traumatic events and did not always “perform” at the level of their personal and societal expectations. Mothers also believed that because of these distresses, their children’s current psychological welfare had been negatively affected. For example, daughters and sons were mirroring their mother’s war-time anxiety or depression. These confessional self-evaluations revealed the lament as well as ambivalence women struggled against in their healing process. Blaming themselves for not being strong enough and blaming themselves for their children’s mental health challenges continued to be a source of guilt and shame.

As daughters reflected, they were clear to articulate the ways in which war had affected their mothers emotionally/psychologically, as well as the ways it had impacted their relationships with them. Although one of the young women spoke of positive outcomes such as closeness and a resilient bond with her mother, all of the other daughters seemed caught in a thoughtful

paradox: their mothers had been strong; their mothers had been immensely vulnerable. They were proud of their mothers, but they were also disappointed in the current quality of relationship with them. Daughters described how their cohesive pre-war family structures had been torn apart. They had felt secure before the war began. During the war, however, these girls witnessed their mothers panic; they also watched them bravely negotiate highly volatile terrain. Once they crossed the borders of Croatia and/or Germany, their mothers were then forced to work, leaving these (at the time) younger girls without emotional support during an important developmental time in life. Additionally, when their mothers were around, they were often distressed, exhausted, and anxious from war-events or the stressors in exile. These cumulative experiences left a residual impact and continued to shape their current mother-daughter relationships in various ways. The compilation of daughters' insights suggests that the persistent and wide scope of psychological wounds incurred is particularly difficult to recover from. In some cases, the depth of injury does not emerge for several years. This section of data analysis also indicates that harm and/or healing cannot be understood apart from the intra and extra-familial processes in which these refugees live.

Disorientation resulting from "shattered" belief systems was the final theme to emerge related to women's identities and their healing processes. Prior to the war, the women in my study held what Janoff-Bulman called "global assumptions" about the world. These were personal schemas or foundational beliefs that guided them as they interpreted the world. However, those foundational beliefs were significantly shaken, shattered, and for some – even severed, due to what they had experienced and survived. As Landsman (2002) argued "the crisis of trauma is pervasive, altering emotional, cognitive, and behavioral experience, and the subjective experience of trauma not infrequently includes a crisis of meaning at a deep level of

experience” (p. 14). This was the case for participants in my study. In the wake of traumatic events, women were left to determine or create meaning out of senseless and disorienting violence at the same time they were also attempting to re-build their lives.

As I listened to their narratives, a unique relationship between ethnicity, religion and nationality seemed intertwined in the principles and values that shaped the women’s judgments about their war experiences and behaviors. Knowledge and appreciation of those belief systems were vital in helping to analyze how they answered the question, “Why did this happen to me?” What I learned was that regardless of whether or not individual women ascribed to being a “practicing” Muslim, each of them had been socialized in a cultural environment that emphasized values and beliefs influenced by an ethnic expression of Islam. This potent influence brought shape and form to their worldview. During analysis, I realized that it was nearly impossible to disentangle Bosnian Muslim ethnic values from Bosnian Muslim religious influence. Instead, an attempt was made to learn from the emic perspective of how women conceptualized their sufferings. Because their meanings systems were rooted in a theological paradigm, I wanted to learn if or how they considered suffering and evil in the context of God’s power and mercy.

. In this study, a majority of women did account for what happened in Bosnia through a religious theodicy or God-based explanation of suffering, evil, and divine punishment. Although their beliefs may not have been explicated prior to the war, women seemed to have held notions that the world was benevolent (God was caring), the world was meaningful (God was intentional), and that the self was worthy (because God had a plan for each person). However, their experiences of violence and violation during the war stood in a direct confrontation to those beliefs. What they witnessed and experienced was incomprehensible and did not fit within their

meaning system. As a result, they experienced significant internal dissonance. The process of aligning a caring God, with an intentional God, and a God who had a specific plan for each individual created a conundrum. The implication of this frame of reference was that the war was pre-destined. It was God willed and what happened to each woman was part of their divinely appointed path. The spiritual impetus for these events may have been that either God was testing their faith, punishing their sin, or rewarding them as martyrs. Whether or not women could live with these beliefs as “true” was what created their crisis of meaning.

In order to find internal resolution, women in my study engaged in what trauma theorists (Pargament, 1997; Park, 2005; Park & Ai, 2006) call cognitive reappraisal, meaning making, and coping. Findings indicate that women’s coping processes led them to confirm or disconfirm pre-war beliefs. What they chose to believe shaped their subsequent strategies and abilities to organize and/or comprehend the painful, chaotic, and unexpected war events. Analyzing how God factored into their reappraisals brought critical insight to women’s coping strategies and recovery processes. Some women reclaimed and conserved their pre-war belief system using strategies such as reframing God, religious prevention, and religious purification. Other women transformed pre-war beliefs by either intensifying religious conviction or behavior, or by converting to another belief system altogether. A third sub-set of women, however, had not found a way to work through their internal dissonance. They were not able to find a satisfying means to align their previously held convictions with the experiences of war. Instead, they continued to ruminate. Treynor, Gonzalez, and Nolen-Hoeksema (2003) suggest that ruminating is not simply a subconscious way to work through cognitive dissonance. Instead, they argue it is a psychological maladaptive response to avoid what may be too painful to confront, or too overwhelming to face. Some of the women in this sub-set described their pain as a “soul

wound”. They also acknowledged deep feelings of loss, remorse, or depression. These women had not found cognitive or emotional resolution and remained suspended within a crisis of meaning.

In sum, results from this dissertation project suggest three things. First, when war refugees are alienated from place attachments, their history and narratives are disrupted. Not only are they dislocated from a literal space called “home” but they lose a sense of existential belonging and identity. A recovery task that they face is to re-establish a cohesive sense of self within a context that is unfamiliar and holds no biographical meaning or place attachment for them. Second, war and forced removals destroy communal and familial relationships. Individuals experience relational losses through death and separation. But they have also lost everything that anchored their social identities. In exile, role expectations and demands may radically shift. Part of their healing process will include re-acquiring the social roles they lost because of uprooting and/or adapting to the new demands placed upon them. Some may even need to construct new identities in their host country. Third, trauma events also create internal disorientation. Centralizing beliefs that served to moor identities are shattered leaving bewildered and confused individuals to face a crisis of meaning. For religious people, the implication for this is that during the coping process, it is likely that their faith will come under personal scrutiny. Prior convictions will be tested against experience. As a result, previously held spiritual beliefs may become either a positive or negative strategy in their cognitive and emotional healing processes. Taken together, these findings elucidate some of the psychological, social, emotional, and religious complexities that survivors of war trauma face in their struggle to recover.

Theoretical Reflection

Unintentionally, this research has been reflexivity in motion. From its inception, the process has been fluid and dynamic. I began my study with the intention of learning about women's healing processes in the aftermath of war rape. Not long after my interviews began, however, I realized that my research questions were somewhat limiting. What the women wanted to talk about was much broader in scope. I faced a decision. Did I push my agenda or respond to their needs? The answer to that question was epistemologically foregrounded by Standpoint theory. I had made a commitment to learn from their social locations and situated knowledge – which meant leaving my original plan. The use of methods such as grounded theory and narrative analysis complimented that intention by requiring that I listen to their dense and complex voices. I was an outsider peeking in on the actualities of their lives. It was their 'local particularities' and their tacit knowledge that I sought to explore. Although I found grounded theory useful in generating the conceptual themes of dislocation, separation, and disorientation, *The Listening Guide*, was particularly helpful in pushing me to attend more carefully what they were trying to say. It was only through the discipline of listening to the tapes several times that I began to distinguish each woman's variant voices. Their tones, pitches, and rhythms became clues to what was hidden and unspoken. There were under-melodies that I would have missed without the guide. Ultimately, I believe it was the confluence of my epistemological foundation and the design of this study that drew me back to my ethic of research. This was a relational process which involved both deep respect and profound honesty. To be worthy of these women's trust meant that I needed to be willing to give up control over the outcome of my study which I did.

Reflexivity also challenged me to ask how personal values, experiences, interests, and beliefs shaped my research. Unknowingly, I began this project with a narrow Western understanding of trauma and trauma recovery. I placed high value on the PTSD model – especially on the need to assimilate unconscious traumatic memory through speech. I wrongly assumed that “to remember” and “to talk” were the primary steps towards recovery. Fortunately, as a result of my conducting an extensive literature review, I broadened my understanding of other theoretical approaches and treatment techniques. Although there is predictable psychological harm that occurs in the aftermath of atrocity, I learned that for many, to heal from trauma is a much more obscure process.

Theoretically, I began to shift away from PTSD as the central way to approach trauma recovery, and instead began to champion the need for culturally sensitive approaches that reflect traditional ways of healing. This seemed particularly pertinent for the Bosnian refugees in my study. “Talk therapy” was not only irrelevant, but it was also socially frowned upon. Sharing intimate feelings was considered taboo. I learned that their recovery processes had included almost no psychiatric or therapeutic interventions. There was a strong emphasis, instead, on religious rituals and forbearance. I found this both interesting and perplexing and began to take more specific notice of their beliefs and assumptions. It was not until I delved more deeply into the analysis phase of my project that I began to realize the ways indigenous knowledge seemed to support, but also limit, the women’s capacity for healing. As I illustrated in Chapters five and six, these women’s social identities were tightly bound to an ethnic framework. It had been difficult for them to individuate or validate their sufferings because of social roles and obligations. Additionally a theological paradigm permeated the meaning attributed to their

sufferings. For many of the women, it was how they understood God's will that shaped their coping strategies – not the process of recovering and assimilating their memories of trauma.

Having been raised within the Christian tradition, I also held some spiritual assumptions about healing and transformation. Inspired by the words of Victor Frankl and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, I believed in “transcendence” or the ability to rise above the human experience. Because my interpretative lens was heavily skewed by these influences, during initial interviews and the early stages of constant and comparative analysis, I was confounded. There were no miracle stories for these women. What I heard were narratives of pain and confusion, not stories of overcoming. Naive? *Yes*. I knew listening to women's narratives would be difficult, but I did not expect to journey into such a dark underworld of suffering. To travel alongside them meant to travail. It became a very personal and costly experience for me. At times, I lost my way. While I am not sure if or how my presence in these women's lives affected them – their experiences have pushed me into both an existential questioning and a suspension of my own global assumptions. At the conclusion of this project, I wonder differently about the human condition and whether or not this is a moral universe. Presently, I am a bit like *Majka Mera*. What I bore witness to in this project did not fit my schema about humanity. What was done to these women leaves me bewildered. At the same time, my hope for humanity seems resistant to change. It is a guiding ideal. So for now, I knowingly stay suspended in an understanding that is riddled with paradox. I believe; I do not believe.

Limitations

When interpreting the conclusions of this study, there are a number of limitations to consider. Similar to other studies of trauma, the research was conducted within a distinct

population and in a specific locale. As such, conclusions cannot be generalized to findings of other ethnic refugee populations, or Bosnian refugees who have repatriated to other regions. Additionally, because of the ethno-cultural differences between the researcher and participants, linguistic challenges may have affected the validity. Working trans-culturally added a layer of complexity and some opportunity to understand might have been lost. It may have been difficult, at times, for women to know exactly what I, as the researcher, was asking. Likewise, it may have been difficult to fully apprehend what the participants were trying to communicate. Although there were two translators involved in the process, it remained challenging to safeguard the original voices of the women while also disentangling the content and meaning of their narratives. However, one of the translators (Elma) had extensive experience within the Bosnian refugee community in Phoenix, and felt assured and comfortable in the interpretative process.

Another limitation of this research concerns the sample. Women in the study self-selected and chose to interview. They were not a representative sample of all Bosnian women. First, characteristics and differences of women who chose not to share or refused to participate are unknown. This may include individuals who are not coping well, or who use different forms of coping strategies. Also, all of the participants in my study originally came from urban centers in Bosnia. As Bringa's (1995) research indicated, for rural Bosnians, extended families and local communities wielded considerable social control over their members. Ethnic and religious belonging held more sway in rural populations than in urban areas. As a result, women coming from these areas may have responded differently to their war and post-war experiences. Research inclusive of the rural and village areas of the country would yield more comprehensive understanding. Finally, the size of each sub-group (approximately 6) was an additional

limitation. Comparative analysis between primary small sample sizes raises issues for generalizing findings.

Methodologically, while grounded theory fosters seeing and exploring data in fresh ways, it is not uncommon for researchers to unwittingly force data into their own preconceived categories. In this study, my invisible standpoints such as religion, nationality, ethnicity, and western conceptions of psychological health were bound to influence perception, awareness, and sensitivities. It is impossible to be “value free” in the analytic process. However, while preconceptions may have influenced perception, that does not mean they determined what was focused upon and/or the meaning attributed to findings. The possibility of researcher bias was lessened by testing codes. As themes emerged during the constant and comparative process, participants were re-interviewed and their feedback was elicited. Also, at regular intervals, the two translators reviewed coding steps to ensure the interpretations remained grounded in the data. As an additional caution, I created an inventory or audit trail which consisted of notes, memos compiled during the analysis phase, and documentation of responses to the data as it began to emerge into theory.

Directions for Future Study

This research has provided evidence that the radical discordance between refugees’ pre/post-war place identification, role continuity, and cultural/religious belief systems is problematic and may obstruct their healing process. Individuals in my study identified themselves as Bosnian women – culturally, nationally, ethnically, and religiously. Not only did war threaten or disrupt those identifications, in some aspects, it fundamentally altered them. Further research between these matrices has important implications for social psychological

theories as they relate to refugees, refugee trauma, and recovery. In particular, new language and ways to conceptualize the healing process are vital. For those refugees who have been ethnically cleansed and cannot return home, to recover what has been severed is not possible. Instead, they are left dislocated, separated, and disoriented. I suggest additional study be given to fundamental changes in refugee identities: the individual and collective loss of identity, the deconstruction of identity, the adaptation of identity, and the reconstruction of identity. The disjuncture between pre-war identities and post-war identities are profound; more thorough investigation of how this impacts the healing process is warranted.

This study also underscores the intersection of refugee suffering with spirituality and religion. The emic perspective of Bosnian Muslim refugees who conceptualized their suffering through an Islamic theodicy contrasts with the etic perspective of a western approach that either medicalizes or secularizes suffering and shies away from interventions incorporating religious ritual and/or spiritual beliefs. Although faith and spirituality sustain many refugees in their process of uprooting, exile, and relocation, research has tended to neglect the role of religion as a source of emotional and cognitive support, social mobilization, or as a way to re-build communal and group identity. Researchers have also failed to examine the negative as well as the positive religious meanings of trauma work.

The unique contribution of my research sensitizes the practices of mental health care workers who provide psychological support to women whose theological paradigm instructs them to believe that what happened to them during the war was God's will. The social implications of this belief system are immense because religious meaning making is not just personal. It is also a reciprocal and ongoing process between individuals and the communities in which they live. If individuals and societies believe war and war trauma are part of God's

punishment for sin, the social repercussions for women who are sexually violated are profound. Enhanced professional and public awareness of the influence of religion as a meaning making system with both negative and positive healing potentials for refugees is critical.

As a way to conclude, I would like to start where I began this dissertation: war is a plague that does not end when B-2's sit idly in hangers or after machetes have been wiped clean. *Why?* Its damage lingers. Downward screams of mortars may have quieted, but that does not mean the violations of war become silent. The breadth and depth of its brutality continue to speak for years to come. As narratives of the women in my study indicated, metaphorical shrapnel remains lodged in their spirits, in their psyches, in their relationships, and in their every day lives – fourteen years later. In this aftermath questions about God and fellow human beings are fair to raise; how does one make sense out of what should not make sense, to recover what has been amputated, or to make a new life out of nothing more than a plastic yogurt cup? There are no easy answers to these paradoxical questions or tidy bows to make the narratives pretty. Instead, through the reflections of the Bosnian women in this study, we are confronted by a raw honesty that points towards the complexities involved in the elusiveness of personal and social healing.

Appendix 1: General Demographics of Participants

Name	Age	City	Education	Occupation	Left Bosnia route to U.S.
Amila	21	Prijedor; Republika Srpska	*M.A.	Student	1992, Croatia, Germany, U.S.
Enisa	82	Banja Luka; Republika Srpska	8 th Grade		1997, Croatia, U.S.
Naida	24	Sarajevo	*B.A.	Student	1992, Croatia, Germany, U.S.
Nastja	23	Derveta; Republika Srpska	*B.A.	Student	1992, Croatia, Germany, U.S.
Merita	42	Doboj Republika Srpska	H.S.	Office Administrator	1993, Croatia, Germany, U.S.
Mujesira	73	Doboj Republika Srpska	Associates		1998, Croatia, U.S.
Azra	52	Banja Luka; Republika Srpska	Associates	Elderly Care	1993, Croatia, U.S.
Elma	25	Banja Luka; Republika Srpska	B.A.	Teacher	1993, Croatia, U.S.
Naida	48	Doboj Republika Srpska	H.S.	Restaurant owner	1993, Croatia, U.S.
Mirzada	19	Teslic; Republika Srpska	*Associates	Student	2001, U.S.
Mirveta	58	Banja Luka; Republika Srpska	B.A.	Health Care	1996, U.S.
Ada	19	Sarajevo	*B.A.	Student	1992, Croatia, Germany, U.S.
Mera	80	Sarajevo	8 th Grade		1997, U.S.
Fatima	72	Banja Luka; Republika Srpska	8 th Grade		1993, Croatia, Germany
Envera	49	Sarajevo	Associates	Accountant	1993, Croatia, U.S.
Sabina	52	Sarajevo	Associates	Paralegal	1993, Croatia, Germany, U.S.
Adevija	71	Banja Luka; Republika Srpska	8 th Grade		1996, Croatia, Germany, U.S.
Aida S.	53	Prijedor; Republika Srpska	Associates	Accountant	1993, Croatia, U.S.
Aida Z.	36	Doboj, Republika Srpska	B.A.	Nurse	1995, Croatia, U.S.

*Currently working on the degree

Appendix 2: Religious Demographic

Name	Age	City	Pre-war religious affiliation	General coping strategy	Outcome
Amila	21	Prijedor	nominal	transformation	atheist
Enisa	82	Banja Luka	practicing	conservation/suspended	practicing
Naida	24	Sarajevo	nominal	conservation	practicing
Nastja	23	Derveta	ethnic/atheist	conservation	atheist
Merita	42	Doboj	nominal	suspended	moderately practicing
Mujesira	73	Doboj	practicing	conservation	Practicing
Azra	52	Banja Luka	nominal	conservation/suspended	moderately practicing
Elma	25	Banja Luka	nominal	conservation	Practicing
Naida	48	Doboj	nominal	transformation	Atheist
Mirzada	19	Teslic	nominal	conservation	Practicing
Mirveta	58	Banja Luka	nominal	transformation	Atheist
Ada	19	Sarajevo	ethnic/atheist	conservation	ethnic/atheist
Mera	80	Sarajevo	practicing	conservation/suspended	Practicing
Fatima	72	Banja Luka	practicing	conservation/suspended	Practicing
Beba	49	Sarajevo	practicing	suspended	n/a
Sabina	52	Sarajevo	nominal	transformation/suspended	Practicing
Adevija	71	Banja Luka	practicing	conservation	Practicing
Aida S.	53	Prijedor	practicing	conservation	Practicing
Aida Z.	36	Doboj	nominal	transformation	Atheist

Appendix 3: Confidentiality Form**UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN**

Department of Psychology
 Graduate School of Humanities
 Rondebosch, 7701
 Tel: 27 21 6504608
 Fax: 27 21 6504104

Exploring Strategies of Coping in the Aftermath of War**RESEARCH CONSENT FORM**

November 2, 2008

To Participant in Research Study:

I am conducting research as part of my Ph.D. program in the Department of Psychology at the University of Cape Town, South Africa. The aim of my study is to learn from the experiences of Muslim women from Bosnia who survived the war between 1992-1995. It will examine their struggle to restore their lives in its aftermath. It is my hope that the result of this study may lead to improved understanding, sensitivity, and processes of personal and social healing.

During this research study you will be asked to participate in three focus groups with other women to explore how you have been coping or have coped since the war in your country.

I would like permission to record the conversation with you. The transcripts of our dialogues will be kept confidential. This means that your name will not appear anywhere in the written material that will come out of this research. You are free to decline to participate or withdraw from the project at any time.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact me at: 480.235.3494 or teri.murphy@asu.edu.

Thank you,

Teri Murphy
 Faculty Associate
 Arizona State University
 Tempe, AZ 85287-5211

I, _____, consent to participate in this study of social healing to be conducted with Teri Murphy. I understand that I may refuse to participate or withdraw from this study at any time. Furthermore, I understand that all responses I give during the focus group dialogues will be confidential and that my name will not be used in the final report. I also understand individual counseling will be made available if I need it and that I can direct any questions to Teri Murphy.

Signature_____
Date_____
Telephone_____
Email

Map 1

Bosnia and Herzegovina after the Dayton Peace Agreement



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