CONSTRUCTING AND RECONSTRUCTING IDENTITIES: TRANSNATIONAL PRACTICES OF BOSNIAN YOUNG ADULT IMMIGRANTS IN WINNIPEG

BY

VERA CIRIVIRI-GJURIC

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Anthropology
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba

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A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University

of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree

of

Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

The study explores the process of (re)construction and maintenance of multiple identities among young Bosnian adults who migrated to Winnipeg from 1990 to 2000 as a result of the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Data were obtained through participant-observation, a questionnaire and in-depth interviews. A circumstantial/situational approach that utilizes the theoretical frameworks of transnationalism, diaspora and refugee studies is applied to the analysis of identity-creating processes among Bosnian immigrants. All three ethnicities–Croat, Muslim, and Serb–are presented and their voices expressed through lengthy excerpts from the interviews. This study views the (re)construction of multiple identities among immigrants as a process of self-making and being made in relation to nation-states and transnational processes. Depending on their lived experiences and their present position in Canada, some Bosnian immigrants have developed a cosmopolitan perspective, while others have retained and developed an ethnonational perspective as a primary reference point. Nevertheless, they all take part in ongoing processes of identity negotiation on several levels–individual, familial, community, and national–as members of their adoptive country and of their home country, and as members of an emerging transnational social field. The data have shown that transnational migration does not erase differences among immigrants. On the contrary, it reproduces gender and class inequalities and ethnic differences. There are limits to the extent and significance of transnational activities among Bosnian immigrants in this study. The relatively short period of time spent in exile, conditions in Canada, and the negative attitude of the

Bosnian government toward the refugees are seen as factors that have a limiting impact on the character of Bosnian transnationalism. Although the small sample covered in this research does not allow generalizing to the wider Bosnian refugee population and far less to the refugee population in general, the study findings are relevant to the study of migration and may be helpful for policy makers and institutions that deal with immigrants in Canada.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my advisor Ellen Judd for her guidance and support. To her, and to the other two members of my committee—professors Raymond Wiest and Margaret Ogrodnick—goes all the credit for the constructive criticism and editorial comments.

I would also like to thank the Bosnian men and women in Winnipeg who open their hearts to me and made this study possible.

Without support and patience of my family this thesis would have not see the light of the day.

Thank you all.

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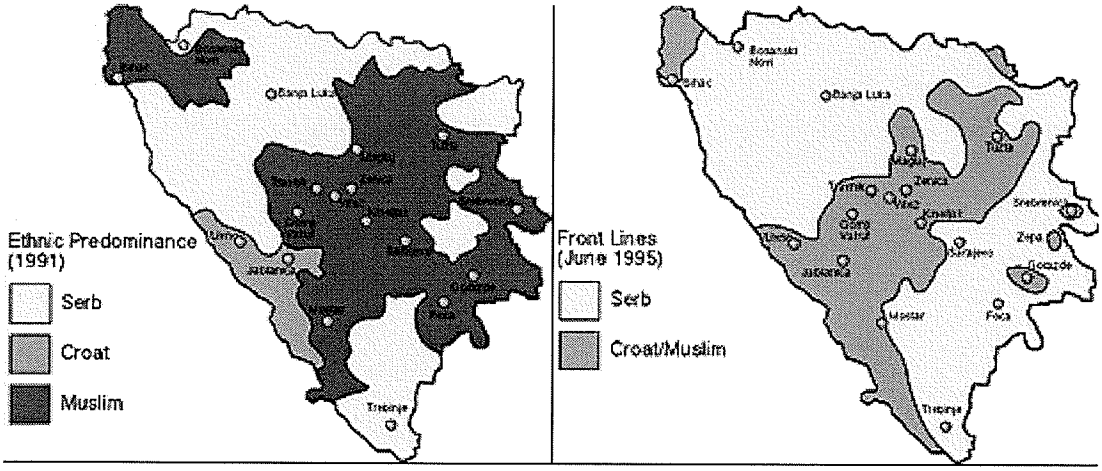
The Balkan States
The main political divisions of the former Yugoslavia.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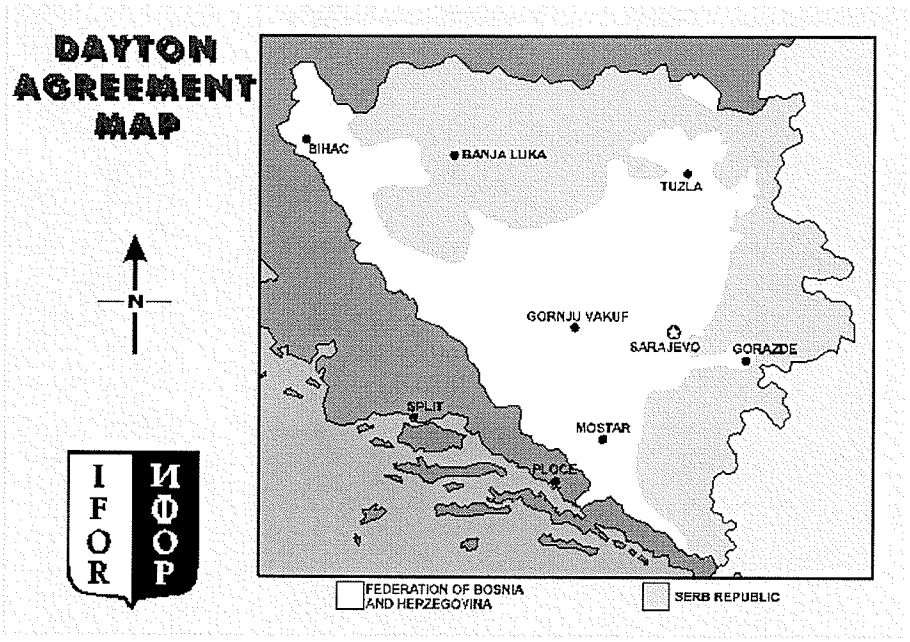
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SERB REPUBLIC

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

> Every time the word refugee is pronounced, in my mind it recalls pictures of women covered with black scarves and poorly dressed, their faces wrinkled, their ankles swollen, dirt under their nails.
>
> Slavenka Drakulic, *The Balkan Express: Fragments from the Other Side of War*

This study started long before I chose anthropology as a field of study, or immigration and transnationalsim as a thesis topic. It started in 1992, the year when my arrival in Winnipeg coincided with that of the first Bosnian refugees. The more people I met, the less valid seemed the cliché of refugees established for us by the media. This study came to be out of concern with the voices behind the headlines, the lived lives behind the images of endless rows of refugees deprived of past and future, defined by others solely in terms of what they have lost–as refugees. These people used to belong to communities, which they valued and which provided them with a sense of belonging and identity. These people used to be defined by their education, job, ideas, character–and yes, their nationality. The war changes people in profound ways. It changes their perceptions of themselves and who they are, and it changes their perceptions of others and who they are. Immigration does the same. This is an account of immigrant experiences of some specific Bosnian refugees to whom Winnipeg has become a second home.

In the last decade, as a result of the fall of the Yugoslav Federation, and later, the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina[1], the number of immigrants from that part of the world has significantly increased in Canada. Many of these immigrants have come to Winnipeg and have extended the already existing ethnic communities. Approximately 1,800 Bosnians[2] have landed in Manitoba in the period between 1990 and 2000 (Labour and Immigration 2001).

[1] Throughout the text I will refer to Bosnia and Herzegovina as Bosnia.

[2] The term "Bosnians" will be used throughout the text when referring to members of all three ethnic groups of Bosnia and Herzegovina–Serbs, Croats and Muslims. However, the term "Bosnian" will be avoided and instead more particular designations will be used–Bosnian Serbs, Bosnian Croats and Bosnian Muslims.

1.1 AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF "FORCED" MIGRATION: THE CASE OF BOSNIAN IMMIGRANTS IN WINNIPEG

Immigration to Canada doubled from 1 million between 1977 and 1986 to around 2.1 million between 1987 and 1996 (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 1997). Among many changes brought about by recent immigrants are increased ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversity, contrasting religious and ethical understandings, varied family practices, differing gender and generational sensitivities and class heterogeneity. In an increasingly globalized world, immigration affects Canadian society no less than Canadian society affects immigrants. The relationship certainly is not symmetrical, but although the influence of Canadian society is very powerful, immigrants, through redefining themselves and their culture in the new setting, ultimately contribute to a new and changing Canada (Abu-Laban and Li 1998).

More recently, the economic and political changes triggered by the global political economy, the fall of Communism and the end of the Cold War have led to increased population movements that rekindle anthropologists' interest in migration (Van Hear 1998; Rumbaut et al. 1999). As a result, refugee, diaspora and transnational theoretical frameworks were developed and increasingly used in the study of contemporary migration processes. These theoretical approaches seem suitable for developing a theoretical framework for studying the processes of creation and recreation of identities among recent Bosnian immigrants.

The study has taken cases of forced migration as the point of entry for its investigation. By "forced migration" I mean large-scale movements of people out of a given territory under pressure, through threat or by applying force (Van Hear 1998:6,10).

Thus, all migrants from Bosnia who came in Winnipeg in the last decade, regardless of their immigrant status upon entry and regardless of their ethnic background, are considered as belonging to the category of forced migrants. Such a position, however, does not ignore sensitivity to degrees of choice and force. On the contrary, as this study will show, many migrants' experiences are combinations of movement by choice and force that resulted in complex migratory biographies and the development of multiple, shifting identities that confirm the appropriateness of the chosen transnational analytical framework.

I chose to focus on the latest wave of immigrants, particularly on the category of young adults,[3] because, I believed, their immigrant experiences, in addition to all usual life changes and decision-making characteristic for that age, would give me rich data for exploring the process of construction and reconstruction of identities. The choice was also influenced by my own background. I was born in the former Yugoslavia (Macedonia), and I speak Serbo-Croatian fluently. Sharing common life experiences with them until the war, but being from a different nationality, has proved to be an advantageous combination most of the time. It allowed me to view some aspects of their culture from the native perspective and other aspects from the outsider's perspective.

This study explores the dynamics of individual and group identity formation among Bosnians in Winnipeg with priority given to the relationship between immigration and ethnicity. Emphasis is put on socially and culturally constructed aspects of

[3] For the purpose of this study the term "young adults" includes a broader category of people than usual in the social science literature. The reason for this is the difference in the cultural construction of the term in Canadian and in Bosnian society. In the Bosnian milieu, one is considered to be a young adult until one gets married and/or has a first child. Therefore, in my study, this category will include persons between the late teens and early thirties, who are young adults as this category is constructed in Bosnian society. The category "young adults" will be further extended to accommodate both persons who were considered young

ethnicity/nationality, that is, the ways in which ethnic boundaries, identities and cultures are negotiated, defined and produced through social interaction inside and outside ethnic communities (Nagel 1994; Hurtado et al. 1994). The study of the processes of (re)construction of immigrants' ethnic/national identities inevitably brings other aspects (regionality, gender, age, class) of their identities into the picture. Special attention is given to age and gender relations as they are played out in immigrants' households, ethnic communities and in the society at large.

The process of identity formation and negotiation is viewed as a result of both structure and agency–a dialectic played out by individuals and groups, and by both home and host societies. Although these identities are negotiated among all parties involved–people(s), state(s) and various institutions--this ethnographic study addresses the processes of identity creation and recreation from the immigrants' point of view.

Immigrants are not viewed simply as victims, but as active agents within the circumstances in which they find themselves. The focus is on the strategies that immigrants develop in the process of (re)creation and negotiation of identities that help them deal with recent dramatic changes in their lives–war experiences, "refugeeness," immigration, and adaptation in Canadian society. The situational and dynamic character of personal and group identities is further determined as such by the transnational character of the contemporary migration.

Organization of the Thesis

In Chapter 1, I state the goal of the study–xploring the dynamics of individual and group identity formation among Bosnians who immigrated to Winnipeg between 1990 and

---

adults at the time when they first came to Canada and those who became young adults after they came to Canada.

2000. In Chapter 2, I address the aspects of transnational, diaspora and refugee studies that constitute the theoretical framework within which the research findings are analyzed. Chapter 3 provides a discussion of the main methodological issues of the study, as well as of the process of research. The connection between the researcher's identity and the social context within which the research was undertaken is established. The choice of qualitative research methods that informs the interactive and interpretative framework of the study is also discussed. Chapter 4 outlines the historical processes that led to war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with emphasis on ethnonationalism and its ability to shape the lives and identities of Bosnians. In Chapter 5, the focus shifts from the collective identities of the three ethnic groups towards individuals' ethnic/national identities in relation to their lived experiences of war and the demands of everyday life in Winnipeg. The second part of this chapter examines the relationships between people, place, identity, and displacement. Chapter 6 discusses the ways in which a life linked to both societies shapes the dynamic of ethnic/national identities among young Bosnian immigrants. The creation and maintenance of multiple identities in transnational settings is explored through analysis of ethnic (ethnoreligious) and national identities among Bosnian immigrants. How identities and boundaries are negotiated in everyday social interaction in relation to other social identities, such as class, age and gender, are addressed in Chapter 7. The study concludes with a discussion about the limits of transnational practices among young adult Bosnian immigrants in Winnipeg.

CHAPTER 2

EXPLORING TRANSNATIONAL, DIASPORA AND REFUGEE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Recent profound changes in the world political and economic order have generated large movements of people in almost every region. Resurgent ethnic, religious and nationalist forces have emerged from the often violent disintegration of nation-states and their reconstitution. These new forces and some new features, such as widely accessible global communication and affordable long distance travel, have combined with prior social, economic and political pressures to generate new patterns of migration in the post-Cold War era (Kearney 1991; Glick Schiller et al. 1992, 1995; Ong 1999). This global reordering has led various scholars to seek new theoretical approaches appropriate for the new meanings that some old concepts (ethnicity and nationality, identities, and border and boundaries) have acquired lately. In the following chapter, transnational, diaspora and refugee approaches to these concepts will be explored in order to develop a theoretical framework relevant for the study of the process of negotiation of collective and individual identities among Bosnian immigrants to Winnipeg.

2.1 TRANSNATIONALISM AND TRANSMIGRANTS

2.1.1. *The Concept of Transnationalism*

The term "transnationalism" is not a new one. It has been used, however, mostly to identify separate and discrete phenomena (e.g., Caribbean society as a remittance society), but not global phenomena. Glick Schiller, Basch and Blanc-Szanton (1992) were

the first to use the term in order to introduce a new conceptual framework in the study of international migration. They have argued that a new analytical framework is needed in order to analyze the new migrant population "composed of those whose networks, activities and patterns of life encompass both their host and home societies" (Glick Schiller et al. 1992:1). Their concept is based on an understanding of transnationalism as a product of world capitalism, but also as a phenomenon grounded in the daily lives, activities and social relationships of migrants (Glick Schiller et al. 1995:50).

Glick Schiller et al. (1995) state that in order to understand current migration, it is not enough to look at the cultural flow (circulation of goods and ideas), but it is also necessary to understand the social relations (on individual, familial, community, and state levels) in which the cultural flow is embedded. Political and economic involvement in both countries result in migrants being addressed and acting as both nationals (home country) and ethnic groups (host country). Transmigrants use their social relationships and their varying and multiple identities[4] both to accommodate and to resist the different circumstances and the dominant ideologies they encounter in their transnational field. Migrants, by creating multiple identities for themselves, redefine different identity constructs–gender, class, national, ethnic and racial.

The same authors also point out that states in both countries, following their own interests, contribute to the construction of those transnational migrant fields. Migrant social relationships are incorporated in the global context as extremely fluid and dynamic,

[4] Multiple identities are not the same as segmentary identities–"they cannot be placed in concentric circles in orderly ways. . . ; [t]hey cut across each other. . . : one has a shared identity with different people at different times" (Eriksen 1993:155).

yet still culturally patterned. Therefore, Glick Schiller et al. (1992:7) argue, transnational experience fits both the global trend of cultural homogenization and the trend toward strengthening nation-states.

2.1.2 *Transmigrants and Transnational Practices*

Since Glick Schiller et al. introduced transnationalism as an emerging theoretical framework in the study of international migration, the number of social scientists who have embraced the concept has grown. However, the understanding and application of the concept is far from being homogeneous. In some writings, the phenomenon of transnationalism is portrayed as novel and emergent, whereas in others it is said to be as old as labour migration itself. In some cases, transnational entrepreneurs are described as a new and still exceptional breed, whereas in others all immigrants are said to be participants in the transnational community. Finally, these activities are sometimes described as a reflection and natural accompaniment of the globalization of capital, whereas in others they are seen as grass-roots reactions to this very process (Portes et al. 1999:217).

One of the main problems in our understanding of transnational communities is who to include and what types of practice should be considered transnational. Portes (1997) includes only those people engaged in recurrent binational dealings and focuses mainly on economic aspects (Itzigsohn et al. 1999). Bach, Glick Schiller, and Szanton-Blanc (1994) are more inclusive, including in the transnational field everyday social practices that affect a range from economic opportunities to the choice of identities. Bjeren (1997) finds social reproduction to be one of the major moving powers of transnational migration–"concerns about social reproduction are the engine for

considerable migration in both directions and provide some of the glue that prevents those first established abroad in a kin group to cut loose from the source of identity back home" (Bjeren 1997:232). In that context, Kearney argues that transnational migrant communities are likely to have a strong collective identity when "exit and voice are blocked in both countries" (1995:255). He exemplifies his position with the case of the Mixtec transnational migrant community built in reaction to exclusion both in Mexico and the United States.

In addition, the desire of individuals and their families to renegotiate their class position (first at home and then in the host country) keeps the migration going (Ho 1999:50). Therefore, transnational social fields are in part shaped by the new migrants' perception that they must keep their options open. One way of doing that is to continuously translate the economic and social position gained in one political setting into political, social, and economic capital in another (Glick Schiller et al. 1992:12). The social construction of race in the host societies also undermines class solidarity and strengthens transnationalism (Bach et al. 1994:262). For instance, the social rejection of Caribbean peoples has promoted intense overidentification with the home country to escape underclass categorization and the cultivation of multiple layers of strong transnational connections and loyalties (Bach et al. 1994:234).

Portes et al. (1999) suggest defining the individual and his/her support network as the proper unit of analysis of transnationalism. This choice does not, however, deny the reality and importance of broader structures. On the contrary, they believe that "study that begins with the history and activities of individuals is the most efficient way of learning about the institutional underpinnings of transnationalism and its structural effects" (Portes

et al. 1999:220). The choice of individuals as a point of departure for inquiry into this field is also motivated by its own origins. Grass-roots transnational activities commonly developed in reaction to governmental policies and to the condition of dependant capitalism fostered on developing countries, as immigrants sought to circumvent the permanent subordination to which these conditions condemned them. State-sponsored transnationalism emerged, mostly subsequently, as governments realized the importance of their expatriate communities and sought to avoid or co-opt their initiatives. Therefore, we can speak about "transnationalism from above" and "transnationalism from below" (Smith and Guarnizo 1998).

2.1.3 *Transnationalism: The Question of Ethnicity and Nationality*

What form does the transnational identity take? It is very often declared to be ethnicity, an ethnic consciousness, which Kearney (1991) finds a highly appropriate form for collective identity to take in the age of transnationalism. Ethnicity becomes the primary form of symbolic capital in transnational conditions in which the borders of the "modern" nation-state dissolve and so does the opposition between tradition and modernity (Kearney 1991:64). In his study of the Southwestern Border Area,[5] Kearney finds that nationalist consciousness is exchanged for ethnic consciousness since national boundaries of territory and identity are overly contested and ambiguous in those border areas. In his words: "The border is not a line with no width; it is also a social and cultural zone of indeterminate extent (from Mexico to Canada). The border area is a liminal region. . . . . [It] is an ambiguous zone in which identities are assigned and taken, withheld and rejected" (Kearney 1991:58,61). The state seeks a monopoly on the power to assign

[5] In Kearney's article the term "Southwestern Border Area" refers to the US-Mexico Border (1991).

identities to those who enter this space. However, undocumented (illegal) immigrants defy the state's power to control their movement into and through the space, and in doing so contest not only space but also control of their identity.

Ong (1999), who also explores the cultural logic of transnationality, finds her subject, the Chinese transnational entrepreneur, to embody the split between state-imposed identity and personal identity caused by political upheavals, migration, and changing global markets. In his (more than her) world, national and ethnic identities "become distinctly different identities, while at the same time, international frontiers become increasingly insignificant as such" (Ong 1999:2). Ong suggests that a closer look at transnational practices and imaginings of the "nomadic subject" reveals that his/her flexibility in geographical and social positioning is an effect of novel articulations between the regimes of the family, the state, and capital. However, she views transnationalism not in terms of unstructured flows but in terms of the tensions between movements and social orders (Ong 1999:6). Ong relates transnational strategies to systems of governmentality– "in the broad sense of techniques and codes for directing humans (elsewhere) that makes a difference (here)." Transmigrants themselves demonstrate awareness of their decentred attachments, of being simultaneously "home away from home," "here and there."

Itzigsohn et al. (1999) consider the case of a Dominican student in an American university as an example of transnational cultural practices (symbolic practices, such as the formation of identities, tastes and values). The Dominican claims: "The head is here, but the heart is there." At the same time she declares that she could not live in the Dominican Republic because she is too accustomed to the way things are done in the United States. Yet, she also claims that it is only in the Dominican Republic that she feels

at home. Her everyday life takes place in the United States but her identity, and the field of relevant symbolic references, includes the Dominican Republic in a very meaningful way (Itzigsohn et al. 1999:324-5).

The production of hybrid cultural phenomena is especially found among transnational youth whose primary socialization has taken place within the cross-currents of differing cultural fields. Among such young people, facets of culture and identity are often self-consciously selected, syncretized and elaborated from more than one heritage (Vertovec 1999:451).

The condition of diaspora or transnationalism includes ever-changing representations that provide an "imaginary coherence" for a set of fractional identities (Nonini and Ong 1997). What is invoked, or when, depends on particular circumstances and the configuration of social relations that constitute our everyday world. Different identities intersect in and constitute an individual. Transnationalism opens up the question of identity–racial, ethnic, cultural, spatial, gendered and personal–as a politics rather than as an inheritance (Clifford 1992), as fluidity rather than fixity, as based on mobility rather than locality, and as the playing out of these oppositions across the world (Nonini and Ong 1997:327). A wealth of personal and collective meanings and perspectives may subsequently be transformed into "new subjectivities in the global arena" (Nonini and Ong 1997:327). Therefore, on the one hand, we need to examine the interplay among practices that articulate the local with the translocal or cosmopolitan and the national with the transnational in the construction of identities. On the other, we must consider the constitution of such practices out of those interconnected class, national and gender regimes of truth and power to which diasporic persons are subject.

The emergent literature on transnationalism seeks to bring into the same framework the economic relations of globalization and the cultural dynamics that shape human responses. It has mostly focused on the less institutionalized initiatives of ordinary immigrants and their home country counterparts. Contemporary study of migration reports that transnational processes are socially bounded (embedded in social relations and expectations that bind across national boundaries), territorialized (occur in specific locations that provide certain opportunities and set limits to their reach), and they do not overcome gender, class, racial and regional differences, categories which remain significant analytical tools for the analysis of transnational migration in general (Guarnizo and Diaz 1999:417).

2.2 DIASPORAS

Although the phenomenon of diaspora has been the subject of considerable interest for some time, this has not led to agreement on definition or content. Some researchers favour an inclusive and extensive perspective, while others prefer a more prescriptive and exclusive definition. For instance, Khachig Tololyan, in the inaugural issue of *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, states that diaspora will not be privileged in the new "journal of transnational studies" and that the term diaspora refers today not only to such classic groups as Jews, Greeks, and Armenians, but to much wider categories which reflect processes of politically and economically motivated moving of population (1991:4-5). He sees his journal as embracing the "semantic domain" that includes the terms immigrant, expatriate, refugee, guest-worker, exile community, overseas community–"the vocabulary of transnationalism" (Tololyan 1991:4-5). Cohen

(1997) points out that extensive definition is inherent in the linguistic origin of the term "diaspora." He notes that the catastrophic connotations of diaspora deriving from the Jewish experience of forced expulsion obscure the Greek origins of the term, which derives from words for "dispersion" and "to sow or scatter" and can imply establishment through trade, conquest, free migration and settlement (Cohen 1997:6).

Others (Sheffer 1986, Safran 1991, Clifford 1994) prefer more exclusive definitions. Although not identical, all these definitions share several basic components: a history of dispersal, myth/history of the homeland, alienation in the host country, desire for eventual return, ongoing support of the homeland, and a collective identity defined by this relationship (Shuval 2000:43). In these instances it is incorrectly assumed that diasporas are always a result of exile.[6] Indeed they are often initiated by processes of political, religious or racial oppression; however, some people may opt for migration as a result of political domination and repression, economic inequality, powerlessness or minority status. What distinguishes diaspora people is their ongoing or re-awakened attachment and loyalty to their homeland and its culture (Kearney 1995). A sense of diaspora is a feeling that is characterized by shifting periods of latency and activism which occur in response to processes in the three relevant referents: the group itself, the host society and the homeland (Clifford 1994).

It seems that the term has acquired a broad semantic domain. It is very often used interchangeably with terms such as immigrants, transnational communities and ethnic and racial minorities. Yet, dispora is a distinct concept in which feelings are given

[6] Diaspora usually is understood as a network of community, of displaced dwelling; collective practices, and collective identities) while the concept of exile is often given individualistic, existential focus. (Clifford 1994:307).

prominent place. It is a social construct founded on feeling, consciousness, memory, mythology, history, meaningful narratives, group identity, longings, dreams, all of which play a role in establishing a diaspora reality (Shuval 2000:43). All definitions include affective-expressive components (Sheffer 1986, Safran 1991, Clifford 1994). Diaspora discourse reflects a sense of being part of an ongoing transnational network that includes dispersed people who retain a sense of their uniqueness and an interest in their homeland. Diaspora migration differs from other types of migration in that in many cases it is based on claims to a "natural right" to return to a historic homeland. In this type of migration an ascriptive, ethnic or religious criterion is used to claim the right of return and entitlement to specific benefits (Shuval 2000:45).

2.2.1 *Diaspora Theory*

Judith Shuval (2000) considers diaspora theory as an independent category although she is aware of its inherent links to other theoretical concepts, especially ethnic theory. Before the 1960s, in the Western world, immigrant groups were expected to shed their ethnic identity and assimilate to local norms. Beginning in the1970s, when it become evident that assimilation models did not work effectively, policy changes in some societies permitted or even encouraged immigrants to maintain various aspects of their ethnic tradition. That led to the reemergence of ethnicity and the resurgence of diasporas.

Shuval explores diaspora theory in relation to other theoretical approaches and argues that the theoretical paradigm of diasporas she proposes will enable scholars to move beyond descriptive research and to identify different types of diasporas and the dynamics that differentiate them. Use of typology–especially in comparative research of different diasporas–makes it possible to focus on structural differences and similarities that

could be critical to the social processes involved (Shuval 2000:41). She proposes using Cohen's (1997) typology of diasporas: victim diasporas, labour and imperial diasporas, trade diasporas, cultural diasporas, and global-deterritorialized diasporas. These diasporas are viewed as overlapping and changeable over time.

Diaspora theory is also linked to the theoretical discourses on transnationalism and globalization. Totolyan states that "[d]iasporas are the exemplary communities of the transnational moment" (1991:4). Diaspora discourse reflects a sense of being part of an ongoing transnational network that includes a homeland. It is characterized by a sense of living in one place while simultaneously remembering and/or desiring and yearning for another place. This is because of the multiplicity of relations not only between diaspora communities and their homeland but also because of ongoing, lateral relations among diasporas communities located in different sites within nation states and in different states. In recent years this approach has led to the notion of multiple-centered diasporas (Totolyan 1991; Clifford 1994; Glick Schiller et al. 1995; Kearney 1995).

Diaspora communities make it clear that identity with a political or geographical entity does not need to be binary–in the sense of all or nothing–but can involve loyalty to more than one such entity (Clifford 1994; Kearney 1995). Deterritorialization of social identity challenges the meaning of the "nation-state" and its claims for exclusive loyalty with the alternative of multiple identities and even multiple citizenships (Cohen 1997). Separate places become effectively a single community "through the continuous circulation of people, money, goods, and information" (Rouse 1991:14). "Transnational migrant circuits," as Rouse calls them, exemplify the kinds of complex cultural formation that current anthropology describes and theorizes.

Besides "diaspora," Clifford (1995) uses a looser concept which he calls "diasporic," referring to transnational practices and cultures of those who inhabit border zones, "sites of regulated and subversive crossing" (Clifford 1994:302). Clifford finds that the transnational paradigm together with the border approach share a good deal with a diaspora paradigm. However, he points out, borderlands are different from diasporas. Diaspora usually presupposes longer distances and a separation more like exile: a constitutive taboo on return, or its postponement to a remote future. Diaspora also connects multiple communities of dispersed population (Clifford 1994:304). The range of people caught up in transnational movements extends from "binational citizens" in Aguililla/Redwood City or Haiti/Brooklyn (Rouse 1991) to the Chinese entrepreneurs in San Francisco who claim, "[they] can live anywhere in the world, but must be near an airport" (Ong 1999:41). This cosmpolitanism stretches the limit of the term "diaspora." Therefore, according to Ong, diaspora studies have to look at the subjective experiences of displacement and victimhood, but also at cultural hybridity and cultural struggles in the modern world (1999:12).

In the light of bloody nationalist struggles throughout the world, transnational diasporism may appear progressive. However, seen in connection with exploitative, "flexible" labour regimes of global capitalism they may evoke a less positive response. Class and gender differences among diasporic populations also have to be taken into account. Diasporic forms of longing, memory, and (dis)identification are shared by a broad spectrum of minority and migrant populations. Dispersed peoples increasingly find themselves in border relations with the old country thanks to constant two-way movement made possible by modern technologies of transport, communication and labour migration.

This overlap of border and diaspora experiences in late twentieth century everyday life suggests the difficulty of maintaining exclusivist paradigms for transnational identity formations (Clifford 1994).

2.3 REFUGEE STUDIES

2.3.1 *Refugees as a "Problem"*

Policy-oriented and humanitarian literature on refugees tend to treat the refugees as "a problem." As a result of sedentarist[7] assumptions about attachments to place, displacement is defined not as a fact about sociopolitical context, but rather as an inner, pathological condition of the displaced (Malkki 1995b, 1996). Instead of examining socio-historical processes that generate massive territorial displacements of people, researchers are often inclined to locate the problem "within the bodies and minds of peoples" classified as refugees. Therefore, "the refugee" is repeatedly presented as "an embodiment of pure humanity (and as a pure victim)" (Malkki 1995a:12).

For a long time refugee problems have been viewed as temporary and unique events (Stein 1981:320). There is also a tendency to see refugees not just as a mixed category of people sharing a certain legal status but also as a homogenous group that shares a common condition or nature.[8] Refugees become "a culture," "an identity," "a community." The word "refugees" evokes just not any persons who happen to have sought refuge but rather a "kind" of person–liminal in the categorical order of nation-state (in a sense of Turner's *liminal personae*), or "matter out of place" (in Douglas' sense), an

[7] Sedentarism views the "world order" as based on the existence of mutually exclusive national units (Malkki 1995b:441).

[8] Barry Stein, a refugee specialist, believes that "despite the diversity among refugees", "[they] should be seen as a social-psychological type (1981:321).

anomaly. Moreover, as Malkki argues, the generalization and problematization of "the refugee" is linked to another process of "discursive externalization of the refugee from the national (read: natural) order of things" (1995b:443). The typical image of "uprooting" suggests that the process of displacement constitutes a break with one's past, culture, and identity. Yet, the recent studies of refugees show that instead of viewing the new emerging identities as a consequence of "break" or "absence," we should locate them in the very displacement, extracting meaning from groups' divergences, and some differing experiences that individual persons have of their own refugeeness.

2.3.2 *Ethnic Identities and Displacement*

In order to show where the new kind of refugee studies is going, I will look more closely at Malkki's *Purity and Exile* (1995a), in which she explores how lived experiences of exile shape the construction of national identity and historicity among refugees. The ethnography is based on her anthropological field research among two groups of Hutu refugees inhabiting two very different settings in Tanzania. Malkki found that camp refugees have constructed a very powerful collective identity for themselves as "the Hutu." They not only accepted but were proud of their refugee status because to them it implied temporariness of exile and refusal to be naturalized and settle where they do not belong. Homeland was perceived not as a territorial entity but more as a moral destination, and displacement had become a form of categorical purity (Mallki 1995a:2-3). Malkki shows that these refugees were able to construct an alternative supra/trans-local nationalism which challenges the common scholarly views of "uprooted," out of "the national order of things" refugees. In contrast, the town refugees had not constructed such a categorically distinct collective identity. They tended to seek ways of assimilation and

of manipulating multiple identities–identities derived or "borrowed" from the social context of the township. Their identities were creolized, changing and situational, which made them look impure in the eyes of the camp refugees. They were constructing for themselves cosmopolitan rather than national identities.

These ethnographic examples, Malkki points out, underscore the risks of using "identity" as an analytical tool when its understanding is continuously reinforced by the metaphorical concept of "rootedness." The Hutu refugees and "the cosmopolitans" suggest that identity is always mobile and processual–"partly self-construction, partly categorization by others, partly a condition, a status, a label, a weapon, a shield, a fund of memories, et cetera" (Malkki 1995b:447-8). Such a finding does not deny the importance of place in the construction of identities. On the contrary, it tries to show that deterritorialization and identity are intimately linked. People's attachments to places can be developed by being born or through living in places, but also by remembering and imagining them.

In conclusion, refugees (both exiles and diaspora) are not perceived any more as powerless and passive victims of global and local structural violence. Exile/diaspora is considered also a space for (re)organizing experience–for creating new affiliations, associations and communities, and for developing new identities. "Thus the term diaspora is a signifier, not simply of transnationality and movement, but of political struggles to define the local, as distinctive community, in historical contexts of displacement" (Clifford 1994:308). As refugees form communities abroad, they engage in reconstructions of experience, and shape specific forms of identity involving ethnic, regional, or national affiliations. In fact, some regard exile not only as a creative process but also as an

emancipatory one in the sense that movement between cultures and perspectives provides deeper insights (Matsuoka and Sorenson 2001:4). Salman Rushdie (1991:124-5) says that exile creates a new type of people, rooted in

> [i]deas rather than places, in memories as much as in material things; people who have been obligated to define themselves–because they are so defined by others–by their otherness; people in whose deepest selves strange fusions occur, unprecedented unions between what they were and where they find themselves. The migrant suspects reality: having experienced several ways of being, he understands their illusory nature. To see things plainly, you have to cross a frontier.

However, it has to be noted that such enthusiasm shown for these new transnationals as objects of study sometimes overstate the ease of such frontier crossings (Grosfoguel and Cordero-Guzman 1998; Matsuoka and Sorenson 2001). Not all displaced people, refugees, and migrant workers experience transnationalism as "constant travel" and a source of "endless opportunities"; for many, it also carries the weight of loss and separation. Nevertheless, they all engage in processes of constant "ordering and reordering of social and political categories, with defining of self in distinction to other, with good and evil" (Malkki 1995a:55). Therefore, as long as issues of gender, age/generation, race, class, ethnicity and nationality are not ignored, transnational and diaspora approaches can offer a suitable theoretical framework for the study of refugees. Their emphasis on multiplicity and polyphony, fluid identities, border crossings, creolization, and hybridity has raised useful questions about the former certainty of ethnicity and nation which are central to this study.

In this study a fairly loose perspective is taken for both concepts–transnationalism and diaspora. Bosnian immigrants of all three ethnic groups are regarded as members of an overarching transnational social field and as members of a new diaspora in making.

Many researchers argue that a distinction can be made between transnational practices of migrants from rural compared with urban areas, or more precisely, between working and middle class migrants (Toro-Morn 1995; Pessar 1995; Roberts et al. 1999). Roberts et al. argue that low-skilled and low-income migrants are more likely to develop strong transnational communities because they "seek to use transnational space to counter marginality in both country of origin and country of destination" (1999:247). More educated and urban immigrants are believed to be more cosmopolitan. This argument is tried to a Bosnian sample through exploration of immigrants' ethnic and national identities and loyalties to both home and host countries. In that context, the creation and maintenance of individuals' social networks are also explored.

Another argument developed by many researchers–that transnationalism did not fundamentally change the division of labour by gender, gender roles and gender identities (Rouse 1991; Georges 1992; Bjeren 1997; Ho 1999; Landolt et al. 1999)–is explored among Bosnian immigrants. This argument is discussed in several contexts–household organization, employment, marriage and intergenerational relations.

The desire of individuals and their families to renegotiate their class position (first at home, then in the host country) (Ho 1999) is considered. The class aspect of their identities is discussed in regard to "symbolic capital" (Bourdieu 1977; Ong 1999) and "symbolic practices" (Itzigsohn et al. 1999). It is assumed that, in the Canadian context, Bosnian immigrants try to transform their refugee and/or immigrant identity into that of a middle-class citizen. Strategies through which they try to acquire appropriate symbolic capital that will be recognized in both countries are explored.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The methodology for this research had to be one that would allow understanding the impact of the war, and of refugee and immigrant experiences on people's individual and collective identity creation processes. In view of their refugee experiences, and the need to flee their homes for no other reason than belonging to a "wrong" ethnic category, Bosnian immigrants (and especially Bosnian Muslims) had every reason to be suspicious of outsiders who enquired about their past and present. Trusting the researcher with sharing their life experiences was a critical factor in the politics of the research process. Therefore, I decided to rely mostly on data gained through qualitative research– ethnographic research methods. I consider these to be the most appropriate means of incorporating all subjects involved in the study (researched subjects and the researcher) and achieving an intersubjectivity that can lead to deeper understanding. The data were obtained through participant-observation, a questionnaire and in-depth interviews.

Since I wanted to do a study of identity creation among Bosnian immigrants (Bosnian Serbs, Croats and Muslims), it was imperative that I include people heterogeneous in ethnic, gender and class terms. At the same time, I wanted to represent all three ethnic communities equally. This proved to be quite a challenge for several reasons. First, I did not have means of finding the real numbers of immigrants by ethnicity since the Canadian government uses "mother tongue" for determination of

nationality.[9] Second, the Bosnian immigrant community is divided along ethnic lines, scattered throughout the city and formally unorganized. And third, my own nationality (Macedonian, which many people immediately translate into Christian Orthodox in ethnoreligious terms) positioned me differently to members of different ethnic/national communities. Some saw me as a member of their community (made of all people in Winnipeg from the former Yugoslavia), while for others I was an outsider.

Participants in the research were selected using a snowball sampling technique that explicitly took care to include people from varied backgrounds (men and women, different age groups, people from different occupational backgrounds, and different ethnic groups). To a lesser degree I was able to locate people from rural areas (three persons) although many of the informants came from small towns throughout Bosnia.

In the beginning, I had to rely on people whom I already knew to introduce me to others. Some of the informants showed more interest in my study than others. Several persons became key informants and helped me make new contacts. Each new person with whom I talked helped me to extend further the network of potential interviewees. Among the youngest in the sample, some who initially showed little enthusiasm or readiness to take part in my study, later became rather insightful and forthcoming. Most of the interviewees had the opportunity to get to know me (if they did not know me already) before I asked them for an interview, and with many I had a chance to talk on more than one occasion. Two persons stonewalled my attempts altogether, while some filled out the questionnaire but declined the interview.

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[9] The table of selected characteristics of Bosnia-Hercegovina Immigrants in Manitoba, 1995-2000 (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2001) includes Croatian, Serbian and Serbo-Croatian but not the Bosnian language. Although we can rightfully assume that Bosnian Muslims are included in the group of immigrants who speak Serbo-Croatian, the numbers under this category most likely do not solely represent

Questionnaires were administrated and interviews carried out with Bosnian immigrants who were resettled in Winnipeg for a period from three months to nine years. Out of 85 questionnaires handed out, 71 questionnaires were returned, which provided a valuable basis for further investigation using standard ethnographic techniques of participant observation and interviews. With the 25 questionnaire respondents I conducted in-depth interviews. An additional four interviews were conducted with parents of the informants, and three with workers of two non-profit organizations directly involved with Bosnians.

All individuals included in this study were recognized as refugees (internally displaced, forced out or "voluntarily" left) at the time of application for resettlement in Canada. Most of the informants were forced out of their homeland; they left in a hurry, without adequate preparation and without much control over their final destination. Most of them, especially the later arrivals, had spent from several months to several years in another country of asylum before coming to Canada (See Appendix A, Table 1). Regardless of socioeconomic status before immigration, the majority of Bosnians started their Canadian lives in poverty, and almost all of them on government assistance (See Appendix A, Table 2). Additional characteristics of questionnaire and interview respondents are presented in Tables 3 and 4 (Appendix A).

To all subjects included in the study I explained the purpose and methods of my research and informed them of the content of the consent form that would be signed before conducting the interviews. Data gathered from the questionnaires is presented in several tables. They are referenced in the appropriate chapters and can be viewed in the

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Bosnian Muslims but also other immigrants (Serbs, Croats, and people with mixed ethnic heritage) who declared Serbo-Croatian as their mother tongue.

Appendices. I collected taped material and field notes in interviews and they are represented through my analysis of that data in Chapters 5, 6 and 7. The interviewees also provided some of the lengthy quotations used in this study. The names used in the narratives and throughout the study are pseudonyms but reflect the ethnoreligious background of the interviewees.

Questionnaires were administered on occasions that presented a one-time opportunity to gather information from many people at one time, such as group social gatherings. It contained a consent form and information on the research, thirty-six questions, and space for comments (See Appendix B).

Questionnaire data were expected to provide only background information on the study sample. As was anticipated, most of the informants responded on the questionnaire with "what they thought 'we'[10] wanted to hear." For example, nearly all of the immigrants reported in their responses that teaching their children their native language is good because the knowledge of a second language is an asset. The same pattern of uniform answers was repeated when immigrants were asked with whom they socialized. They all answered that they socialized with "everybody regardless of their ethnic background." Yet, by observing, I found that some immigrants' behaviour suggested different practices. The uniformity of the answers implied that questionnaire data alone would not allow for a deeper understanding of the choices made or strategies developed, but it certainly indicated the immigrant discourse, developed and used by the immigrants themselves, when dealing with outsiders. Interviews gave a new perspective to these and other stereotyped answers.

[10] I as a researcher was sometimes perceived as one of "them"–immigration officers, settlement workers, journalists, ESL teachers, welfare workers, employment counselors–government employees.

The strength of qualitative interviewing is in its capacity to access self-reflexivity among interview subjects, leading to the greater likelihood of the telling of collective stories. Such an interview built on interactive components (rather than trying to control and reduce them) can achieve "intersubjective depth" (Miller and Glasner 1997). It can also avoid the interviewees' responding to the interviewer through the use of familiar narrative constructs that are shaped by general cultural understandings rather than providing meaningful insights into their subjective view.

In the interviews with informants, I encouraged them to express themselves by not limiting myself to standardized questions and a uniform approach. The interviews were informal and open-ended. My list of possible questions served only as an interview guide. It contained mostly the same questions as in the questionnaire, but participants were allowed to answer them at great length and "to take the interview in a direction that is significant for them" (Holstein and Gubrium 1997). I was alert to what the interviewee might want to talk about and followed those leads wherever possible. The readiness to keep the interviewing process open as much as possible comes as a result of many researchers' accounts of their missed opportunities while conducting interviews. As Ives points out, "the most interesting material of all may turn out to be what you catch out of the corner of your eye. This is the principle of serendipity, and it is always working in your favour, if you let it" (1995:52). Most interviews were with single individuals either in their homes, or in mine, or in a location they chose. In some cases I had extended discussions with groups of two or three people. Many interviews lasted several hours (one to three hours) and I spoke with some interviewees on more than one occasion.

I started out the research with a plan to tape the interviews whenever possible. As expected, tape-recording the interviews enabled me to go back to the original information as much as needed to re-elicit it, or to look for hidden additional meanings. However, since this technique has downfalls–it asks for constant awareness that this kind of interviewing is actually "trialogue" (Ives 1995), and sometimes can intimidate the interviewee–it was used only when interviewees agreed and felt comfortable with it.

The following topics were explored through interviewing: 1) reasons for immigration to Canada, 2) opinions about Canadian society, 3) integration in the Canadian context, 4) comparison between one's expectations and one's experiences, 5) goals planned and achieved, 6) help received, 7) obstacles faced, and 7) changes experienced. Interviewees were also asked about their ethnic and national membership(s) and sentiments. The gender issue was addressed through exploring parent-child and marital relationships.

The interviews with members of nonprofit organizations involved with Bosnian immigrants were semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions. In this case, the questions addressed the organizations' mandates, interviewee's opinions about the extent to which a particular organization had been able to achieve its goals in regard to Bosnian immigrants, and obstacles with which they have to deal in providing services the way they envision them.

The ethnographic process, based on slow building of long-term interpersonal relations[11] with the immigrants in various social settings is critical to our understanding of

[11] Although I administrated the questionnaires and conducted the interviews in a period of four months, my involvement was actually much longer. Ever since I decided to do my thesis on Bosnian immigrants I was deeply involved in social relations which allow me to say that I had developed long-term interpersonal relations with many of my informants. With a number of the younger immigrants that I met

the strategies and practices they employed in different situations. Ethnographic observations sensitize us to the power of social context in shaping the lives of immigrants. Ethnography also allows us to discover critical phenomena that we could not detect otherwise.

In the first phase of my fieldwork, especially during the summer, I tried to be present as much as possible at formal and informal gatherings of the three ethnic groups. That included being present at soccer games, picnics, concerts, social gatherings, cafés, and Serbian and Croatian Folklorama Pavilions.[12] The fieldwork of the second phase, during the fall and winter of 2001-2, depended on the activities of people chosen and/or willing to be interviewed. During this period, much valuable data was also obtained through daily gatherings at one of the University of Manitoba cafés. This place became "the location of the fieldwork" because of the high concentration there of Bosnian students that made up one half of my study group. In the beginning, since I knew several students from before, I was "allowed in" but treated formally and respectfully[13] according to the cultural norms when dealing with an adult (that is, someone of your parents' generation or older). With time, they got accustomed to my presence there, got to know me better, and to accept me as someone who is doing research but is also one of them—a student with student problems to whom they could relate more easily. They gradually dropped the polite "You" form, and in my presence carried on with their jokes, gossip, and discussion of their love lives. On several occasions the chatting spontaneously turned into emotional

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for the first time in September 2001, I am still in on-going relations thanks to the daily gatherings at the University café.

[12] Folklorama is an annual multicultural celebration held in Winnipeg that features food, music and dance from many countries.

[13] They were talking to me by using the Serbo-Croatian equivalent of the French *Per-Vous* polite form and were avoiding "bad" (swear) words and more personal topics altogether.

discussions (triggered by some event or news) and slipped into so much avoided and yet so unavoidable "talks about politics" that these talks were even more telling than arranged interviews. This is not to say that what people were telling me in the interviews was not true, but it was to some extent an "idealized" presentation of their beliefs and behaviours. The real-life situations and students' everyday interactions provided insightful additional data. It revealed denied but existing and carefully negotiated ethnic/national boundaries.

I also, of course, rely on the prior and ongoing research in a variety of disciplines which are focused directly on Bosnia and on the latest wave of Bosnian refugees. There are numerous books on the war in Bosnia but only a handful of articles on Bosnian refugees. Among those available, several deal with refugees' post traumatic stress syndrome, reflecting the tendency to represent refugees primarily as victims. This study has a different approach. The analysis points out that refugees are active shapers of their personal and collective lives. The interpretation of the data highlights their strength and not merely their vulnerability. Significant life experiences prior to the war that led to their flight, their own definitions of the causes and events that made them leave their homes and country, their refugee experiences, and the problems and opportunities encountered on resettlement in Canada were woven together to provide a holistic picture of the social construction of their identities and an elaboration of how Bosnians made meaning of these life experiences. To what extent I was successful in "objectively" and fruitfully representing a number of different experiences is a question that leads the discussion toward the issues of positioning of the researcher and objectivity.

3.1 Reflection on the Research Process

Very often journalists and academics under the guise of objectivity altogether exclude alternative perspectives, thereby discrediting voices that go against their beliefs or the interests of institutions, organizations and states that they represent. I was constantly reminded of such practices while following the media coverage of the war in Bosnia, and reading the numerous books on the topic. At the same time, given the staggering human cost involved in the war in Bosnia, I would consider it reprehensible to pretend not to have political and moral views about the war, its reasons and methods. In addition, my own experience of the dismemberment of Yugoslavia has unavoidably influenced my analysis.

My own former-Yugoslav background and the fact that I am also an immigrant to Canada has put me in an ambiguous situation of being, at the same time, an outsider and a member of the community I study. I come close to what is regarded as a "native" or "ethno" scholar because of the familiarity with the language, the unspoken cultural codes and the shared Yugoslav past. However, I fall back into the category of "halfie,"[14] semi-native anthropologist, because of the different ethnic background and not sharing the war and refugee experience of the study subjects.

Earlier discussion about "native" or "ethno" scholars was centered on the methodological aspects of their ethonographic work–whether one's native familiarity with the language, cultural practices of the community, or one's social ties within the research site facilitated or hindered one's research project. It emphasized the problems of gaining enough distance and slipping into subjectivity.

[14] Lila Abu-Lughod applies the term "halfies" to people whose "national or cultural identity is mixed by virtue of migration, overseas education, or parentage" (1991:137).

However, as Lila Abu-Lughod (1991:141) eloquently comments on the issue of positionality--"every view is a view from somewhere." No less than the native or "halfie," the "wholie" is in a specific position vis-à-vis the community being studied. The connection is always there between the researcher's positioning in society and history and the kind of research agenda and understanding such personal background shapes. What some call the outside is a position within a larger political-historical complex. James Clifford (1986:6), among others, has convincingly argued that ethnographic representations are always "partial truths." They are also "positioned truths" (Abu-Lughod 1991:142).

Shared national or cultural identity with the people anthropologists study has actualized the fundamental distinction between self and other central to the study of anthropology. More recent reflexive discussions explore some of the personal and epistemological questions of "writing within, and moving between" the native/outsider positions (Motzafi-Haller 1997:196). Discussing such double experiences seems just right in the time when anthropological theory has moved away from the essentializing representation of "communities" (or cultures) and of unified collective identities into an exploration of the imaginative and contested construction of boundaries and multiple identities.

In the past, the author was invisible, and the facts that he (more than she) had recorded constituted what was regarded to be a scientific account. On the contrary, more recent ethnographic writing emphasizes the representation of multiple voices rather than that of the single author. Contemporary anthropologists are investigating the fieldwork process itself, and especially the complicated relationship between ethnographers and the

people they are studying (Rabinow 1977; Crapanzano 1980, Clifford and Marcus 1986; Kondo 1990; Behar and Gordon 1995).

I started this project intrigued and challenged by the concept of multiple authorship and "giving voice to the voiceless." However, now that I have gone through the writing process myself, I have became aware that while the researcher/ethnographer seeks to present a number of different "voices," he or she still ultimately has the control over their representation. I have presented these voices in ways that make sense to me, and this necessarily reflects my own views. I orchestrated these voices by selecting certain interview's fragments and comments that I thought presented significant pros and cons for particular arguments that I was making. Yet, I still believe I "let their voices to be heard" by including lengthy, unedited excerpts from the interviews in the text. They are powerful and relevant even if they are limited by my choices. After all, I only claim that the following ethnographic material represents an account of refugee experiences of some particular immigrants in Winnipeg, and those as being seen through my lenses. Following Baszanger and Dodier's (1997:14) argument for combinative ethnography,[15] I tried to identify certain cases as examples of more general phenomena but with quite a high degree of freedom to circulate between different levels of generalization. Such an approach, however, does not make this study less relevant to understanding the refugee, immigrant, and transnational experiences of Bosnians.

Having outlined the theoretical background in Chapter 2 and introduced some methodological issues in Chapter 3, in Chapter 4 I will examine the historical and political background to the Bosnian case of forced migration. Sound understanding of the war

[15] Baszanger and Dodier (1997) place combinative ethnography somewhere between integrative (positivist) and narrative (post-modern) ethnography.

which brought the subjects of the study to Canada is needed in order to present the continuum of the processes of creation, suppression, and recreation of ethnic and national identities among Bosnians.

CHAPTER 4

THE WAR IN BOSNIA – ETHNONATIONALISM AT WORK

From the beginning until the middle of the twentieth century, both modernization and Marxist literature assumed that cultural differences would decrease and become politically insignificant. However, despite the widespread dissemination of the trappings of globalization–world markets, mass media, rapid travel, and modern communications—cultural forms have not become homogenized across the world. Moreover, the end of the cold-war era led to a revival of ethnonationalism.[16] In fact, the record is mixed. At the same time, on one side, we witness the process of European unification, and on the other side, the dismembering of many European post-communist countries.

In this chapter the focus will be on the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina that has followed the violent dismembering of Yugoslavia and which has added the term "ethnic cleansing"[17] to the global vocabulary. The analysis of the processes which had lead to, and methods used in, the war in Bosnia will be utilized in the discussion about the immense mobilizing power of nationalist ideology and its ability to shape the lives and identities of Bosnian refugees. Sound understanding of the war which brought the subjects of the study in Canada is needed in order to develop a historical continuum of the processes of creation, suppression and recreation of ethnic and national identities among Bosnians.

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[16] Although the term ethnonationalism has an inner redundancy, it is used to avoid any misunderstanding since nationalism can be understand as identification and loyalty to one's nation or as loyalty to one's country (state). See Connor (1994)

[17] The Commission of Experts defined "ethnic cleansing" as "rendering an area ethnically homogenous by using force or intimidation to remove from a given area persons of another ethnic or religious group" (Hayden 1996: 732).

The war in Bosnia and its violence were perceived as a surprise by some, and as inevitable by others. The surprise came out of a lack of research done on local-level ethnic relations and political processes since the study of nationalism in Yugoslavia was suppressed (Bax 1997:17). The study of ethnicity has long remained confined to analyses of the cultural content of ethnic identity or has been focused on the inter-state level.

Simplistic explanations cannot give a satisfying answer to the question of why things happened the way they happened in Bosnia. We cannot accept the wisdom that age-old ethnic and religious hatreds in the region were the main cause of the violence. As much as there are dark pages in the history of Yugoslav communities, the latest crisis was rooted in the present "chaotic transition from one system of power to another" (Samery 1995:5) and in the "fragility of the civil society" (Udovacki 1997:6.) Communist ideology had lost its power, but new values have not yet been created. Yugoslav society has never known a real democratic experience, so an ideological gap was created. People simply went in full flight from one into another type of collective identity, which in the case of the former Yugoslavia flight means into ethnonationalism.[18] In that liminal period of transformation of the multinational federation into nation-states, nationalist leaders made use of the peoples' vulnerability and fear to create a reality in which ethnic conflict, and then the war, started to seem inevitable. In order to understand the significance of the ethnic identities and boundaries, nationalist ideologies and ethnic conflicts, first we have to have a glance at Bosnian history.

[18] When we look at the rising nationalism in post-WWII Yugoslavia we refer to the concept that defines nationalism as "identification with and loyalty to an ethnic/religious 'nationality' that may or may not coincide with the state's jurisdiction' (Williams 1994:53). Also see Friedman (1997) and Mojzes (1994, 1998). Throughout this work, nationalism and ethnonationalism are treated as synonyms.

4.1 BOSNIA – A SHORT HISTORY: MAKING OF THE BOSNIAN MUSLIM NATION

The great religions and great powers of European history had overlapped and combined in Bosnia. The religious-cultural fault lines between Eastern and Western Christianity, between Latin and Byzantine cultures, between the remnants of the Hapsburg and Ottoman empires, and between Christian Europe and Islamic Asia run through Bosnia. Its specific position in geographical, political, religious, and cultural terms made it the object of special ambitions and interests. As a result, Bosnia was never an independent state although it was able to retain its identity and boundaries through modern times (Malcolm 1994:65).

For reasons of language and culture, and because of more than a thousand years of history, the modern population of Bosnia can properly be called Slav (Malcolm 1994:2). Distinctions among the indigenous Slav peoples developed along religious lines, as a portion of the Slav population, mostly landowners, for economic reasons converted to Islam after the Ottomans conquered Bosnia in the fifteenth century. (Burg and Shoup 1999:19). Also, some members of the Bosnian Church[19] converted to Islam to avoid the pressures of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches (Malkolm 1994:40). The process of conversion was slow at the outset and took many generations. The only written comments about conversion came from some monks who indicated that most people made the change of religion voluntarily. Turkish documents of that time also suggest that it was not

[19] Modern scholarship agrees on the existence of the Bosnian Church, probably a monastic order, that was regarded as "heretic" (a word more likely loosely used to mean "schismatic" without implying large-scale doctrinal differences) by Rome but it is divided on the issue of a possible link between the Bosnian Church and the Bogomils (heretical dualist movement) (Malkolm 1994:27-42).

uncommon for people to become Muslims and take Islamic names, but continue to live with the rest of their Christian family (Malcolm 1994:55). Bosnian Muslim elites experienced prosperity in return for their loyal support of the empire. However, the members of Christian (Orthodox and Catholic) communities had been exploited and subjugated Sultans' subjects. Thus, although language, historical experiences, economic conditions, and other elements of the culture were shared, they were not always experienced in identical ways by the three religious communities. From the middle of the eighteenth century, Ottomans organized the Christian population into *millets*[20] in which the church played a key social and cultural role. The previous fluidity of Bosnian society was replaced with more closed communitarianism (Bougarel 1996:88).

After the fall of the Ottoman Empire, from 1878 to 1941, Bosnia and Herzegovina experienced five different regimes. In the course of this relatively short period, Bosnia's quasi-feudal way of life was undermined and partially replaced by the two great forces shaping European society: nineteenth-century nationalism, and twentieth-century modernization. However, the process of nation-state consolidation that took place throughout Europe in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries bypassed Bosnia and Herzegovina.

During the Austro-Hungarian period, political, economic, social, cultural, and even

[20] The *millet* system allowed for some autonomy for local populations within the Ottoman Empire to organize along religious lines. Therefore, collective cultural identities were based on membership in a religious community.

sporting life continued to be structured on a communitarian basis. Political life was characterized by coalitions of interest between political elites of different communities (Bougarel 1996:90). During this period the meaning of "Muslim" identity started to transform from the narrowly religious into a broader ethnic identity mostly as a reaction to Croat and Serb nationalism.[21] Its previous strict religious basis was also being gradually eroded by the secularizing influences of the twentieth century. The population at large was becoming more relaxed in its practices (Friedman 1997:271).

The Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, later Yugoslavia, made radical changes to the economic and political balance between the communities and gave the upper hand to the Serbs. It produced a crisis of communitarianism in Bosnia by the *banovine*[22] system that cut across ethnic lines. The Serb and Croat population of Bosnia looked more and more to Belgrade and Zagreb respectively, while the conflict between them deepened rapidly. Exposed to the pressures of Serb and Croat nationalism, the Bosnian Muslims were increasingly inclined to take refuge in national indeterminacy and a tactical Yugoslavism.[23] Within the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, the term "Muslim" also started gradually to acquire political significance (Denich 1994:372). At the same time, the decline of the traditional Muslim elites produced a profound crisis of identity within the Muslim community.

In terms of language and shared history, Croats and Serbs in ethnically mixed areas had more in common with their neigbours than they did with the more distant members of

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[21] Benjamin Kallay, the Hungarian-born Finance Minister of the Habsburgs Empire, was the architect of Austria's Bosnia policy which tried to promote the notion of *bosnjastvo* or Bosnianism as a counter to the Croat and Serb nationalism (Deak in Lewis 1996:45).

[22] The *banovine* system replaced ethnoreligious delineation with administrative units that cut across the existing communities.

[23] The notion of a great South Slav unity was created at about the same time as Serbian and Croatian nationalism at the end of the eighteenth century (Mousavizadeh 1996:9).

their ethnic group. The primary marker of ethnic boundary at the folk level coincided with the Catholic/Orthodox distinction. During this period Bosnian Muslims lacked their own national statehood ideology. Therefore, three fundamentally conflicting political currents came to dominate politics in the province: the efforts of the Serbs to create a greater Serbia, the efforts of the Croats to create a greater Croatia, and the efforts of local Muslim leaders to secure cultural and political autonomy for their people and preserve the territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The basic issue surrounding possession of Bosnia and Herzegovina was that the nation that retained the loyalty of Bosnia would dominate the South Slav state. Progressive Islamic leaders realized that Serb and Croat chauvinism was detrimental to the improvement of the economic and social position of the Bosnian Muslims. However, they were also aware of the possibility of partition of Bosnia and Herzegovina that would make Bosnian Muslims a minority in Yugoslavia. As a result of the pressures they faced from both Serbs and Croats, the Bosnian Muslims reaffirmed that their most secure policy would be support of the central government.

The ambivalent position of Bosnian Muslims had continued during World War II, when many members of their community participated in genocidal Ustashe[24] atrocities against Serbs, while many other Muslims supported Tito's multinational Partisans. In post-World War II Yugoslavia, mutually exclusive claims of Serbia and Croatia to the lands between them were denied altogether by Tito's creation of the republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It was designed to be a multinational unit consisting of Serbs, Croats, and other Bosnian inhabitants, but "belonging" to none of them (Friedman 1997:274).

[24] Ustashe – an ultranationalistic paramilitary group led by radical Croat politician Ante Pavelic during WWII.

The continuing ambivalent position of Bosnian Muslims was reflected in the various post-war censuses. In the 1948 census, Bosnian Muslims could declare themselves as Serbs, Croats, or "Muslims nationally undetermined." The 1953 census introduced the category of "Yugoslav undetermined" and those who chose this category were mostly Bosnian Muslims.

The introduction of self-management (decentralization in the society as a whole) in the 1950s was considered necessary for the achievement of equality and concord among the national groups. Bosnian Muslims, not being recognized as a corporate national group, were denied the access to the republic and federal levers of power that recognized national groups enjoyed.

This situation changed in 1969 when Bosnian Muslims were formally recognized as a Yugoslav nation. This decision was recognition of their need for self-realization, but it was also a political decision made to solve national conflicts within Yugoslavia and to enhance Yugoslavia's international prospects with the nonaligned world. When the category "Muslims in the sense of nationality" was introduced in the 1971 census, Bosnian Muslims became the third largest national group in the country and the largest nation in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Friedman 1997:276). Bosnian Muslims' demographic became vitally important as the 1974 constitution turned Yugoslavia into a *de facto* confederation. The bulk of decision-making power (except for foreign policy, defense, and a few other areas) was given to the republics (and autonomous provinces). Most high-ranking jobs in the republics as well as in the federal government were filled according to the so-called "national key" (the number of such positions assigned to the members of one nation was according to the proportion of that nation in the total population). However, the very

principle of this ethnic/national key that was created to avoid underrepresentation and open conflict between different communities helped to reinforce among Yugoslav citizens the notion that they were only represented politically to the extent that they were represented ethnically (Bougarel 1996:97).

4.2 UNDERSTANDING ETHNIC CONFLICT IN BOSNIA

4.2.1 *State-Society Relations in Yugoslavia (1945-1992)*

During the Tito era, Yugoslavia's Communists founded their paradigm for solidarity among Yugoslav ethnic groups and nations on two "supra-ethnic" elements (Hopken 1997:82). First, they emphasized the "all Yugoslav" historical experience of a joint struggle for freedom, independence, and a common state during the "National Liberation War," symbolized in the famous slogan, "brotherhood and unity." Second, they relied on a common sense of ideological values, coded in the term, "self-managed socialism." Both elements were intended to offer a specific and apparently unique Yugoslav political identity to all its peoples. Anticipating that highly fragmented societies need a kind of "universal ethics" to develop an integrative capacity, these two patterns were meant to replace the missing ethnic and cultural homogeneity by a consensus of values and common historical memory. At the same time, both patterns were fulfilling the party's need for political support. Tito (Tito's Yugoslavia was a synonym for Communist Yugoslavia), the army (the people's army always ready to defend the country from external enemies), and history education (focused primarily on ideological identity for the purpose of creating of common historical memory) were the main forces the Communist

Party of Yugoslavia relied on to support its position and hold the country together (Irvine 1997).

The state-building activities of socialist elites during the founding period and in subsequent decades were closely linked to the question of how to distribute power among Yugoslav's several national groups. The Tito regime sought to provide a balance of power and to solve the "national question" within the federation chiefly through two means. First, it sought to restrict Serb and Croat national sentiments, which it perceived as threatening to the party-state. And second, it attempted to strengthen the national consciousness and sentiments of Macedonians, Albanians and Muslims as a counterbalance to the two more powerful republics in the federation (Serbia and Croatia). Bosnian Muslims were one of the national groups that found itself in an increasingly advantaged position within the federal system. Their recognition as a separate nation was expected to have only secular implications. However, as Bosnian Muslims began to increase their communal self-identification as a nation, their religiosity was concomitantly asserted as a main part of their national self-identification and differentiation (Friedman 1997:168).

The 1974 decentralizing constitution resulted from the rapid industrialization and urbanization of Yugoslavia after 1945 that was marked by two sorts of disequilibria– between developed regions of the north and underdeveloped regions of the south, and between urban communities benefiting from economic development and marginalized rural communes (Bougarel 1996:93). In Bosnia, the large cities became more cosmopolitan while the traditional ethnoreligious[25] separation was still very much in place

[25] In all three major religious communities, Eastern Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism and Islam, the emphasis is not on the religious behaviour of the individual, but on collective familial and ethnically

in rural areas. The move away from the concept of a centralist Yugoslav federation ("Yugoslavism" and the attempt to form a Yugoslav national identity) toward one of Yugoslavia as a federation of national republics, sowed the seeds for heightened interrepublic rivalry and further cultivation of separate national and ethnic identities (Bringa 1995:26). Competition for access to scarce resources, use of personal ties, bribery, and ethnic preference had tightened the ethnic boundaries even further (Verdery 1994:86). In addition, the emerging new economic and scientific elites and the educated urban population began to contest the legitimacy of an ideology and a political elite inherited from the partisan movement. This also contributed toward reactivating old rivalries between different national communities. Decentralization without democratization ultimately led to the demise of the federal state, the "ethnification of politics" and the rise of proto-states for today's nation-states. The softness of the Yugoslav brand in the end made no structural difference. It allowed certain freedoms which were of great importance to the everyday life of private individuals and to the development of a feeling of individual dignity in a material sense, but not in a political or societal sense (Dyker and Vejvoda 1996:23). In the 1980s, as the economic crisis deepened and the communist ideology increasingly lost its credibility, nationalism took an ever stronger hold.

4.2.2. *Serb, Croat and Muslim Nationalism*

Despite the Communist effort to suppress nationalism, in the 1970s Croatian intellectuals and political leaders used nationalist appeals to challenge the federal system of Yugoslavia. The economic demands (resolving economic relations between Northern

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inherited membership (Mojzes 1998:80). Since there had never been overlap between nation and state, collective cultural identities were based on membership in a religious community (Bringa 1995:21).

and Southern republics) were expressed in an ideological context that revived concepts of Croatian nationhood (Denich 1994:371).[26] Bosnian Muslims were also closely watched during the 1980s to prevent any pan-Islamic manifestations. For instance, the Yugoslav leadership in the 1980s took action against what was perceived to be chauvinistic Bosnian Muslim nationalism. Thirteen Muslims, including current Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic, were arrested and charged for "hostile and counter-revolutionary activities" (Friedman 1997:282). By the mid-1980s, the growing rivalry among Yugoslav constituent republics again led to nationalist outburst, this time initiated by Serbian intellectuals. Members of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts drafted a "memorandum" of grievances and demands. The revived Serbian nationalism found a political advocate in the Communist leader, Slobodan Milosevic, who encouraged the organization of a massive revitalization movement, the so-called "happening of the people" which legitimated the revival of a pre-Communist concept that called for complete national and cultural integrity for the Serbian nation, regardless of the republic in which it was located (Samary 1995:149). As the most dispersed of the Yugoslav nations, the Serbs were also those most threatened by the loosening or termination of bonds among republics (Denich 1994:372). Serb nationalism was *hegemonistic,* while the nationalism of the others tended to be *separatist* (Mojzes 1994:72). To counter the threat of revived Serbian hegemony represented in the Milosevic leadership, nationalists in Slovenia and Croatia began to call for the breakup up of Yugoslavia into separate states, either joined in a loose

[26]Both Williams (1994) and Forbes (1997) argue that ethnic groups with advanced economies and great cultural differences *vis a vis* the dominant political groups are most likely to seek autonomy or national sovereignty (e.g. Slovenia and Croatia in Yugoslavia). However, in general, it appears that successful ethnic challenges to central states are more likely to follow a state crisis than to succeed because they produced a state crisis.

confederation, or completely independent.

In the late 1980s Muslim nationalism was moderate. Of the nationalist movements, it alone defended a multiethnic Bosnia and Herzegovina, at least officially. The reasons for its position have been historical and pragmatic. First of all, Serbs and Croats in Bosnia could each turn toward another republic/state-to-be and try to enlarge it at Bosnia's expense; but there was no "great hinterland" for the Bosnian Muslim community. Bosnia has always been the only country they have. Even there they had only a relative majority–all the more uncertain if one goes by strict religious affiliation.[27] It was thus in the Muslim community's interest, more than that of any other, to maintain a multiethnic Bosnia, because a multiethnic Bosnia was necessary for the Muslim community's existence. This reality undoubtedly pushed "Muslim nationalism" toward compromises and alliances (Samary 1995:98). The policy of supporting the central government, practiced throughout their history, was abandoned in the 1990s and even then, not as choice but because alliance as an option was removed once Slovenia and Croatia left the federation.

4.2.3 *Dismembering of Yugoslavia*

Immediately after Tito's death, the state remained Tito's Yugoslavia ("After Tito–Tito"). International multi-billion dollar assistance and debt-rescheduling programs were organized in order to keep the country on a life-support system. Tito's successor was a rotating federal presidential body. However, institutions supposed to replace him and

[27] The absolute majority of the population of two million Muslims did not think of themselves as religious believers and only followed some of the practices of Islam as a matter of culture and tradition. One survey in 1985 put the proportion of religious believers in Bosnia at 17%. Decades of secular education and Communist political culture had been reinforced, in this respect, by the ever-increasing liberalization of society too. The growing urbanization had an effect, too; by the late 1980s, approximately 30% of marriages in urban districts were "mixed" marriages (Malcolm 1994:222).

carry the continuity of the federation, encouraged narrowly national rather than Yugoslav aspirations. The second-generation Communist leadership more closely identified themselves with the national interests of their own republics than with the interests of the federation. When the political unit for economic and political decision-making (the republic or the autonomous province) coincided with ethnic boundaries, it was inevitable that economic and political decisions would be infused with nationalism. Also, a new group of anti-Communist nationalists, suddenly and with little experience, was brought into the highest offices of the state in a wave of popular enthusiasm for multi-party "democracy" (Mojzes 1994:152). The vast majority of the political parties formed in the late 1980s and early 1990s operated only within the scope of a single nationality and more often than not carried the prefix of the national identification. Each of them addressed themselves only to their own ethnic/national group (Mojzes 1994:82).

The contest in Bosnia over individual versus collective rights, and over the competing claims of the Muslims, Croats, and Serbs as state-constituting nations, were manifested first in a political struggle over the definition of decision-making principles and institutions. This quickly escalated to a contest over a constitutional definition of the state itself and, ultimately, to a war over whether that state should exist at all. Serbs clung to their right to remain in Yugoslavia, Croats to leave what was left of the federation, while Muslims clung to sovereignty. None of the three nationalist parties in Bosnia was committed to the notion of a civil society[28] (although the Muslim Party of Democratic Action [SDA] did support the idea of a civil society in its party program in December 1992). Each of the nationalist parties pursued goals that clashed with those of the other

[28] Civil society is here understood as made possible by the establishment of a state based on citizenship, not on nationality.

parties (although the Serb Democratic Party [SDS] and the Croatian Democratic Union [HDZ] did both favor the dismemberment of Bosnia). The election campaign in 1990 showed that nationalist parties were strongest in the countryside, with reformists and ex-Communists faring better in the cities, but there was no campaigning for an independent Bosnian state. Yugoslavian, understood as a civil identity, was mostly expressed in the multiethnic setting of the big cities, far less evident in the smaller cities and towns, and practically absent in the rural areas of the republic (Samary 1995:29).

In 1991 the Bosnian population pronounced itself 74 per cent in favour of a ban on national or confessionally based parties but only six months later voted in the same proportion for precisely such parties (Bougarel 1996:99). In a matter of months, however, the dynamic of conflict created a situation in which different ethnic identities became sharply polarized and everything that had been shared was forgotten. That could not have happened if it had not been for systematic daily attacks on people's perceptions of "others." It started to become evident that in Bosnia, where ethnic cultures were not geographically segregated, new identities could be generated only by systematically imposed "forgetting," or by systematic terror (Bougarel 1996:99).

Serbian nationalism was focused on the historical Serbian victimhood—Serbian people not being appreciated and even hated by the others despite their sacrifices during the Balkan Wars, WWI and WWII for the common good of all South Slavs (Udovacki and Ridgeway 1997:1-4). Croat nationalism rekindled the myth of "a thousand-year dream of independence" that could not be realized because of Serbian hegemonism and imperialism. Both rallied the masses around alleged (and some real) national grievances,

and, in doing so, both reached deep into their past and mythologized their political discourse (Udovacki and Ridgeway 1997:1-4).

During the Tito reign, the state had a degree of control over the representation of the past. Events that would disrupt interethnic cooperation were not to be mentioned, except in collective categories, all "victims of fascism" on one side, and all "foreign occupiers and domestic traitors" on the other side. People were not allowed to forgive, they were made to forget (Denitch 1994a; Bringa 1996; Bax 1997). Both Serbian and Croatian nationalists made symbolic use of the memory of the wartime Croatian state and WWII genocide,[29] powerful symbols with polarizing context. Traumatic memories and the sentiment of victimhood among Serbs were reinforced with direct media coverage of the opening of the "pigeon caves" (burial sites) and the removing of the remains for proper burial (Dentich 1994:381). At the same time, Croatian nationalists fought back with rival exhumations.[30]

Mass rallies, officially sponsored public events, often featured old symbols, rituals, uniforms, and folk customs from previous eras creating what Udovicki and Ridgeway (1997:1) call "political ethno-kitsch." The archaic past was revived and presented, as it was somehow a part of the everyday life that could grip and hold people's imagination.[31] The rediscovery of tradition was reinforced by the rediscovery of "national identity" that

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[29] The Independent State of Croatia, established in 1941 under the wing of Hitler, extended the Nazi genocidal policy to remove Serbs, in addition to Jews and Gypsies, from its territory. See Denich (1994).

[30] Croatian media in 1990 made public another set of previously unmentionable World War II massacre victims (Communist led Partisan troops executed anti-Communist and collaborationist fighting forces that had retreated from Yugoslavia and were repatriated by the British). They were mostly Croat Ustasha and home guards from Slovenia and Croatia, but also Serbian nationalist Chetniks (Denich 1994:378).

[31] As Giddens (1994) argues, reality is no longer just direct human experience, but has become extended to what the press and electronic media present. Thus, information is not merely descriptive of reality, but is a constituent part of it.

was suppressed in the former system. Newly rediscovered old "imagined communities" were presented as the only possible collectivity in the country that was still formally multinational. Gradually, in the vacuum created by the transitional period, they started to fulfill the need for belonging and security. By manipulating the information and creating an atmosphere of uncertainty, politicians successfully pushed the ordinary people towards national fundamentalism–which reduces subjective uncertainty by embracing collectivism and tradition (Dyker and Vejvoda 1996:77).

A crucial element in the nation-building process is the establishment of the "historical continuity" between people and a specific territory. That was lacking in the mythohistory of Bosnian Muslim nationalism. Therefore, Bosnian intellectuals revived the historical concept of *Bosnjastvo* (Bosnianhood) and the category *Bosnjak* (*Bosniak*) (Bringa 1995:34).[32] Although this category was initially proposed to serve as a national label for all residents of Bosnia, there was no real enthusiasm for it. Muslim nationalists appropriated its discourse and equated *Bosniak* with Muslim, in contrast to Serb and Croat which were already established official national categories. Alija Izetbegovic,[33] the current President of the Bosnian Government, consistently pledged himself to a secular, multi-national and multi-religious state in which everyone's rights would be respected. Nevertheless, he supported the view that *Bosnjaks* are "those whom we today call Muslims" arguing that the concept of *Bosnjastvo* would solve the ambiguities of the term Muslim (Bringa 1995:35). This concept was especially attractive for more radical Bosnian

[32] All inhabitants of Bosnia (whether Muslim, Serb or Croat) were sometimes referred to as Bosniacs by Ottomans, Austro-Hungarians and even by Serbs and Croats from Serbia and Croatia (Malkolm 1994, Friedman 1997).

[33] He created the party of Democratic Action, which was almost exclusively Muslim and clearly religion-identified, and had championed the homogenization of a Muslim ethnoreligious identity (Mojzes 1994:142).

Muslim nationalists who argued that their direct ancestors[34] were originally separate from either the Orthodox or the Catholic inhabitants and, therefore, sole bearers of statehood in Bosnia (Friedman 1997:12, 192).

Premature recognition of Slovenia and Croatia heightened the political discussions about the direction that Bosnia should take–secession or union with the South Slavs that remained in the federation. Sovereign and independent Bosnia and Herzegovina, a state of equal citizens and nations of Muslims, Serbs, Croats and others who live in it, was recognized in 1992 by the EEC (Chandler 1999:190). The war in Bosnia started immediately; it started as a war of aggression by the Yugoslav Army against the Sarajevan government, despite official Belgrade denials. However, the conflict became concurrently a civil war between Serbs, Croats and Muslims (Mojzes 1994:108-9). Bosnian Serbs reacted with immediate declaration of a Bosnian "Serb Republic." The Croat counterpart, the "Croatian Community of Herceg-Bosna," was declared later the same year.

The feelings of insecurity, and then of bewilderment, were overnight replaced with feelings of terror. People's sense of fear was secured by the media's constant messages and images that built and justified the fear and mistrust toward the "Other." A powerful propaganda and political machine, supported by the acts of paramilitary groups, resulted in active xenophobia in a very short period of time (Dyker and Vejvoda 1996:92). Neighbours turned into self-appointed policemen (Drakulic 1993:50), those whose identity was bound up with the Yugoslav idea rather than ethnic particularity were seen as traitors and criticism was perceived as an act of disloyalty or a betrayal of "the group" (Ugresic 1998:ix, x). Loyalty to one's nation proved stronger than all other loyalties (Deak in

[34] Members of the Bogomil movement and Bosnian Church.

Lewis 1996:25), but only after a person was reduced to one dimension only, that of the nation (Drakulic 1993:50).

The overlapping claims over territory led to the war that made use of the method today recognized as ethnic cleansing. Half a century after World War II, mass violence reoccurred in Bosnia, with different outcomes. Systematic terror was used by all the warring ethnic fractions (Serbs, Croats, and Bosnian Muslims) to displace ethnic populations as a means for establishing control over territory. Armed forces committed atrocities against civilians to intimidate them into fleeing as refugees. While the basic methods were shared by all sides, atrocities reported on the largest scale were committed by Serbs against Muslims, and the greatest numbers of refugees were Muslims, fleeing as Serbian forces gained territory. People were killed for no other reason than being of the "wrong" nationality.

Many Bosnian Muslims perceived the war not only as a war for territory, but also as a war against a people and their traditions. The systematic attacks not only on people, but on their cultural heritage (mosques, libraries, gravestones) is understood as an attempt to completely annihilate a people and their way of life (Bringa 1995:96). Many Serbs, in Bosnia and Serbia, believed that their soldiers only began fighting when attacked by Muslim terrorists (*mujahedini)* and that the Muslims have carried out massacres (Deak 1996:57). There were calls for peace, but they were frequently tempered by strong defensive language, rejecting the culpability of one's own side and directing the blame toward the other (Mojzes 1994:146). Yet, for a long time, the international community did not understood that ethnic cleansing was not a by-product of the war, but a central part of the political project which intended to achieve creation of homogenous ethnic territories

(Malcolm 1994:246). Detention camps and mass rapes had the same goal–conveying the message to the victim's group of expulsion (Hayden 2000).

Between 1992 and 1995, several different plans for cantonization or full division of Bosnia were introduced until the Dayton constitution redefined "the republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina" as a state–"Bosnia and Herzegovina"–composed of two entities, the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina (the Bosnian [Muslim-Croat] federation) and the Republika Srpska (the [Bosnian] Serb Republic) (Chandler 1999:195).

The conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina was the first major test in the post-Cold War period of the ability of the international community to resolve ethnic conflicts. Its failure to prevent the conflict in Bosnia, or to end it sooner, was not only the result of different political interests but also a consequence of the failure of the international community to reconcile the conflict between two mutually exclusive principles of state formation–the principle of state sovereignty and territorial integrity, and the principle that recognizes ethnicity as a basis of state formation (Burg and Shoup 1999:4). As a result, Bosnia remained haunted by the contradiction between integration and partition.

CHAPTER 5

EXILE, MEMORY AND COLLECTIVE IDENTITY

Although writers vary in point of departure, the currently dominant consensus is that identities are invented or (re)constructed and undergo constant transformation (Winland 1995). This perspective has become particularly compelling for those who have investigated the circumstances under which selected aspects of the past acquire meaning. The sense of continuity, shared memories, and collective destiny form the foundation upon which identities are constructed in relation to people's everyday lives. For refugees, discontinuities, resistance and reconstruction also shape the process of identity creation.

The first part of the following chapter deals with the experience of becoming a refugee for some Bosnian Muslims, Croats and Serbs. The specific history and background of the war, which led to their displacement and is directly linked to nationalist aspirations and struggles, strongly influence the expression of identities among Bosnian refugees (Al-Ali et al. 2001:591). The past and the "new" mytho-histories figure prominently in people's self-representations and in their narratives. The past is an essential element in the renegotiation of identity presented through a "selectively appropriated set of memories and discourses" (Winland 1995:7) which often carries a powerful ethnonational symbolism. Yet, it seems that some refugees have replaced their ethnic identities with more cosmopolitan/transnational forms of identity.

During the war, the Western media habitually homogenized ethnic/national groups in the Balkans. Social research models in the field of refugee studies also show the tendency to generalize the "refugee experience" and therefore overlook individuals who do not fit the stereotypes. There was much variation in the actual responses of the

refugees[35] from this study. And it is this variation that interested me most–the situational nature of the relation between personal and collective identities, between various lived experiences and ethnic/national identities–ariation that does not allow simple generalizations.

The second part of this chapter examines the debate concerning the relationship between people, place, identity, and displacement which is also relevant for the discussion of the identity-creation process among Bosnian immigrants in Canada today.

5.1 ON BECOMING REFUGEE

> War is not a single act, it is a state of facts and minds, a head-spinning spiral of events and a gradual process of realization. . . . It seems that every one has to learn this truth alone, step by step, from the events of his or her own life. War is a process. . . . That is why it is hard to say when it started, who started it and who exactly is the enemy. . . . First you do not believe it, then you do not understand why, then you think it is still far away, then you see war all around you but refuse to recognize it and connect it with your own life. In the end it grabs you by the throat, turning you into the animal that jumps at every piercing sound. . . .
>
> Slavenka Drakulic, *The Balkan Express: Fragments from the Other Side of War*

I would open the window and peek while grenades were flying all around our building. Once my husband got really irritated and said to me: 'Do you want one to fall on us to start believing? Close that window!' Then, I realized–it's a war; it's for real. (Ivana, 35-year-old woman with a mixed heritage from Sarajevo)

I realized that it was a war when my professor suggested that we should probably sit on the ground during the exam, and when we had to duck while we drove through the downtown and out of the city, and when I found myself living in an

[35] I will refer to Bosnian young adult immigrants in Winnipeg as refugees only when I talk about their first place of exile, where they were accepted temporarily. It seems inadequate to refer to them as refugees when I talk about their experience in the Canadian context, given that they were all granted landed immigrant status upon their arrival, and especially because they did make a choice to come to Canada and, therefore, do not regard themselves as refugees.

> unfamiliar student dormitory in an unfamiliar city far from home. (Sandra, 33-year-old Serbian woman from Mostar)
>
> They came to my door and took me. Thanks to our supposed allies I found myself in a detention camp. Then, I couldn't any longer deny that the war is happening to me too." (Amir, 26-year-old Bosnian Muslim from Mostar)
>
> It's weird! I just realized that I lived through that war. Everyone thought that I was acting out–I didn't go into the basement with the others when the sirens would announce danger; I behaved as if nothing happened. I was totally in denial. I finally started to feel secure here, in Canada, when this happened in New York.[36] It's strange–I became so frightened as I was never during the war. Somehow, it made me aware of the war in Bosnia, of what I lived through. . . . The bombing made me realize that I was actually scared, very scared for a long time." (Tamara, 22-year-old Bosnian Croatian from Livno)
>
> I don't want to talk about the war. I want to forget. It's past. My life is now here, in Canada. (Damir, 22-year-old Bosnian Muslim from Banja Luka)

I had Drakulic's (1993) words on my mind when I asked my informants when the war started for them. I got different accounts but all reported initial profound disbelief and bewilderment. As my informants tell it, they never imagined that war could erupt in Bosnia. In describing their daily life in their home towns, they agreed that Croats, Serbs, and Muslims lived together in "brotherhood and unity." For many born after WWII, being Croat, Muslim or Serb has no special meaning. They were educated to believe that the whole territory of the former Yugoslavia was their homeland and many of the younger generation insisted that, until a few years before the war, they did not even know who among their neighbours, co-workers and fellow-students was a Serb, Muslim or Croat since intermarriage between groups was frequent and because many Bosnians chose to identify themselves as Yugoslavs rather than with an ethnic identity. Even as war-refugees, many cannot understand the ethnic violence that forced them away from their homes, their families, their friends. The same sentiments are reported elsewhere–in

[36] September 11th (2001) terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in New York.

Bosnian Muslim and Croat refugee camps in Hvar, Croatia (Gilliland et al. 1995), among Bosnian Muslims in Israel (Markowitz 1996), and among Bosnians in Austria (Franz 2000).

However, when Bosnia declared independence, the armed confrontations along ethnic lines started almost immediately. Initially, many decided to stay because they did not believe that a war in Bosnia was possible. Many informants repeatedly made comments such as: "We thought everything would end in two months, maximum." Among the first to leave were families with mixed ethnic background who, even without immediate threat to their lives, felt that they did not have any other choice–the entire former Yugoslavia was caught in a process of ethnogenesis in which communities were reconstructed along the lines of ethnic and religious affiliation.

Then, increasingly, women and children of all three ethnic groups started to take refuge in other republics where they had relatives. Many husbands, eligible for conscription, had to stay behind. Men, the ones who could, joined their families after several months when they realized that all was lost in Bosnia.

As the war progressed, it became more and more difficult to leave besieged cities or to cross from one territory to another. Many found themselves living in towns and villages that used to be their homes but became "enemy" territories. Muslim men living in Serb-held territories received military draft notices, and when they failed to appear for duty with the Serb forces they were automatically dismissed from their jobs. Housing often went with jobs, so the families also lost their homes (Lewis 1996:56). Citizens were encouraged to watch their neighbours, and those accused of helping "the enemies" could be killed on the spot. This put Bosnian Muslims at the mercy of their neighbours, who

could denounce them out of chauvinism or in retaliation for past grievances of a personal and nonpolitical nature. Although some informants said their non-Muslim neighbours helped them as much as they could and had no intention of co-operating with a regime they despised, every Muslim in Serb, and later in Croat, controlled territory felt that s/he was in danger of persecution. The situation was to a lesser degree the same for the Bosnian Serbs and Croats who found themselves in the "wrong" territory.

However, most of my informants, although they felt forced to choose sides, were able to maintain relationships and friendships across ethnic lines and to distinguish between those who caused them harm and members of those same ethnic groups who were innocent victims, like themselves.

Amir[37] is a 26-year-old Bosnian Muslim who spent nine months in a Croat-run detention camp in 1993. Although he is still troubled with his war experience, he believes he emerged unchanged from the war:

> You can't choose your parents, who you are and what you are [by nationality], but you can choose your friends. I divide people as human and inhuman (good and bad). I don't divide them as Serbs, Croats and Muslims. I have never chosen my friends on a national basis; I always have had Croat and Serb friends. There and here. . . . But then, I hadn't lost anybody from my immediate family. If I had, maybe I would think differently now, but I don't think so.

Kemal, another Bosnian Muslim who was in a Serb-run detention camp expresses a similar position:

> [While in camp] I tried not to break mentally. . . and . . . not to get out full of hatred. I tried to view everything that happened as a human tragedy for all. I didn't want to come out and to hate all Serbs. Here, in Canada, I socialize with everybody [from former Yugoslavia] who doesn't carry nationalist baggage.

Contrary to my findings, some researchers (Weine and Laub 1995; Gilliland et al.

[37] All names are pseudonyms. However, they reflect the real ethnic identities of the people cited.

1995) who worked with Bosnian Muslim and Croat refugees report confessions of unmitigated hatred for the Serbs because they saw them as the primary aggressors in the war and have essentially discarded any belief in Bosnia and Herzegovina as a multiethnic country.[38]

Certainly not everyone I interviewed could distance him/herself from ethnic sentiments but only a few revealed that, here in Winnipeg, they avoid all others except members of their own ethnic group. Their narratives build on their war experience ("We learned our lesson"; "We can't live together, and better keep it that way here [Canada] and there [Bosnia]."). Yet, even those who came to view other ethnic groups as "They" ("Others") were very careful to point out that they do not hate them. The need to reconstruct understandings about those newly labeled "Others," and a new perception of themselves as "Others" in a land of strangers, all appeared in the stories they told.

Ethnic cleansing created ambiguities for refugees–some found themselves living among, or accepting refuge from people they (or their ethnic group) now define as "the enemy," a situation which can only give rise to ambivalence and confusion (Gilliland et al. 1995). Bosnian Muslims outside Bosnia did not have their own communities where they could take refuge and feel sheltered. Many found themselves living among "enemies." One of my informants told me a story of Nihad, a young Bosnian Muslim she met in Belgrade. He wanted to be called "Nikola" while he was in Serbia, which she found strange. She was surprised even more when he "became" Nihad again after he immigrated to Canada. His strategy of taking a new identity is a practice reported for members of

[38] This discrepancy can be explained by my inability to reach more of those people who were ethnically exclusive in their social practices because of my own positioning in the community. Such feelings, Bosnian Muslims would express more openly in front of an outsider than in front of someone who

other refugee groups who try to avoid government officials and/or to blend with the local population in order to find a job and avoid being harassed (Malkki 1995a, Matsuoka and Sorenson 2001). What Nihad did was not give up his ethnic identity but, rather, construct a temporary, camouflaging identity for himself as a strategy for surviving. In the initial period in Canada, some individuals favored avoidance of people from the former Yugoslavia entirely and even of their own ethnic/national group as a coping strategy. Speaking English among each other, especially in public places, was and still is a strategy of avoiding contact with other refugees whose ethnic background is unknown. Some Bosnian Serbs during the years of the war preferred not to say their ethnicity/nationality but to use the term "former Yugoslavia" when they were asked where they came from. They explain this practice by arguing that Canadians are ignorant of the history of other peoples and readily have accepted a one-sided picture about the war in Bosnia presented to them by the Western media (i.e., CNN and other news channels presented a very black and white picture of the war in which Serbs were aggressors). Therefore, such practice was not a measure of loss but of hiding ethnic identity as a result of the negative public opinion about Serbs. The same practice was reported by some Bosnian Muslims for entirely different reasons. Mina, a 22-year old Bosnian Muslim explains:

> The West says they are protecting innocents regardless of their ethnicity or religion, but I encounter anti-Muslim sentiments everyday. Why should I say I am a Muslim when I don't really feel like one? I am a Muslim because my father is Muslim. In fact, he was a Communist. I don't know what being a Muslim really means.

The issue of construction and reconstruction of identities will be discussed further in Chapter 6.

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is seen as Christian Orthodox and therefore as one of the "Others." (On two occasions I was openly rejected because of my ethnicity.)

For men in exile in Croatia and Serbia there was constant danger that they would be taken into the army and sent back to fight in Bosnia (some ended up in their enemy's army). When they did remain in the country of their family's refuge, they often did so illegally in fear that at any moment they would be torn apart from their loved ones and deported to a raging war. The Bosnian Croats who took refuge in Croatia felt they had to make efforts to change their dialects, so that local people would not mistake them for Muslims or Serbs. It was the same for Bosnian Serbs in Serbia. They were among "their people" but they were still refugees who were not necessarily welcomed.

Sinisa is a 25-year-old Bosnian Serb who left his town as soon as the war started. He was sixteen. Sinisa and his family spent the next six years as refugees in Serbia. Three years ago he immigrated to Canada and later helped his family to join him in Winnipeg.

> I wish the war had not happened, but it taught me a lot. I realized how fragile and how strong people are at the same time. It [the war] helped me to mature faster, to become stronger, to find what I want from my life. The war had also taught me that there is no such a thing as an extended family and national (ethnic) loyalty and reliability. In Serbia I was Bosnian. I was "a refugee," one of "them," not one of "us"--for my relatives, for my schoolmates, for the girls. . . . My best friends were also refugees from Bosnia, maybe because the war made us different or maybe because we were suddenly perceived as the "Other." I was so disappointed, but I learned my lesson. Now, I divide people only by good and bad. Nationality does not have anything to do with it. Some Canadians, total strangers, helped me more than my relatives in Yugoslavia. The old immigrants[39] are no help either. They see us as refugees who got an easy start in Canada, unlike them. Plus, they are the biggest nationalists. For them, there are no good Muslims or Croats. They were sitting in their warm houses here in Canada and watched the war in Bosnia on TV. It was easy for them to be patriots.

Sanja is a 22 year-old Bosnian with mixed ethnic background. She was only

[39] He refers to members of the already established, pre-war, Serbian immigrant community in Winnipeg.

twelve when her family left their town in Bosnia. She seems very outgoing, popular among her friends and well adapted. However, during our numerous meetings, she often talks about her feeling of being a "stranger" (outsider):

> When they ask me what nationality I am, I don't know what to tell them. I say I am from Trebinje.[40] I have an accent when I speak English. If I wanted to adapt here maybe I could've lost it. But, I didn't want to. Even now, after more than eight years in Winnipeg, I still suffer that we had to come to Canada. I have a feeling that I was supposed to live some other life, but the war happened and interrupted everything. . . . When we left our town it felt as if we were going on vacation. The school ended earlier and we were happy. The summer was coming. Even when the bombings had started in Bosnia, I still pretended that I was only on vacation. When my parents signed me into a school in Belgrade, I realized that we were not going back. I cried every day. Then, we came to Canada. I couldn't speak English and refused to learn it at first. I haven't adapted easily . . . . Actually, I am not adapted yet. I will never be. I feel like a "stranger" here; I don't belong here, but I don't belong down [in Bosnia] either. If I go back, at least I will be home. . . . Although, I don't feel comfortable when people make nationalist jokes and comments. It makes me very uncomfortable. Sometimes I feel I would be better off on Mars. I could live the next forty years here and I would still feel that I don't belong here.

5.1.1 *Multiple Otherness*

The struggle to survive and negotiate a new life for Bosnian refugees has been a process of social reconstruction of identity. The war along ethnic lines, the nationalist propaganda and the late response of the international community to the conflict created feelings of multiple otherness for members of all three ethnic groups. In public, Bosnian Croats and Muslims generally perceived the Serbs as *Chetniks*; Bosnian Serbs and Muslims viewed the Croats as *Ustashe*; Bosnian Muslims were converts or "Turks" accused of becoming *mudjahedini* (fighters for the Jihad). Bosnian Serbs, for Serbs in Serbia, were Bosnians and refugees. For Europe, all Bosnians were the "Other," the lawless "Balkans." For the USA, the Bosnian problem was a "European problem."

[40] Trebinje is a town in Bosnia close to the Adriatic Sea.

In most host countries, neither governments nor their citizens "imagine" (Anderson 1983) refugees as being members of their society. Opportunist politicians and nationals blame most shortages on refugees although "the so-called negative impact of refugees on the host population is, more often than not, perceptual rather than real" (Kibreab 1999:345-6). Almost all of my informants had spent some time in another country where they were treated as temporary guests before coming to Canada. In the former Yugoslav republics, as in most other countries of asylum, refugees were precluded from working or could only find manual, low-status employment. In Serbia and Croatia, many young refugees were living on money made on the black market. Parents could not adapt to the situation as fast as their children. Some felt depressed because of the change in their social status, but more because of coming to terms with the war and the feeling of insecurity.

Many of the Bosnians have identified the stigma of being a refugee as a concern for them. Referring to their first place of asylum (former Yugoslav republics or European countries), they claim that the identification as a refugee, the inability to work legally, and temporary residence prevented them from becoming a part of the general community. The term "refugee" can conjure up assumptions that all a person is and has been is a "refugee" (Mcspadden and Moussa 1993:210). The stigma of refugeeness was present even among people who shared ethnicity with the refugees. Real individuals were reduced to an abstract "They." Once excluded, refugees became aliens, not-us. "From there to second-class citizen–or rather non-citizen–who owns nothing and has no rights, is only a thin blue line. You still feel responsible, but in a different way, as toward beggars. . . . Maybe [it

is] a mechanism of self-defense as if there were a limit to how much brutality, pain or suffering one is able to take on board and feel responsible for" (Drakulic 1993:142-3).

Refugees, on their part, felt rejected, discriminated against and disappointed. They have had to cope with trauma and loss. These people had "lost" their past. This was manifested through regrets for lost photographs more than for any other possession, because photographs made memories and past lives concrete, and could remind people that homes and intact families had indeed been theirs before the war (Gilliland et al. 1995:5). At the same time, they had to adjust to life in new and often inhospitable social and cultural environments. Many were unprepared for altered gender role expectations in the new context, new patterns in daily life, and new relationships with family members and others both in camps and in local communities.

They had lost the jobs that gave meaning to their lives and the roles that gave them identities and purpose. The theme of "nothing to do" echoes in the narratives of refugees who spent some time in refugee camps (Gilliland et al. 1995). One young man recalling the time spent in the refugee camp in Hungary has this to say:

> I don't know what was worse–the food or being idle all-day long. Days passed without doing anything purposeful–I am not used to it. Suddenly, one has all the time in the world and just sits there and worries. I had never in my life wanted more to work, to do something useful. . . .

When they talk about the time spent in exile, they remember the feelings of powerlessness, of being no longer in control of their lives. A need for stability, "normal life" and security have become their prime concerns. They recognize that they lived "day-to-day," preoccupied with very mundane concerns since they could not yet deal with the future–they had no idea where they would eventually live or what they could do. One woman, remembering the time spent in a refugee center, found the feeling of helplessness

and powerlessness most difficult to cope with: "I had never before been unable to take care of myself and my family. That was a very frightening feeling. When I survived that, I knew I can survive everything that life will bring to me."

As the war in the former Yugoslavia raged on, host countries reevaluated their policies toward the refugees who fled that war and have responded as their interests dictate–offering naturalization or long-term residency (Sweden, Netherlands), or implementing policies to send them back (Germany, United Kingdom).[41] Bosnian refugees who came to Canada and were granted landed immigrant status mostly came to stay, to start a new life. This opinion was shared by government officials, settlement workers and Canadians with whom I came into contact during my fieldwork. Bosnian immigrants, themselves, generally describe their experience in Canada as a positive one–a relatively hospitable reception, including prompt legalization, government support, and low levels of discrimination. However, many continue to live in a state of limbo, being caught between their wish to return, unfavorable circumstances in Bosnia and the difficulties of starting a new life in Canada.

5.1.2 *(Re)creating Mytho-histories*[42]

One should note that in the Balkans "it is widely believed that primogeniture (earliest and most indigenous) establishes exclusive contemporary rights to territory and to rule" (Mojzes 1998:82). The emphasis on when the various medieval states formed is due to the perceived link between the formation of the state and the formation of the nation.

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[41] In 1996, 10 European states hosted Bosnian populations of more than 10,000–in descending order of magnitude: Germany, Austria, Sweden, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Denmark, the UK, France, Norway and Italy. Smaller numbers were scattered among other European states and North America (US Committee for Refugees, 1997 cited in Van Hear 1998:235).

[42] Following Malkki's (1995a) notion of "mythico-historical" discourse developed by refugees, mytho-histories refer to the process of construction and reconstruction of refugees' history as that of a "people."

Contemporary Bosnian Muslim historians assert the legitimacy of their nation on the basis of the existence of an independent medieval Bosnian state. Those who insisted on a separate and distinct nationality for the Bosnian Muslims argued that the unique character of the religion in that area (the schismatic Bosnian Church [*Crkva Bosanska*]) indicated that their direct descendants were originally separate from either the Serbs or the Croats. Thus, Bosnian Muslims were a unique national entity recognizable even during the pre-feudal era when the Serbs and Croats were also becoming unified national entities.

Equally forcefully, many Serb and Croat nationalists maintain that Bosnia was originally part of one or the other cultural, religious, and geographic legacy. In order to fortify their positions, both Serbian and Croatian nationalists turned to nineteenth century formulations of nationhood, reviving the same mutually exclusive formulations that had culminated in the fratricides of World War II.

Could the traumatic experiences of individuals be transformed into collective memory, shared by those who did not experience the actual trauma? In the context of community life, personal experiences are told and retold, so that individual memories take the form of "standardized narratives" evolving into oral traditions (Malkki in Denich 1994). As Mojzes (1994) emphasizes, "time is understood mythologically rather than chronologically. Concepts of the past and the present are so intermixed that a grievance of long ago is perceived as a present affliction. It is believed that present action may not only vindicate but actually eradicate and reverse a past defeat" (40).

Interpretations of history are therefore important to ideologies (nationalist, for example) seeking to justify, strengthen and maintain particular ethnic identities. The political effect of such mythical thinking in Bosnia has created polarization and feelings of

insecurity for all three ethnic groups. The collective perceptions of their historical experience became a fundamental difference among the three national groups.

Malkki (1996) raises the need for anthropological rethinking of the interconnections between historical memory and national consciousness. She argues: "The construction of national past is a construction of history of a particular kind; it is one that claims moral attachments to specific territories, motherlands or homelands, and posits time-honored links between people, polity, and territory" (Malkki 1995b:434). The common historical memory–mytho-history–"exists as a set of narratives and symbolic codes, transmitted by verbal and ceremonic communication" (Denitch 1994a:369). It enables people to talk about their culture as though it were a constant. However, a common historical memory is a "present-day construction of past" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992); it is an "invented tradition" (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983) that draws on religion and myth for its symbolism, which is often violent in character.

The immense power of mytho-histories is relevant for our discussion because of its ability to shape the lives and identities of Bosnian refugees since not only nationalists essentialize, refugees may do so as well, as this case study shows. Notions of the homeland as the best place to be, re-creating and celebrating history and traditions, and discourses of victimization form part of the collective self. Even if refugees are not directly engaged in "mythico-historical" discourses, that does not mean that they lack means of perpetuating their ethnic identity or for transmitting their culture to their offspring (Kibreab 1999:389).[43]

[43] Language, music, preserving traditions through observing religious holidays, intensive socializing and networking within their ethnic group, and frequent visits to Bosnia are the most important means by which Bosnian immigrants nurture the ethnic identity of the second generation of immigrants.

Many of my informants claim that they are not nationalists and view themselves as apolitical. However, their narratives include various essentialist and primordial elements of nationalist ideology regardless of the discussion's subject. Their discourses employ the idea of ethnicity/nationality as given by birth (i.e., natural, inherited), the myth of land and blood and essentialist talk about "mentalities."[44] "You can't choose your nationality–you are born into it" was a statement repeatedly made by my informants. On several occasions informants referred to somebody as a "pure-blooded" member of this or that ethnic group, as if that makes a person more patriotic and his/her actions more explicable.

Zvonimir, a 30-year-old immigrant, insists that "different mentalities of Serbs, Croats and Muslims have to do with the centuries of Ottoman rule that didn't allow Serbs and Muslims to become part of civilized Europe as was possible for Croats under the Austro-Hungarian regime." Zarka, another informant in her early twenties, claims that she can say a person's ethnicity just by looking at him or her. Some discard such claims as racist while others reject them as historically invalid because "we [Bosnians] were all the same people before religion divided us."

All this essentialist talk about "mentalities" is alarming especially when paired with historical mythmaking. It is the basis for present-day sympathies and antipathies toward "neighbouring" people. Such beliefs (and classifications and stereotypes that come out of them) are retained by most of the Bosnians I have encountered in Winnipeg. This

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This issue will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter on transnational practices of Bosnian young adult immigrants in Winnipeg.

[44] "Mentalities" are understood as "environmentally shaped historical and political cultures and socialization" (Denitch, 1994:136). He argues that a major disservice to scholarship as well as to intraethnic peace among Yugoslav nations has been performed by generations of national historians, ethnographers and writers who tried to prove the special role and virtue of their own group (136). Mountain *Dinaric* types (Serbs) are people with hardy state-building virtues in the words of Serbian ethnographer Jovan Cvijic, or are more suited for war and violence as Dinko Tomisic, a Croat ethnographer, sees them. The mild

was expected for the older immigrants and not for their children–today's young adult immigrants, most of whom left their country in their early teens. Such beliefs were not only successfully communicated to the young, but also integrated into the process of construction and reconstruction of their national history in an attempt to develop and maintain a distinctive collective identity. Many parents in the refugee community pay a great deal of attention to communicating and shaping the national identities of their children. They claim that they were lacking a sense of national history and identity which made them victims of the war (Eastmond 1998:165).

In their stories, Bosnian Muslims frequently focus on the effects of Serbian nationalist politics on their particular Bosnian identity and on their lost feeling of belonging (Franz 2000:10). My Bosnian Muslim informants also refer to Serbs collectively as "aggressors." Bosnian Serbs, on the other hand, view their nation as the last and only true defender of Yugoslavia and refer to others as "traitors" and "separatists." Such distinctive and mutually exclusive mytho-historical discourses, in addition to their lived experiences, strengthen ethnic identification for most Bosnians. It was embraced by most of them incontestably because it created a sentiment of wholeness and continuity with the past at a time when life worlds were fragmented and people were being "uprooted." However, most of my Bosnian Muslim informants are able and willing to distinguish between the actual perpetrators and politicians, and ordinary people–Serbs who are victims as much as they are. Some disregard notions of ethnic identity and the politics of national exclusivism all together. However, it should be emphasized that almost all of

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Pannonian types (Croats) have a more servile mentality, or are the natural democrats and state-builders, depending on who is making the statements–Serbian or Croatian scholars. See Denitch (1994b).

the proponents of the latter position are either married to someone from another ethnic/national group or have parents with different ethnic backgrounds.

5.1.3 *Remembering: To Forget but not to Forgive*

As observed among other refugee groups, the conflict between "remembering" and "forgetting" is central for all forced immigrants. My informants unanimously identify the need to forget–"to put behind"–as crucial for normalization of their lives and for integration in Canadian society. However, their answers reveal different surviving strategies. Victims of ethnic cleansing may not easily forget, suggests Kibreab (1999:402). One way by which survivors may cope with their distress could be selectively "forgetting" the most painful events. This was poignantly elicited in the words of my informant, Amir:

> They came to my door and just took me, without explanation. I spent nine months in a detention camp run by Croats. There were several thousands Muslims there. We had to work for them; we dug trenches, built bunkers. We were almost like slaves–anyone could take you to his house to do some work for him. Sometimes they would come drunk, wake us up and force us to sing Ustashe songs. Sometimes they would choose two men and made them bite each other, have a duel. . . . I was afraid. How could you not be afraid?. . . . I wouldn't talk more about it; I don't want to go back to those memories. Lately, I don't feel good. . . . I have flashbacks. . . they don't go away and how could they? Time passes, I try if not to forget, if not to get over it, at least to store those memories in one part of my mind and not to use it. I keep myself busy–work, school, home.

Some refugees may be reluctant to talk about their pain with outsiders, but this should not be taken as an indication that they have forgotten their past. For instance, one informant who was in a camp run by Serbs rather casually mentioned that later in our conversation. Another says, he thinks of it as a rather insignificant event, especially when compared to the task of putting his family back on their feet here in Canada. They mostly talk about getting a job, learning the language, and putting Bosnia behind them.

Even when they insist that "all that is a past; it's forgotten," their behavior tells different stories. Some manifest or report clear symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder[45] (crying, nightmares, flashbacks). Five, six or even nine years may not be long enough to enable the refugees to forget what happened to them and to dissociate themselves from their place of origin and history.

Generally, there are two groups, one that wants to forget and put behind them the past (making everything possible to integrate themselves as fast as possible in Canadian society) and another group that does not want or does not know how to forget the war and refugee experience (exclusive socialization within their ethnic/national group, little incorporation, plans for repatriation). For both groups forgetting is difficult because of the constant perpetuation of mutually exclusive mytho-histories. None of my informants talk about forgiving.[46] Nevertheless, the boundaries dividing "personal" and "public" aspects of mytho-historical discourses are not so absolute; they contain great complexities and ambiguities about historical events (e.g., stories of Serbian kindness and generosity), and ambiguities about the relationship with the perpetrators. Also, some express recognition that all three nationalities of Bosnia should and could–again–work together. Comparison between Tito's time and today is inevitable. Currently there are some signs of nostalgia (Yugonostalgia), although favouring old times and "softening of the 'fundamentalist' stance was unthinkable in the acute phase of ontological insecurity" (Mojzes 1994:62). That opens up the possibility of re-examination of identity, more realistic assessment of knowledge about "Us" and "Them" and, possibly, forgiving.

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[45] Defined as such by American Psychiatric Association (1994) in *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-DSM-IV*. 4th Edition. Washington D.C.

[46] Kibreab argues that "victims of genocide/ethnic cleansing may forgive over time but may not easily forget" (1998:402). That may be a difficult task for Bosnian refugees. During the Tito reign, events

There may be gender and generational differences in these memory processes. Weine et al. (1997), who established the Bosnian Refugee Trauma Program at Yale, report that adolescent survivors are less burdened by traumatic memories, more enthusiastic about the future while, "[w]hether in daily thoughts or nightly dreams of beloved others, women [more than men] report active cognitive and emotional involvement with their natal homelands and with relatives left behind" (Jenkins 1997:36,41).

The process of forgetting can be slowed down by the receiving society's policy and practice (Gilliland et al. 1995; Malkki 1995b; Eastmond 1998; Kibreab 1999; Al-Ali et al. 2001). Very often recent refugees send to the receiving society the following message: "We are victims of war and not voluntarily here." It resonates with a conception of refugees as "traumatized victims" that is emerging in the helping professions of the host societies and in the research models on "the refugee experience." Such a tendency assumes that, in the host country, all difficulties experienced by refugees are somehow related to the trauma of war and cultural liminality. Victim identity easily becomes a negative marker of significant difference.

Therefore, non-traditional scholars of refugee studies challenge the practices of some host countries. For instance, in Sweden and the US, substantial government funds in the health care sector have been allocated to preventive and curative treatment for Bosnian refugees (Eastmond 1998:177). However, as Eastmond shows for Sweden, medicalization of Bosnian refugees did not facilitate easier integration in the economic and social life of the host society. On the contrary, it resulted in higher numbers of unemployed urban Bosnian refugees living on social assistance, compared with Bosnian refugees living in

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that would disrupt interethnic cooperation were de-emphasized. People in Yugoslavia were not allowed to forgive, they were made to forget (Denitch 1994a; Bringa 1996; Bax 1997).

small towns and not receiving any treatment. This is not to say that professional help is not needed. Quite the reverse, many of my informants emphasize the need for counseling, especially in the initial period in Canada.[47] What these scholars want to point out is that a generalized identity as refugee and traumatized victim may become a permanent part of self-identity, reinforcing dependency and disability rather than empowerment. Some of my informants have made the same argument. They are critical of governments' hypocrisy–locating huge funds in the health care sector but practicing a restrictive immigration policy that limits their job-finding abilities. From the refugees' perspective, the major concern in their everyday lives is rather the active reconstitution of "normal life," which means recovering a sense of economic independence and control over their lives.

In conclusion, as Malkki (1995b) cautions, the refugee experience entails losses, but we cannot know, *a priori,* what these are or what social meanings are construed around them. Rather, it covers a diversity of experiences and cannot easily be generalized. While transformation and change are part of the refugee experience, not all change is perceived as loss or defined as problematic and unwelcome by the refugees themselves. Some look at immigration to Canada as a second chance or as a way of obtaining security and stability in their lives on a longer run. The case in point is the statement made to me by Silvana, a young, single Bosnian refugee woman:

> I always wanted to live somewhere in North America. It wasn't difficult for me to decide to immigrate. On the contrary, the war made my dream come true. And, it's not only me who is happy to be here. Other refugees, especially people who left at the beginning of the war, once they made a decision to leave, they became more open to new opportunities and change, and less accepting of what was

[47] Sporadically counseling was offered but the lack of translators of the same ethnic origin as the refugees (Bosnian Muslims) made many of them who came directly from detention or refugees camps quit the program.

happening to them as their destiny. They immigrated hoping they can feel secure enough to make plans again, and able to see where they are going to be in ten, twenty years. . . .

5.2 PEOPLE, IDENTITY AND PLACE: DISPLACEMENT AND (RE)CONSTRUCTING LOCALITY

> We neither came to stay nor to go back
> (Kemal, Bosnian Muslim chemist/factory worker/artist from Winnipeg)

The tendency of refugee studies to generalize "the refugee experience," expressed as a loss of culture,[48] identity[49] and homeland,[50] of "uprooting," has been critically examined, among others by Appadurai and Breckenridge (1988), Clifford (1988), Kearney (1995), Malkki (1995b), Turton (1996), and Cohen (1997). The powerful metaphoric practice of linking people to places, they argue, directly enables a vision of territorial displacement[51] as pathological. Numerous ethnographic examples (including this case study) show the complexity and ever-changing nature of the relation between people, identity and place. These studies suggest that identity is always mobile and processual, and caution against using "identity" as an analytical tool if "its understanding is continuously reinforced by the metaphorical concept of 'rootedness'" for those categories of people classified as "displaced" and "uprooted" (Malkki 1995b:435). However, such findings do not deny the importance of place in the construction of identities. We can speak of deterritorialized identities only if deterritorialization is understood not as a loss of

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[48] The idea of culture carries with it an expectation of roots, of a stable, territorialized existence (Clifford 1988:333).

[49] People are often thought of, and think of themselves, as rooted in place and as deriving their identity from that rootedness (Malkki 1996:436).

[50] "The nation" and the "homeland" are commonly referred to in many languages by such methaphoric synonyms as "the country," "the land," and "the soil" (Malkki 1996:436-7).

[51] "The very word 'displacement' implies an assumption that all human populations 'belong' in a certain place and that, in an ideal world, they would all be where they belong. This in turn implies that the

a "natural" link between territory and identity, culture, nation, and homeland but, on the contrary, as a proof that the link does not presuppose sedentarism because it is not lost when people are forcibly moved from their territory. As Malkki eloquently points out: "For refugees, the process of constructing, remembering, and laying claim to particular places as "homelands" or "nations" continues even in absence of actual territorial and national bases through memories of places that they can or will no longer corporeally inhabit" (1996:434).

The metaphor of home (homeland–*domovina*) is also territorializing for it is thought to "denote something to which one is naturally tied" (Anderson, 1983:131). Many (even some Bosnians in their twenties) express the desire to go back, if not soon, then, at least in time to die at home–"to leave my bones where I came from"–in the words of Emir, one of my informants. Likewise, it is not uncommon for a person on the first visit to Bosnia to bring back a rock or sea water, although Adriatic Sea is not any more part of their country. Nevertheless, for Bosnians, the Adriatic Sea is still "Our Sea," as people referred to it during Tito's Yugoslavia. Their sentiments show that attachments to places can be retained even when people are deterritorialized from them. People can feel affection for a certain land and heritage, but the "people" as an entity (including refugees and all other migrants) cannot be linked to a clearly delineated territory.

The notion of "fatherland" or "homeland," as Bosnians refer to their country of origin, is critical in negotiating diasporan identity. However, the disintegration of Yugoslavia, the war along ethnic lines, the new Bosnian state, and immigration to Canada created a need for renegotiation of the meanings that Bosnians assign to the "homeland."

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identity people gain from their associations with a particular place is in some way fundamental or 'natural' and that to be deprived of that identity is to lose some part of one's very humanity" (Turton 1996:97).

Trauma related to experiences during the war might further challenge their attachments to Bosnia. For a large number of Bosnians, the "home" they used to know and with which they identified has disappeared (either because they identify with the former Yugoslavia or because they would constitute a minority within the present-day borders of the two state "entities" within Bosnia and Herzegovina).

To the young adult Bosnian immigrants I have been working with, "home" means the country, the region, the town, or the village from which they were forcibly displaced. Their perception of home has undergone change and has been reshaped by their experiences and their memories. For instance, Sanja explains to me:

> Before the war, without any hesitation, I would've said that Yugoslavia is my country. Now, I can't even say that Bosnia is my country. When I think of home, I think of my town. I don't think I can live in Bosnia, but I can live in my town.

I came across a few informants to whom home even meant the actual house. However, I came across many who do not identify with the new state. Especially, Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats do not seem to view the new Bosnian state as theirs. Goran, a 24-year-old Bosnian Serb comments on the topic:

> They [Bosnian Muslim] got what they wanted–a Muslim state. When you see a car with a Bosnian bumper sticker you can be one hundred percent sure a Muslim is driving it. There is no Serb or Croat who identifies the new Bosnian state as his/her country. When they say 'I am from Bosnia,' they mean the old Bosnia, not this one. Bosnian Serbs and Croats are left without a homeland. If they are nationalists, they put Serbian and Croatian bumper stickers on their cars, but Serbia or Croatia is not their country either.

Disappointments with the uneasy truce established by the Dayton Agreement,[52] and maybe even more its partial and slow implementation, have augmented among many

[52] The signing of the Dayton Agreement near the end of 1995 theoretically included and anticipated the option of return to their places of origin for the 2.3 million displaced persons and refugees. Most of the refugees who have returned benefited from the "majority returns option" of the Dayton Agreement; that is, Bosnian Muslims from the Federation are returned to the *Bosniak* areas of the Federation, Croats to the Croat areas, and Serbs to the *Republika Serpska.* The Dayton agreement does not allow for relocation, for

refugees anxieties and fears concerning political stability. Problems related to reconstruction of economic and social infrastructure have further diminished the likelihood of permanent return (Al-Ali et al. 2001:582). Consequently, many refugees started to perceive their initial temporary place of residence as long-lasting if not permanent.

The nature of the link between people, identity and particular places which determines how people perceive displacement and return to places or countries of origin depends, on the one hand, on the conditions under which they leave their places of origin, and, on the other, on the treatment they receive and opportunities existing at the destination (Kibreab 1999:407). The circumstances of life as refugees in Canada also shapes the social meaning of the images of homeland; in response to the stereotypes about refugees and hardship in establishing themselves as self-reliant in an economic sense, the dream of home may take on new significance.

Mina, a Bosnian Muslim woman from a small community in Central Bosnia, who took care of her three children and worked on family land before the war, does not take her idle life in Canada easily:

> People have been very kind. But we miss our place or . . . you can say, I miss it the most. It was my home; my kids were born there. I spent my adult life working on our new house and on our land. I would return to my home, even if there was nothing left of the place itself. I don't feel useful or needed by my family here the way I was in Bosnia. I am nobody here but I was respected in our community as a hard worker and a good mother and wife.

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example, of Bosnian Muslims originating in the *Republika Srpska* to the Federation, because this would be equal to accepting ethnic cleansing. But relocation increasingly takes place on an individual basis as the years pass and no other opportunities are available. The ones who are still in need of a permanent settlement solution within Bosnia and the ones who decide to stay in the countries of exile mostly are persons who have become ethnic minorities in their communities where refugees of other ethnic group(s) are now living in their homes (Franz 2000:2-3).

Another informant, a former high school teacher, works at three different part-time jobs but cannot practice her profession without obtaining a Canadian teaching certificate. Zora and her husband were a highly respected and well-off couple in their town. They would have stayed despite the war, but her husband was twice drafted by two different armies–Bosnian [Muslim] and Serbian. Telling her story, she expresses her dissatisfaction with her personal situation in Canada and reflects on her opinion about Canada and Canadians:

> My husband didn't want to fight in that war; he didn't feel right in either army. We have lived in Canada since 1993. I haven't adapted; I don't like Canada. Canadians think that immigrants come to have a better life; they don't understand that eighty percent of Bosnians came because they had to, and that they had a good life before, even a better life, a higher living standard than they have now. They have presumptions about refugees–people that don't know better than what is generously given to them by the [Canadian] government. Canadians think their country is the best country in the world, but it is too individualistic and too materialistic a society . . . . Since we came here, I went once to Yugoslavia to visit my parents but not to Bosnia, not to our town. When I go I will go to stay.

Not all, and especially not the younger educated immigrants, let the initially lowered social status make them feel inadequate in Canada. Most have built a future for themselves by going back to school and by obtaining professional jobs. When asked if they would return now to Bosnia, many acknowledge that they would not. The reason given was that they had just established themselves in Canada, and things have changed too much for them to be able to live normally in Bosnia. Bosnia for many was not any more a homeland, it had become a strange and insecure place. A reversal of earlier representations of life in the homeland now emerges in the narrative of Vesna, a 33-year-old mechanical engineer from Sarajevo:

> We had to live with my husband's parents because we couldn't afford our own place. We had professional jobs but the economy was so bad that we couldn't save or plan anything. It was different for our parents. They enjoyed at least two

> prosperous decades in their lives. We didn't get the chance. Canada is not corrupted. If you are good, eventually you will make it here. We'll stay for the sake of our kids. I am not giving up on Bosnia but. . . . Could I belong to two countries? Why not?

Some vow never to go back claiming that their home is here and that they do not have any desire to be reminded of the past. Those are usually the ones who still have to deal with the trauma and loss they experienced during the war. One of them, Mirza, a young Bosnian Muslim from Banja Luka (a city that belongs to *Republika Srpska*), however, offers a unique argument for going back to Bosnia. He proclaims:

> I can imagine myself living in Canada but still, when I finish my studies, I will go back–"*iz prkosa.*"[53] To show them [Serbs] that they can't make everyone leave; they can't have it their way. They will have to live with Muslims and Croats. Actually, I also want to go back home for a more rational reason–I want to make a difference in the lives of people who stayed behind because they wanted to or because they didn't have a choice. I hope to find a job with some humanitarian organization. I might come to live in Canada again, later. I don't have anything against this country. On the contrary. But first, I have to go back.

The older generation of immigrants suffer nostalgia but does not have many illusions about the present situation in Bosnia. Their children do not suffer from nostalgia and are more at ease with Canadian ways of life which, however, that does not prevent them from expressing intentions to go back more readily than their parents do. The decision to immigrate to Canada seems frequently to have been a family decision made by parents. The young adults, who have not yet built up an inventory of memories and experiences as extensive as those of previous generations, responded most strongly in favour of returning to Bosnia. In the last few years Bosnia has became for them "a fun place to be," to enjoy summers and more familiar ways of socializing in their hometowns and on the Adriatic coast. There are cases in which one of the adult children in the family

[53] *Prkos* can be translated by the words obstinacy, spitefulness, and defiance. Bosnians themselves recognize *prkos* and refer to it as both vice and virtue (Mojzes 1994:50).

has decided to return to Bosnia on his/her own. Most keep that option as possible but remain in Canada.

The low numbers of returns can partially be explained by the Al-Ali et al.'s (2001) findings from within Bosnia that suggest that refugees are often perceived as "traitors" who fled during the war and failed to defend their homes. They report that this attitude is especially widespread around Sarajevo, a city that was under siege by Serb troops for more than three years (Al-Ali et al. 2001:591). I encountered an indication of such an attitude through discussion only with one of my informants who spent the war years in Bosnia and has just recently joined her family in Winnipeg. She pointed out to me the difference that people in Bosnia make between someone who is *izbeglica* and *pobeglica.* The first term implies that the person had to flee in order to save his/her life. The second term is newly invented and carries a negative connotation. *Pobeglica* is, if not a traitor, then, at least an opportunist who put his/her own interest before the interest of the ethnic/national group to which s/he belongs.

The low numbers of returns can also be explained by the direction that the Bosnian government has taken towards refugees. Despite Bosnia's obvious brain-drain as a consequence of the enormous refugee flight abroad, by and large, Bosnian politicians have not encouraged the involvement of refugees in post-war reconstruction (Al-Ali et al. 2001:589). Some respondents even argued that the Bosnian nationalist parties have put out negative propaganda about refugees in the national media and are partly responsible for the growth of resentment against them.

However, most of my informants do not feel that their relationship with close friends and family have suffered because of their decision to immigrate to Canada, but

they do agree with researchers' evidence of common misconceptions of refugees living in great comfort and luxury abroad. In Bosnia, the people who have immediate family members who are now refugees tend to be better informed about their actual living conditions. Yet, many refugees try to avoid upsetting their immediate kin, especially elderly parents, and consciously leave out the details of their struggle and hardships when communicating with them. Others are ashamed to admit, at least to neighbours, former co-workers and friends, that they are not better off than they were in Bosnia before the war. This reproduces distortions and misconceptions about refugees' lives and material conditions in the receiving countries.

The discussion on the situational nature of the relation between people, identity and place has shown that the nation, even though it has powerful associations with particular localities and territories, is simultaneously a supralocal, transnational cultural form (Appadurai and Breckenridge 1988). Diaspora communities make it clear that identity with a political or geographical entity can involve loyalty to more than one such entity (Clifford 1994; Kearney 1995). Deterritorialization of social identity challenges the meaning of the "nation-state"[54] and its claims for exclusive loyalty with the alternative of multiple identities and even multiple citizenships (Cohen 1997).

[54] In the predominant modern conception of the world order, the nation-state is the given basis of identity and culture, the "natural" place to live and belong (Bouman 1990 cited in Malkki 1995a).

CHAPTER 6

TRANSNATIONAL PRACTICES AMONG BOSNIAN IMMIGRANTS: THE CREATION AND MAINTENANCE OF MULTIPLE IDENTITIES

Contemporary migration processes are distinguished from those of an earlier era by the degree to which migrants travel to and from their homelands, and the extent to which they sustain cultural and personal attachments with the country of origin (Glick Schiller et al. 1992). Therefore, only recently has international migration acquired the critical mass and complexity necessary to speak of an emergent transnational social field--"transnational socio-cultural systems"[55]–in which territory is no longer the organizing factor (Glick Schiller and Fouron 1999:340). Initially, the literature on transnationalism was focused primarily around experiences of labour migrants (Rouse 1991; Glick Schiller et al. 1992; Gupta 1992; Fernandez-Kelly 1994; Portes 1997). More recent studies of transnational migration have become increasingly diverse in approach and scope. For instance, they have exhibited a growing interest in refugees as transmigrants, and especially in the processes of constructing and reconstructing their identities (Moberg 1996; Shami 1996; Al-Ali 2001; Matsuoka and Sorenson 2001). The interest in how groups reinterpret values and practices in order to support old and develop new identity

[55] "Transnational social field," "transnational socio-cultural systems" and "transnational communities" are terms that are used interchangeably in transnational studies for groupings of immigrants who participate on a routine basis in a field of relationships, practices, and norms that include both places of origin and places of destination. Minimally, a transnational field provides immigrants with opportunities and perspectives that are alternatives to committing themselves exclusively either to the new society or to the old one (Roberts et al. 1999). Some researchers, however, make a conceptual distinction between the first two and the third term, arguing that the analytical concept of community, because of its tendency to "privilege homogeneity and stasis" and to emphasize "commonality and coherence," is not an appropriate analytical tool (Rouse 1991:10).

claims made ethnic diasporas "the exemplary communities of the transnational moment (Tololyan 1991:5).

My reading of the term "diaspora" follows the work on transnationalism of Hall (1990), Rouse (1991) and Glick Schiller et al. (1994). All of them emphasize the relationship between symbolic and transformative dimensions of identity, and how diasporic discourses are invoked by those who, seeking to maintain a connection with their homeland, have become part of the transnational social field. Following their lead, this chapter explores the processes of creation of transnational/diasporan multiple identities through examination of the emerging transnational practices of young adult Bosnian immigrants in Winnipeg. The process of transnationalism has created the conditions through which Bosnians are developing identities embedded in networks of relationships and webs of meanings–systems that connect them simultaneously to their homeland and to Canada.

Although some narratives predominate among the latest wave of Bosnian immigrants, differences such as ethnicity/nationality (in combination with political viewpoint), economic status (class), generation and gender do not allow sweeping generalizations. Therefore, the narratives chosen to exemplify the complexity of the processes of (re)creation of identities are differentiated and circumstantial rather than collective and historical. Discourses of identity are informed by a multitude of personal memories, sentiments, experiences, and everyday practices that undermine the possibility of deriving a common basis for identity. Importantly, for immigrants everyday life is framed by and spans different social contexts and places at the same time: sending and

receiving societies, ethnic immigrant communities, and other, globally dispersed and transnational networks to which they are connected.

6.1 ETHNICITY AND NATIONALISM AS FOCI OF COLLECTIVE AND PERSONAL IDENTITIES AMONG BOSNIANS IN WINNIPEG

What form does transnational identity take? It is very often declared as ethnicity, as ethnic consciousness, which Kearney (1991) finds a highly appropriate form for collective identity to take in the age of transnationalism. This is especially true for Bosnian immigrants who were forced out of their country because of disintegration of the former multiethnic state (i.e., Yugoslavia) and ethnic conflict in the new state (Bosnia and Herzegovina). However, the processes of (re)creation of ethnic and national identity are very complex. Therefore, the analysis of these processes follows Eriksen's (1993) approach of seeing human beings entertaining multiple and shifting identifications in concentric and intersecting circles. This approach seems the most adequate one for understanding the dynamics, ambivalences, and ambiguities of the (re)construction of ethnic/national identities among Bosnian young adult immigrants in Winnipeg.

Eriksen advocates "a relational and processual approach to ethnicity" and argues that "ethnicity describes both a set of relations and a mode of consciousness" (1993:157). The meaning as well as organizational form of ethnicity changes with other aspects of society (or societies, as is the case with immigrants). Such an approach balances the importance of both local micro and historical and societal macro processes in the home and host societies for the development of ethnic groups and identities.

Ethnic identity becomes crucially important the moment it is perceived as threatened (Eriksen 1993:76). It is only when cultural differences "make a difference" in interaction that they are important in the creation of ethnic boundaries. The outbreak of civil war in Yugoslavia in 1991, and the eventual fragmentation of the federation, exemplifies the relativity of ethnic boundaries. Ethnic boundaries, dormant for decades, were activated; presumed cultural differences which had been irrelevant for two generations were suddenly "remembered" and invoked as proof that it was impossible for the groups to live side by side.

6.1.1 *The Role of Nationalism in Creation of Ethnic and National Identities among Bosnian Immigrants*

Regardless of the war experience, this study shows that beliefs and attitudes of Bosnian immigrants depend on the sociocultural environment in which each person had grown up. Generally, to the generations that grew up in the sixties and seventies ethnicity was not an issue, but it was for some young people who "came to age" in the eighties and early nineties when Serb, Croat and Muslim nationalist parties started aggressively to propagate exclusive ethnonationalism.

Other social identities (such as class and rural/urban identities) also challenge national solidarity and imply potential conflict within each ethnic group and between the three Bosnian ethnic groups.[56] In Bosnia, among the urban-educated class, a significant degree of interethnic and interreligious cooperation took place, and the socioeconomic stratum a person belonged to was more important than was his or her nationality. On the

[56] Besides on individual level, the concept of "culturedness" is also applied on ethnic group level—Muslims are perceived as less "cultured", Serbs are in the middle and Croats as the most cultured and closest to the West (Bringa 1995:61). More detail about the distinction based on the level of culturedness will be given later in this chapter.

contrary, relatively little interethnic and interreligious mixing took place in the villages. Therefore, rural and urban populations developed quite different identities and practices (Mojzes 1994; Bringa 1995). Many of my informants also point out these differences. Some of them (all urban immigrants) share the view that the war in Bosnia was "*seljacka buna*" (a rural uprising based on a mix of ethnic and urban chauvinism) and point out the fact that nationalist parties mostly, if not exclusively, won in rural areas where ethnoreligious identification was fundamental. However, we should keep in mind that the rural population was in an economically disadvantageous and culturally marginalized position in Bosnia and therefore easy prey for nationalists.

Processes of (re)constructing ethnic identity and boundaries in exile draw from events and discourses in different contexts. For the Bosnian immigrants in Winnipeg, current conditions in Bosnia form one such important context, especially in light of heightened assertion of ethnic and cultural differences brought on by nationalist politics and war. These form part of post-war realities in Bosnia (as reflected, for instance, in many areas of education and the mass media) and run parallel to a multi-ethnic state policy (Eastmond 1998:167). They imply stressing differences and rejecting much of the pre-war cultural commonality that did exist in many areas of everyday life in multi-ethnic Bosnia. Hence, national identities are neither clear-cut nor unproblematic not only in exile but also in the homeland.

National identity shaped by events and discourses in Bosnia takes on additional functions and meanings in exile. As part of a discourse in exile, nationalist sentiments may draw particular strength from the very absence of the homeland (Malkki 1995a). "This homeland is imagined and idealized as a distant, unattainable but dreamed of reality,

infused with the emotional force of personal losses suffered as disowned and displaced people" (Eastmond 1998:165).

However, multiple contacts with Bosnia make such symbolism ambiguous. Visits to Bosnia, through personal observations of conditions at home and critical political debate with friends and relatives, very often modify simplified and idealized images of Bosnia created during the initial years in Canada. The past images are darkened when people are faced with burned homes, with strangers living in their houses, and few relatives and friends left behind. Amir remembers his first visit:

> There was nothing left of our home. They [Serb paramilitary] burned it down. If you didn't know there was house there once you couldn't say by looking at all that grass. I had good memories connected to that house, but somehow, when I stood there, staring in the empty space, I felt that those good memories have already started to be replaced by painful and sad ones.

Selma and her family were refugees in Germany for seven years. As a part of German repatriation, they returned to Bosnia in 1999. Faced with many problems there, they immigrated to Canada a year ago. Most of our discussion revolved around the home they lost. The house was a source of pride and a symbol of their status; it became a source of pain and anger:

> We just finished our new house before the war started. It was one of the biggest in the town and very modern. While we were in Germany, we were saving to buy some furniture for when we went back. We spent all our savings and shipped everything in Bosnia only to discover that three or four different families were living in our house during the war. The people who now live there did not feel comfortable when they saw us, but they stayed. We had to find another place for ourselves in a nearby town. We didn't even have a bathroom inside the house. My husband and I built one for the old lady who took us in. I felt a stranger in that town although it was a Muslim town. People behaved differently, they even spoke differently than us. I don't know if we can ever get our house back. If I could've lived in my house I wouldn't have come to Canada. At least, we have our own place now. In Germany we lived in the house of a German family. It was nothing like home.

Beside the home society, the host society also plays a significant role in the process of (re)creation of ethnic/national identity. Many aspects of their position as refugees/immigrants in Canadian society both reinforce and counteract the relevance and consolidation of ethnic identity and community. According to Matsuoka and Sorenson (2001:61), who studied the Ethiopian diaspora in Canada, Bosnian refugees received expedited treatment and a formal welcome that was later extended to all refugees from the Former Yugoslavia, in contrast to Ethiopians who reported prolonged delays and corruption at Canadian embassies and UNHCR offices. Also, as pointed out to me by Canadian settlement workers and immigrants themselves, Bosnians are perceived by Canadians as "modern," and "not much culturally different from us," with reference to a hierarchy of categories conceived in terms of "cultural distance." Few refugees came from rural areas;[57] most who settled in Canada were from urban areas (with high numbers of nuclear families comprised of mixed marriages), and many had previously lived in European or North American cities. These factors did much to shape the demographic of the Bosnian diaspora in Winnipeg and the perception of the host country about them.

However, Bosnians of all three ethnic groups indicate the problematic experience of generalized perceptions by the host society which render invisible other dimensions of their identity than that of refugee. They also find Canadian society to be very individualistic and money–oriented.

There is another nexus of relations to be considered–those with the established migrant population of the same ethnic/national origin as the newcomers. One of the most

[57] The vast majority of rural refugees did not go beyond the former Yugoslav republics, or stayed internally displaced. Some of them preferred European countries, the traditional destination for labour migrants, where they had relatives on whom to rely.

important factors in the internal dynamics of the community has been the date of arrival in Canada–"because of peculiarities of each period of immigration, newcomers may have ideological orientations that are so incompatible with those of the established community that the two segments do not see each other as authentic representatives of the culture" (Winland 1996:6-7). The fact that many Bosnian refugees had skills and personal resources that enabled them to embrace opportunities in Canada evoked resentment in those who had been here longer and had achieved modest goals. Old country localism, or these locally specific logics of self-construction, often translated into the establishment of discrete social and political networks and affiliations.

Adaptation and integration involves not only relations with established populations; it also involves relations with other recently arrived migrants, who may be co-ethnics. These relations, usually assumed to be positive, are not necessarily so. Other identities based on class and social status or local place of origin in Bosnia make a difference in social interaction, perhaps even more so as they are threatened in the new context. The experience of a general social downgrading of the entire group seems to increase competition and status claims rather than solidarity. While, on a personal level the search for national identity and community may be meaningful with reference to the turbulent transformations of their lives, few close social relations are formed. Informants often lament the contrast between the present, and the ideal and pre-war practice of socializing (*druziti se*). Nevertheless, families maintain ties with relatives, friends, former neighbours and others in many different places; as often as the household economy permits, they visit or telephone in Canada, the US, Europe, and Bosnia. Almost every

family, after the Peace Agreement, has made at least one return trip to Bosnia, even if many cannot go back to the place where they once lived.

The social turbulence of war, with massive population displacement, makes reconstruction of a sense of community between people forcibly thrown together especially difficult: the local refugee collectivity is a result of the placement administrated by the host country, and represents people from different parts of Bosnia and different social strata who would not, before the war, have existed in each others' social worlds or have felt they had much in common. In that context, Al-Ali et al. (2001) question the concept of transnational community as a unifying entity in terms of ethnic/national, religious and ideological determination and socio-economic position. The transnational community is also divided by different world-views–cosmopolitan versus parochial outlooks.[58] Many studies argue that a distinction can be made between transnational practices of migrants coming from rural and urban areas, or more precisely, between working and middle-class migrants (Pessar 1995; Toro-Morn 1995; Roberts et al. 1999). They argue that low-skilled and low-income migrants are more likely to develop strong transnational communities because they "seek to use transnational space to counter marginality in both country of origin and country of destination" (Roberts et al. 1999:247). On the other hand, most in ethnically-mixed families who are unable or unwilling to follow the ethnic division and fully participate in any of the ethnic networks (and face a similar problem if returning home), seek other mixed families or orient themselves to Canadian networks and to remaining in Canada.

[58] Van Hear refers to contemporary rural immigrants as parochial transnationals–people with transnational networks and links, but with a parochial world-view (1998:255).

In the new setting, young adult immigrants measure themselves situationally, in part by comparing their present with their own past, and in part by comparing their well-being with that of others in their current environment. They select a reference group in accordance with the meanings they want to communicate to others and themselves. When they want to emphasize their hardship, they compare themselves with the Canadian mainstream or with friends back home whose parents have become very affluent. On the contrary, when they want to emphasize their hard work and success, they compare themselves with other immigrant groups or Aboriginal Peoples following already existing negative stereotypes.

How new young immigrants define themselves also depends on the sociocultural context in which they find themselves and on meanings they want to communicate to a particular person or group:

> Sometimes it depends on to whom you are talking. If we talk to Canadians and they do not know the difference–Serb, Croat or Muslim–we just say 'I am from Bosnia'; that's easier for them and we avoid hassle. Other immigrants, for instance–-from China, India, or some country from Africa–can more easily relate to the experience of ethnic conflict, war, refugeeness. With them we [Bosnians] sometimes get involved in political discussions. They know more history and geography. We also avoid talking about politics among each other–everyone interprets the war and the history from the perspective of his/her own nation. It is an unwritten rule not to ask for one's ethnicity if he or she doesn't volunteer that information. But, we always try to guess (Marko, 20-year old Bosnian with mixed ethnic background).

> I always make a point of the fact that I am from Europe. If I say, "I am from Bosnia," they will immediately categorize me as a refugee. I don't want people [Canadians] to perceive me as less civilized than them. I even think that most of us are more civilized than an average North American. We are from the Balkans but we have traveled through Europe, we accepted European culture and ways of life. We have broader general knowledge. We are refugees but we retain our dignity and eventually we will find our way in Canadian society. I don't want anyone to look down on me; I don't want anyone to feel sorry for me; I only want an opportunity to show I can make it here (Merima, 29-year-old Bosnian Muslim, recently earned graduate degree at the University of Manitoba).

6.1.2 *Bosnians or Bosniaks: (Re)constructing Bosnian Muslim National Concept*

The ethnic definition of Bosnian Muslims (as Bosnians or Bosniaks) emerged and started to be accepted by the Bosnian Muslims during this war. Bringa (1995), an anthropologist who studied Bosnian Muslims prior to the war, in his ethnography reports "the lack of a myth of common origins or idiom of shared blood" among Bosnian Muslims. He states: "For Serbs and Croats nationhood was natural because it was based on an unambiguous and common ethnic origin. Instead, the Muslims referred to their collective identity in an idiom which de-emphasized descent ("ethnicity") and focused on shared environment, cultural practices, shared sentiment, and common experiences" (Bringa 1995:30). However, a decade later, Franz (2000), who studied Bosnian Muslim refugees in Austria, reports that "[e]thnicity defined in a primordial sense, as an exclusivist marker based upon blood and land, frequently appears in the men's narratives" (2000:10). The rapid development of ethnic identity for Bosnian Muslims was fostered by Serb and Croat nationalism and ethnic cleansing. And, in contrast to the ambiguous Muslim category, Bosnian and especially *Bosniak* identity makes the historical connection clear between people and a certain territory which is central in any nationalist discourse.[59]

The identity of "Bosnian" in pre-war Yugoslavia, according to Bringa (1995) and Bougarel (1996), was a regional one, not politically relevant or ideologically backed as a territorially based nation. After the war, "Bosnian" carries new and politicized connotations: in Bosnia, those who refer to themselves as Bosnians are predominantly Muslims. Only a few of those of ethnically mixed origin use the same term, although

[59] After the recent war, *Bosniak* in its exclusive sense has established itself more firmly, and has gained increased currency in the Sarajevo media and in the new elementary textbooks in Bosnia. *Bosniaks* are presented as the original people, the descendants of the homogenous medieval *Bosniak* population (Eastmond 1998:165-7).

some have expressed great need for a more inclusive term for their national identity (Al-Ali et al. 2001). Most of the Bosnian Serbs and Croats use the term "Bosnian," but only as marker of their regional identities.[60] Although the term "Bosnian" now refers to citizenship in the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina, they doubt any possibility of developing identities as Bosnians in national terms. At the same time, they oppose the exclusive use of the term by and for the Bosnian Muslims.

Similarly, in the Canadian context, the category of "Bosnian" is assigned predominantly, if not exclusively, to Muslims, and the two are becoming coterminous among the host population (to the dismay of other Bosnian nationalities in Canada).

In Bosnian context, the term "Bosnian" also refers to an ideological multiethnic position and is used in contrast to the more nationalist term "*Bosniak.*" In the past, the term "*Bosniak*" shifted between an inclusive use, encompassing all groups in Bosnia, and a more exclusive one, referring to Muslims only. In this conflict over historical precedence in Bosnia, this exclusive identity is of course highly contested by the non-Muslim Bosnians among refugees. One of my informants has made a comment on the margins of the questionnaire that says:

> Bosnian Muslims don't have exclusive right over the name *Bosniak.* My mother is a Croat and my father is a Serb, but I feel neither Croat nor Serb for I had grown up in Bosnia. I am *Bosniak* as much as some Bosnian Muslim is. If they want to use that term exclusively, the Bosnian government has to come up with a new name for the Bosnian nation that doesn't carry nationalist baggage and can be embraced by all.

Only two of my Bosnian Muslim informants identified themselves as *Bosniaks.* Others expressed support for the mythohistory that goes with the new exclusive Muslim

[60] A Bosnian collective identity was elicited by the non-Bosnian identities of peoples born outside the territory of Bosnia. In prewar Yugoslavia Bosnian was constructed in opposition to other identities, such as Slovene, Macedonian, Croat (from Croatia) and Serb (from Serbia) (Bringa 1995:32).

national identity but refrain from explicitly identifying themselves as such. Even the two *Bosniaks* thought that it was necessary to explain their choice by commenting: "Isn't that how we are called now? That's how they called us in Germany." This uneasiness comes from a fear that their choice can be understood as the expression of an exclusive religion-based Muslim nationalism with which most of the Bosnian Muslims I encountered in Winnipeg feel uncomfortable. Most of Bosnian Muslims identified themselves as Bosnians or Muslims (the pre-war term for the Bosnian Muslim nation). A few explained that they still feel they are Yugoslavs, in the old meaning of the term, and cannot "become muslims[61] overnight in order to be Bosnians the way the new Bosnian state expects us to be."

My research shows, as does the research done by Eastmond among Bosnian Muslims in Sweden, that "[i]n search of national unity, the community of *Bosniaks* is in a very clear sense imagined rather than genuine" (Eastmond 1996:177). *Bosniak* identity is more often used to counter Serb and Croat nationalism or out of opportunism, than used to regain long-lost national identity, as Muslim nationalists want to represent it.

Many Bosnian immigrants also have to deal with the ambiguity of their Yugoslav national identification. Before the war, the "Yugoslav" designation was mostly chosen by Bosnian Muslims and also by members of mixed marriages and their offspring, as well as by Serbs and Croats (and others) who did not want to identify themselves ethnically as anything but Yugoslavs or who, living in a republic not dominated by their national group, felt this more appropriate. The disintegration of Yugoslavia and the rising nationalism put

[61] In pre-war Yugoslavia, Muslim with an upper case M referred to the nationality and muslim with lower case M referred to the religious designation.

some of my Bosnian informants in a very ambiguous position. One of them, 22 year-old Sanja, expresses her confusion:

> I am a Yugoslav, yet Yugoslavia exists no more. My dad is a Croat, my mom is a Serb. I grew up in multi-ethnic Bosnia. Yugoslavia was my country. Some people are almost forcing me to renounce my more universalist position and "become" a Croat or a Serb. But I only feel Yugoslav. . . . I know, it doesn't make sense anymore. . . . You can write that I am nationally undetermined.

Others, like Dragan, identify themselves as "post-Yugoslav" or, like Sead, as "former Yugoslav." These creative and personalized new national categories exemplify people's sarcasm but mostly their confusion and resistance to the nationalist agenda of all three ethnic groups. What identities those who see themselves as neither Croats nor Serbs nor Muslims will create for themselves is still an open question.

6.1.3 *Multiple Loyalties*

Rumbaut (1994) argues that "segmented adaptation"[62] has been observed in the same ethnic group, in the same ethnic neighbourhood, in the same school, and even in the same family. Evidently, the positioning of every single immigrant in many different contexts and his/her lived experience paves the particular avenue that this person will take in the process of integration in the host society. For the purpose of the following discussion, the dynamics of segmented adaptation among Bosnians will be explored through examining their multiple loyalties.[63]

This study has shown that young adult Bosnian immigrants of the three ethnic groups have used six different categories to express their national identity–Serbian,

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[62] Rumbaut emphasizes the situational and differential character of adaptation and integration of immigrants in the host society. He uses the concept of segmented adaptation, a term coined by Portes and Zhou (1993), to indicate varying modalities of immigrant incorporation into distinct sectors of American society.

[63] I prefer the term "multiple loyalties" over "conflicting loyalties" because it addresses not only conflicting aspect of immigrants' loyalties, but also immigrants' ability to take advantage of their transnational positioning.

Croatian, Bosnian, *Bosniak*, Muslim, and Canadian; and some more ambiguous ones–Yugoslav, Former Yugoslav, Post-Yugoslav, and Serbo-Croatian. A significant number of them has chosen an identity as "nationally undeclared" (See Appendix A, Table 3). In addition, Bosnian immigrants have constructed and utilize simultaneously some broader identities, depending on their positioning or the message they want to communicate in a particular socio-cultural context–Balkan, East European or European identities.

When I asked them if they feel Canadian, almost all said that they do not. However, their narratives on that topic revealed very different reasons for such a statement, and different levels of loyalty toward Canada. For instance, Vanja explains his answer in the following way:

> I say I am not Canadian[64] out of respect for real Canadians. Patriotism is a part of the national feeling. I still don't feel that way about Canada. . . .Although, while I was in the U.S., I caught myself a couple of times defending Canadian politics and policies in discussions with my friends. And I cheer for Canadians when they play other national teams.

Amir and Tamara have constructed completely opposite identities for themselves. Amir, a Bosnian Muslim who does not declare himself as such anymore, states:

> I always had a problem recognizing the category "Muslim" as appropriate for expressing one's national identity. It didn't make sense for me, especially because I am not a Muslim in religious terms. I came to Canada as a refugee. I became a Canadian. I feel comfortable, totally integrated into this society. On the day when I got my Canadian citizenship (and the fifth anniversary of being released from a detention camp), I got a tattoo of a maple leaf on my arm.

Tamara, who has a mixed ethnic background, sees herself as a Croat. Before the war she declared Yugoslav as her national identity, as did the other members of her family. She

[64] He and most of the other informants have Canadian citizenship. When they say that they are not Canadian they mean they do not feel Canadian.

explains her new ethnic identity as the only possible option for her once the war destroyed her ideals of "brotherhood and unity":

> An ethnic identity is passed from a father to a child; you are born into it. Therefore, I am a Croat. My mom is a Muslim. My parents didn't teach me who I was because they both were Communists and atheists. The war made me aware of my real identity. It is safer to stick with your people. My in-laws are Croats and Catholics. I was baptized before my church wedding. My husband fought for the Croats. My parents didn't like that. There is nothing wrong with defending your nation. Otherwise, Serbs would've destroyed us.

Most of the others can be placed on a continuum between these two opposing views. They are not only less secure about their ethnic identity but also do not give it so much importance. Their outlooks are more cosmopolitan and their practices are clearly transnational. They are bilingual, most have double (even triple) citizenship, they consciously entertain multiple identities, and they keep their options open. This is how Sanja sees herself:

> For my Canadian friends I am a Canadian with a Bosnian background. My friends from the former Yugoslavia see me as *Hercegovka.*[65] When I go back to Bosnia, I am Sanja from Trebinje. Some desperate young men back home see me as "a passport" to Canada. For most people, I am simply Sanja. I feel comfortable here in Canada and with Canadians. But I also feel at home anywhere in the former Yugoslavia. Sometimes, I think I should go back; other times I play with the idea that after I get my degree I can look for a job somewhere in Europe. I wouldn't go to the U.S. I feel more secure in Canada, and I don't approve of the role Americans have played in the war in Bosnia. I will probably just stay in Canada.

As we can see from these narratives, multiple loyalties do not necessarily follow ethnic lines. Gender, class or regional loyalties will situationally overrule ethnic loyalties. Networks of professional solidarity may also cut across ethnic lines. For that reason, scholars today emphasize the existence of multiple identities that cut across each other in a complex way–one has a shared identity with different people at different times. In the

next chapter, I will look more closely at age, class and gender identities in transnational context.

6.2 RELIGION, TRADITION AND IDENTITY

A symbiotic union between nationality and religion does not make sense if religion is seen in its more modern, individualistic sense.[66] Nor would it make sense to see the most recent war in Bosnia as a war between Orthodox, Catholic, and Muslim. But if we are correct in defining religion in the Balkans as being predominantly of the collective type, then the reality of ethnoreligiosity inevitably allots a significant role to religion in the Balkan conflict (Mojzes 1998:77-9). The fundamental causes were ethno/national yet many nationalists took on a religious label as a way of expressing their identity and many religious institutions and leaders did not discourage this process (Denitch 1994b:30).

In Bosnia, in the last fifty years religious identity has lost its religious meaning; religion has been reduced to little more than artifact, another way of describing cultural, ethnic or national differences (Powers 1998:223). The nationalist propaganda and the ethnic conflict contributed to strengthening the connection between ethnic and religious categories (Bosnian Muslim-Islam, Serb-Orthodox and Croat-Catholic), and religious practice has increased in recent years with the end of Communism and with the state of war.

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[65] *Hercegovka* is a distinct regional identity for a woman from Herzegovina. This particular regional identity is associated with a strong localistic loyalty that has given H*erzegovians* a reputation of being people with the most extensive and the strongest social networks.

[66] The fusion or overlapping of ethnicity and religion is a well-known phenomenon in much of Eastern Europe, especially in the Balkans. For centuries the church envisioned its role so broadly that it contributed not only to the awakening of national consciousness but also to feelings of nationalism. The result was sometimes positive, sometimes negative. The Communist regime in Yugoslavia tried to rupture this close identification. A generation or two grew up under Tito believing that ethnic and religious differences were not unbridgeable and that virulent ethnic nationalism had been laid to rest at the end of WWII (Mojzes 1998:126). Also see, Connor (1994) and Denitch (1994).

Most of my informants still use religious identification as a marker of ethnic membership–they identify themselves and are identified by others as Muslim, Orthodox, and Catholic even though they do not profess or practice any religion. In the Bosnian context a person usually "inherits" his/her religious identity from his/her parents and, above all, from the father who passes on his last name to his children and thus establishes a child's ethnic identity. That, for instance, Muslimness serves as an ethnic-identifying, but not all-encompassing, personal marker is illustrated in the following narratives of two of my informants:

> For me, Muslim identity was a kind of exotic part of my family's past. I believed Islam as a religion represented our past rather than our future. I identified myself as a Muslim by nationality, which to me meant I had ties neither to Serbia nor Croatia, but saw my social and cultural identity as a part of an ethnically-mixed Bosnia (Damir, 22 year-old Bosnian Muslim).

> I grew up in the Communist era. My mom was a member of the Communist Party. I never thought of myself as a Muslim. I don't know how to pray, I never went to the mosque. . . . But now, I do think of myself as a Muslim, at least as a member of a people [nation]. I went once to a mosque here in Winnipeg, but I don't understand Arabic, and anyway, I don't feel that I belong there. Recently I bought the Koran. I have to understand what it is about me and my people they [Serbs and Croats] wished to obliterate, but I can't become a believer just because of the war or politics (Amir, 26 year-old Bosnian Muslim from Mostar)

It is no wonder that Muslim volunteers from "the East" who went to Bosnia found the Muslims of Bosnia "a peculiar lot, secularists through and through, children of Europe lightly touched by the faith" (Deak in Lewis 1996:51). Along the same lines, Eastmond reports that in Sweden, the Islam of Bosnian refugees is distinguished from other expressions of Islam, as refugees prefer creating their own congregations to joining existing supra-national congregations, arguing that their Islam is a European, modern Islam (1998:170). In his study, as in mine, non-existence of their own congregation was mentioned as a reason for not going to the mosque regularly or at all. Not practicing their

religion in public also reflects the fear of being associated with non-European Islam and fundamentalism, since Islam is a controversial identity marker in the negative climate of growing intolerance towards Islam of Western host countries. As their "Muslim" identity has entered the political stage in both societies, it has become socially more complex and contested. It was reflected in the words of Kemal, a Bosnian Muslim, with whom I talked immediately after the September 11 attack:

> I feel so depressed these days. When I learned what happened in New York, my first thought was–How I am going to show up tomorrow at work, in the café? Will people see me as one of "Them?" Will people see me as a potential terrorist or as Kemal they knew from before?

6.2.1 *The Role of the Churches in the Ethnic Conflict*

It is obvious that the church played a significant role in the war in Bosnia. What is less obvious is the kind of effect its involvement had on people's religious and ethnoreligious identities. It certainly fostered strong ethnoreligious identification, but also created as many new believers as skeptics and opponents since most clergy had not acted as peacemakers. For instance, many bishops served to strengthen the view that identity as a Croat necessarily meant identity as a Roman Catholic. Also, more often than not, Catholic bishops have tried to minimize the casualties of the Croat war crimes in WWII, and to emphasize the fact that many Croats were killed after the war by the partisans (Mojzes 1998:135).

The Orthodox Church contributed to the conflict too, at first, mostly by whipping up claims of the uniqueness of Serbian victimization by others, and later by its uncritical support of Serbian nationalist aspirations. The Orthodox priests talked about "the Serbian Church," and "the Christian Serbian nation," contributing to further ethnoreligious identification of the Serbs (Mojzes 1998:136-9). A number of priests voluntarily joined

the Chetnics (who employ Orthodox symbols on their uniforms and weapons), not merely as chaplains but as combatants, justifying their participation by saying that they are doing this in order to prevent Muslim domination of their people (Mojzes 1998:140).

During the war, some churches were included in the relief work but there were reports of abuses; certain local churches distributed aid only to regular churchgoers of their own denomination or used aid in order to promote church attendance or even conversion. Most of the clergy were seen by my informants as advocates of exclusive and even militant nationalism. One of my informants explains:

> One can't carry the cross and the gun at the same time. Our priest gave food only to "real" Croats–the ones who were hardcore nationalists. . . . It was very difficult to get a Croatian passport if you were not baptized in a church. We wanted to apply for Canada. My sisters went to the church to get baptized. I refused. I resented the idea that I should be baptized to get a passport or to prove that I am a real or good Croat. It is sad that the church was used in political games. I am more religious now than I was before the war. I would go sometimes to church but here in Winnipeg the Croat Catholic church is politicized too (Vanja, 24 year-old Croat from Novi Travnik).

Another informant, a Bosnian Muslim woman, expresses the same resentment towards the new Bosnian government:

> I went back to Bosnia for a visit and was surprised to see veiled women in my town. That wasn't the case before the war. I learned that the new government gives 400 DM to each woman who will cover herself. Some in our community see them as greedy and opportunistic. I don't blame those women. Most are in difficult economic situations. They have to feed their children, send them to school, and put shoes on their feet. But I blame the politicians for using people's hardship for political reasons, for personal gain. And I blame the Imam for allowing and supporting this practice.

This is not to say that there are no devout Muslims, Orthodox Christians or Catholics among Bosnian immigrants who, in their words, do not want to dwell on the corruption of a few. A number of young adults reported that they "discovered" religion on their own (See Appendix A, Table 7). They come from non-practicing families and some

even encounter parental opposition to their choice. As before the war, the significance of religion as faith and practice varies with individuals' devoutness, as well as with social class, age and gender. All three religions were an active part of everyday life and the basis of a local moral community in the villages. Secularization was more characteristic of the urban educated middle class. However, for instance, many urban Bosnian Muslims remember Islam as a religion practiced in their childhood. Usually grandmothers were singled out as carriers of Islamic tradition and practices. Some among them claim that religion had become more significant for them since the war started, even if they did not all start to participate in the prayers and fast. Serbs and Croats refer to them as "April-Muslims"[67] or "neo-Muslims", secularized people now adopting Islam as a marker of national identity (Macek 1997). The same practice is notable among Serbs and to a lesser degree among Catholic Croats. Many immigrants explain their turning toward religion as meeting their spiritual needs, although generally they join their ethnic congregations without exploring other options. There are some, however, who did not want to tolerate the nationalist dimension of their church and have found alternative churches.

6.2.2 *The Role of Religion in the Immigrant Setting*

Bosnian Muslims, Serbs and Croats determine their own or co-ethnics' religiosity in terms of faith–believing or not believing–but not in terms of religious practices (i.e., not praying did not imply not believing). Members of all three ethnoreligious groups, however, judge others' devotion in terms of how dutifully they fulfill prescribed religious practices. Lately, the need to redefine the essence of Croatian and Serbian identity was marked by the return to "tradition" that led to increased numbers of church weddings and

[67] The term "April-Muslim" refers to the beginning of the ethnic conflict in Bosnia–April 1992.

baptisms–both in Bosnia and in Canada. For the Serbs, celebrating a family's *slava*[68] has become an important religious event which significantly marks their distinct Serbian national identity.

For Bosnian Muslims, the continuity, unity and distinctiveness of the Bosnian Muslim moral community in relation to the non-Muslim is reflected most clearly in the collective celebrations of Ramadan[69] that sums up the role of practiced Islam in Muslim identity formation among Bosnian Muslim immigrants. None of my Bosnian Muslim informants reported practicing Islam regularly. The month-long fast for Ramadan, if at all, was mainly kept by married women. Some men reported abstention from drinking alcohol during Ramadan. But they all reported celebrating Ramadan with their families and friends. Its celebration clearly serves as a vehicle for the expression of a distinctive Bosnian Muslim national identity *vis a vis* other non-Muslim Bosnians. Therefore, it is evident that for a number of immigrants (although less true for the young adult Bosnians), emphasizing distinct traditions helps constructing "otherness" through pointing out differences that are always structured as parallel opposites. Symbolic boundaries of separateness are maintained by referring to "our customs" or "among us" versus "their customs" or "among them." As Clifford notes about diaspora cultures, they ". . . work to maintain community, selectively preserving and recovering traditions, 'customizing' and 'versioning' them in novel, hybrid, and often antagonistic situations" (1994:317). Maintaining newly (re)discovered traditions, besides having purely religious and mostly ethnoreligious roles, serves an additional purpose in the immigrant setting. In the new,

[68] *Slava* is a Serbian family feast for its patron saint.
[69] Ramadan (called *Ramazan* in Bosnia) is the main event in the ritual calendar of Islam.

unfamiliar social surroundings tradition offers comfort and a sense of continuity and belonging. It helps build a home away from home.

As a presentation of themselves as a nation to themselves, and to others, the official discourse at these national celebrations has both internal and external aspects, explicit and implicit meanings. Both Serbian and Croatian Folklorama pavilions are situated in their respective churches. Socials, weddings and New Year celebrations also take place in churches. All these social gatherings exclude some categories of people (people with mixed ethnic background, people married to someone of another nationality and, of course, Bosnian Muslims) by their choice of symbols displayed and cultural program presented. Cultural representations of the homeland, such as traditional folklore, are framed by symbolic forms (flags, maps and pictures) associated with religion and historical periods and persons which, from a nationalist perspective, represent the heydays of the Serbian or Croatian nation. The overall theme of these national celebrations, passed to new immigrants by the old labour immigrants, is that of immigrants as a "community of fate" sharing a particular history and culture denied to them by the communist regime. Therefore, many of my informants find these events alien and even upsetting.

Believers or not, nationalists or not, it is evident that for all Bosnian immigrants the connection between nationalist politics, self, and religion is inescapably significant. This is the case because religious identities are (re) created by choice (self-ascription) but also by ascription by others. These identities also serve as ethnic denominators. Efforts to reduce the multiple expressions of Croatianness or Serbianness to one common, shared identity, namely a nationalist one, have introduced some controversy and discord into the community. Some more cosmopolitan Bosnians, who find ethnoreligious identities and

communities based on them very limiting and stereotyping, had to distance themselves from their ethnic community that gravitated around the church.

6.3 TRANSNATIONALISM AS A MODE OF CULTURAL REPRODUCTION

The production of hybrid cultural phenomena is especially found among young transnationals whose primary socialization has taken place within the cross-currents of differing cultural fields. Among such young people, facets of culture and identity are often self-consciously selected, syncretized and elaborated from more than one heritage (Vertovec 1999:451).

Along these lines, I consider the case of Sandra as an example of transnational cultural practices (symbolic practices, such as the formation of identities, tastes and values). She claims: "The head is here, but the heart is there." At the same time, she declares that she could not live in Bosnia because she is too accustomed to the way things are done in Canada. Yet, she also claims that it is only in Bosnia that she feels at home. Her everyday life takes place in Canada but her identity, and the field of relevant symbolic references, includes Bosnia in a very meaningful way. Similar examples are given by others who have studied transnational cultural practices (Hall 1990; Ong 1996; Itzigsohn et al. 1999).

Several young Bosnians[70] (ages 22-25, both male and female, all single) had decided to return on their own to Bosnia regardless of their parents' disagreement. At the time of the study, two of these had returned to Winnipeg. They explained that in Bosnia they found the economic and political situation unhealthy and ethnic tensions still visible.

[70] The stories of the same five persons were given by several of my informants.

Also, they both realized that they had changed and become used to the ways things are done in Canada. Most of the younger informants do not even contemplate return, although all say they would want to go as much as possible to visit during summer holidays. However, some keep their options open by choosing to get university degrees that will allow them to work in Europe or anywhere else. Sanja reasons:

> I wanted to study child psychology but I could work only in Canada afterwards. So, I chose to study international management. With that degree I can work anywhere in Europe. I don't think I would go back in Bosnia–everything is so different there now. But I like the European way of life. I may look for a job in some country close to Bosnia, spend every summer on the Adriatic Sea and keep my friendships alive.

Mirza has a different plan for his future but one that still includes Bosnia:

> I am soon graduating with a degree in international development. I am going back to Bosnia. I am planning to get a job with one of the international organizations that are involved in rebuilding Bosnian society. I want to make difference in the lives of people disadvantaged by the war in every possible way. I will also have a chance to be close to my parents. But I don't think I'll stay for good. I plan to return to Canada. I like the freedom and choices that I have here.

Affordable long-distance telephone and instant Internet communication and information add to the fast development of transnational social networks. They form channels for communication with the community of origin but also with members of a Bosnian diaspora worldwide. Some of immigrants' practices–frequent visits to the home country and to friends and relatives in other countries of asylum, sending remittances, having double citizenships, voting at elections home, and double residency of households–are all signs of continued participation in both societies. They are also signs of an emerging Bosnian transnational culture despite the fact that, in comparison with others (e.g. Haitians, Israelis, Eritreans),[71] their economic and political transnational

[71] See Glick Schiller and Fonner (1999), Cohen and Gold (1997) and Al-Ali et al. (2001).

activities are limited. It can be said that their transnational activities still take place only at the individual level (mostly through family networks) and not yet through institutional channels (through community or international organizations).

6.3.1 *(Re) creation and Maintenance of Cultural Identities and Practices*

The changes and negotiations of cultural distinctiveness observed among Bosnian immigrants in Winnipeg reflect similar processes in the home country. Language (used and/or recognized as one's own) is one of the spaces in which ethnic/national identities are renegotiated. The rekindled ethnonationalism, the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the war resulted in new and increasingly distinct national languages emerging in Bosnia.[72] Muslims claim "Bosnian" as their language, and that fuels the debate around Bosnian as a separate language of the Muslims or of the entire population in Bosnia. With the government policy of 1993, the official standard dialect (*ijekavica*) of what was formally "Serbo-Croatian" can be described according to the self-ascribed identity of the speaker as either Serbian, Croatian or Bosnian (Eastmond 1998:167). It seemingly promotes multiethnic tolerance but actually acknowledges "Bosnian" as the national language of the Muslims. At the same time, in the areas in Bosnia controlled by Serbs or Croats, the official language adopted is the variety used in Serbia and Croatia, respectively.

Reflecting such language politics, language differentiation is rapid. A good example of the subtle means by which difference can be created and charged with meaning as a national boundary marker is the Muslim phoneme "h," reintroduced in spelling, and with a distinctively guttural pronunciation (Eastmond 1998:167). As a result

[72] Before the war the official language was Serbo-Croatian. It is a literary language created by nineteenth-century Serbian and Croatian intellectuals. Popular speech is divided into several dialects and

of the nationalistic rethoric, the greetings, which were specific to one particular community (religious in nature or of Turkish origin), were also reintroduced into the public life (e.g. merhaba, "You are among friends"). A distinctive Muslim heritage is promoted by using this new Bosnian language through the media, educational and other official institutions.

Informants who went to Bosnia for a visit noted high discrepancies in everyday practice–some words are not understood and the official language is found ridiculous and artificial. However, in the Canadian context, some–like Kemal and Dina–were critical of government and other social service organizations, which ignored their requests for a Bosnian speaking (i.e. Bosnian Muslim) interpreter.[73] Knowing all this, I was concerned with the naming of the language used in the interviews. My doubts were resolved by interviewees themselves who referred to the language they speak and that we used in the interviews as "our language." This practice of using the phrase "our language" mostly is a way of crossing ethnic boundaries, but in some instances it is a way of making a political statement. In everyday language, the conscious practice of the new forms varies considerably between families, depending on their view about and engagement with nationalism and national consciousness, as well as their social background and education.

Boundaries between Muslims, Serbs and Croats in Winnipeg are subtle but strictly maintained. Where forced together, as in ESL classes, people keep conflict at bay by reducing communication to a minimum and to "safe" and superficial topics, avoiding any

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subdialects, but that is little help in separating Serbs, Croats and Muslims. The boundaries between the various dialects do not run along ethnic lines (Deak in Lewis 1996:7).

[73] When the first big group of Muslim refugees arrived in 1993 in Winnipeg, Bosnian Muslims, on a pretext of language, asked for interpreters of the same ethnic background. The settlement agency refused this request for reasons of cost rather than principle, considering its existing Serbo-Croatian speaking staff sufficient. However, the same decision seemed less justifiable when they failed to hire a Bosnian Muslim interpreter for counseling offered to detention camp survivors.

reference to the war. The same practice is utilized in informal socializing. Shared culture brings Bosnian immigrants together in socials, concerts and other leisure activities. Ethnic boundaries are often crossed but not erased. Tanja, a 22-year-old Bosnian student, informing me about a social gathering, tries to recreate the atmosphere of the social for me:

> There were Serbs, Croats and Muslims. People were mingling, chatting to each other regardless of ethnicity. But then, I looked at the tables and realized that people shared them only with co-ethnics. Actually, the whole setting of the room, intentionally or incidentally, was ethnically delineated. Croats were occupying one part of the room; Muslims were in the middle; and Serbs had the back of the room for themselves. That's how we socialize–together but still separated.

In Winnipeg, in the absence of any other kind of formal associations,[74] Folklorama and the ethnic churches constitute the major arena for the articulation and affirmation of a national identity. Since the Bosnian Muslim group does not have a predecessor community to call on, and since it is relatively small, it has not yet created a base for itself. Some Bosnian Serb and Croat families have joined the long-established Serbian and Croatian communities of labour migrants by sending their children to Serbian and Croatian language classes in their churches, and by participating in folk groups and soccer teams. The majority of young immigrants find these activities unsuitable and insufficient but have demonstrated little initiative beyond organizing socials and occasional concerts.

During the interviews, informants very often make their points by comparing themselves and Canadians. Distinctions between "Us" and "Them" are made based on some cultural concepts (such as the institution of good neighbourliness or the practice of labeling people as "cultured" or "uncultured") that were and still are relevant in the

[74] Eastmond reports that, in Sweden, in a very short period of time the Bosnian Muslim refugees, who did not have ethnic communities to fall back on, have formed their own associations (1998:163).

Bosnian context. Bosnian immigrants transferred them to the immigrant setting and use them to emphasize cultural differences that explain their feelings of strangeness and isolation.

In Bosnia, as in the former Yugoslavia as a whole, it is common practice to label people on a dichotomous scale of "cultured" and "noncultured" (*kulturni* and *nekulturni*) (Bringa 1995:58). Being "cultured" or "noncultured"[75] refers to a whole set of ideas associated with other sociological oppositions such as town versus village, educated versus uneducated, poor versus rich, modern and Western versus backward and Balkan. People are not necessarily labeled one or the other but rather are placed on a sliding scale of culturedness in relation to their behaviour in social interaction with others. The same concept is used in the immigrant setting and it is applied to Canadians too. Social identities (the same as ethnicity) are relative and situational–the compass of the "We" category may expand or contract according to the situation (Eriksen 1993:30). Therefore, the category "We–the cultured" sometimes includes Europeans (including Bosnians) as opposed to North Americans, and at other times only a certain group of people from the former Yugoslavia–members of the urban, educated middle-class–in comparison to Canadians in general. Styles of life, values and tastes acquired in Bosnia are some of the cultural practices that young adult immigrants find difficult to renounce, although, to their own dismay, after several years they realize they have somewhat changed and accepted doing things the "Canadian way."

Proximity to Bosnia, and significantly higher numbers of old labour immigrants and recent refugees may play a role in the higher level of formal and more active organizing in comparison to Winnipeg.

[75] *Seljacina* is the pejorative term for "noncultured" used by all Bosnians. (We should keep in mind that there is a distinction between *seljak*–villager–and *seljacina*–noncultured).

The informal institution of *komsiluk*[76] (good neighbourliness) was a norm in everyday dealing between the ethnic communities in Bosnia. However, it was based on a constant reaffirmation of community identities and codes, and not on their elimination (Bougarel 1996; Bringa 1995). The same practice is evident among Bosnian immigrants in Winnipeg. Good neighbourliness is still nurtured but there are clear boundaries of its extent along ethnic lines. In Winnipeg, Serbs, Croats and Muslims have proven that they can live peacefully together, not by erasing ethnic boundaries but by respecting and constantly reinforcing them through their daily practices.

Informants complained of impoverished interpersonal relations in Canada. Given that social visiting is an important part of cultural life in Bosnia, many found the more individualistic nature of Canadian society unsatisfying. Informants commented on the overwhelming pace of life and on the "time is money" orientation in Canada. This sense of social isolation is not confined to older people. Vesna, a young mother of two, complains:

> At home we knew everybody who lived near us. But here, I don't know who lives in the apartment beside me, I don't know the names of my first [closest] neighbours. I guess you get used to it after some time, especially if you work. You are out all day, you come home tired and it doesn't matter any more. The most difficult thing is adjusting to the lifestyle. You lose your social life. You are more lonely; you become more selfish. We sent more money home when we were making a living delivering newspapers than we do now.

Some informants say that they maintain social relationships with many, but that they do not have real friends here. Some admit they tend to avoid socializing with Canadians because of cultural differences and language, not because they expect to encounter discrimination–"It's easier because we are different, we laugh at different jokes,

[76] Daily coffee-visits, visits in connection with life-circle events among women, and communal work or helping a neighbour (e.g., building a house) among men have been the most important means of

we have different interests and concerns." Others find Canadians friendly, and seek new friends outside their ethnic communities especially after they realize that they have accepted much of Canadian culture and way of living. Sandra states:

> I had to go back to Bosnia to realize how much I have changed. I couldn't stand waiting in long lines, or asking for favours if I wanted to get a passport or a telephone line. Not having privacy was another thing that bothered me. And not recycling. . . ."

All those different statements reinforce the need "[i]nstead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact . . . we should think. . . of identity as a 'production' that is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation" (Hall 1990:222). Bosnian immigrants are taking part in the ongoing process of identity negotiation on several levels–individual, familial, community and state—as members of their adoptive country and of their home country, and as members of an emerging transnational social field.

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building social bonds and integration of the community in Bosnia.

CHAPTER 7

DIASPORA HOUSEHOLDS

From the complexity of transnational relations, in this chapter, the focus shifts to the effects of transnationalism on family and household organization among Bosnian immigrants. It will be argued that the dynamics of transnational migration question all available definitions of family and household but do not negate their existence and importance in transnational settings.

For some time, migrants have been treated as "part and parcel of households that were represented as unproblematic, co-operating, resource-pooling units" (Bjeren 1997:233). In the new conception, the household is seen as an arena of social relations organized along generational, gender and kinship lines. Conflict and struggle among members to control and change the lines of power and authority over decision-making, division of labour, and household resources are an integral part of household dynamics.

Not everyone within a family network or even within a household may benefit to the same degree, and tensions are created as men and women, young and old, those at home and those abroad, define their interests and needs differently. Decisions that affect the daily lives of household members are made across national borders. Some households are in a real sense transnational with some of its members residing in Bosnia and others in Canada (Winnipeg). In others, some members divide their time between the two countries. Officials of governmental and civic institutions do not recognize the partial character of many of the immigrants' households in Canada. They often formulate policies and programs based on census data that inadequately capture the structure and

mode of operation of many contemporary immigrants' households (Blanc in Glick Schiller et al. 1995:49).

The war and migration created for many a lack of social place in which one is known and respected. The desire of individuals and their families to renegotiate their class position (at home and in the host country) keep the migration and post-migration dynamic going (Ho 1999:50).[77] Transnational social fields are in part shaped by the new migrants' perception that they must keep their options open. One way of doing that is to continuously translate the economic and social position gained in one political setting into political, social, and economic capital in another (Glick Schiller et al. 1992:12).

Transferring part of their income to family left behind is migrants' most common economic transnational practice. Sending remittances, among Bosnians, however, is not understood as an obligation that has to be fulfilled regularly, but only (or especially) when financial help is really needed, except when elderly parents are in question. In Bosnia, the extended family is a key cultural institution. Close networks of relatives and obligations to parents are part of the "structure of feeling." Despite this strong family orientation, many informants did not want to bring parents to Canada to settle, citing isolation as the main reason. However, parents (especially mothers) are temporary members of many Bosnian immigrant households as part of the transnational mobility practices of these households. Most immigrants prefer grandmothers' care to child daycare centers for several reasons: they save money, their mothers have the chance to spend some time with

[77] Once resettled in Canada, many try to help their relatives to immigrate too. Priority is given to unmarried siblings and parents. However, government-sponsored refugees are considered better off than those under family sponsorship, because they receive support and services for the first year after arrival. Those under family sponsorship depend on relatives for assistance, and are sometimes unaware of existing resources or receive misinformation.

them, and children have a better chance to learn their parents' native language and culture. Immigrants' parents usually are also able to save by not spending their pension money for several months. Some apply for permanent resident status and divide their time between Bosnia and Winnipeg during the three-year period needed for citizenship. When I asked two of them if they plan to stay here after they get their citizenship, they both reply that the citizenship is "just in case."

Data suggest that Bosnian immigrants' living arrangements parallel life-course stages and events, which reflects shifting levels of dependence, economic need and desire for privacy within the household.[78] The nuclear family is an ideal for young adult Bosnian immigrants. Households are more likely to be extended vertically, across generations, rather than horizontally. Extended households are more likely to include grandparent(s) rather than other relatives. Extended family living arrangements are only temporary, either upon arrival of a new family member, or as a strategic choice for caring for young children and older adults.

The old stereotypes about *Gastarbeiters* (i.e., labour migrants) who make a lot of money and have an easier life in North America are still "alive" and elevate the expectations of gifts and financial help in the extended family and among friends at home. Such an image is supported by the practices of some immigrants themselves. Many do not talk about their hardships here, either not to worry their parents and siblings back in Bosnia, or because they are embarrassed by their jobs and their lowered living standard. Immigrants often complain that buying "presents for everyone I know back home" is a considerable financial burden that has to be taken into account when planning a visit.

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[78] The same pattern is found among other immigrant groups. See Massey and Garcia Espana (1987).

Those left at home feel that they are not any more considered to be an important part of the life of the immigrant if they do not get presents or are refused financial help. This existing tension is often masked by a strong kinship ideology, but nevertheless results in class differentiation within families. Sinisa tries to explain some of these relations:

> [Relatives in Bosnia] asked me how much money I make, then converted that to DM and concluded that by now I must have a saving of an extended amount. When I said I didn't, nobody believed me. They don't distinguish between us and the previous generation of labour immigrants who just worked and sent money for the house they built in their village or town. They don't understand that we are not here temporarily and that we also have lives to live. During one such conversation, an uncle said to me: "Oh, I see, the whole world is now yours. It's not enough for you that you went all the way to Canada; now you want to travel too. Why would you care for us or Bosnia?" What was I supposed to answer him when he doesn't understand anything? He lived all his life in the town where he was born; he can only see things from that perspective.

The respect conferred by the community is one of the most powerful marks of, and a result of, one's social place. It is inseparable from one's sense of self-worth. In Bosnia, respect is earned on the base of one's achieved professional degree[79] or on one's material worth. The socioeconomic status of immigrants is assessed on the basis of current occupation, which for the immigrant group is heavily influenced by the transferability of skills and credentials. Generally, professionals face more difficulties in their attempts to get the same job they had in their home country than do skilled and non-skilled workers.[80] (See Appendix A, Table 8). Although Bosnian immigrants, themselves, continue to see work in terms of social status, most have adapted very fast to the circumstances–they took whatever job they could find as long as it was perceived as temporary and as a step on the

[79] A university education is considered to be a vehicle toward increased social mobility and status for both self and family.

[80] Bosnian engineers were the only professional group that was able, in a short period of time, to secure employment at a level comparable with their previous experience, and to maintain or improve their material circumstances.

ladder toward their goal. Some report having problems coping with employment beneath their qualifications, especially because "[a]t home, people have the expectation–if you go out of the country, they think you will succeed right away." However, when faced with a limited choice–going on welfare or taking low-status jobs--almost all choose to work because by living on welfare they could lose even more respect in their community.[81]

7.1 A GENERATIONAL DIVIDE

Significant social, cultural, and economic differences are created between different generations during the resettlement process in Canada. In addition to class positioning (respect and prestige), the war and migration also had an impact on parent-child relations and gender relations in general. Power and authority relations in the family were disrupted and are being renegotiated in the new socio-cultural setting.

Lack of English language skills put some young people, even adolescents, in the role of being mediators between their parents and Canadian society. Parents, and especially fathers, report sometimes feeling incompetent in the parental role or losing their authority altogether. The new immigrants are experiencing a rapid process of downward mobility, although many have a middle-class background. Situations when parents temporarily depend on their young adult children for financial support are considered "out of order." Sinisa, who came to Canada on his own, has been in such a situation for two years:

> My parents didn't believe it that I can make it on my own. I've never lived by myself before. I had never worked before I came to Canada; I hadn't been in the Army yet.[82] The fact that I was sending them money, that they needed my support, was difficult for them to accept. They felt guilty, like they failed as parents. When

[81] Among my informants, only three families were living on welfare. All three families had been in Canada no more than two years and were still attending ESL classes.

[82] Doing the one-year military service in the Yugoslav Army was considered to be a form of initiation of young men into the world of adulthood.

> they came, they wanted to start working immediately. To put things back in order, they should work, and I should be at school. But they had more problems adjusting than I did. Language was a problem too. After two years, when I said that I would go back to school, they finally relaxed. They both have a university education and want the same for us. My father now works at two jobs (neither in his profession, but he doesn't care). He is happy that he is again the breadwinner in our family. We don't agree on every issue, and there is a generational conflict (about how much time I spend at my girlfriend's place and so on) but we still live together. We can help each other–we need each other.

Aronowitz (1992) argues that the fact of migration and relocation may be less important for children's adjustment than the way in which such experiences are mediated to the children by their parents. Parental attitudes toward social change and new experiences may serve as important mediators of the successful adjustment of these children. One of the settlement workers pointed out parents' biggest concerns:

> People are afraid of children being abducted, if they have small children. If they have adolescents, drugs are their primary concern. Therefore, they are a little overprotective in the beginning. Absolutely all say that they came because of their children–to have better chances to get an education, to have a brighter future, and not to be drafted into the army. But, they also want their children not to forget their roots. It's important to parents that their children find friends among people from the former Yugoslavia or the same ethnic group. Sometimes they ask me to match them with families with children of the same age. Rarely, but there were some cases, some parents asked for help to find Canadian families with children for socializing.

Nebojsa addresses some of his parents' concerns along these lines:

> My parents are afraid that I am becoming Canadian. For them, I guess, it seems like they are losing me because I speak English with you now, or because I mostly have Canadian friends and a Canadian girlfriend. They shouldn't worry. I got many things from our culture and from them. You can't just drop one culture out and take the other one. But you also have to adapt to Canadian living if you want to stay in Canada. You have to find a balance between the two cultures in order to be happy in Canada. Our parents say they came to Canada because of us, the children, but then they want us to be the way that we would have been if we had stayed in Bosnia. That's impossible.

The data from this study show that many other factors besides parents' attitudes toward adaptation and integration influence the turn that these processes can take among

young Bosnians. Different lived experiences (especially related to the war) and age at the time of migration seem to differentiate the futures of young Bosnian immigrants. Siblings have developed different ethnic/national identities and different practices (in regard to career plans, socializing, dating, and language use). Sandra gives her and her brother's example:

> The war had a different impact on me and on my brother. He was younger. He grew up during the war years. I don't know what it is–he big age difference or different experiences–but we are not very close. But, of course I helped him to come to Canada. I want him to have a normal life. My life was nicer and easier; I have nice memories. He didn't have a chance to get a degree. Therefore, he has to work harder than me–two jobs, shift work. . . . His life has been more difficult then mine. He learned what poverty means; for him, it is more important to work and to be able to support himself than to get higher education and a debt [a loan that has to be paid back]. He is afraid; I wasn't. I didn't want to give up my goals of having a career. I went to graduate school. I have a good-paying job now. That's why I say my life is easier.

A university degree was the norm in Bosnia for the last three decades. Therefore, most young immigrants voice their and their parents' high educational aspirations. They are aware that in the absence of social networks they can rely only on themselves: "We are immigrants! We can't afford to just sit around and blow it like others who've been in this country longer and take everything for granted. We have to go to university."[83] However, despite their determination, some feel under pressure because of their parents' high expectations. Janja, an 18-year old first-year student, complains:

> It's not enough to pass an exam or to get a good mark; you have to get a very good mark, one of the best in the class, if possible. They do a lot for us but they are also very demanding. They are not like Canadian parents; they do not give credit for effort, only for results.

[83] The high level of educational motivation among young Bosnians even influenced several co-ethnics, children of old immigrants, to go back to school.

Almost all of the Bosnian students I have met live and plan to stay with their parents through their university years despite some limitation of their freedoms. Sanja gives her reasons:

> Parents pay for almost everything–for our tickets to go to Bosnia during the summer holidays, for our university courses, for our car. That's why I don't think of moving out. Why would I? I have everything that I need at home. I have maybe less freedom than if I live by myself, but that's OK. I stay with them not only because of my interest, but also because I know they want me there–that's how they believe it should be until I marry. They always did a lot for my brother and me and we are aware of that. They both work two jobs . . . sometimes I feel guilty. I care about their feelings; I want to do well at school because I know that means a lot to them. After all, they came to Canada with our future in their minds.

Igor, a 22 year-old friend of Sanja, adds:

> My brother chose to live on his own; I stayed with my parents. They had a problem with his decision for a while but got used to it. Their home will be always open for us. I'll be the same way with my children. It's strange when friends from university are telling me that some pay rent at home (if they work), or that their parents asked them when they plan to move out.

The study shows that relations between young adult immigrants and their parents remain strong, although they have had to be renegotiated in the new setting and altered in many cases. Parents sacrifice for their children, and young adults feel obligated to take care of their aging parents. But, they also take advantage of the changes that migration brought in their lives. Consider the cases of Ivan and Jasmina:

> My parents are going back [to Bosnia] in a year. I plan to send them money regularly but I am not going back. Canada saved me. Two of my closest friends are dead of drugs. I was so angry for so long. I'm not anymore. I proved to my parents and to myself that I can be a responsible person and take care of myself. Canada helped me to do that. That's why I would stay. But I understand my parents too. It was more difficult for them to adjust to the new life. I am only sorry that we as a family will be dispersed all over the world–parents in Bosnia, and I in Canada, while my twin sister plans to move to Australia, and my other sister went to the US. (Ivan, a 24 year-old computer programmer)

> One good thing that we have here is that we don't have to deal with our parents on a daily basis. My parents, especially my dad, didn't approve that I got baptized

and married in the church. I come from a mixed marriage, and both my parents were communist. My in-laws are Croat Catholics to whom religion was always very important. I got married when the war started. My father couldn't stand that emphasizing of religion especially in times when people were killed all around because of it. He couldn't understand either that I loved my husband and that I was ready to become Catholic for his sake. Here, we found a solution that suits us both–we go to a Catholic church but not to a Croat one, and we escaped constant conflicts with our parents. Their interference in our marriage is the only reason why I haven't yet gone back for a visit. (Jasmina, a 34 year-old mechanical engineer, mother of two)

7.2 RECONSTRUCTING GENDER RELATIONS

Although gender was for a long time "an ignored social relation" in general migration research, within contemporary migration discourse it is accepted that migration is a gendered process and that gender is a relational concept (Bjeren 1997). In that context, this study takes the position that the refugee experience is importantly differentiated by gender. Forced migration, and especially the flight, vividly illustrates the gender dynamic by increasing the interdependence of men and women, acted out in daily dangers and vulnerabilities (McSpadden and Moussa 1993:212). In Bosnia, as in other war areas, women were vulnerable to rape, and men feared being captured, beaten or shot.

During the early 1990s, the Formal Yugoslav media extensively used two long-entrenched images of ideal masculinity and femininity, that of the brave young male soldier and the heroic, self-sacrificing mother–images that went hand in hand with an emerging war culture and with the intensive repatriarchalization of society. The image of refugees was associated with women and children, portrayed as helpless, forced to leave

their homes.[84] Images of male refugees were omitted. When used, male refugees were often presented as unpatriotic, unmasculine, and even cowardly.

For men and women the refugee experience in flight, asylum, and resettlement produces further contradictions, conflicts, and ambivalence in their sense of self. The men who were in detention camps (whom I came to know in the course of the study) all reported that attacks on their manliness was one of the most humiliating methods used by their enemies. It created feelings of shame and desperation, doubt in one's value system, and loss of self-respect and confidence. These feelings, in turn, have an impact on their adaptation in Canadian society and on their relations with family members and other people.

Refugeeness often takes away the assumed permanence of the social relationships between men and women. As a result of changes in gender roles, there might be a shift in the previously experienced and expected power hierarchy and power differentials. As refugees, men either gave up their authority to their wives or became excessively authoritarian (Gilliland et al. 1995:7). Some researchers, like Franz (2000), find that Bosnian refugee women (especially ones who come from rural areas) have over time increased their personal freedom and influence in family decisions. Others, like McSpadden and Moussa (1993) emphasize the negative impact of the refugee experience on gender relations. They argue that underemployment or unemployment ("experiences [that] make men feel they have lost their position of authority in the family and consequently their pride and respect") is the reason for "the growing number of wife

[84] Actually, there was ambiguity in the presentation of women. On the one hand, women were presented as helpless refugees, but on the other hand, they were pictured as heroic mothers–bearers of soldiers.

battering cases in the Bosnian refugee community in Canada (McSpadden and Moussa 1993:214). Although many of my informants are single (never married), I had a chance to interview and observe many couples whose experiences support both findings (See Appendix A, Table 3). Many couples seem to depend on each other, to offer mutual support, and report that they became even closer in the sharing of hardship:

> Neither of us brought anything into the marriage. Everything that we have we acquired together. We were together through good times and bad times. We share the same experience. It made our relations stronger. Canadian couples really share housework, and we try to follow that example. It's not that my husband doesn't want to help me but he grew up in a very patriarchal household as an only child, and a son. Now, when I think about this, I am pretty sure that we would've had problems if we had stayed in Bosnia. His parents expected us to live with them. (Sandra, a 33 year-old woman who married a Bosnian refugee while in exile).

However, informants also told me stories about abuse that started once in Canada, but they were about other people. Volunteering my interpreting services in the last decade, I also witnessed several divorces due to abuse. For all women involved, the realization that wife assault is a criminal act was very frightening. These women would never want to cause the imprisonment of their husbands–a reality exceptionally frightening for refugees. The absence of extended family and close friends to mediate marital problems increases vulnerability and isolation. But, at the same time, I witnessed that the very same absence of social network,[85] and the availability of social services in Canada, made some women decide that they would not take the abuse anymore. However, at the time of the research, only one woman from my study group reported such drastic change in her husband's behavior that led to divorce.

[85] The absence of a close social network can be viewed as advantageous in certain situations. Woman battering and divorce are considered a shame for the whole family, not only for the couple. Therefore, women are often pressured not to make public the abuse or to stay in the marriage for "the sake of the children."

Snjezana, a 36-year-old single mother tells her story:

> Immigrant women get adjusted faster. We can clean even if we have university degrees. We are more practical; we are mothers–we have that instinct for surviving. We can work, learn English and take care of the children, all in the same time. Men worry more about their careers; they lost their social position and take that very hard. They become depressed, frustrated. My husband couldn't get over what happened to us . . . to him. We fled together, we endured the hardship in exile together, and when we had a chance to settle and rebuild our lives, he lost his mind. He became abusive–first, toward me, then toward the children. That's why we had to divorce. I couldn't imagine I could go through all that on my own without the support of my family and friends. After all those experiences, I think of myself as a heroine because I overcame those situations. I never imagined I could do that. It makes me proud of myself. Now when I face a hard situation I know that I can manage it.

Snjezana's reasoning for her husband's abusive behaviour resonates with findings of many immigration researchers–clearly differentiated gender identities of the home culture were seen to affect the subjects' attempt to rebuild their lives and reconstruct their identities in the new environment (McSpadden and Moussa 1993; Gilliland et al. 1995; Franz 2000; Al-Ali et al. 2001). Since the status of men in the home culture was determined by their occupation, their financial level, and their networks, many found it difficult to come to terms with their helplessness as refugees and, later, with the lower status and limited opportunities in resettlement. In contrast, the status of women (regardless of whether they work in or outside the house) was primarily based on their abilities as homemakers and mothers.

Women had already experienced a conflict in the home environment between their traditional (being good mothers and wives) and their individual aspirations, and were used to putting their goals aside for the sake of the family. Therefore, they have less difficulty in accepting low position jobs (as concierges, office cleaners, waitresses, or part-time sales persons), irrespective of their educational background and aspirations. Therefore, Bosnian

women seem to be more pragmatic than their male counterparts during the time of adaptation, although many men from the study group initially also did cleaning, newspaper routes, pizza delivery, and were caretakers in exchange for free rent in the buildings where they lived.

Ideally, children (even when they become young adult men and women) live with their parents, go to school, work for pocket money, and spend their free time going out with their friends. Their mothers take responsibility for housekeeping, preparing meals and other support needed so that "children can pursue their education." Middle-aged women often sacrifice opportunities for continuing education, and consequently, for better-paying jobs and careers. They keep their low-paying jobs but support their husbands' efforts in career-building and their children's university educations. Younger women (wives and mothers in their twenties and early thirties) are less accommodating in renegotiating their position. Most who have university degrees work in their field or are pursuing a new career. However, even for their age group, inherited patriarchal gender identities from the home country influence their choices. Women usually have gone back to school later than their husbands, and often have chosen more job-oriented educational options, in contrast to men who took the longer path and tried to gain additional education and training that would allow them to regain the status they had in their home country.

Practices influenced by patriarchal ideology are also evident when we look at the division of labour in the Bosnian immigrant household. The same as practiced in the former Yugoslavia, even when women work full time outside the house, husbands do not have clearly defined and regular house chores. They occasionally "help" their wives and, although they do not think that it is shameful for men to do housework, excuse themselves

by saying that they were not brought up that way. Most women seem willing to accept the double responsibility of work outside the home and in the home, without help from their husbands. While they do not deny that they were feeling overburdened, they insist that of prime importance to them is to establish or re-establish a sense of family stability in resettlement. They say they want to create a "normal" family life by all means.

The impact that the revival of ethnic nationalism and the migration process have on gender relations among young Bosnian adults is somewhat different. The war had produced stronger objection to mixed marriages.[86] When asked about their preferences, young single Bosnians, both men and women, indicated overwhelmingly that they prefer to have relations or to get married with someone from the Former Yugoslavia and not necessarily from the same ethnic group (See Appendix A, Table 9). However, their practices reveal a different picture. Since they came to Canada, most have had relationships or married someone with the same ethnic background and almost none have been or are involved with someone from a different nationality. "Non-mixing makes things easier" or "We learnt our lessons" are the responses that I got when I asked some why they limit their choice to their own ethnic group. Even informants whose parents have different ethnic backgrounds show little readiness or belief that it is possible to follow their parents' footsteps. Igor talks about his experience:

> Most likely I will marry a girl from the Former Yugoslavia. Or, at least that's what I thought until recently. It might be difficult. Some time ago, a girl was in love with me and I liked her too. She is Bosnian Muslim and I come from a mixed Serbian/Croatian background. Of course, her father didn't like me. He openly showed that he didn't approve of my coming to Bosnian socials. I guess he saw me as a Serb. We never got involved. It was too much trouble.

[86] Mixed marriages constitute an anomaly (understood in the way in which Eriksen (1993:62) talks about ethnic anomalies–"neither-nor" or "both-and" depending on the situation and/or the wider context).

As far as having a relationship or getting married to a Canadian, most young Bosnians do not exclude the possibility, but show a lot of reservation towards the prospect. Sinisa has a girlfriend with the same background and Nebojsa is in a three-year old relationship with a Canadian girl. Although they have opposite opinions, they both share some of the norms and beliefs that are part of their home culture.

> I don't believe in marriage with a Canadian. We are so different. But it is so difficult to find the person who is just right, as well as "one of ours." I was lucky to find my girlfriend. Some young people move to Ontario hoping that they can find a girlfriend or boyfriend with the same ethnic origin more easily there. Some go to Bosnia and bring wives back. That's even worse. How could you find someone to share life with in a month? (Sinisa, a 24 year-old Bosnian Serb)

> I have a Canadian girlfriend but she is different from most of the girls I have met since I moved in Canada. It's not the nationality but the attitude that can create problems. Here, there is no respect in young people's relations. It is more like–I need someone. It's not–I need you. People move in so easily for a trial period. If you know a person you should know if you could live with her or him. It's not like buying a car. Let's give it a shot for a month, if not I'll get my money back. There is a lot of material interest involved and little trust and respect (Nebojsa, a 22-year-old Bosnian man with mixed ethnic heritage)

Seeking to marry someone with the same cultural background, in addition to the determination of the young adults to get university degrees and not to be "stuck" in their initial jobs, has led to some new practices–delaying marriage and having children later in life. Giving priority to ethnic background over some other characteristics of the future spouse sometimes also means accepting traditional gender roles and a relationship not based on equality. Therefore, migration and access to paid employment is certainly not a guarantee of improvement in women's status (Morokvasic 1993:476). As this study finds, gender inequality among Bosnian immigrants remains largely what it was prior to the migration process.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

Although the small sample covered in this research does not allow generalizing to the wider Bosnian refugee population and far less to refugee populations in general, an important point emerges that has important ramifications for transnational migration studies.

Gender, age, class, place of origin and political affiliation are all variables that have been seen to affect levels of transnational engagement, while these in turn have varied according to specific contexts within migrant communities, and in home and host states. The wide range of experiences of Bosnians from different backgrounds, in terms both of strategies and of transnational practices, is of wide importance.

The challenge was to capture the political and cultural dynamics, as well as the diversity of social experiences, that would show the limitations of generalized descriptions of the "refugee experience" and stereotyped one-dimensional constructs of refugees stripped of all but their "victims of war" identity.

Through an ethnographic approach, this study explored some of the creative ways in which identities are being shaped and articulated by the Bosnian refugees, in relation to the different social contexts in which they concurrently participate. There are features (identities, practices and networks) that can appropriately be described as transnational. However, there is no sense of unity within the Bosnian diaspora—immigrants are divided along ethnic, religious, political, and class lines. Transnational processes are "culturally situated practices" (Ong 1999) that lead to the creation of heterogeneous transnational

social fields rather than to a Bosnian transnational community. Therefore, I prefer to talk about Bosnian transnationalism as "diaspora in making".

Transnationalism among young adult Bosnians is in part shaped by their perceptions that they must keep their options open, which results in continuous translating of the economic and social position gained in one setting into social and economic capital in another. Some Bosnians are more deeply involved in transnational activities, whereas others participate occasionally. Many Bosnian immigrants experience the transnational field only in a symbolic way, as part of their space of meaningful references.

Transnational mobility and maneuvers mean that there are new diaspora consciousnesses which are marked by new modes of constructing identity or rather, multiple identities. What is invoked, or when, depends on particular circumstances and the configuration of social relations that constitute the everyday worlds of Bosnian immigrants.

While some migrants identify more with one society than the other, the majority seems to maintain several identities that link them simultaneously to more than one nation. Even transmigrants themselves demonstrate awareness of their decentred attachments, of being simultaneously "home away from home," "here and there." There is an interplay among practices that articulate the local with the translocal or cosmopolitan, and the national with the transnational in the construction of identities. Generally, refugees originating from urban areas are more flexible, mobile and able to transcend boundaries of cultures, political systems and economic systems than the refugees from small towns and villages of Bosnia.

The data have shown that transnational migration did not erase differences among immigrants. On the contrary, it has reproduced gender and class inequalities and ethnic differences.

An overriding concern for most adults has been and remains the "normalization" of everyday life, associated with recovering some stability and predictability in social and economic life and including regaining other (such as professional) social identities, suspended or lost by the war. Bosnian immigrants who experience the threat of permanent economic marginality in Canada express more readily a desire to return to Bosnia. However, this says little about actual plans and intentions. Only a small number of families have returned. Some households are in a real sense transnational with some of their members residing in Bosnia and others in Canada (Winnipeg). Others have begun a temporary commuting life of double residency (which includes obtaining dual citizenship), and a number of other strategies can be expected in the future.

The monolithic character of ethnicity expressed at the collective level does not preempt the continual reconstruction of ethnicity at the personal level. The number of Bosnians who refuse to declare their ethnicity/nationality or feel that they do not belong in any of the existing categories is very high.

Many Bosnians were and still are structurally placed to have multiple loyalties in ethnic/national terms—some because of their mixed ethnic heritage, others because of their move to Canada. Most are not at ease with the Bosnian society that evolved after their departure. People found that expectations and values had changed (both here and there) while they were in exile, and those who had been away longer felt that they had

become different from those at "home." However, only a few said that they had become used to life in Canada to the point that they could not imagine ever going back.

Multiple loyalties do not always follow ethnic lines–regional, gender identity or social class membership situationally overrule ethnic boundaries. It appears that in the self-perception of Bosnian immigrants the emphasis upon ethnicity, class or gender are constantly changing in true sense of Eriksen's (1993) statement that "one has a shared identity with different people at different times."

The value that they placed on education and status that can be (re)gained based on profession, has motivated the majority of Bosnians to seek more upgrading courses in English and computer skills, graduate school, colleges, second degrees, that would give them access to job opportunities in the Canadian employment market (See Appendix A, Table 10). The young people with the help of their parents, loans, and work are able to "work the system" of schools and jobs better, and to develop more effective networks needed for full integration in the society.

The existing tensions in the family and in the community are often masked by a strong kinship and neighbourhood ideology but nevertheless result in class differentiation among family members and friends. The desire to (re)gain social status in the immigrant communities (especially among people from the same town) is responsible for stiff competition between some relatives and friends.

Besides class positioning as well as respect and prestige, the war and migration also had an impact on parent-child relations and gender relations in general. Power and authority relations in the family were disrupted and are renegotiated in the new socio-cultural setting. The study shows that despite the fact that relations between young adult

immigrants and their parents remain strong, interdependence of parents and children does not erase generational gap and tensions.

The study confirms that refugee and immigrant experiences are importantly differentiated by gender. There is a shift in the previously experienced and expected gender roles and power differentials. The status of men in the home culture was determined by their occupation, their financial level, and their networks. Therefore, men are more unsatisfied with the job opportunities and limited possibilities for advancement. Women, who had already experienced a conflict in the home environment between their traditional and their individual aspirations, have less difficulty in accepting low-status jobs. They insist that what is of prime importance to them is to re-establish a sense of family stability in resettlement and to create a "normal" family life by all means.

Women from small towns feel that life in Winnipeg created opportunity for emancipation that they gladly seized. In some cases the altered gender roles and power relations led to abuse and termination of relationships. Gender roles had undergone change but gender inequality among Bosnian immigrants remains largely what it was prior to the migration process.

The war and the revival of ethnic nationalism also affected marriage practices. Young adult Bosnians may delay marriage and having children because for many of them pursuing an educational goal takes longer in resettlement, but the study shows that the limited pool of potential marriage partners, even further narrowed by stronger objection to mixed marriages, may be the reason behind these new practices. Young single Bosnians, both men and women, do not get into relationships outside their ethnic group.

The length of time the group has spent in exile, conditions in their host country, and the attitudes of the home state can explain the transnational links. For Bosnians flight and exile are relatively recent events. A sense of political and economic security within Canada gives rise to the confidence needed to create and venture into transnational domains for some immigrants. Others report financial instability and lack of employment as factors which have a negative impact on their capabilities to get involved in transnational activities with the home country. Geographical distance and the distancing of the refugees from post-war reconstruction of Bosnia by the Bosnian state are two additional reasons for limited transnational activities.

There are limits to the extent and significance of transnational activities among Bosnian immigrants from my study group. Political, economic, social and cultural transnational ties are all present to a certain degree among Bosnian refugees. The emergence of transnational economic activities in the form of entrepreneurial investments are still absent. With time, or more precisely, with immersion into a new life in the country of residence, links with their home country increase. Financial remittance, regular contacts and visits, the exchange of ideas and knowledge, upholding social ties and cultural practices, are some of the ways in which Bosnian refugees turn transnational.

The goal of this study was to explore the (re)creation and maintenance of multiple identities among Bosnian immigrants in Winnipeg within a transnational context. The data show the situational nature of the relation between individual and collective identities and between various lived experiences and ethnic/national identities results in variation that does not allow simple generalization. Nevertheless, it is conclusive that the experience of becoming a refugee, the specific history and the background of the war, and the conditions

in Canada (Winnipeg) strongly influence the processes of (re)construction of identities and maintenance of multiple identities among Bosnian immigrants.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Table 1. Country of Departure for Bosnian Immigrants in Winnipeg

Bosnia	Former Yugoslavia	Europe	USA
5	53	11	2
Total			71

Table 2. Immigrant Status upon Arrival

Government Sponsored	Family Sponsored	Church Sponsored	Independent
52	6	7	6
Total			71

Table 3. Characteristics of Questionnaire Respondents

Characteristics	Number
Sex	
Male	41
Female	30
Age	
18-24	23
25-31	13
32-38	21
39-45	14
Nationality	
Serbian	21
Croatian	16
Bosnian Muslim (Bosnian, Bosniak, Muslim)	16
Undeclared	8
Yugoslavian	9
Others	1
Years in Canada	
0-2	8
3-5	22
6-10	41
Education	
4 years	1
8 years	0
12 years	15
Vocational school	3
Collage diploma	2
University degree	20
Master's degree	6
PhD	1
Current college students	4
Current university students	19
Marital Status	
Married	34
Remarried	1
Common-law	1
Separated	1
Divorced	2
Single	32
Total	71

Table 4. Characteristics of Interviewees

Characteristics	Number
Sex	
Male	13
Female	12
Age	
18-24	9
25-31	7
32-38	9
39-45	0
Nationality	
Serbian	5
Croatian	4
Bosnian Muslim (Bosnian, Bosniak, Muslim)	7
Undeclared	8
Yugoslavian	1
Others	0
Years in Canada	
0-2	3
3-5	2
6-10	20
Education	
4 years	1
8 years	0
12 years	6
Vocational school	2
Collage diploma	3
University degree	1
Master's degree	3
PhD	1
Current college students	1
Current university students	7
Marital Status	
Married	9
Remarried	1
Common-law	1
Separated	0
Divorced	1
Single	13
Total	25

Table 5. Visits to Bosnia

One	Two	Three or More	None
37	7	1	26
Total			71

Table 6. Views on Moving from Winnipeg

To Bosnia			To Other Province			To USA		
Yes	No	Maybe	Yes	No	Maybe	Yes	No	Maybe
9	52	10	54	9	8	20	46	5
Total								71

* Europe was not included as an option in the questionnaire. Two persons added Europe on their own initiative.

Table 7. Religious Beliefs

Religious Before the War	Since the War	Non Religious	Religion as Tradition
2	6	12	5
Total			25

Table 8. Occupation before and after Immigration to Winnipeg

Same	Same or Different Occupation--Lower Position	On Government Assistance
16	37	5
Total		58

Table 9. Stated Ethnic/National Preference for a Marriage Partner

Former Yugoslavia	Same Ethnicity		Doesn't Matter	Don't Know
	Very Likely	Unlikely		
4	19	3	4	5
Total				35

Table 10. Upgrading Courses Taken by Immigrants with Working Experience from Bosnia

Additional Education and Training	Number of Persons (out of 42)
Graduate Studies	8
Undergraduate Studies	3
College	3
Vocational School	2
English as a Second Language Classes	38
Government Sponsored Programs/Employment Training	25
None	1

Table 11. Time Spent on Social Assistance

Yes		No	
1 month	3		
2 month	1		
3 month	2		
6 month	1		
9 month	1		
1-2 years	2		
Total	10	**Total**	61

Table 12. Bosnian Immigrants' Citizenship(s)

Bosnian/Canadian	13
Bosnian/Croatian/Canadian	4
Croatian/Canadian	5
Croatian	3
Bosnian	12
Canadian	48
None	3
Total	71

Table 13. Evaluation of ESL Training Attended (rating on a scale from 1 to 5)

1	3
2	1
3	11
4	24
5	11
Total	50

Table 14. Evaluation of Services Received from Government and Non-profit Organisations Working with Immigrants (rating on a scale from 1 to 5)

1	4
2	3
3	6
4	6
5	7
Total	26

*Organisations rated -- Jewish Aid Immigration Services, International Center, Employment Projects for Immigrants, Credential Recognition Program (Government of Manitoba)

Table 15. Evaluation of Government-Sponsored Employment Training Programs (rating on a scale from 1 to 5)

1	0
2	0
3	2
4	4
5	7
Total	13

*Organisations rated – Progress Re-entry Program (ADS), Success Skills, Horizons, Academy of Learning, Access Program RRCC, Global Connections

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE

Constructing and Reconstructing Identities: Transnational Practices of Bosnian Young Adult Immigrants in Winnipeg

Consent -- I agree to participate in the above titled research project by answering this questionnaire. I understand that my participation is voluntary and anonymous. I may decline to answer any questions with which I might feel uncomfortable. Information gathered will be confidential and used only by Vera Ciriviri-Gjuric for the purpose of writing her MA thesis in anthropology. Names, addresses, telephone numbers, pseudonyms as well as questionnaires and all data will be kept until the final version of the thesis is written and then destroyed. A summary of the findings (with confidentiality protected) will be available at the conclusion of the research and the researcher will be available to answer questions earlier, on my request. The project has been approved by the Joint Faculty Research Ethics Board at the University of Manitoba. Any complaint regarding a procedure may be reported to the Human Ethics Secretariat (474-7122), or the Head of the Department of Anthropology (474-8999) for the referral to the Joint Faculty Research Ethics Board.

1. Date of Birth _____ Sex _____ (M/F)
2. Nationality _____ Citizenship(s)_____
3. How long have you been in Canada?_____
4. What was your immigrant status upon arrival _____(student, sponsored, refugee, independent immigrant)?
5. Did you come to Canada directly from Bosnia? _____ (yes, no). If not, state the place of departure _____(country, city)
6. Did you come a) alone b) with your family (parents and/or siblings) c) relative(s) c) with a group of refugees?
7. Did you know anybody in Winnipeg before you came here?_____(yes, no)
8. If yes, what was your connection with that person(s)_____

   _____

   _____
9. Have you been back home for a visit? _____ (yes, no). If yes, when was your last visit and what was the reason for it _____

   _____

_____

If not, explain why not _____

_____

_____

10. Highest level of education when you came to Canada a) elementary b) secondary c) university degree d) graduate degree
11. Have you taken any ESL classes? _____ (yes, no) Please specify _____

_____

_____

(which, how many courses, for how long)

12. On a scale from 1 to 5 how would you grade the ESL classes that you have attended? _____
13. Have you received any kind of services from organizations that work with immigrants? _____ (yes, no) If yes, please specify the organization(s) and the service(s) received _____

_____

_____

14. On a scale from 1 to 5 how would you grade the services that you have received?

_____

15. Have you attended any government sponsored program/employment training? _____ (yes, no) If yes, please specify _____

_____

_____

_____

16. On a scale from 1 to 5 how would you grade the program/training that you have attended? _____
17. Did you obtain any kind of additional formal education since you came to Canada (diploma, certificate, college, university courses or degree etc.)?

_____

18. Did you work before you came to Canada and for how long? _____

_____ What was your occupation? _____

19. Have you been working since you came to Canada? _____ (yes, no)
    What is your occupation? _____
20. Marital status a) single b) married c) separated d) divorced
21. Change in marital status after you came in Canada _____ (yes, no)
22. If yes, please specify and give details _____
    _____
    _____
23. If single, how likely do you think it is that you will marry someone with the same ethnic origin a) almost certain b) likely c) unlikely d) very unlikely e) don't know
24. If married, is your spouse of the same ethnic origin? _____ (yes, no).
25. Do you have children? _____ How many? _____
26. What language are you speaking with your children? _____
    Please explain why _____
    _____
    _____
27. Have you been on social assistance? _____ For how long? _____
28. Do you own a home? _____
29. Do you own a business? _____
30. With whom do you socialize? _____
    _____
    _____
    _____ (people of the same ethnic group, people from Former Yugoslavia, other immigrants, Canadians)
31. Would you move to another province in Canada for a better-paid job? Please explain _____
    _____
    _____
32. Would you move to the US for a better-paid job? Please explain
    _____
    _____

_____

33. Would you move back to Bosnia? Please explain _____

_____

_____

_____

34. How many persons do you know who came originally to Winnipeg from Bosnia but moved later to some other region or country _____
35. Where did they move? a) Canada b) USA c) Bosnia d) some country in Europe e) elsewhere
36. Additional Comments _____

_____

_____

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