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A Focus on Strength-based Outcomes of Wartime Sexual Violence in a Sample of  
Ethnically Diverse Women from Bosnia and Herzegovina

By

Mia Susic

A Dissertation  
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies  
through the Department of Psychology  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
at the University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

2019

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A Focus on Strength-based Outcomes of Wartime Sexual Violence in a Sample of

Ethnically Diverse Bosnian Women

by

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## **DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY**

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## ABSTRACT

There has been a surge of academic interest in wartime sexual violence since the Bosnian and Rwandan wars in the 1990s. However, there is a paucity of research on the outcomes of wartime sexual violence for women and the research is limited in two important ways. One, women's outcomes have been largely examined from the trauma of rape discourse, a deficit-based perspective that rape is necessarily (and permanently) traumatic. Two, there is a lack of ethnic diversity in the study samples that seems to be primarily fueled by 'rape as genocide' or 'rape as ethnic cleansing' discourses. The purpose of this study was to examine outcomes of women's wartime sexual violence, focusing on strength-based outcomes and how these may be associated with women's ethnic origin. Tape-recorded semi-structured interviews were conducted with 13 ethnically diverse women (i.e., Muslim, Serb, and Croat) who were victimized by sexual violence during the Bosnian war (1992-1995). The women were recruited through "Women Victims of War" – an organization that works with victims of wartime sexual violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Transcripts were analyzed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis to allow women's complicated post-rape experiences to emerge. Within the context of the study's purpose, five relevant superordinate themes emerged from the analysis. The first superordinate theme, "multi-faceted outcomes (consequences and strengths) of complex trauma in war", was common to all participants and addresses the consequences of complex trauma on the women's lives as well as the strengths gained or retained after the wartime events, including the rape(s). The second superordinate theme, "life with intersectional identities", was also common to all participants. This theme was about the women's perceived perceptions of the motivations for the wartime events (including sexual violence) which can be summarized as being primarily about gender and nationality/ethnicity. In the third superordinate

theme, “loneliness”, women discussed the direct and indirect impact of the war on the loneliness they felt. This theme was present only for non-Muslim women. A fourth superordinate theme, “avoidance of the word ‘rape’”, was noted in a small group of women who never used the language “rape” or “sexual assault” or “sexual abuse” when describing their experiences. Finally, in the fifth superordinate theme, “culture as contributing to upholding patriarchal ideals in recovery process”, one woman discussed the direct connection she made between her process of recovery and the culture’s perceptions of sex and sexual assault.

Analysis of the interviews suggested that a deficit-based lens and its prescription that sexual violence is necessarily and permanently traumatic does not take into account the strengths that women retain or develop as part of the recovery process. Furthermore, although there are many similarities in the outcomes of women with diverse ethnic backgrounds, there are also important differences (i.e., loneliness) that may be crucial in understanding the implications of relying on the 'rape as genocide' or 'rape as ethnic cleansing' discourses.

*Keywords:* sexual violence; rape; war; outcomes; strength-based outcomes; Bosnia and Herzegovina; women; interpretative phenomenological analysis

## **DEDICATION**

To the women who let me be a part of their life, even for just a moment.

Every story, every tear, every laugh – you are with me.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to my supervisor Dr. Charlene Senn who has guided me on this long and meaningful trip. Your faith in my dissertation work and your support over the years has been much appreciated starting with the humble beginnings of being the only undergraduate student in your graduate-level Psychology of Women course. You introduced me to a world of psychology that was more than I could imagine: exciting, labour-intensive, rewarding, emotionally exhausting, and capable of creating measurable (and immeasurable) change.

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I made many and lasting friendships in the Psychology Department at the University of Windsor. Thank you to my 2010 cohort of colleagues and friends. We got each other through difficult times with quality laughs. Thank you to my lab and all its members, past and present. You made my working environment comfortable, pleasant, and thought-provoking.



There is not enough space to thank all my friends who supported me on this journey. Lauren and Mich – the relationships I cultivated with you over the years were part out of collective anger and part out of collective hope – and somehow wholly out of understanding one another and what it means to live in the world of academia. Sara and Laura – you took me out of the academic world when I needed to leave and were consistent reminders of the beauty of friendships and the capability of souls to live together even when physical bodies are so far apart.

Thank you to my parents, Dobrila and Ruzmir, who each contributed significantly to the completion of this dissertation. Mama, you knew exactly what I needed even when I did not. Your organization and emotional and instrumental supports came at the right times and without question. Tata, you were there to help whenever I needed it and created consistent opportunities for me to focus on my analysis and writing. I always knew I was lucky to have you both as parents, but this past year has shown that your love and support knows no bounds. You both dropped everything you were doing to ensure that I would finish this degree. I am the luckiest person to have two loving and supportive parents like you. You left a world that you knew and came to the unknown. You are navigating this unknown world very well. I love you.

Thank you to my partner Mike – you have waited patiently for me to finish this part of my journey and have never rushed me. Your encouragement has meant a lot. And, a special thank you to my daughter Ariana – I do not have words for the love I have for you. May you never live life in fear. May you never be persecuted for who you are. May you always live a life of love.

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## Introduction

I am a woman. I am of “mixed” ethnicity, a product of a mixed marriage: although my mother and father are both Bosnian, they do not share the same ethnic identity. My gender and ethnicity continue to shape my life. The journey for this dissertation began when I was five years old and the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, a country I was born in, fell apart and “ethnic” wars ensued. My mixed ethnicity became salient to me overnight. I had to hide who I was to avoid persecution. Even as I write these words, I am acutely aware that they will be published online through Scholarship at UWindsor, and fear is a nagging voice that I will be revealed for my non-belongingness to one or the other ethnic identity, or to both. One of my parents had no issue with me sharing their ethnic identity publicly (Bosnian Muslim), but the other asked that I only identify that they are not Muslim. I also fear that my mixed identity will be used against me to discredit my work one way or another. My identity as both the oppressor (i.e., not Muslim) and the oppressed (Bosnian Muslim) remains a defining feature of my identity, though I played no part in the war. This made it easier for me later in life to identify as a white (oppressor) woman (oppressed) feminist. Feminist theory became a home to my personal politics and validated that (a) women can be strong in the face of oppression and (b) women’s lives are multi-dimensional: the way they experience their lives are dependent on their gender, their race, and other socio-economic factors (Crenshaw, 1989; hooks, 1984/2000). Wartime sexual violence is no different.

My study took place in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), where conservative estimates suggest 20,000 women were affected by wartime sexual violence (United Nations, 2014) and more liberal estimates suggest up to 60,000 women were affected in the broader context of the former Yugoslavia (United Nations, n.d.<sup>a</sup>). Sexual violence is considered any act of “a sexual

nature which is committed on a person under circumstances which are coercive” and does not need to be physical in nature (International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, 1998, p. 275). That is, sexual violence includes a spectrum of acts such as rape, undressing people and forcing them to be publicly nude (International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, 1998, p. 275), sexual slavery, forced pregnancy, and enforced prostitution (“Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court,” 1998).

It is known that women from a variety of ethnic groups were victimized by sexual violence and that men from many ethnic groups were perpetrators, including those who were employed for “peacekeeping” purposes (see Allen, 1996, p. 67 for an example of Bosnian women raped by United Nations personnel). However, little is known about women’s experiences in BiH beyond the fact that they were negative and that the primary victims were Bosnian Muslim women. Research from BiH reflects the wider research in wartime sexual violence wherein the focus has historically been on negative consequences for women who have also been victimized because of their ethnic, cultural, or national belonging (e.g., Tutsi women in Rwanda).

The bulk of the research on women’s wartime sexual violence has been conducted in the past 25 years and has been necessary in demonstrating the trauma of rape and its consequences. However, there is very little research about women’s strengths after their experiences with wartime sexual violence (e.g., willingness to testify in court; Skjelsbaek, 2006). In order to supplement what is already known about women’s experiences and further inform theory on wartime sexual violence, studies which incorporate various women’s experiences and employ methodologies that allow for women’s complex stories and identities to emerge must be conducted.

There were two goals to my study. The first goal of the research was to add to the literature on wartime sexual violence outcomes by interviewing a sample of ethnically diverse women (e.g., Bosnian Muslim, Bosnian Serb, Bosnian Croat) victimized by wartime sexual violence regardless of the perpetrator's ethnic origin. The second goal was to expand on the limited literature on women's strengths post-sexual violence. I met the goals by using semi-structured interviews to allow women to explore both the negative consequences and developed or retained strengths post-sexual violence.

### **Significant Issues with Wartime Sexual Violence Research**

**Lack of diversity.** In a systematic review of outcomes of wartime sexual violence I conducted, there were 24 empirical articles about women's outcomes from many different wars and conflicts (e.g., World War II, Rwandan genocide; Sisic, 2015). Ethnicity played a subtle but salient role. Many of the stories came from women who were not only victims of sexual violence, but who were also victims of war (i.e., the ethnic group they belonged to played a defensive role in a war/conflict and/or they were victims of genocide) such as Bengalis in Bangladesh who defended themselves against Pakistanis, or Bosnian Muslims who defended themselves against multiple armies including the Bosnian Serbs. Many other studies did not specify the ethnic origin of the participants, but it was implied that they were women who belonged to a group that was on the defensive side of the war. The scope of the literature is in line with other Western academic (Allen, 1996) and non-academic documents (e.g., newspaper articles) that focus almost exclusively on women who have been victimized by both sexual violence and war/conflict (on the basis of their ethnic, religious, etc. belonging) such as Bosnian



Muslim women. Additionally, the perpetrators in these documents are almost always implicitly or explicitly war aggressors such as Serb men.

The privileging of particular kinds of stories such as the dyad of a Muslim victim and a Serb perpetrator has occurred at the expense of other stories that do not fit the mold of social expectations rooted in patriarchal thought. The international court systems and academia have essentially ignored women's stories that do not meet expectations for what "real" wartime sexual violence looks like (e.g., women who have been victimized by sexual violence but who share an ethnic identity with the war aggressors).

This study attempted to rectify this lack of inclusion. Studies examining peacetime sexual violence show that women of different ethnic backgrounds show variability in how they talk about their rapes and post-rape recovery (Bletzer & Koss, 2006), calling attention to the importance of diversity in sexual violence research. "When feminism is defined in such a way that it calls attention to the diversity of women's social and political reality, it centralizes the experiences of all women, especially the women whose social conditions have been least written about, studied, or changed by political movements" (hooks, 1984/2000, p. 27). When this was written, it was a criticism of feminist theory's lack of inclusion of Black women's life experiences – women who were oppressed in multiple ways by the social categories they belonged to such as Black, woman, and poor or working class. However, this standpoint is not only suited to women who are oppressed in multiple social categories (e.g., Bosnian Muslim women), but also to women who may be oppressor in one social category (e.g., Bosnian Serb) and the oppressed in another social category (e.g., woman) and who have been ignored by research. The ignoring of women's stories who embody both the oppressed and the oppressor limits the development of feminist theory on gender-based violence (e.g., Berg, 2014), including

sexual violence. By opening up this study to any women who have experienced wartime sexual violence during the Bosnian war, I made it possible for women who may have “unconventional” stories of rape (e.g., raped by men of their own ethnicity, raped Serb women) to come forward and make their experiences more visible.

**Trauma of rape.** Existing Western research on peacetime sexual violence largely reinforces the idea that rape leads to trauma, a discourse that was radical, politically charged, and helpful decades ago when the impact of rape was minimized and denied (Brownmiller, 1975; Gavey & Schmidt, 2011). Today, however, this theory is dominant in research and within it a woman is a victim, her experience with rape is medicalized, and the burden of healing is placed on her, usually through obtaining therapy. Gavey and Schmidt (2011) outlined the features of the trauma of rape discourse which include “a default presumption that rape *is* traumatic” (p. 439); perception of the trauma as being primarily psychological and potentially affecting all domains of one’s life with the effects never completely fading; perceptions of women having to work on their “healing” and “recovery” (p. 439) with the support of others such as professionals; and the idea that a woman who minimizes or does not acknowledge harmful post-rape effects to herself is actually in a state of denial which is dangerous to her well-being.

The “trauma of rape” discourse has its limitations. If we accept that the feminist revolt against sexual violence is at least partially about hearing women’s voices and making their experiences central to the sexual violence discourse, then the trauma of rape discourse is, although largely helpful and a welcome change from the denial of negative outcomes prior to the 1970s, problematic in its assertion that rape victims *must* be traumatized and they *should* rely on professionals for help (Gavey & Schmidt, 2011). Reliance on professionals for help is further problematic due to socio-cultural issues such as stigmatization of victims of sexual violence (see

Skjelsbæk, 2006 for an example relevant to wartime sexual violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina) and financial issues such as cost.

Although research upholds the idea that traumatic events such as sexual violence can have varied outcomes, the way that academic literature typically frames outcomes is within a trauma of rape discourse. For example, although we know that many women's post-rape distress decreases over time and is largely absent after one year (Ellis, 1983; Frazier, Conlon, & Glaser, 2001; Kilpatrick, Resick, & Veronen, 1981; Koss & Figueredo, 2004), the way that studies have been titled and written typically assert the "trauma of rape" discourse (Gavey & Schmidt, 2011). Sexual violence does not have the same outcomes for all women and many women do not rely on professionals as part of their post-trauma care (e.g., Price, Davidson, Ruggiero, Acierno, & Resnick, 2014). Whether it is a single woman who experiences a multitude of outcomes (negative consequences, reduction or absence of those symptoms, strengths-based outcomes) or many women who all have varied experiences, we cannot assume. We cannot assume to know women's real experiences unless we open our minds to a rhetoric that allows for women to have negative or deficit-based outcomes, positive or strengths-based outcomes, both, or neither: a model that does not predefine women's outcomes of trauma.

Rape is a traumatic experience and I do not mean to imply otherwise. The focus of the critique of the "trauma of rape" discourse is on outcomes of rape and not the traumatic act itself. The "psy" fields (umbrella term for psychology, psychiatry, and related fields such as counselling) have primarily focused on negative outcomes of rape (Gavey & Schmidt, 2011), to the point that one would be inclined to believe that *every* woman who has ever been raped or sexually assaulted *will* suffer from serious and irreparable damage to her body and/or mind. But, most women do not suffer irreparable damage. Very few do. Some do not. Some women are

offended at and constrained by the idea that they must experience particular outcomes such as anxiety and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). They report that when people assume these outcomes, it closes off a potentially fruitful conversation about their experiences or opens up a conversation that they do not want to have (Ovenden, 2012). The trauma of rape discourse which positions women who have not been horribly harmed by rape as unlikely and abnormal scenarios (Gavey & Schmidt, 2011) has the potential to exclude and marginalize women who do not fit the script of typical rape outcomes. The discourse runs a risk of forging a dangerous path of leading women and society to believe that “real” victims of rape act a particular way post-assault.

The trauma of rape discourse is replicated in the wartime sexual violence research. In addition to the medicalization of women’s outcomes, women’s acts of agency have been minimized. For example, women victims of wartime sexual violence who testified in international courts have been used to primarily benefit the prosecution and defence while reproducing the women’s victimization and reducing them to “dismembered and passive” victims (Žarkov, 2006, p. 200). If rape is a way for a man to exert power and control over a woman, then the trauma of rape discourse further takes control away from a woman as it allows for society or professionals in the “psy” fields to interpret a woman’s experiences for her.

Perhaps a more inclusive way of positioning the discourse would be to use Gavey and Schmidt’s (2011, p. 439) wording that “rape is *potentially* traumatic.” This discourse would be more accepting of women’s varied experiences with sexual violence and supported by the evidence gathered from academic literature on outcomes of sexual violence. In my research, I addressed this issue by using methods and analyses that allowed for women’s complex voices to emerge and for the possibility for women to experience an array of outcomes, including strengths-based outcomes.

## Theorizing Sexual Violence

Feminists continue to debate whether rape is “violence not sex” or whether the “violence is sex.” The “violence not sex” argument is rooted in the 1970s feminist movement when rape was perceived as sex incited by the female victim (Muehlenhard, Danoff-Burg, & Powch, 1996). As a response to these dangerous stereotypes, feminists highlighted the violent nature of rape (Muehlenhard et al., 1996) and thus, the “violence not sex” view is based on the idea that rapes are not driven by sexual desire, but rather by the desire and expression of power, dominance, and control (see Price, 2005 for review).

As a mentor once pointed out to me, rape can be considered sex about as much as beating someone with a rolling pin can be considered baking (Morrison, 1990 as cited in Senn, 2008). The instrument used does not (or, should not) determine the definition of the act. In this case, just because a penis (or another object) is used to commit violence, it does not mean that it is sex. Rape, at its core, is about power and control (Brownmiller, 1975; Rozee, Bateman, & Gilmore, 1991). Specifically, it is about the control of the masculine over the feminine, the dominant over the submissive. And, as our culture would have it, the masculine and the dominant is commonly (but not always) embodied by those we recognize as men, and the feminine and the submissive is commonly (but not always) embodied by those we recognize as women. Thus, rape is most often recognizable as men’s violence against women and it is but one manifestation of such violence. When I say “men”, I mean this as a general and political statement and not a testament to how each and every individual man thinks and behaves. And though only a certain percentage of men rape (Lisak & Miller, 2002; McWhorter, Stander, Merrill, Thomsen, & Milner, 2009; Swartout et al., 2015), it has been argued that all men reap the benefits of rape as women are kept in a

constant state of intimidation and fear that the penis could be turned into a harmful weapon against her (Brownmiller, 1975).

The “violence is sex” perspective is seen by some feminists as growing out of the “violence not sex” argument (Price, 2005). “Violence is sex” problematizes our society’s erotization of the dominant and argues that because of this erotization, force and desire are not mutually exclusive (MacKinnon, 1983). Sex and violence are treated by men and the law as mutually definitive (MacKinnon, 1996). Thus, the “violence is sex” argument does not discount dominance and violence, but instead posits that dominance and violence are eroticized (see Price, 2005 for review).

In the context of the wartime sexual violence (a term that includes rape, but also other types of experiences such as sexual slavery, forced pregnancy, and enforced prostitution [“Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court,” 1998]) in BiH, both the “violence not sex” and “violence is sex” perspectives find some support. The “violence is sex” argument finds support in the brothels that were set up for men’s sexual pleasure (Stiglmayer, 1994). The “violence not sex” argument seems to be supported by (a) accounts of rapes that were experienced alongside other demeaning and dominating acts such as forcing Muslim women to dance naked and sing Serbian songs (see Stiglmayer, 1994 for more examples) and (b) reports that some men who raped told the women that they were being forced to rape, alongside reports that some men were killed if they were unwilling to participate in the rapes (Stiglmayer, 1994).

The “violence not sex” argument seems to explain more of the rape experiences I have reviewed in the context of BiH and was originally seen as a better fit for this project. However, much like the theoretical debates, I expected that the women in my study would also differ from one another in how they perceived the rapes. The potential varying experiences and perceptions

of sexual violence was not an issue in this work, because women's experiences as they perceive them, rather than an imposition of a theory, were and are central to this dissertation. True to my expectations, different women perceived the rapes differently. Although not all of them talked about the motives, many of the women noted indirectly that the rapes were about power or something other than sex (e.g., by telling me that the rapist could have or did have a female partner that he could have had sex with, but instead he raped).

### **Brief Historical Overview of Sexual Violence**

Sexual violence has historically been tolerated and used as a tool to keep women, young and old, living in fear (Gordon & Riger, 1989; Kalra, Wood, Desmarais, Verberg, & Senn, 1998; Stanko, 1995). It has also been used as a tool to ensure that women must rely on men's protection for their own safety, the same men (acquaintances/intimates) who were most likely to use sexual violence against them (Hanmer, 1990; Valentine, 1992). To say that rape is violence against *women* is a bold and a relatively new idea in itself. For much of history, men controlled the definition of rape (MacKinnon, 1996) and it was seen as a crime – property damage – committed against another man (Brownmiller, 1975) for which the woman was to be at least partially blamed (Backhouse, 2008). Remnants of this ideology remain and can be seen when society is more hesitant to believe a woman when she has been raped by a boyfriend or husband or another close male companion and less hesitant to believe a woman when she has been raped by a stranger. When we are more horrified that stranger rape has occurred or when we make excuses for a male acquaintance who has raped a woman, our implicit message is that a male partner has rights to her body and her integrity, and a man who is a stranger does not have those rights and is stealing the rights that belong to someone else (i.e., not her).

Historically, men have had a “right” to women’s bodies (Campbell, 2005) and were entitled to sex, and this entitlement had historically been legitimized through marriage (Gavey, 2013). Men have had access to certain women’s bodies (e.g., their wives), but they did not necessarily have a right to other men’s property (Wald, 1996; Weitz, 2007). As such, when raping a woman was a criminal act committed against a man and his property, her experiences were by default never taken into account and it was assumed that (a) there were little to no consequences to her (Gavey, 2013) and (b) rape was not a crime against her (Brownmiller, 1975). When the second-wave feminist movement challenged these assumptions and brought women’s experience to the forefront of rape discourse (Gavey, 2013), it became apparent that (a) women were affected by rape, and negatively so and (b) it was an invasion and degradation of *her* and *her body*.

It was not until the 1970s that women had space to talk about what rape meant to them and how it affected them. In the years since, we have found out that women experience a multitude of negative psychological, physical, sexual, and economic outcomes associated with a sexual assault (Martin, Macy, & Young, 2011) such as sleep disturbances (e.g., Clum, Nishith, & Resick, 2001), sexually transmitted infections (e.g., Jenny et al., 1990), depression and PTSD (e.g., Frazier et al., 2001), among others. In other words and contrary to men’s thinking prior to the second wave feminist movement, rape is not harmless. Rape is an act of political violence that is rooted in the hatred of the feminine with the goal of keeping women oppressed through fear and intimidation (see Brownmiller, 1975; Griffin, 1971; MacKinnon, 1996 for examples).

The political system of fear and oppression is working effectively. Just the fear of rape forces women to adopt attitudes to protect themselves (e.g., “That won’t happen to me because I am unattractive”), they change their own behaviours (e.g., do not drink at parties, walk with a



companion at night), and, in general, police themselves to avoid violence that could happen to her or be attempted upon her no matter how she dresses, where she walks, and who she has ever had sex with (e.g., Dekeseredy, Burshtyn, & Gordon, 1992; Gardner, 1990; Riger, Gordon, & LeBailly, 1982; Rozee & Koss, 2001; Stanko, 1995). Fear, through the social control of female bodies (Campbell, 2005), can take the place of freedom. In the Bosnian war, women's movements were already restricted due to conditions of war, but rumors of rapes also created fear that forced women to leave their homes (Stiglmayer, 1994).

**Brief history of wartime sexual violence.** The rape of women and girls during conflicts and wars has long been regarded as an inevitable sidebar to war: women are spoils of war (Brownmiller, 1975). It was not until the 1970s that the world took notice of this crime (Brownmiller, 1975). In 1971 in Bangladesh, at least 200,000 Bengali women were systematically raped in a nine month period by Pakistani soldiers as well as “freedom fighters” who were supposedly defending the Bengali women (Brownmiller, 1975). Some women were held in military barracks for purposes of rape (similar to the rape camps set up during the Bosnian war) and approximately 25,000 became pregnant as a result of the rapes. Bangladesh was exceptional at that time due to the international attention garnered because of the rapes, but the sheer numbers of raped women was not different than the number of women victimized previously in Nanking in 1937 (and its related cases of “comfort women” – or more correctly, women forced into sexual slavery), Belgium and France in World War I, and so on.

There have been cases of wars with few or no rapes, showing that rape is not a necessary part of war. For example, in a war between Indigenous and European groups in northeastern North America in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, there is no evidence of rape of white

female captives by the Indigenous (Abler, 1992). This contradicts the decades-old idea that rape is a normal part of war in which women are prizes that can be won.

It was not until the international criminal tribunals were established in the 1990s for both the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda that sexual violence was considered to be worthy a charge of “crimes against humanity” (United Nations, n.d.<sup>a</sup>). There was a concerted effort by the international community to investigate wartime sexual violence, specifically rape, and the number of women who have been impacted. It is difficult to pinpoint how many women are victimized by rape, in part because shame, humiliation, and fear of reprisal may prevent women from reporting (Farr, 2009). Additionally, there are definitional issues and methodological variations: access to data can vary by region, much of the research is informal, prevalence estimates for a country are sometimes based on the prevalence in a specific geographical region, and at times it is unclear whether the numbers provided describe the number of incidents of rape or the number of women who have been victimized (Farr, 2009). It is also unclear which definition of rape is used. The United Nations’ (1998) definition is closely aligned with a familiar definition used in the context of peacetime rape (rape committed in the context of relative peace or non-war):

the sexual penetration, however slight, either of the vagina or anus of the victim by the penis of the perpetrator, or any other object used by the perpetrator, or of the mouth of the victim by the penis of the perpetrator, where such penetration is effected by coercion or force or threat of force against the victim or a third person.

Methodological and definitional issues aside, one thing is clear: sexual violence, including rape, happens far too often in far too many places.

## **Defining Herself; Defining Her Experiences**

Women who have been victimized by rape engage in a process wherein they define themselves and their traumatic experiences (e.g., Bletzer & Koss, 2006; Thompson, 2000). A study by Wood and Rennie (1994) explored the dynamic way women engage in that process. Eight women who had experienced forced sexual intercourse were recruited for the qualitative study (Wood & Rennie, 1994). The women's perception of rape and victimhood varied: five women did not define their experience as rape for years after it happened; two identified it as rape but questioned it later; one identified the assault as rape and continued to hold this conceptualization. Much of the women's hesitance to identify their experience as rape came from the idea that it did not fit the social construction/myth of rape (i.e., they were raped by someone they knew and not by a stranger).

As for the identification with being a victim, the victim identity was constructed as negative, such as being unsuccessful or devastated. But, there was a distinction drawn between being a victim and being victimized. Being victimized gave a woman room to feel injustice, receive sympathy and compassion, and to be a victim temporarily and without allowing it to be a fixed identity with its perceived consequences (Wood & Rennie, 1994).

Further understanding of the complicated issue of victim identity is found in the broader male-perpetrated violence against women literature. Forty racially and ethnically diverse heterosexual women who experienced intimate partner violence were interviewed about the construction of their identities, specifically focusing on the victim discourse (Leisenring, 2006). The women both drew from and rejected the victim discourse; sometimes simultaneously. When they claimed a victim identity, it was often done to show that they did not have control over the harm that was done to them and that they deserved sympathy and support. When the women

rejected the victim identity, they often did it to distance themselves from the stereotypes of a victim: powerless and weak, but responsible for the violence perpetrated against them. Claiming and rejecting the victim identity was done simultaneously by many women and sometimes shifted from one to the other throughout the interview.

Context is also important for the choice to adopt or reject the victim identity (Leisenring, 2006). Although women associated the victim identity with being weak, powerless, helpless, and responsible for the violence and they commonly rejected the identity to demonstrate they were not those things and that they did not want to be perceived as such, they used the victim identity in the criminal justice system when they demanded rights. Some women identified with pieces, but not the whole, of the victim identity. For example, one woman noted that she did not claim or reject the identity, because she felt that something bad happened to her (identification with the identity) but that it was not her fault (counter to the victim identity which is perceived to hold the victim accountable), so the word “victim” was tainted for her and it was a word that she could not wholly reject nor embrace. From the sample of 40 women, four women claimed a “survivor” identity to show they were neither weak nor helpless. This identity was tied to hope, responsibility to putting an end to the violence, strength, resilience, and personal responsibility.

Thus, labelling women as victims in academic writing or greater societal discourse may be doing a disservice to most women who are either opposed to the label or do not identify with it at a particular moment. Further, identifying one’s experiences as rape and oneself as a victim are not linear processes nor do women engage in it in the same ways or in the same timeframes. Although there is some research in peacetime sexual violence literature on how women define their rape experiences and their post-rape identity, wartime sexual violence literature has been largely devoid of this type of research. It is qualitative methods that aim to discover the complexity

and meanings of identities and are thus best suited to wartime sexual violence research.

Therefore, I used qualitative methods to examine the complicated outcomes of sexual violence.

**Role of ethnicity.** Western society largely believes that “real” rape is committed by strangers (e.g., McKimmie, Masser, & Bongiorno, 2014), a myth that is present for wartime rape as well. Although the available literature on the rapes in Bosnia and Herzegovina has largely countered these myths with stories of women who were raped by friends and neighbours (Schulz, Marovic-Johnson, & Christianhuber, 2006; Stiglmayer, 1994), the focus of stories in research has typically been on the war aggressor (Bosnian Serb) and war victim (Bosnian Muslim) dyad which may be a wartime manifestation of the stranger rape myth. One could argue that the meaning of “stranger” can be extended to mean “ethnic stranger” or someone who does not belong to the same ethnic origin as the woman/victim. Along the same lines, an “acquaintance” in wartime sexual violence could be an “ethnic acquaintance” or someone who is of the same ethnic origin as the woman/victim. Within the peacetime context, the less intimate victims have been with the perpetrator, the more likely they are to label the experience as rape (Kahn, Jackson, Kully, Badger, & Halvorsen, 2003; Koss, Dinero, Seibel, & Cox, 1988). Thus, women who have been victimized by someone of their own ethnic group within the context of wartime sexual violence may not self-identify as victims of rape or feel that their experiences meet the societal standards for rape.

In a wartime context, there may also be the question of “allegiance”: if a woman is raped by a male partner, friend, or stranger of the same ethnicity, she may not be willing to report it because she has made her allegiance to her ethnic group (who faces external threats like genocide) and not her sisters – women who have been raped from any ethnic group. That is, if she reports someone from her own ethnic group, she is delegitimizing the suffering of her

ethnic group. In a study about violence against women and the intersection of ethnicity/race and gender, African-American/Black women reported that they were hesitant to call the police out of loyalty to their race and because they were afraid of how the police officers would treat their male partners given a history of racism (Sorenson, 1996). This was true even in some cases of extreme violence and it demonstrates that our social status (e.g., ethnicity) has an impact on the options we perceive we have when it comes to reporting. It also reminds us that women belong to a gender category, but also to other social categories such as race, ethnicity, class, etc., (Crenshaw, 1989; hooks, 1984/2000) and all of these intersect in ways that influence her decision-making process when it comes to identifying as a victim of violence.

Women who belong to another oppressed category, in addition to gender, may take up allegiance and form solidarity with that group (e.g., racial solidarity; Sorenson, 1996), but not with other women who have had similar experiences (i.e., their gender). West (2002), a researcher in the area of intimate partner and sexual violence, notes that “a pro-Black and pro-feminist dialogue requires us to acknowledge Black women’s victimization and to acknowledge the oppression of Black men, while simultaneously holding them accountable for their violence” (p. 20). The idea suggests that when working with victimized women, researchers must remember that gender is not the only defining social category. Additionally, when working with women who were sexually assaulted during a conflict by someone of their own ethnic origin (or some other defining category such as religion), researchers must be sensitive to the women’s victimization while also being mindful that they may want to protect the rapists (who may be victims of genocide or other war atrocities themselves) from the criminal justice system.

The issue of labelling oneself as a victim is further intensified when wartime sexual violence is labeled as genocidal rape, as it was during the wars in Croatia and BiH (Allen, 1996).

When genocide is a necessary qualifier for wartime rape, it is implied that the rape was committed to kill an ethnic group or nation and that this has very little or nothing to do with gender. Women who were victims of genocide but were raped by someone of their own ethnicity (a man who was also a victim of genocide) or women who belong to ethnic groups against whom genocide was not committed may not easily define themselves as rape victims.

My research attempted to address the problems of women's fear or unwillingness to label their experiences as rape or sexual violence due to issues related to perceived negativity of holding a victim identity, allegiance to the woman's ethnicity and/or the genocidal qualifier. I did this by opening up the study to any woman who had been sexually victimized by any perpetrator including a perpetrator who shared the woman's ethnicity. The word victim, or any other related words such as survivor, were not used in the recruitment process. This helped ensure that women did not perceive their identity (ethnic or otherwise) as a disqualifier for the study. I attempted to alleviate the issue of allegiance by reiterating that the interviews would remain confidential if that is what the woman chooses. I kept in mind that the women may not have been part of any research studies in the past and may fear that the criminal justice system may get involved if she named her perpetrator or, alternatively, some women may have been involved in criminal justice proceedings for their rape(s) and have had to name or identify the perpetrators. To curb the potential expectation that a woman needed to name her perpetrator (an act I did not expect, but an act that may have been on the women's minds if they had expected to do that during criminal justice proceedings) and subsequently risk revealing her own identity, I was very clear at the beginning of the process that women should reveal only the information they feel comfortable revealing.

## Wartime Sexual Violence

Wartime rape is an extension of peacetime rape and anti-woman politics (Brownmiller, 1975). Though it has been historically less visible than peacetime rape, partially due to other horrific events such as loss of lives during wartime, articles written on wartime sexual violence have grown exponentially since the early 1990s. The sexual violence in BiH and Rwanda launched wartime sexual violence visibility in academia and media. The violence has become difficult to ignore, partially because so many rapes happen in a short period of time and many are publicized, extreme, and horrifying (e.g., cutting off women's breasts, insertion of military weapons into vaginas).

The international court tribunals of Yugoslavia and Rwanda (International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia – ICTY and International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda – ICTR, respectively) have brought much attention to the problem of sexual violence during wartime. It was not until the ICTY that an international tribunal had a trial exclusively for sexual violence. The ICTY and ICTR were the first international tribunals to pass convictions for rape as a crime against humanity. Approximately 80 individuals (nearly half of all accused) at the ICTY have had sexual violence included as part of their indictments (United Nations, n.d.<sup>b</sup>). The ICTY and ICTR are a far cry from the World War II tribunals where mass rapes of women, including German women raped by the Red Army at the tail end of the war, were largely ignored.

The tribunals, with the help of feminist lobbying and writings along the way (Halley, 2009; United Nations, n.d.<sup>b</sup>), have brought attention to women, their perspectives, and what they have experienced. Women have testified against their rapists in the tribunals and multiple men have been charged and imprisoned for wartime rape. The ICTY in their rulings has recognized



that sexual violence has had a discriminatory purpose not only directed at ethnicity, but also gender. In at least one ruling so far, ICTY has stated that men committed sexual violence against women, simply because they were women (“Mucić et al. (IT-96-21) “Čelebići Camp,” 2003). The ICTY and ICTR have sent a clear message that women are no longer considered “spoils of war” in international tribunals and that women’s stories and experiences matter, but rulings based on hatred against women are rare, particularly when compared to rulings based on hatred of groups based on ethnic, religious, or national belonging.

Though the convictions at ICTY and ICTR have been revolutionary, similar problems that we see with sexual violence in peacetime have persisted in wartime. Out of the eight current judges at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), none are women (ICTY-TPIY: The Judges, n.d.) and out of 43 former judges, approximately one fifth have been women (ICTY-TPIY: Former Judges, n.d.). This is important for three reasons. One, studies suggest that men are more likely than women to engage in victim blaming (Grubb & Harrower, 2008; Kanekar & Kolsawalla, 1977; van der Bruggen & Grubb, 2014). Two, men are more susceptible than women to be influenced by victim and perpetrator race (Donovan, 2007). And finally, data show that even those groups or professions that work with rape victims are largely similar to the general population with respect to blame attribution (van der Bruggen & Grubb, 2014). That is, the professional status of the observer does not necessarily shield one from blaming victims of sexual violence. As such, those who are a part of the international criminal justice systems involving sexual violence may have predisposed notions of rape and victimhood, and it is possible that these can have an effect on whether a woman’s rape is defined as rape and whether she is perceived to be a victim. Further, the rapes that are tried are primarily those

committed by the “ethnic stranger.” As such, women and their varied experiences with sexual violence continue to be silenced in familiar ways.

**Rape as genocide in international courts.** The United Nations define genocide as: any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; [and] forcibly transferring children of the group to another group. (from “Convention on the prevention and punishment of the crime of genocide,” 1948; Office of the UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, n.d.).

The definition is explicit in defining genocide from a national, ethnic, racial, or religious perspective and not from a gender perspective, thus placing women’s gendered experiences second to their experiences as national, ethnic, racial, or religious members of a group. Therefore, any claims to rape as genocide need to necessarily show that the rapes were committed on the basis of nationality, ethnicity, race, or religion. This has drawn criticism that “international law, which has been shaped almost exclusively by men, grants more importance to the categories of ethnicity, nation, and religion than to sex” (Sharlach, 2000, p. 93) and that the “destruction of female people and crimes against women remain of lesser legal importance than genocide and crimes against ‘humanity’” (Sharlach, 2000, p. 94).

The ICTR ruled that rape and sexual assault in Rwanda were used to perpetrate genocide against the Tutsi ethnic group through bodily and mental harm, and often before killing the women (International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, 1998). This was a practical example

showing that under the United Nations' widely recognized definition of genocide, deaths are not necessary to constitute the crime of genocide and it may be sufficient to cause physical or mental harm to members of a group. Although rape was never tried as genocide at the ICTY, the ICTY has established a link between rape and ethnic cleansing which they have recognized is, in some cases, related to genocide (ICTY-TPIY: Landmark Cases, n.d.). (The popular discourse around rape in BiH is one of ethnic cleansing or genocide). Hypothetically speaking then, if gender were a category against which you can commit genocide under the United Nations definition of genocide (gender-based genocide) or if "femicide" was recognized to be a gender equivalent of genocide under the United Nations definitions of crimes, then all women who have been victimized by wartime sexual violence could seek redress through the international court of law because of psychological and physical damages they have endured because of their gender (Mukamana & Brysiewicz, 2008; Mullins, 2009; Skjelsbaek, 2006; Zraly & Nyirazinyoye, 2010). Women could do this regardless of their national, ethnic, racial, or religious belonging.

**Rape as genocide in academia.** Rulings at international courts are but one way to define rape and genocide. The feminist literature regarding the Bosnian case has been riddled with debates on whether wartime sexual violence constitutes gender-based genocide (i.e., femicide) or genocide that is more closely aligned with the U.N. legal definition ("Convention on the prevention and punishment of the crime of genocide," 1948) and thus is based on nongender social categories such as ethnicity.

**Rape as gender-based genocide.** The rapes in BiH initially drew international attention because they were viewed as ethnic attacks, rather than as attacks on women (Copelon, 2000). Some academics have argued, however, that wartime rapes are examples of genocide against women regardless of whether the victims were raped on the basis of their ethnic, racial, national,

or religious identity (Sharlach, 2000) and implies that a shared gender-based word such as “femicide” may be an accurate descriptor of women’s victimization by wartime sexual violence. (Others have taken similar positions by fighting for inclusion of rape as a gender crime under United Nations’ crimes against humanity [Copelon, 1994].) Femicide, consistent with the U.N. definition of genocide (except for genocide’s exclusion of gender as a category against which it can occur) could be defined as acts intended to destroy, in part or whole, the female gender.

***Rape as genocide.*** MacKinnon (1994) criticized the either/or perspective (hate crimes against women or genocide), and proclaimed that the sexual violence committed against women (Bosnian Muslim women, specifically) in the Yugoslav wars was “*rape as genocide, rape directed toward women because they are Muslim or Croatian*” (p. 188, emphasis added) – that is, some men (Serbs) were committing them against certain women (Muslims and Croats) and that this was not an example of “aggression by all men against all women” (p. 188). That is, her argument is that it was genocidal rape – systematic rape by Serb men with the intention of eradicating entire ethnic groups (Muslims and Croats). MacKinnon’s (1994) analysis was prompted by the world’s silence and inaction during the Yugoslav wars because it was determined at that time that all sides were raping, so there would be difficulty “picking a side.”

Understanding MacKinnon’s point of view means understanding that routine killings were accompanied by systematic rapes of women. There is some evidence showing that the rapes of Bosnian Muslim and Bosnian Croat (i.e., non-Serb) women by Serb(ian) men were ordered from the top echelons of the political and military spheres (Allen, 1996). Bosniak (Bosnian Muslim) women and girls were collected and put into rape camps – a term that defines a camp set up during wartime for the explicit purpose of collecting and raping women. Multiple camps existed across the country (Allen, 1996). Some women were raped by dozens of men each night.

Some women were purposefully impregnated and forced to carry the fetus to term, so that the Serb nation could expand. There was an unprecedented use of forced pregnancies as part of Serb policy to systematically annihilate Bosnian Muslims, showing support that wartime sexual violence of Bosnian Muslims by Serbs was genocidal and different than peacetime rape or rapes committed by Croats, Bosnian-Herzegovinians, and the United Nations Protection Force (Allen, 1996).

The rape of Bosnian Muslim and Croat women may have served a specific function such as the genocide of their ethnic groups and was likely committed in larger numbers than sexual violence against other ethnic groups such as Bosnian Serb women. But, excluding Bosnian Serb women from any analyses of the sexual violence means that ethnicity, rather than gender, becomes the salient and common factor in wartime sexual violence. There was evidence available as early as 1992 that victims and perpetrators of rape belonged to all ethnic groups involved in the war (see p. 138 and p. 140 for early evidence in Stiglmayer, 1994) which would support the idea that the crimes were committed against all women and thus the sexual violence was also a form of femicide.

Sexual violence as genocide may not only be excluding Serb and other (non-Muslim) women, but also Muslim women who perceive their gender as the primary component of the rapes they endured. In one study, women who identified as survivors of wartime sexual violence and had an absence of negative consequences also identified themselves as *ethnic victims* of war rape rather than gender victims (Skjelsbaek, 2006). They felt solidarity with others of the same ethnic origin, including men. Conversely, the women who identified as *gender victims* of war violence experienced outcomes that would be categorized as victimhood (Skjelsbaek, 2006). Those women who identified their rapes as having a primarily ethnic component (i.e., genocidal

rape) were able to, under the rape as genocide framework, experience solidarity with women *and* men of their ethnic group, and were able to see justice served at international tribunals whose focus was the prosecution of genocide. On the other hand, women who saw gender as a primary component of their rapes were hard-pressed to find hatred of female bodies and women (i.e., hate crimes against women, femicide) as explanations for what they endured and they saw no tribunals erected to seek justice against any and all women (no matter the ethnicity) who were victimized by sexual violence. The solidarity of the gendered victim would arguably come from all women, no matter the ethnicity, who were victimized by sexual violence. But, the reality is that geography and racism often prevent these kinds of solidarity movements from coming to fruition. Women who identify gender as the primary factor for their rapes are then left with limited or no social networks to experience solidarity or seek justice.

The debate over whether the rapes were genocide or hate crimes against women (e.g., femicide) was an instance of simplification of that which is complicated and MacKinnon (1994) tried to rectify it with the assertion that the two, genocide and rapes against women, can co-exist. However, subsumed under genocide (i.e., genocidal rape), the rapes are not given equal credence as representations of hatred toward women (i.e., hate crimes against women, or femicide). Western analyses of the “genocide or hate crimes against women” debate also ignores the very real fact that Bosnia and Herzegovina was the most ethnically diverse republic of the former Yugoslavia and marriages between people of different ethnic affiliations – “mixed marriages” – held a steady rate of over 10% of the population since 1973 (Bosnia and Herzegovina Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina Federal of Statistics Office, 2008). Mixed couples produced multiple generations of “mixed children” (children whose parents are of different ethnicities than one another) and when the war began, families, couples, and individuals chose “sides” of the war.

Sometimes, especially in mixed marriages, these “sides” did not always match the ethnic identity of the individual. There were Serb women on the Muslim “side”, Muslim women on the Croat “side”, and so on. Additionally, right before the start of the war in 1991, there were nearly 250,000 people in BiH who declared themselves as “Yugoslav” (out of a population of 4,377,033), stripping away any ethnic identity and instead adopting a united national identity (Republika Bosna i Hercegovina: Državni Zavod za Statistiku Republike Bosne i Hercegovine, 1993). This reality created some difficulty in the analysis of the seemingly clear-cut way that Serbs, Croats, and Muslims are conceptualized and separated in Western writings of the war and rapes. These conceptualizations often assume the ethnic purity of someone labelled a Muslim, Serb, or Croat, and ignore the facts that some women identified as Yugoslav, that women of all ethnicities were found on all “sides” of war, and that women of all ethnicities were raped.

*Current study standpoint.* One of the purposes for the rapes may have been to inflict genocide on a nation, but the women chosen for the rapes were chosen because they were women and not men. These women belong to social categories other than gender and these categories work(ed) together to define their experience and their outcomes. In the context of the Bosnian war, when we take into consideration that a raped person is a woman and a Muslim, then the identification of genocide and hate crimes against women can coexist. A raped Serb woman may be stripped of the label of genocide, but not hate crimes against women or femicide.

Bosnian Croat and Bosnian Serb women were raped during the Bosnian war (United Nations, n.d.<sup>b</sup>), but at the time that this research was conducted (2016), I was not aware of any research articles written about their experiences though we knew these women existed (e.g., United Nations, n.d.<sup>c</sup>). Recently, however, two authors have published work on wartime sexual violence and included Bosnian Serb women in their work. In her book, Simić (2018), focused on

the silenced Bosnian Serb women who had been victimized by sexual violence during the war, using primary and secondary sources of data. Additionally, Clark has published a series of articles and a book on her research on wartime sexual violence in BiH which included both men and women, including Croat, Serb, and Muslim women (Clark, 2017<sup>a</sup>).

The very recent inclusion of Serb and Croat women into research on wartime sexual violence is important for understanding the ways wartime sexual violence affects all victims. Bosnian Serb women, especially, have been delegitimized as victims of rape (Žarkov, 2007). One reason for the absence of these women's stories is because Bosnian Muslim women were more likely to be raped and have the rape labelled as a genocidal act. The most likely rapists in the genocidal rape of Bosnian Muslim women were Serb men and I am not aware of international court cases based on intra-ethnic rape (e.g., a Bosnian Muslim woman raped by a Bosnian Muslim man, a Bosnian Serb woman raped by a Bosnian Serb man, etc.). Historically, intra-racial or intra-ethnic wartime and peacetime rape has garnered less attention (Brownmiller, 1975), so it quite likely that these women's stories have not received attention. In this study, the recruitment materials were worded carefully so that all women, including those who were victimized by men of the same ethnicity, were not discouraged to share their stories.

Gender and ethnicity could be intersecting in another way to shape women's experiences: men's ownership of women's bodies could have a relationship with ethnic origin such that the woman's body is owned by, not one man, but all men who belong to the same ethnic group as she does (see Copelon, 1994 for a similar argument). In the context of the former Yugoslavia, there is evidence of political perception and media portrayal of women as ethnic bodies, ethnic territory (Žarkov, 2007). Logically then and similar to peacetime sexual violence, when (for example) a Bosnian Muslim woman is raped by a Bosnian Muslim man, she is perceived to be



his property based on her gender (woman) and her ethnic origin (same as his), so the rape is minimized. However, when a Bosnian Muslim woman is raped by a Bosnian Serb man or any non-Bosnian-Muslim man, she is perceived to have been raped by someone who does not own her, someone of a different ethnic origin – a stranger – and thus the rape is more in line with the familiar ideology of rape as a crime against men's property.

The arguments for conceptualizing sexual violence against all women, regardless of ethnicity, as genocide-like crimes are rare and are entirely missing from psychology literature. It is important to further explore these arguments because they can change the way we conceptualize the research conducted about wartime sexual violence including the participants we recruit. Using words such as femicide or gender-based genocide to describe wartime sexual violence against any and all women regardless of their other social markers such as ethnicity, includes women who may not have been previously included as participants in research. One of the central purposes of my dissertation was to research the impact of sexual violence on a diverse group of women, including those women whose ethnic identity is shared with the group who committed war crimes or genocide, women whose stories are rarely heard.

### **Women's Outcomes of Wartime Sexual Violence**

**Negative consequences.** Women who are victims of wartime rape or conflict related sexual violence can experience a wide range of effects or outcomes. Readily available and highly regarded documents and information from sources such as the United Nations tend to categorize women's outcomes into health and social consequences for them, their social networks, as well as their communities (United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict, 2011).

Women's health outcomes include sexual and reproductive consequences such as sexually transmitted infections, unwanted pregnancies, permanent damage to the reproductive system and

unsafe abortions, as well as physical injuries (United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 1998; United Nations, 2011). Women's mental or psychological health is also affected. They can experience a wide range of distress such as fear, self-blame, shame, anxiety, depression, substance use, suicidal ideation and self-harm (United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict, 2011). Social consequences for women who have been raped include being stigmatized, ostracized, discriminated against, being considered unmarriageable and rejected by both family and community, as well as being in danger of further poverty (United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 1998; United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict, 2011). Additionally, sexual violence may continue or increase post-conflict (United Nations, n.d.<sup>a</sup>).

Academic research in a variety of disciplines, including psychology, describes women's outcomes of wartime sexual violence in similar ways. The studies have been conducted in many countries (e.g., Rwanda, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sierra Leone) with sample sizes varying from one woman (i.e., a case study) to a few hundred women. Women are described as being negatively affected physically, psychologically, and socially by sexual violence. Women's outcomes of wartime sexual violence include shame (Michiko, 2001; Papineni, 2003; Skjelsbaek, 2006; Soh, 2006; Zraly & Nyirazinyoye, 2010), guilt (Schulz et al., 2006), physical pains (Skjelsbaek, 2006), posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or related symptoms (Suarez, 2013), depression (Cohen et al., 2009), embarrassment (Nagai, Karunakara, Rowley, & Burnham, 2008), anxiety (Yohani & Hagen, 2010), social withdrawal (Yohani & Hagen, 2010), and sexual disorders (Hustache et al., 2009).

In a cross-sectional study, researchers examined the relationship between sexual violence and reproductive health conditions with 320 women from the Democratic Republic of Congo. There were three different groups: (a) those who had experienced no sexual violence, (b) those who had experienced non-conflict related sexual violence and, (c) those who had experienced conflict related sexual violence (Dossa, Zunzunegui, Hatem, & Fraser, 2014). Approximately one fifth of the sample was women who were victims of conflict-related, or wartime, sexual violence. Using a standard questionnaire, researchers found that obstetric or traumatic fistula and chronic pelvic pain was most prevalent for women who were victims of wartime sexual violence. This group of women was also most likely to experience an absence of desire for sex and children. Reasons given for not desiring children among women in the conflict-related sexual violence group were association of pregnancy and children with painful experiences of aggression and negative perceptions of men. Additionally, abortion is illegal in the Democratic Republic of Congo and women who are raped during conflict are forced to carry the pregnancy to term by law without regard to the additional psychological trauma this may cause. Consequently, 10 percent of the women who became pregnant in the conflict-related sexual violence group put their lives at risk by attempting to abort under unsafe conditions. This research shows that conflict-related sexual violence has health and social consequences which mirror consequences in non-conflict related sexual violence, albeit with greater frequency (e.g., unsafe abortions, fistula, and chronic pelvic pain; Dossa et al., 2014)

In addition to physical and social consequences, women also experience psychological trauma. In the Eastern Congo, 53 women and girls participated in a cross-sectional quantitative study which found that most of the women (96.2%) reported being sexually assaulted (Schalinski, Elbert, & Schauer, 2011). Over two thirds of the women met criteria for PTSD and

over half of the women met criteria for depression. The study was conducted during ongoing violence in the Eastern Congo, so the women likely participated in the study relatively soon after they experienced sexual violence. In another study, 68 women and girls had been raped approximately one year before the study took place and it was found that 31% had PTSD and 78% had depression (Lončar, Medved, Jovanović, & Hotujac, 2006).

In a different study, 27 elderly German women participated in a study measuring trauma and posttraumatic stress symptoms (Kuwert et al., 2010). All of the women had survived the mass rapes by soldiers (an average of 12.5 rapes) towards the end of World War II and reported severe trauma. The women were raped between the ages of 12 and 26; they were between 76 and 89 years of age at the time of the study. Nearly half of the women still met the criteria for PTSD or partial PTSD, 19% met full criteria for PTSD and approximately 80% reported sexual impairments at some point in their lives.

In a recently published book about silenced Serb women who were victimized by wartime sexual violence, Simić (2018) collected data from primary and secondary sources (e.g., women's testimonies, informal conversations with survivors, and media reports). Though it is sometimes unclear whether the consequences experienced by the women were from rape specifically or the interaction of wartime events and/or post-war events, some long-term consequences for the women included: stigma, shame, isolation, health consequences, and suicide.

The aforementioned studies suggest that consequences of wartime sexual violence are long-term, but that there may be a decrease in negative consequences for women over time. Although there are no longitudinal studies examining women's outcomes of wartime rape, studies conducted shortly after rapes have taken place show that one to two thirds of women

meet criteria for PTSD (Lončar et al., 2006; Schalinski et al., 2011); the only study examining long-term effects of wartime rape found that less than one fifth of women meet criteria for PTSD. These studies suggest that many women may experience a decrease in PTSD symptoms post-rape.

The research reviewed above shows short-term and possibly long-term psychological consequences of wartime sexual violence for women of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The women's post-sexual violence outcomes are presented as traumatic and negative. One possible issue with describing women's outcomes from the deficit- or pathology-based perspective is that it ignores the reality that some women do not meet criteria for psychopathology. For example, when researchers report that over two thirds of women meet criteria for PTSD (e.g., Schalinski et al., 2011), they do not explicitly acknowledge that this means nearly one third of women do not. Describing women's wartime sexual violence outcomes as only negative and traumatic is common and present in most research on this topic.

**Reduction or absence of negative consequences.** There is a subset of studies that show women's outcomes of wartime sexual violence are not solely negative experiences. Some studies demonstrate that women's outcomes include a reduction of or absence of negative consequences such as PTSD (Hustache et al., 2009). It is important to examine these studies because they are able to help paint a broader picture of women's post-rape experiences. Many studies that show an absence or reduction of negative consequences are based in therapeutic interventions. The studies are typically centred around therapy and use phrases such as "reduced symptoms of PTSD" (Schulz et al., 2006, p. 204), "clear improvement of psychological state" (Hustache et al., 2009, p. 12), and "reduced psychological distress and psychosocial difficulties" (O'Callaghan, McMullen, Shannon, Rafferty, & Black, 2013, p. 365). A case study showed the effects of

therapy on PTSD with a 64-year old Bosnian Muslim woman, who was treated for PTSD, chronic, and major depressive disorders, and who showed feelings of guilt for her own rape (Schulz et al., 2006). The study showed that therapy can help reduce “disabilities due to symptoms” (p. 196) and that women who have experienced wartime sexual violence can learn coping skills to deal with distressing thoughts and master their own trauma.

The focus of these studies indicate two things. One, women suffer adverse psychological consequences of sexual violence, but these negative effects can be reduced. And, two, they can be reduced with the help of therapy. The studies help show that women can recover post-trauma, so they are helpful in showing women’s strengths. Two possible drawbacks of such studies are that they are rooted in the idea that (a) negative consequences and trauma are necessary and potentially the only components of women’s post-rape outcomes, and (b) women need professionals to recover from traumatic experiences such as rape. However, there is some literature showing that women may recast trauma, so that positive outcomes or strengths are experienced alongside negative consequences post-rape (see below).

Additionally, some peacetime sexual violence literature suggests that women can and do recover without the use of professionals (Thompson, 2000). Thus, conceptualizing women as dependant on professionals for their recovery as well as only experiencing negative consequences may be presenting an incomplete and somewhat unidimensional picture of women’s post-rape recovery and experiences.

**Strengths.** Other wartime sexual violence research paints a more complex picture of post-rape outcomes: women can experience negative consequences or outcomes, positive outcomes or strengths, or both when coping with the trauma of rape. This demonstrates women’s multi-dimensionality in constructing their post-sexual violence identities. In a qualitative study,

seven women aged 25 to 40 were interviewed to examine the lived experience of women in Rwanda who were raped during the country's genocide in 1994 (Mukamana & Brysiewicz, 2008). They were all part of an organization where survivors of genocide, including rape, came together. The women reported negative outcomes such as loss of identity, dignity and respect; social isolation; loss of hope for the future; and babies born out of rape as a source of family conflict because the children were a reminder of suffering. However, the women also reported developing a sense of community with other women from the organization. Some of the women fought stigma surrounding rape by talking openly about it and they found comfort, support and acceptance in one other (Mukamana & Brysiewicz, 2008). Similarly, in a paper about three women who were raped during the Bangladesh war in 1971, the women were silenced by their village and had a fear of being scorned when they came into media spotlight 20 years later (Mookherjee, 2006). However, the women found their voices and saw themselves as liberation fighters.

In a qualitative study with five Bosniak (Bosnian Muslim) women aged 24 to 44, some women claimed victim status while others claimed survivor status (Skjelsbaek, 2006). The women who identified as survivors spoke about the negatives in their recovery from rape (e.g., being on sedatives). However, the survivors also defined the rape as a criminal act and as a crime against humanity. They were not silent about their rapes and this was shown by their willingness and strength to testify at The Hague – International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). The women did not view their female identities as destroyed and they indicated that they did not feel shame for their rapes. The women who identified as survivors experienced negative consequences, but also an absence of certain negative consequences (e.g., lack of shame) in their recovery process. Women who identified as victims experienced outcomes which included

physical (stomach pains), psychological (shame; insomnia; nightmares; negative feelings towards men or boys; problems focusing; damage to how they view themselves and their relationships; fear that their children will ask about the rapes), and social consequences (no job due to psychological issues, concern about marriageability). Additionally, this group of women perceived the war rapes as having negatively altered their female identities through “their sexual and procreative abilities” (Skjelsbaek, 2006, p. 392). Women who identified with the victim status echoed much of the research in wartime sexual violence literature and supported the idea that outcomes of sexual violence are primarily negative. Contrary to this discourse, however, was the evidence of some women finding strength after their experiences of wartime sexual violence.

*Women’s strengths in peacetime sexual violence literature.* The research on women’s strengths after wartime sexual violence is limited, but we can look to the more developed literature on peacetime sexual violence for clues. Much like wartime sexual violence research, research in peacetime sexual violence shows negative impacts on women physically (e.g., unintended pregnancies and abortions; Holmes, Resnick, Kilpatrick, & Best, 1996), psychologically and emotionally (Brown, Testa, & Messman-Moore, 2009; Resnick, Kilpatrick, Dansky, Saunders, & Best, 1993), as well as socially (Brown et al., 2009).

Women have described positive outcomes in their recovery from rape during peacetime (Draucker, 1999) even when they did not receive psychological support from professionals in the process of recovery (Thompson, 2000). Women’s strength-based outcomes, ones that are counter to the trauma of rape discourse, in psychology are difficult to find. In a literature review and synthesis I conducted, there were over one thousand results on outcomes of sexual violence that suggest serious implications for women and only 18 results were related to women’s strengths in the recovery process post-sexual violence (Sisic, 2015).



From these 18 articles, approximately half were politically oriented and presented women as having political and/or personal agency, as well as engaging in acts of rebellion. The women in the described studies became politically and socially active (e.g., became actively involved in changing the legislation on sexual assault) post-rape (e.g., Bergen, 1995; Danzer, 2011) and acted in ways that were inconsistent with the social script of their gender such as being assertive and deciding they could live without a partner (e.g., Draucker, 1999; Draucker, Stern, Burgess, & Campbell, 2000).

In approximately half of the 18 articles reviewed, women's strengths were portrayed as personal strengths or acts (rather than political ones) and focused on psychological indicators of survival and women's relationships with others (Sisic, 2015). Psychological indicators of survival included descriptions such as women's resiliency, growth, coping with thoughts and feelings, and reliance on family, friends, or therapy for coping (e.g., Borja, Callahan, & Long, 2006; Popiel & Susskind, 1985; Thompson, 2000; Valentiner, Foa, Riggs, & Gershuny, 1996). When women's positive relationships with others were described, studies focused on women as helping or protecting others (e.g., Miller, 2014), having increased sympathy or empathy (e.g., Draucker, 2001), and better relationships (e.g., Frazier et al., 2001).

There are numerous factors that influence rape outcomes in peacetime. A review article examined the psychological impact of adult sexual assault in peacetime using the ecological model, including individual-level factors (e.g., coping) and higher-level factors such as microsystem factors (e.g., informal support from family and friends), meso/exosystem factors (e.g., contact with legal centre or rape crisis centers), and macrosystem factors (e.g., societal rape myth acceptance; Campbell, Dworkin, & Cabral, 2009). Higher-level factors produced the most consistent results showing, for example, that negative social reactions and cumulative trauma

predict negative post-assault outcomes. The review is corroborated by other research on post-trauma that shows the association of social support with more positive mental health outcomes (e.g., Reich, Lounsbury, Zaid-Muhammad, & Rapkin, 2010), as well as more recent research showing the possible contribution of the lack of social support to distress experienced by those victimized by sexual assault (Stermac, Cabral, Clarke, & Toner, 2014).

Mixed results were found on the role of individual-level factors such as psychological characteristics of a person (e.g., personality and pre-existing mental health conditions). Though studies examining personality characteristics are rare, Campbell et al.'s (2009) review found that neuroticism and self-criticism predict PTSD post-rape. They also reviewed a number of studies that have examined the role of pre-existing mental health conditions on women's post-assault trauma. Although some studies showed that pre-existing mental health conditions (e.g., pre-assault depression, pre-assault anxiety) are positively associated with post-assault trauma, some studies have not found the same relationship. The authors of the review suggested that pre-assault mental health may affect post-assault outcomes. However, the relationship between prior victimization and pre-existing mental health has not been assessed in research (e.g., the pre-existing mental health may in fact be related to a prior sexual assault) making it difficult to ascertain what the aforementioned mixed findings reflect (Campbell et al., 2009).

Although spirituality and religious coping have been positively linked to psychological well-being post-assault (Ahrens, Abeling, Ahmad, & Hinman, 2010; Kennedy, Davis, & Taylor 1998), approach coping (i.e., cognitive restructuring and expressing emotions; different construct from religious coping) has been more strongly related to self-reported positive life changes than religious coping (Frazier, Tashiro, Berman, Steger, & Long, 2004). Further, no study has compared the well-being of religious versus nonreligious women who have been victimized by

sexual assault. Thus, the relationship between religious coping and well-being is unclear in the context of sexual violence. Victims' coping responses also showed mixed results in a review article (Campbell et al., 2009). In general, adaptive coping yielded positive results and maladaptive coping yielded negative results. Adaptive coping such as seeking social support was related to quicker recovery and less psychological sequela such as depression, anxiety, and PTSD. Maladaptive coping such as using avoidant coping strategies predicted negative outcomes such as depression, PTSD, and longer recovery time. However, several studies also found contrary findings for coping and post-assault sequela: one study found that seeking some types of social support were related to *more* distress and another study found that some avoidance strategies were related to *less* distress. The authors note that the mixed findings suggest that context (i.e., microsystem influences such as support from family or friends) may be important when examining coping strategies. For example, women's access to support of family members may affect the type of coping they engage in. Overall, the review points to the importance of context and higher-level factors even when examining individual-level factors of psychological impact of adult sexual assault (Campbell et al., 2009).

***Psychological indicators of survival in peacetime sexual violence.*** Studies examining psychological indicators reinforce the trauma of rape discourse through their default presumption that rape is traumatic and that women need others (such as psychologists) in order to heal and recover (Gavey & Schmidt, 2011). Therapy is central both to studies examining psychological indicators of survival and to the trauma of rape discourse. But, "therapy assumes that someone is

sick and that there is a cure” which implies a personal solution to the problem (Hanisch, 1970, p. 76). That is, women’s experiences of rape and its outcomes are implied to be a *personal issue*.

When we focus on a woman’s psychological consequences such as anxiety, we medicalize her experiences and when we send her to therapy or focus on her post-therapeutic outcomes, we assume that she is “sick” and that there is a cure or, put differently, that there is a personal solution (Hanisch, 1970) to sexual violence. Feminists and other critics have criticized therapy, because it can lead us to adjust to our conditions rather than to change them (Hanisch, 1970). Sexual violence, the political and widespread issue that it is, is not something to which women should be adjusting to. Although emphasis on psychological harm of sexual violence has been helpful in drawing public empathy, support, and acknowledgment of this issue as a problem, it has not contributed to the understanding of the violence as worthy of political discourse and action (Ovenden, 2012).

I am not suggesting that the research on psychological indicators and negative outcomes of sexual violence should cease, because they are important to know. But, there should be a balance. When we are constantly bombarded with the idea that women will suffer after rape, be traumatized, and will not have any strengths to speak of, it is no wonder that some women perceive rape to be a fate worse than death and that some women fear disclosing sexual violence because they do not want to be perceived as a stereotypical victim (e.g., “poor girl”; Ovenden, 2012, p. 947). When we write about and speak about women’s strengths such as political action, we are reproducing images of women who possess strength after rape and we put at the centre a wide array of women’s stories, and not just one particular narrative (i.e., trauma of rape).

In a recent article, Clark (2018) problematized the overreliance on the trauma of rape discourse (also using in part the arguments made by [Gavey and Schmidt, 2011]) in wartime rape

and highlighted the importance of a resilience discourse. The article's purpose appeared to be a theoretical argument for including resilience as part of the discourse and a call for such a lens in work on wartime sexual violence outcomes. Thus, my research – with its examination of women's comprehensive and complex outcomes, including strengths retained or developed as a result of wartime sexual violence and conceived several years prior to the article's publication – is an answer to Clark's (2018) call for greater recognition of resilience in those victimized by wartime sexual violence.

### **Current Study**

There are three main limitations in the current literature on wartime sexual violence. One, there is little research, particularly in psychology, with women who have survived wartime sexual violence. Two, where there is research, it is predominantly conducted from a trauma of rape discourse where women's psychopathological or deficit-based outcomes are highlighted rather than or in addition to the strengths they may have acquired as a result of the trauma. And finally, a sampling limitation in the studies on wartime sexual violence is the lack of ethnic diversity, especially in the studies conducted in Bosnia and Herzegovina where the focus of research has been on women victimized by both genocide (by virtue of their ethnic belonging) and sexual violence (i.e., Bosnian Muslim women).

My study addressed these limitations in three ways. One, because we do not know a lot about wartime sexual violence, I used qualitative methodology which allowed me to explore women's experiences and conceptualizations of experiences with rape in more depth. Specifically, I used Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), a methodological framework focused on how individuals make meaning of their experiences (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). Throughout the research process, I treated the women as experts of their own lives

(Parker, 2004) to create and maintain rapport with them, show respect for what they have experienced and the knowledge they have about their own experiences, and to gain insight into this under-researched area of study. This can be a difficult topic to discuss, so my primary mode of recruitment was done through an organization that works with women victims of war, the Association Women Victims of the War (Udruženje žena žrtva rata; henceforth “the Association”). The Association has a relationship with a psychotherapist, so the women participants had a readily available social support network and access to therapy should they have needed it.

Additionally, I examined the women’s post-rape recovery and life by conducting tape-recorded semi-structured interviews (recommended for IPA; Smith & Osborn, 2003) using comprehensive and open-ended questions. I hoped that this approach created space for the women’s complicated lives and recovery to emerge. Additionally, the approach avoided relying on the trauma of rape discourse which does not leave room for women to have different reactions to traumatic events, to feel a multitude of things, and to feel those things at different points in their lives. It was, and continues to be, important to me that psychology’s fondness for discovering inferiorities and deficits in others (Parker, 2004) was not perpetuated in this research.

Finally, I want to be clear that I perceive wartime sexual violence to be an act of femicide. I see any woman who was sexually assaulted during the Bosnian war as victimized first and foremost because of her gender and then because of, but by no means any less important, other socio-cultural factors such as ethnicity and/or religion. Within this framework, any woman can be raped. Stories of women who belong to the ethnic group that perpetrated a war/conflict or genocide are not discounted under this framework and when we include stories of

different women's experiences, not only do we have the potential to expand research and theory of wartime sexual violence, but also give a voice to women who have been ignored by research (but who we know exist). In my study, women from diverse ethnic backgrounds (i.e., Bosnian Muslim, Bosnian Croat, and Bosnian Serb) who have experienced rape in any context (e.g., rape camp, intraethnic rape) during the 1990s war in Bosnia and Herzegovina were recruited and interviewed. However, I was open to the women taking a different perspective about their experiences each step of the way in the research (e.g., the way I conducted the interviews, the way I analyzed the transcripts). Thus the sexual violence as femicide perspective was not imposed on the participants, but was rather allowed to emerge when present, or be contradicted.

The interviews were guided by one over-arching research question and two sub-questions:

How do women who have experienced wartime sexual violence conceptualize their post-rape outcomes?

- 1) Do the women identify any positive or strength-based outcomes? Related to this, has activism or political involvement had an effect on the women's post-rape recovery and experiences?
- 2) What aspects, if any, of the women's post-rape outcomes are associated with their ethnicity and/or the ethnicity of the perpetrator?

## **Methods**

### **Participants**

Thirteen women who had been sexually assaulted during the Bosnian war participated in this study. Though it may appear to be a small number, 13 participants far exceeds the typical number of participants required for the nuanced analyses of IPA. In their guide to using IPA in

qualitative research psychology, Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012) note that it is uncommon to publish studies with more than 15 participants. Additionally, they cite Turpin et al. (1997) to add that doctoral programs in Britain recommend six to eight participants for IPA studies as an appropriate number for examining similarities and differences between individuals without having an overwhelming amount of data to analyze.

The women were between the ages of 36 and 75 at the time of the interview; they were between the ages of 12 and 51 when they were raped. Two women had some primary schooling completed; one had some secondary schooling; eight had completed secondary schooling; and two had post-secondary schooling. Five women were retired; one was retired but working; three were unemployed; two were employed; one was employed but not currently working; and one worked but did not have steady and regular employment (i.e., she worked odd jobs). The women represented all three major ethnicities: five Croat women, five Muslim women, two Serb women, and one mixed (Serb and Croat) woman. They all had children. See Table 1 for demographic information. (In-depth demographic information, along with the women's stories of war and rape will be written about at length in the "Herstories" chapter). The women lived in two major urban areas or their surroundings.

### **Recruitment Procedures**

The women were recruited through the Association (i.e., the Association Women Victims of the War), an organization that assists those victimized by rape or sexual assault committed during the Bosnian war. The Association was founded in 2003 with the goal of gathering women who were sexually assaulted and raped during the aggression on BiH, and has since expanded to include men victimized by the same aforementioned crimes. It is a nongovernmental and multi-ethnic association whose members are interested in, among other things, employment and a



Table 1

*Basic Demographic Information of Participants*

Participant	Age	Ethnicity	Schooling	Employment	Children (Y/N)
Jedan	57	Mixed	Post-secondary	Retired	Y
M.O.	42	Muslim	Secondary school	Unemployed	Y
Tri	58	Serb	Secondary school	Retired	Y
Četiri	45	Croat	Secondary school	Employed but not working	Y
Pet	43	Muslim	Secondary school	Employed	Y
B.H.	63	Muslim	Secondary school	Retired but working	Y
Sedan	63	Serb	Secondary school	Unemployed	Y
Osam	36	Croat	Secondary school	Working, but irregular work	Y
Devet	74	Croat	Elementary school	Retired	Y
Deset	75	Croat	Four primary grades	Retired	Y
Jedanaest	63	Croat	Post-secondary	Retired	Y
Dvanaest	38	Muslim	Secondary school	Employed	Y
Z.J.	54	Muslim	Some secondary schooling	Unemployed	Y

return to a “normal life” (Bosna i Hercegovina Udruženje Žena Žrtva Rata Sarajevo, 2019). The organization is a good source for recruiting women of all three targeted ethnic groups, because they (a) work largely with female victims and (b) are situated in a large urban location (i.e., Sarajevo) but have worked with women all over BiH.

An overview of the study was provided to the President of the Association and two employees including the goal to have an ethnically diverse sample and approximately an equal number of women from each major ethnic group. The employees had the initial contact with the potential participants. I deemed it more appropriate that the female workers helped in the early stages, because they had a pre-existing relationship with the women. The aforementioned process of engaging an existing worker to help with data recruitment was modelled after another study about wartime sexual violence (Mukamana & Brysiewicz, 2008). Additionally, I offered to compensate for the employees’ time (i.e., not the number of participants recruited) if the recruitment work they were doing fell outside the purview of their job.

The employees contacted the potential participants to introduce the study and establish the potential participants’ interest using a script I provided them with as a guideline (Appendix A). If a woman was interested and met the criteria, she was invited to participate in a face-to-face interview with the researcher. The potential participants were given a choice between setting up an interview time with the employee or allowing the employee to give me their contact information so I could call them and set up an interview time. When setting up the interview time, women were given the choice between meeting at the Association (a place the Association made clear was seen as safe) or elsewhere (in case the participants wanted the choice of participating or not participating kept anonymous from the Association; or if they were unable to come to the Association for the interview).

Some women arranged a meeting time and location through the Association. Others had asked the employees that I call them to arrange a time and location (see Appendix B for script). If I contacted the woman at any point during the study via phone, I ensured that the subject of the study was not disclosed to anyone but the woman (e.g., when the phone was picked up, I did not mention the study topic until the woman confirmed I was speaking with her).

All participants in the final sample were recruited through the Association. Once interviews with the women were completed, I told them that I was interested in speaking with any women who experienced sexual violence during the war and under any circumstances, including those women who were victimized by someone other than army personnel or men who shared the same ethnicity. I gave women cards with my contact information and asked them to give a card to any women they knew who were victimized by wartime sexual violence and may have been interested in participating in the study. This “snowballing” process did not lead to additional participants.

The women were compensated 70 BAM (Bosnian currency) for their time and were offered compensation for any child care costs. At the time of the interviews, one BAM was worth approximately .75 CAD. The women’s compensation was calculated based on a conversation in February, 2016 with the Director of a different women’s organization (with whom the recruitment was originally to take place) who said that women in the organization who have been raped during wartime were compensated between 50BAM and 100BAM in the past for their interview time. I chose an amount within the range given by the Director, but on the low to mid end of the range. Therefore, the compensation was hopefully seen as honouring the participants’ time and effort without inducing participation that would otherwise not be

considered. Additionally, the cost of public transportation (1.80 BAM each way) to meet with me was included in the compensation.

## **Procedure**

**The semi-structured interview.** All interviews were conducted in Bosnian, a language I am fluent in. When I first met the women, I chatted with them briefly and gave them time to look over the consent form which was written in Bosnian. Once they read the Consent Form (Appendix C; title of study was different, so that the participants were not swayed by my focus on strength-based outcomes) or I read the form to them (some women had forgotten their reading aides), I gave them an opportunity to ask questions about the form or the study. Rather than having participants sign the Consent Form, their verbal consent was tape recorded. For privacy reasons, they did not use their name when recording their consent. A copy of the Consent Form with my signature was given to the participants to keep. They were asked if they would like to use a pseudonym and if they chose one, I used it throughout the tape-recorded interview.

I interviewed the women about their experiences using semi-structured questions (Appendix D for guiding questions) based on the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis stance of open questions with “gentle” probing (Smith, 2004, p. 49). I began the interview by turning on the tape recorder and confirming consent to participate. Next, I asked the participants basic demographic information, where they lived before the war (this type of question was used in previous research with victimized women in Bosnia and Herzegovina; Skjelsbaek, 2006) and what their life was like in general during the pre-war period. Then, I asked them questions about their war experiences, specifically about the sexual violence they experienced. Finally, I asked them how the experience(s) of sexual violence affected them both short-term and long-term, and if they thought that their or the perpetrator’s ethnicity played a role in their recovery process.

Breaks and opportunities to check-in with the participants were built into the interview in case the women needed a break from the interview. Due to the nature of the subjects discussed, I gave each woman the contact information (Appendix E) for the psychotherapist already familiar to the Association for her work with the women.

The women were also told that I would call them within two weeks if I needed to clarify anything and that I would call them within approximately one month to ask them if they would like to review a hard copy of the interview transcript or have it emailed to them. Six women were initially interested in seeing the transcripts, but only two followed through with the request and were given the transcript. I contacted all of the women who showed initial interest, but four were no longer interested. For example, one woman said she would e-mail me her request so I could send her an electronic copy, but she did not do so; another woman was hesitant about requesting a copy and told me to call her twice on a specific day and if she does not answer, it means I should stop calling her. None of the requests or lack of follow-through to see transcripts struck me as odd, because the women had shared a very personal and traumatic part of their lives and likely did not want to be reminded of it. Additionally, based on the rapport I had with the women, they likely trusted that the transcripts were true to the conducted interviews (e.g., one woman told me she did not want to see the transcript because she trusted I would anonymize the information she asked me to anonymize). The women who chose to review the transcript were told that they would be given two weeks to do so. If two weeks had elapsed without them contacting me, I told them I would assume the transcript was approved. In case they needed to reach me or thought of anything else they wanted to tell me, I gave the women calling cards worth approximately \$5 and a couple of business cards with my contact information. Ultimately, none of the women had contacted me to make changes to the transcript.

**Confidentiality and anonymizing of interviews.** While I was in BiH, the digital recorder containing the audio recordings of the interviews was password protected and stored in a password protected box which was kept in a locked room. In case of loss or theft, the audio recordings were also sent to my supervisor, Dr. Senn, using “Big File Drop Box” and a password. I did all the transcriptions of the interviews. The transcripts of the interviews were stored in a password protected document on a password protected laptop. Upon my return to Canada, the audio recordings were stored in a locked cabinet in Dr. Senn’s secure research laboratory. While both Dr. Senn and I have access to the data, Dr. Senn does not read or understand Bosnian so this access is necessarily limited. Audio recordings were destroyed once the accuracy of the transcripts had been confirmed and the dissertation was defended.

At the start of the interviews, I offered the women an opportunity to be anonymous in the transcripts by selecting a pseudonym. Most studies on wartime sexual violence have used pseudonyms, but there have been instances where real names were used. In one study, the researcher used a mix of pseudonyms and real names noting that two women wanted to remain anonymous whereas the other women did not (Soh, 2006). It was important to me that I gave the women a choice of whether to be anonymous or not in transcripts and published materials, because I did not want to assume that anonymity is something they want. Although it may be convenient or common to anonymize data based on concerns about identifying participants, it may be hurtful to participants to deny them their voice (Parker, 2005) and some have argued that it borders on infantilizing participants by assuming they do not know how to protect themselves or that they are incapable of taking measures for their own protection. Three participants asked to use their initials and the remainder asked for me to assign them some sort of pseudonym. If a

quote was critical to the analysis but would be identifying for a woman, the details were changed or redacted to ensure that the person was not identifiable.

### **Transcription and Analysis**

Interviews were conducted and transcribed in Bosnian (I use the term “Bosnian” while keeping in mind that it is quite similar to Croatian and Serbian and that all three languages belonged to a cluster that was called Serbo-Croatian pre-war). They were transcribed verbatim including my questions, significant pauses, false starts, and laughs (Smith & Osborn, 2003). When conducting qualitative research in non-English, but presenting the findings in English, it is important to stay in the original language as long as possible (Van Nes, Abma, Jonsson, & Deeg, 2010). Additionally, an important feature of IPA is the “double hermeneutic”: the participant engages in sense-making of their world while the researcher engages in sense-making of the participant making sense of their world (Smith, 2004). Language plays an important role here, at least in part due to how words and language are used in a particular language. In line with this, all analyses were conducted in Bosnian. Once the analysis was completed and themes identified, the themes and illustrative quotes were translated to English.

Before formal analysis took place, I transcribed the interview audio, then listened along with the written transcript to check for accuracy, and finally re-read the transcript. Although not a part of formal analysis, this stage of the process was important for familiarizing myself with the data and set the foundation for the coding in the formal analysis.

Analyses were completed based on recommendations for IPA by Smith and Osborn (2003). I began by examining one interview transcript before moving onto others. In the first stage of analysis, I read the transcript a number of times to become familiar with it. Specifically, I read the transcript, then listened to the audio, and finally read the transcript while listening to

the audio. I used the left-hand margin each time to note what was interesting or significant (e.g., connections that came to mind, preliminary interpretations, participant's use of language, contradictions). In the second stage of analysis, I worked more with my notes from stage one and used the right-hand margin to write down titles of emerging themes. I tried to word the themes in such a way that they were still connected to what the woman expressed, but also allowed for theoretical connections in the next stages (e.g., I used more "psychological" phrases in this stage). In the third stage, I made a list of the emergent themes and looked for connections between them to create a cluster of themes (i.e., superordinate themes). Through an iterative process, I checked that the superordinate themes encapsulate the original text from which it was derived. And, although recommended to be done in stage four, I wrote key words from the transcript for each theme and the corresponding page and line numbers so I could easily refer back to the quotes should I need to. In the fourth stage, I created a table of the superordinate themes (along with a list of "sub-themes" and key words/phrases that belonged under each one) and marked up the transcript noting under which superordinate themes the phrases were categorized. At this point, themes for which there was not a lot of rich evidence in the transcript or those that did not fit well within the emerging structure were dropped.

In the next stages of analysis, I repeated the same steps with each new transcript, starting from scratch with each new participant. If a new superordinate theme appeared in a transcript, I went back to previous transcripts to see if there was evidence of that theme. For personal reasons, I could not finish writing the results until approximately one year after finishing analysis. For that reason, after the hiatus, I re-familiarized myself with the data by reading through all transcripts again and examining the themes and tables once more to ensure they made sense. I considered this a stage of analysis, because I took the opportunity to (a) re-word



superordinate themes to capture the data better and (b) re-organize themes that fit better under other superordinate themes (e.g., they became subthemes).

Smith (2004) described IPA as having different levels of interpretation, but that these can largely be categorized into two types of hermeneutics: (a) hermeneutics of empathy and meaning recollection and (b) hermeneutics of questioning and critical engagement. In line with Smith (2004) as well as my own personal values of believing women who have been raped, the empathic reading and interpretation of the text came first. At times, and especially when I found myself questioning whether I understood what I had read in a transcript, I read and re-read pieces of the transcripts and engaged in a process of more critical (or questioning) engagement. In the context of the world we live in today, I feel that I must say that this critical or questioning engagement never had me questioning the occurrence of the events the women described. Instead, the critical engagement was often in response to subtleties in their use of language (e.g., using default male pronouns to describe those victimized by sexual violence, but also referring to those who are victimized as women and girls).

### **Herstories**

When I interviewed the women in this study, the stories they told me gave me context for the eventual analysis I performed. Without the context – her story – the results seemed incomplete. From a methodological perspective, IPA's aim is the detailed exploration of participants making sense of their personal and social worlds (Smith & Osborn, 2003). In this study, that means exploring wartime rape and its meaning to each woman. To optimize the

meaning of the results, the reader should be familiar with each woman's story, her world in relation to wartime sexual violence.

I wrote the following as succinctly as possible while keeping the integrity of each woman's story. Some stories are longer; some are shorter. Each of them is told as closely as possible to the story she told me in the interview. The stories varied in length based on detail provided in the interview. The pseudonyms were chosen purposefully. Three women asked me to use their initials (i.e., M.O., B.H., and Z.J.). The remainder of the women asked me to choose a way to identify them using some sort of "code" or "number." For the women who asked me to do that, the name I assigned them is, in Bosnian, the numbered order in which I interviewed them. For example, I assigned the name "Jedan" to the first woman I interviewed which is the word for the number "one" in Bosnian. The choice I made may seem unnecessarily emotionally distant, as if each woman is just a number. It may seem, ironically, that I am quantifying a woman in a qualitative study. However, there were two major reasons why I chose this method of naming.

One, assigning an actual name is a deeply political act. If I chose names that were familiar to an Anglo-Saxon audience, I would have perhaps made reading easier for an English audience, but would have effectively erased the culture of the participants. If I had chosen more culturally appropriate names (e.g., "Bosnian" names), that too would have been riddled with political choices. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, a name is often an indicator of someone's ethnic identity (e.g., Serb, Croat, Muslim). The main issue with this would have been choosing a name for women who were of "mixed" ethnicities (i.e., Jedan).

Two, the numbers used as identifiers in this study are the same in Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian. Recent survey data from Bosnia and Herzegovina show that popular "mother tongues"

in the country include Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian (Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2016). The use of numbers as identifiers does not suggest ethnic belonging of women nor impose an ethnic belonging in the case of “mixed” participants.

### **Jedan**

Jedan was 57 years old at the time of the interview and retired. She had finished two years of post-secondary education and had worked as a physiotherapist before the war. She lived in central BiH before the war, during much of the war, and after the war, all in the same city. Jedan is “mixed”: her father is ethnically Serb and her mother is ethnically Croat. She has three children: two sons from a mixed marriage (she was married to a Muslim and divorced before the war had started) and a daughter from a post-war relationship with a man who died some time ago.

Before the war started, Jedan was told by others to leave her city because a war was brewing. She was told to pack up her children and go to her mother’s home, out of the city she was residing in with her children. Jedan was in such disbelief that she left with the last plane flying out of the city: “everyone told me “[participant name redacted], pack up the kids, take the kids, go to your mom’s, there will be war.” Come on, what war? I [left] with the last plane, I know it was a Wednesday, that my boss packed me up on the plane to go to [name of city redacted], just so I can get out.” With her children in tow, she made her way to her parents’ home (which was in a different part of the region) and stayed with them for approximately one year. Then, she wanted to go back to the city she had lived in, in part because she did not want to lose her job. There were calls through media (television, radio) for workers to go back to their jobs: “I want to go to work, I will be left without a job. I saw them calling workers to return over the

radio [and] over the television (...) [to return] to work.” She left her children with her parents and went back to the city she left.

When she arrived there, she felt confused about the war (e.g., who was at war, which parts of the city were occupied and which were not), citing that all of her city was one before the war: “you don’t know who to defend yourself from, you don’t know, you don’t know what to think, you don’t know which side to go on. It was all yours, all of [name of city redacted].” On her way back to the city, due to wartime circumstances, she was unable to go directly from her parents’ home to her home. A bus was unable to get her to her neighbourhood in the city. An opportunity came up when she ran into a former co-worker who said he could get her to a different [Serb-occupied] neighbourhood and then find her transportation to her house. Her colleague took her to a building where the [Serb] army was stationed and where she was captured for approximately five days. The colleague left her with the army to change his clothes and she did not see him again. While she waited for him, she witnessed a beating and rapes. (From the way Jedan told the story, it seemed that the colleague was not aware that Jedan would be imprisoned.)

At one point, shortly after her arrival, a soldier offered to take her for coffee and she found it difficult to either accept or refuse in such a circumstance: “[he] said ‘let’s go for a coffee.’ (laughs) go on and say no, go on and say yes.” She left to have coffee with the soldier in an apartment upstairs, reflecting on it as “bloody coffee.” She remembered that the soldier did make coffee and gave her whiskey and cigarettes, but he also raped her. Jedan did not label the sexualized interaction as rape, but she noted the coercive nature of the situation such as the soldier telling her she had better take her own clothes off or he would do it:

I entered that apartment, he really made coffee and whiskey and Marlboro, all that, you know. It came to that, “go on, take off your clothes. Here, we have beds and everything, come on.” He finished, all that, you know, “you better take off your own clothes, don’t make me take it off.”

After that, she was raped by three other soldiers. She told me matter-of-factly that the first soldier who raped her was not going to prevent his colleagues from doing the same thing he had done to her just shortly before. Again, she did not label what the three soldiers did to her as “rape.” However, she used a euphemism implying rape:

well he won’t forbid his friends [from doing the same]. Who am I? “when I could [do it], so can you. Why not?” Who asks you who you are and what you are? (7 second pause)  
Come on, as they say, one climbs off and another climbs on [indirect translation of an expression].

After those rapes, she told me that she was “saved” by a “Četnik” (i.e., term used for Serb nationalist) from worse atrocities that could have been committed against her during captivity. Being “with” this particular soldier meant that she was largely saved from other rapes and assaults. However, she continued to witness atrocities in the apartment (e.g., torture of young men) and be victimized herself (e.g., the soldier’s dad raped her when his son was out of the apartment). After his dad raped her (again, Jedan does not call it “rape”), the “Četnik” hid her elsewhere in the apartment building. She was found in the hiding place by a soldier and raped by him and another soldier. She did not use the word “rape”, but did tell me that she felt like she was taping a “porno”:

when that living out started, like he never, well he didn’t, he had never seen a woman.

“want it like that, want it like that, turn around.” In the meantime, he took off his clothes,

it's like I was taping porno films.

She told me she screamed but it did not help; she just hoped she would stay alive and see her children again: “you can howl, you can scream as much as you want, just pray to yourself that you stay alive, to see those kids.”

After being entrapped for some time (she thinks it was approximately five days but cannot remember all the details), she worked up enough courage to knock on the door of an apartment she knew was inhabited by a civilian and ask for his help for a way out:

I gathered strength, just like that door to door, to knock. I know that there was one older man there. I saw him the one day when I sat in front of the door, I saw that he passed by (...) and I knocked on the door, the man unlocked [the door]. I said “please, can I have just one cigarette, and can you tell me which way to escape?” He gave me that super filter cigarette and said “I can't help you child.” [I said] “Just tell me where, I have no idea [how to get around] this way.” He can't [tell me] either and since his door was looking on straight, he said “go by those garages.”

The civilian told her which way to leave. Jedan was able to leave the building and looked for transportation to get out of the neighbourhood she was in. While waiting, she was approached by a police officer who tried to get her to come with him elsewhere, under the guise of giving her medicine for her eye. She verbally resisted:

“across the street there was this one bar, that is where the police was. One police officer turned around and looked at me. He crossed over. I also had a sty [on the eye]. [He asked] “what's that on your eye?”. [I said] “a sty.” “Come on,” he said, “let me give you, I have a good cream.” “Thanks,” I said, “I have to urgently go to [municipality name redacted].”

Luckily, she says, a truck came along and she was able to escape, albeit sharing the space with a dead man. She later found out that the police station that the police officer tried to bring her to was known for wartime murders and rapes.

Neither the apartment building (location of the rapes) nor the perpetrators were familiar to Jedan (i.e., she did not know them before the rapes). She told me she did not comprehend the extent of the crimes she was witnessing at the time. She also considered herself lucky that she had an IUD and, early in captivity, tried to prevent pregnancies from any rapes by inserting tampons in herself:

only nothing, actually I was lucky I had an IUD (...) I found tampons, I just shoved tampons in, I would shove two in. If the next one [did the same], just so I don't get pregnant.

Jedan was able to find her way back to her parents' home where she told her mother about one of the rapes (and only much later about the others). Jedan did not know if her mother would believe her, due in part to her mother's religiosity ("on the basis of that faith and this and that, I didn't know if she would believe me."). Returning to her parents' home was not easy. She said she was not herself for about two weeks. She began to drink after the rapes and went to rehabilitation for alcoholism. She continues to be reminded daily of the rapes, particularly at night when she lays to sleep. She cannot chase away the memories of what happened to her – somehow she always thinks back to that time even if she starts out thinking about happy memories. She stated that it was one thing to be raped during peace time, and another thing to be raped during wartime, but did not elaborate. Post-war, a fire destroyed her home. However, she was able to rebuild it with help, including help from the Association. She is hopeful that she will get a break from negative events in her life.

An overall note on the participant in this interview is that she tapped her fingers on the table in front of her for much of the interview. As an observer, it was unclear whether she was nervous, whether it was used as a mechanism for memory recall, whether it was a coping mechanism or self-soothing behaviour or something else entirely.

### **M.O.**

M.O. was 42 years old and unemployed at the time of interview. She lived in eastern BiH before the war, but now lives in a major city in central BiH. She finished high school and intended to go on with her education, but could not due to the war starting. M.O. is Muslim. She is married to a man and has two daughters. She has one living sister and one living brother. Many members of M.O.'s family were killed during the war. The closest relatives who were killed were her parents and brother. Two siblings survived. During the war, her cousins were killed, leaving behind a 13-month old baby whom she saved and who stayed with her during some of her wartime treks until she delivered the baby safely to the baby's uncle.

M.O. spent the war moving around a lot for various reasons. One of the reasons was that she was moved to several different locations while she was held at a camp by Serb forces. She was captured by both Serb forces and Croat forces at different points. It was while she was captured at a Serb-run camp that she was raped.

She told me about a soldier coming in to the apartment where the prisoners were held and watching them. M.O. explained that other soldiers would also come and question them, but this particular soldier would simply watch them: "and he came in, before that deed he began to come in, just to watch us (...) but he came in just because." After a few nights, he came again and called out a woman. M.O. remembered that the woman was gone a long time and that when she came back, she walked into the room with shame, all red, finger marks around her neck, and her



hair a mess. M.O. told me that at that point that she still did not understand what was about to happen. The following night, the soldier came for her. He began by asking if the baby [her deceased cousin's child] was asleep. Once M.O. confirmed that the baby was asleep, the soldier asked her to come outside with him. She verbally resisted (e.g., "I said 'but why will I go out? I have no need to leave this apartment.'"), but the soldier grabbed her and took her outside. It was dark. There were no other soldiers around. A car was parked near a shed – a set-up the soldier had made so that others do not see what he was doing, M.O. thinks. She explained that while there were bad things that happened to them in captivity, there were people who protected them. However, the prisoners felt they could not share the information with those who tried to protect them for fear that those people are the same – that they want to hurt the prisoners and that if the prisoners complained to them, they would be punished:

Really, he probably set that up for himself so that no one would see him. Because beside the bad things that happened, there were people who protected [us], unknowingly(?) – but you could not tell them because you were afraid that they were the same, that you will fare even worse [indirect translation] if you say something. So you just stayed quiet.

The soldier pushed her in the car and took out a knife. M.O. pleaded with him. The soldier raped her twice that night: "however, unfortunately, that – in fact, I want to say that he was not affected by that [M.O.'s pleading]. Instead he, that what he intended to do, he did." The rapist brought her back to the apartment where she was being held captive. She went to the bathroom and tried to wash herself. She came across a pair of scissors and wanted to kill herself:

I rushed in, there was a bathroom (...) and I shut myself in the bathroom and there were scissors. I really wanted to cut all my veins on my arms that night, so I no longer exist.

However, a fellow prisoner, the woman taken out by the soldier the previous night, knocked on the bathroom door. When M.O. opened the door, the woman told her not do anything (i.e., not to harm herself) and that everything will be alright: “do not do anything, everything will be alright, everything will pass.” M.O. realized that the woman, her fellow prisoner, had been raped the previous night by the same soldier: “and then I realized that she experienced the same thing, that which I had as well.”

Other women were taken out for rapes by the same man, on different nights. M.O. said the rapist came for her a second time, but that she lost consciousness (she does not know if it was from hunger, thirst, or fear) and does not remember if it happened on a second occasion. Some time later, she and fellow prisoners were released from the camp.

She has never told her husband anything about the rape. When the prosecution in Bosnia and Herzegovina was formed, something “awoke” in M.O. – and she thought it may make her life easier if her rapist faced the legal consequences of his actions: “when the prosecution began to work – and something simply awoke in me. Ee, I thought, dear god maybe it will be easier for me if he faces justice.” She began the process of bringing him to justice, but did it secretly and with her name protected as she did not want her husband to know what had happened to her. After she began to talk about what happened, at the behest of her former fellow prisoners, she contacted SIPA (State Investigation and Protection Agency) about the multitude of wartime crimes that had happened. Despite having been to therapy, it was with SIPA that she revealed for the first time that she had been raped:

at those psychosocial therapies, I did not go into the core of what happened to me. I just went around and around [the topic], then a little so that I could see how I would stand it,

how I will be able to shake it out of myself one time. However, the first time I really talked was with SIPA, that agency for investigation and protection.

That is, the first time she told anyone about the rapes was 13 years later after it happened.

M.O. described the war as having had hit her so hard that it sprayed her life into one thousand pieces; pieces which she is still trying to gather but unfortunately thinks will never succeed in gathering them all:

I customarily say that in '92 life knocked me so, that my life sprayed into a thousand pieces. Even now, I try to collect those pieces of my life but I think there are far too many pieces so that I will never, unfortunately, be able to succeed. But, life goes on.

M.O. spoke in a detached manner for most of interview and used male nouns and pronouns to describe what had clearly been her own experience (e.g., “a person [direct translation: “man”] survives all kinds [of things].”).

### **Tri**

Tri was 58 years old at the time of the interview and retired (although she did work from time to time). She has a high school diploma. She was divorced from her husband and living with her son. She has one son, but had a second whom she lost as a result of wartime injuries. She lived in a large city in central BiH before the war and lives there now. After the Dayton Agreement (i.e., peace agreement for BiH), she escaped the city and came back after approximately eight years of living elsewhere. She did not disclose her ethnic identity during the taped portion of the interview. She told me after I turned off the tape recorder and we were

chatting (and she was visibly getting more comfortable with me) that she is Serb and had been in a mixed marriage with a Muslim.

Tri was raped on her way to find food for herself and her family. The place where the rape took place was unfamiliar to her. She did not know the individuals who raped her nor the army to which they belonged. It took her a few days to get back home, because she could not even walk. She felt that she could not tell anyone what had happened to her: “the children were at home and this one neighbour. You could not even say what happened to you.” When her children asked her where the bread was that she had left home to find, she simply said that some men took it: “the kids just asked ‘mom, where is the, where is the bread?’ I just said that some men stole it. ‘there’s no bread, the men stole it.’”

Her husband was away when she came home and when he returned she had to pretend nothing had happened to her. She was afraid he would beat her if he found out about the rape(s). She eventually told two neighbours about the rapes: “they noticed but didn’t ask, and I didn’t [say] anything – I did with time.” Tri asked the women not to tell anyone. It was important to her that others did not find out, something that the women fulfilled: “so that it would not go around and that – and really, they never told anyone, it stayed between us.” Tri hid the rapes and did not tell anyone what had happened in any great detail until approximately 20 years later. The soldiers who raped her have not been caught.

Tri was relatively emotionally distant during the interview and did not disclose many details of her life. At two points in the interview, she told me that she did not want to go into details (i.e., while talking about the rape; the difficulty of present-day life).

## Četiri

Četiri was 45 years old and has a secondary school/high school diploma. She was employed but not working at the time of the interview. She found it physically and psychologically difficult to work a lot. She lived in eastern BiH before the war and for a short time during the war, and now lives in central BiH. She is in a mixed marriage [identifies herself as a Croat married to a Muslim] with a man whom she married before the war started. They have four children together: three daughters and one son. She mentioned several times throughout the interview that her whole family has mixed marriages and that mixed marriages were normal to her before the war.

Četiri's story began shortly before the war came to her city. Četiri's sister called her as well as her parents to tell them to leave the city in which they were living. After the call, Četiri left her home to visit her parents on the other side of town to try to convince them to leave. She was having difficulty convincing them, so she decided to spend the night at their house. The next morning, she could not leave because barricades had been set up in the city. She was then captured by Četniks, whom she identified as both people unknown and known to her: "they were already there in Četnik uniforms: neighbours and [those] known [to me], and [those] unknown] to me. A person cannot believe how quickly one undresses and dresses [into something else]." Četniks took her mother and a female neighbour to an apartment where a Serb man lived and locked them the basement of the apartment. While the neighbourhood was familiar to her, the specific apartment was not. They were told by the Četniks that they were being locked for their own safety.

The next day, a group of soldiers from the town came and one recognized Četiri. He asked why she was there and she explained she happened to be with her parents. She said he did

not say anything else to her. That night, the rapes began and lasted six nights straight. The men who raped her were not locals and she identified the rapists as Montenegrins and Serbians (both Montenegro and Serbia were republics of Yugoslavia, and until 2006 were unified; although often seen as nationally and ethnically separate groups, it was not unusual that Serbian military and paramilitary groups included individuals from Montenegro). She was also beaten. Četiri's mother managed to get into contact with her other daughter's husband, a Serb, and he took them back to the home of Četiri's parents. Četiri stayed there for 10 days and then was reunited with her family with the help of her husband and brother-in-law.

It was not until she was in a safer place, after escaping, that she became more conscious of what had happened to her and it became harder to bear: “but ee I guess how that then – the more conscious I became that that that period was behind me then then it became harder within me to fight with that.” Her husband and her parents-in-law knew about the rapes, but it was an “unwritten rule” in the home that they were not to talk about it:

I mean, he [husband] knew, but we never talked about it because I was not ready to talk about it with anyone. Everyone, I mean, [my] mother-in-law and father-in-law knew but – it was an unwritten rule in the house that that no one could talk to me about it.

There was a period in Četiri's life between late 1990s and mid-2000s when she felt mostly psychologically well. This was a period in her life when she worked, was making a home for her family, birthing children, and avoided people and things that were related to war. She is currently in a phase of life where she has more “ugly” moments than nice ones: “well, now I am more in some ugly phases than nice ones.” Aside from having her family and basic necessities met (e.g., she is alive and well, and has enough to eat and drink), she is dissatisfied with her life:

generally, my conclusion is that I am not satisfied with my life. I am not satisfied at all. I am satisfied in in in in in the sense that I have a family, that we are healthy, all alive, so you say – what I said: we have [enough] to eat, to drink, we are not hungry nor thirsty. I am satisfied from that side, but over here [from the other side] I am not satisfied at all.

She told me that she predicts that she will die dissatisfied: “and I will die dissatisfied. I will always be dissatisfied.”

Četiri openly struggled with nationality through much of interview (being prejudiced now versus having not been in the past; unsure of whether prejudices are good for her life or not):

because now I am going back to that what I said at the beginning. I mean, we were raised so that we are really, never in my life did my parents tell me nor did I hear it – I tell you, because I had so many mmm mixed marriages in the entire total family, not in the immediate family but in the extended family. Mm that that we never valued people [by their nationality] but then I began to value people by that. Unfortunately.

Although she did use the word “rape”, there was some hesitation and avoidance of the word (e.g., she never used it to describe what happened to her directly though it was clear that she had been raped on multiple occasions).

### **Pet**

Pet was 43 years old at the time of the interview. She has a high school diploma and was employed at The Association “Woman Victims of the War” at the time of the interview. She lived with her husband and two children (a son and a daughter). Pet is Muslim. She lived in eastern BiH before the war and during the war, and now lives in central BiH. At the start of the “aggression on Bosnia and Herzegovina”, she and her family escaped her hometown. Once the Yugoslav National Army called them back, the family returned to their home.

Shortly after their return, two army police officers and one police officer came to her family home. The police officer was a neighbour. One of the army police officers forced her to search for a gun in a room away from the remainder of her family. Pet searched for a gun even though she knew they did not have one in the home and the officers were told this. She said the rape happened quickly because she had been distracted looking for the gun and the officer had been standing behind her. She was suddenly thrown onto a bed and raped:

I am thrown on the bed. To this day I don't know what I was wearing, what actually happened. Ee when he undressed and what happened behind my back, I could not see that nor could I hear it. Because I was constantly opening, rummaging through those things looking for that something.

She remembered screaming and then seeing her mother at the door coming to her defence. The officer hit Pet on the head and she lost consciousness. She remembered being at the hospital where she received stitches. After the hospital, she went to an extended family member's home, because the family could not return to their own home at the time. She was 19 years old and refers to the day as the day she was raped in her own home in front of her parents: "that day when I was raped in my house, meaning – I I always say in front of my parents' eyes."

She escaped her hometown shortly after the rape and went to a nearby village. She remembered having to take out her own stitches. She reflected that she did not have time to think about the rape at the time, because each day after the rape was more difficult in its own way: "a person ee thought in that moment ee it was only important to get out. You didn't have time to think about that about about about the event, what was it that happened, what happened, no. because every day, meaning after that, was somehow more difficult in its own way." She spent



an increasing amount of time outdoors and running away, and decreasing amounts of time in the house (e.g., only going inside the house for food):

you spend less time in the house, more time running away, you spend more time outside, you spend more time sleeping now ee outside. Eee you can approach your house at all less, and that is even if you approach that was only for a short time to take, I don't know, food. Bathing was almost impossible.

Pet spoke about seeing so much death that she slowly became numb to it. While she was in the village, many people were killed. She said she cried in the beginning, but then began to care only about those she knew that were killed and eventually she was concerned with her own survival only. She became so accustomed to death that murdered people simply became numbers to her:

while we were still in the village, many people were killed, burned. Somehow at the beginning you are crying, you are sorry for this person and that person. Later you get used to it, so you don't cry. Then you hear ten people are killed, so if one of yours [i.e., family member] is nearby, you just ask if it was them. It's becoming all the same who the people are. People simply became numbers; there were no more names. It wasn't important to anyone. Everything came down to "as long as I'm alive."

Pet did not hide the rape she endured. She recalled that her family and those in the village she escaped to knew what had happened, because she told them:

**Pet:** [my] parents knew right away. Eee my immediate family knew right away, they knew right away in the village.

**Mia:** did they know or did you tell them?

**Pet:** I told.

**Mia:** mhm

**Pet:** I told, well of course.

She told me that a woman had come to the Association not too long ago and recalled being outside and naked after being raped during the war. The woman specifically remembered that Pet walked by her and openly told her not to feel ashamed because Pet herself had also been raped.

Of note in this interview is that the transcript often read like a narrative: something one would read in court proceedings, a practised story. This may be the case due to the fact that, although she has not testified against her rapist, Pet has given a statement to SIPA and has been a court witness for a different case (i.e., not her rape). Thus, she has had to talk about the wartime atrocities she has survived many times.

**B.H.**

B.H. was 63 years old at the time of the interview with a high school education. She was retired, but worked at The Association “Woman Victims of the War.” She has a husband, two daughters, and five grandchildren. B.H. is Muslim. She lived in eastern BiH before the war and now lives in central BiH. At the start of the war, she escaped her hometown, but returned shortly after there was a call for individuals to return home or they would risk losing their jobs. Upon arriving home, Četniks came to her home. She and her family survived many “tortures” in their home. A local police officer wanted to take B.H. to the police station, but she resisted. Later, she was taken to a public security office, where she was raped. She was then taken to a high school and raped. Finally, she was taken to a home for women with special needs where she was interrogated, maltreated, and raped. All three locations of the rapes were known to her: she worked in the first, went to elementary school in the second, and was familiar with the third. She knew the perpetrator of the first rape at the public security office.

She returned home and told me that after living through the assaults and witnessing atrocities, she thought her family would not survive. She tried to throw her daughters out of the house so she would not have to watch them be murdered:

already when we saw that none of us would survive, I literally threw my kids down the stairs, just so they would leave the house so I would not see death in the house. That is the hardest moment that shakes me up a lot, one where they are holding me by the chest, pleading “mom don’t give us away.”

Eventually, she made it out of her hometown and escaped to a village. She said atrocities began in the village as well, so she was forced to escape the village. She escaped to and from many places during the war, one of which was so peaceful for a couple of weeks, that people were out for walks – until Serbian planes began to drop grenades. People were out waving for help, because these planes had a “UN” sign on them:

for about 15 days it was so quiet that sometimes you thought it was peace time, that people were walking in the evening as if on a promenade – until the planes from Serbia started shelling, those Polish ones [i.e., Polish planes]. On them [planes] it was written UN. We were waving, thinking we were being saved.

B.H. finally ended up in central BiH.

Some years after the war, B.H. returned to her hometown and was met with the murderers and rapists of her family members. They were police officials who laughed in the faces of B.H.’s family. The criminals asked the family if they were back so they [the criminals] could finish what they started: “one sentence which follows [indirectly translated] me through life, when they said ‘did you come so we can finish what we started?’” She got together with a few women from

eastern BiH and registered the Association “Woman Victims of the War.” Once the women received media attention, the number of women breaking their silence about the rapes rose.

The Association has continued to function and covers 73 municipalities in BiH. At the time of the interview, B.H. stated that women continued to come to their organization to submit statements about wartime rape. Their primary goal is the fight against impunity, as well as the economic strengthening of survivors. Their fight has brought women raped in wartime under the law for civilian victims of war who, if recognized by the state as civilian victims, get a monthly payment. B.H. has testified in court for the crimes of rapes committed against her.

Near the beginning of the interview, I suggested to B.H. that she can focus on the rape that was most meaningful to her. She responded that they were all the same. Thus, the analyses completed are based on B.H.’s experiences of all three rapes. She also told me something significant about the court process for the rapes, but asked me not to write about it in my final document. The request was not made because she did not want to share this significant part of her story. Instead, she told me that an outside organization prevents her from sharing that detail about her experiences. Her request reminded me that outside sources sometimes prevent women from sharing details of their own experiences even when they would be happy to reveal them.

When I was interviewing B.H., parts of her story seemed familiar in some ways. I realized why this was the case. B.H. is Pet’s mother, something that neither woman had revealed to me. Another woman had disclosed their relationship to me. I thought about whether and how this may affect the results of the analysis. After examining each woman’s story several times, as well as the results for each woman, I came to the conclusion that their stories share enough important moments (e.g., being tortured in their own home) that a full disclosure to the reader is

necessary. However, their relationship aside, they survived the war each in their own way and the consequences of both the rapes and the war are distinct for each woman.

### **Sedam**

Sedam was 63 years old at the time of the interview and was a high school graduate. She was unemployed. She had two daughters and was a widow. She does not specify the ethnicity of her or her deceased husband, but does state that she had been in a mixed marriage. It is implied that she is Serb and that he was Muslim. She lived in eastern BiH before the war and now lives in central BiH.

She stayed in her town for some time after the war started and had trouble escaping. Once she left, she lived abroad before returning to BiH. Sedam was regularly raped in her own home for months by both men she knew and did not know. She said men would come to her home whenever they wanted to (“they came in the afternoon, evening, they broke in at night, broke the door. Whenever they, whenever they ee ee were ee whenever they were in the mood that’s when they came.”) and raped her constantly (“it mostly happened, not every night, but it happened happened all the time.”). She was physically assaulted during some of the rapes and suffered damage to her head. She became pregnant from the rapes and had an abortion. She counts herself to have been lucky to have had access to an abortion, because many women did not:

and I had that luck to have been able to get an abortion [i.e., she used a common expression for abortion here], that I ee cleaned [i.e., common expression for abortion] that, did that abortion. Because my daughters are already grown. I did not want that child regardless of how grown my daughters are. I did not want that child. I had luck that I did that but many women did not have luck to do that. I did. And thank god after, after, I

don't know, either – I wouldn't know what to do with that child, I am their mother after all.

Other than telling one friend, Sedam did not tell anyone about the rapes for approximately 15 years. Then she told the Association as part of her statement to them. She also told her family.

### **Osam**

Osam was 36 years old at the time of the interview. She had a high school diploma and worked, but did not have a permanent job with steady and regular pay. She lived with her three children and the man she is in a long-term relationship with (unmarried). Osam is Croat. She lived in southern BiH before the war, for some time during the war, and currently lives in the same city she lived in before the war. She was the only participant who asked me to stop the interview. Her request came a few minutes after the interview began. It was clearly a very emotional and traumatic time that I asked her to remember and tell me about. Once we stopped the interview and the taping, she asked me if I would spend some time with her that day, so she could get to know me. Osam said that this would help her decide whether she wanted to continue the interview or not. Of course, I obliged. After spending some time together, during which she ran some errands and showed me her home, she said she was ready to do the interview in her home. Osam cried or teared up during much of the interview. Even though she did not open up a lot about the rape, she revealed that she was captured and raped at the age of twelve in a camp by a Serb soldier whom she did not know. Her sister was killed around the time Osam was captured and raped. Her parents did take interest in what happened to Osam, but she remembers that the family concern was, at the time, more directed toward wondering whether her sister is alive or dead. She recalled that her mother said of Osam's sister that she would have rather have her back alive even if it meant that her sister had been raped:

then, when I was captured and all that, that is when my sister was killed, you know. And everything – now when you mention that family ee this and that, it was all somehow ee how do I say it ee. We didn't know anything about her. I came [home], great, I am alive, I am healthy, you know, I came [home]. It was important that I came [home]. And they did want to talk with me and this and that, I do remember that. Mom would always ask, you know – you're a child [indirect translation] and don't want to talk about anything. But, we were all more ee thinking more about what's happening with her [i.e., Osam's sister]. Is she dead, is she alive, is she you know – like my mom said “I would have liked, I would have liked it more that she had been raped, that she gave birth to a million children if she just came back.”, you know

Osam arrived home approximately two weeks after the rape. Her dad took her to a doctor and Osam said that the doctor told her dad about the rape and then she told her dad herself.

I noted that through the interview, Osam had some difficulty assessing the impact of the rape, because she was a child. She seemed to have noticed this as well. Several times, she spoke about how women who were older than her at the times of the rapes were grown women with a life that had already been formed (e.g., “they had a life of some sorts”). She was a child, she said, and perhaps she still does not understand what happened to her (“I was a child. Maybe I don't know even now what happened to me.”).

### **Devet**

Devet was 74 years old at the time of the interview and living in southern BiH, in the same city she lived in before and during the war. She finished the equivalent of elementary school and was retired, though she enjoyed working outside the home “recreationally.” She was not in a relationship at the time of the interview. She has two sons. She is Croat and had been

married to a Serb (i.e., mixed marriage) until he was killed by Serbs in the war. She was raped by a number of Serb men (i.e., gang raped) on two different occasions: once when she was fetching water and another time when she was taken from her home to a forest and raped. Neither location had been familiar to her. She did not know the perpetrators and notes they were not from her region (she could tell by their accent). The rapes happened in close proximity to each other (approximately two weeks apart). She talked to me about both instances of rape during the interview with no apparent differentiation of consequences. The first people she told about the rapes were those from the Association. She told them years after it happened, but does not remember the exact year. She only talks to women from the Association about the rapes, because she is afraid that others will judge her.

She spoke about another significant wartime event when she had been taken from her home and interrogated by Serbs. She recalled that she was supposed to be killed, but was freed by a Serbian soldier who tried to save her and told her to try and get out of her city.

### **Deset**

Deset was 75 years old at the time of the interview. She had four grades of primary schooling completed and was retired but worked recreationally in her garden. Deset is Croat. She was living in southern BiH with one of her three sons and his family. She lived in the same general area she had lived in before and during the war, except for some wartime instances when she was captured and lived in camps. Her husband was killed in the war. Although she was determined to and did find his body, she still does not know all the circumstances of his death.

Deset was captured by Serbs and then later Muslims, and therefore spent her time in two different camps. When Serbs took her from her home, three men had come for her (while her husband was still home and alive) and found her outside on her way to feed her livestock. She



knew one of the men: “the three of them came and I knew one, a neighbour. He was even on good terms with my kids. But two of them I didn’t [know]. With rifles in their hands and they said to come with them to the command [station].” She was raped three times in the Serb-run camp. The first time she was raped, it was a gang rape. She was kept in the room where she had been raped and the men had thrown water at her, so that it would look like she had been taken to be “refreshed” in a camp with a strictly imposed schedule on access to water, etc.:

and then they keep you there for you to come to, so that your people in your room would not notice anything, they even pour water on you, like you were being refreshed, that they took you to be refreshed, that you were bathing, that they helped you.

The second time she was raped, it was not any of the men from the first time. She remembered asking the rapist to kill her. The third time she was raped, the rapist was one of the men from the first rape.

Neither the location nor the rapists were known to Deset before the war. She was released from the first camp on a prisoner exchange and returned home. Shortly after, she was captured by Muslims and taken to a Muslim-run camp. She was not raped in the Muslim-run camp, but notes that she knew that rapes were happening there as well. Five months after her capture, she was released from the Muslim-run camp on a prisoner exchange. She described feeling “frozen” after everything that happened to her in the war and it took her about half of a year to start thinking about and feeling emotions about what happened to her. She kept quiet about the rapes for a long time. The first time she talked about it was to the Association.

### **Jedanaest**

Jedanaest was 63 years old at the time of the interview and retired with a college degree. She is Croat. Jedanaest has two children: one son and one daughter. She is a widow. Her husband

died shortly after the war ended. She sees his death as a consequence of wartime events.

Jedanaest lived in central BiH before and during the war, and continues to live there. At the start of the war, she was captured by the Serb army, along with her husband and daughter. The army, with the help of Jedanaest's neighbours, first tried to break into her family's home to capture them. They were having some difficulty breaking in so they called her on the telephone and told the family to surrender. Jedanaest and her family refused to surrender:

then they called me on the telephone. The telephone still worked. They had all the telephone numbers. Then they told me that we come outside, because I answered [the phone], to surrender. We said "we have no need to surrender, to whom are we to surrender? We are not coming out, we are staying in our apartment and that's that." No, they broke in and came upstairs.

The army eventually broke in and shortly after capturing them, separated Jedanaest's husband from her and her daughter. While still imprisoned, she found out that her husband was imprisoned in the same location, but in a different part of the building. Before being separated, Jedanaest and her husband agreed that they would not tell anyone that they have a son in the BiH army because they were afraid of being killed (they heard of this happening to others during wartime). She spent a few months in captivity.

During an interrogation in captivity, she was asked if she supported the then-president of BiH. Jedanaest responded that she supports people and not individuals who are in power. She added that nationality and religion do not matter to her, but instead what matters is that the individual acts like a human being and not an animal. After she said that, she was grabbed, asked who the animal was that she was talking about (the soldier thought she was insinuating that her

captors were animals) and dragged out of the room she was in. She was then thrown onto a metal table in another room and raped by four men.

The rapists bit her during the rape and a wound she had from a pre-war surgery had split open. It had to heal post-rape without any medical intervention. Jedanaest said that she was raped on one day, but does not remember how long it lasted (e.g., how many times she was raped during that time). The location of the rape was not familiar to her. She did not know the rapists and told me she would not recognize them today because they had been in uniform and had beards. Once she was returned to her room after the rape, she remembered the guard let her go to the bathroom for a few days to clean herself up because she had been bleeding.

Jedanaest was released, along with her daughter, on a prisoner exchange a couple of weeks after the rape(s). After her release, she sought psychological help. She did not tell anyone about the rape until her husband was released. Her husband was released a few weeks after her and only after Jedanaest petitioned for his release. She told him about the rape(s) shortly after his release. He revealed to her that he had also been raped, to make it easier on Jedanaest and show her that he understands how she feels: “to make it easier on you, so you don’t feel that way, I experienced the same thing even as a man. Therefore, I understand you completely, how you are how you are feeling.” Until he had died, neither of them told anyone else but each other about the rapes they endured. They had each other to talk to; they cried together; they comforted one another.

because, by ourselves we would comfort and cry and talk and talk and, because he experienced the same thing as I did. Only he didn’t – he never told anyone except me. Jedanest told me that while he was alive, they could communicate just by looking at one another and that he could tell by the look in her eyes how she felt and that he would calm her. Jedanaest

said he talked to her a lot and helped her more than she helped him. His death meant that her greatest and only support system when it came to the rapes was gone:

and the two of us [i.e., Jedanaest and her husband] then mutually treated each other (...) he helped me more ee he talked to me a lot. (8 second pause; 2 exhales) I don't know. I had a lot of mm help from him but unfortunately when he passed away, so I didn't have help even from him.

Once he died, her recovery took a turn and the rape affected her strongly. She felt alone and unprotected:

but when he very quickly left this world then I was left alone. I felt unprotected again, that I don't have anyone anywhere and and and and and then it all returned again, all those pictures returned to my memory and I was on the edge of sanity, to say nothing else [indirect translation]. The edge of sanity.

Jedanaest told a doctor and the Association about her victimization after her husband's death, but the first time she told anyone about her husband's rape was to me during the interview. Her husband's death continues to be difficult to cope with. She told me that it was particularly difficult the first five years after he died. She was in a difficult psychological state, so much so that she would not remember outings with her friends:

for me that [i.e., her husband's death] was, I couldn't get, to this day I can't get a hold of myself. I am not conscious of that [i.e., husband's death]. I am conscious that he is gone, that he died and all that, but I cannot believe that that happened to him. There. That that wasn't – I walked around with those friends, I would go out, they would take me outside but I did not know I went outside. I would think I was in the house the whole time. That is how I was in such a difficult psychological state.

She returned to her home after the war, once the peace treaty was signed. However, she lived alone and was so scared (e.g., she routinely saw the neighbours that helped capture her and her family) that she moved elsewhere.

### **Dvanaest**

Dvanaest was 38 years old at the time of the interview. She has a high school diploma and works (for pay) at The Association “Woman Victims of War.” She is married and has a son. Dvanaest is Muslim. She lives in a major city in central BiH. Before the war and for some time during the war, she lived in eastern BiH. During the war, she moved to many locations, living a “refugee” life. She was 13 years old when the war began. Dvanaest was in disbelief at everything that was happening during the war. Her Serb neighbours became her enemies and took her home and land.

Dvanaest situated herself as a minor who was 13 and a half years old at the time of the rape, whose mother had been captured and was gone when Dvanaest had been raped, whose brother had been killed, whose father she had not known the whereabouts of (she later learned he was killed), and who both understood and did not understand that sexual assaults were being perpetrated. She describes that time in her life as a hunt for Muslims especially those living in villages. She looked for safe spaces as soon as she saw army personnel with weapons:

they came then from Serbia, various army was coming. It was a hunt for Muslims, especially in the villages. Thirteen and a half years [old], meaning it is happening – you’re conscious and not conscious [of it]. On the one hand, I am conscious meaning as soon as I see various army personnel coming armed, I look for shelter in a third place, [so] I am no longer there.

Dvanaest's mother was sexually assaulted by individuals who were a part of the Army of Republika Srpska (also known as Bosnian Serb Army), after which she advised her daughter, Dvanaest, to run when she sees someone or a car approaching. This was her way of warning her daughter that rape is a possibility for her as well. Dvanaest did run. But she was caught.

A Četnik had come to Dvanaest's village to loot and look for [Muslim] men to kill. He caught Dvanaest while she was running away. When she was caught and saw that he had a rifle, a beard, and a badge on his hat [the beard and badge on the hat are signifiers of a Četnik], she wet herself from fear. The Četnik told her that he was her neighbour's cousin who had come to defend the Serbs from the Turks [derogatory term for a Bosnian Muslim] and to take revenge out on the Turks. The Četnik put his rifle in her back and took her from house to house, interrogating her about the whereabouts of the [Muslim] men. She did not reveal any information for fear of the Četnik killing the men and her:

I automatically wet myself in the middle of the field. And like that, with a rifle in my back, he took me from house to house to to to say where the men were and no one was there (...) after he took me house to house asking for the men, I was a child who matured from all that fear. I could not reveal anyone's name. I just said "they are not there, they have been killed, they have been taken." I could not reveal anyone's name because if I revealed, they would find him, kill him and me.

One of the houses Dvanaest was taken to was her cousin's house and the Četnik sexually assaulted her there. She described the perpetrator as a 50-year old man with a beard who disgusted her. Her post-assault state was one of "death" inside her and she felt like a zombie, empty:

I did not have tears or crying, everything inside me was dead [after the sexual assault]. Simply a person was going, now I compare it to being like a zombie, you are going somewhere, not seeing light, you are just going somewhere, going. Like a zombie through some emptiness after something, empty.

After the assault, the rapist attempted to take Dvanaest to the local school with the intention of killing her. However, her Serb neighbours (a husband and wife) saw what was happening, came out of their house, and saved her life.

Dvanaest did not tell anyone about the assault for a long time. The first person she told was her mother who already knew because she had heard “stories” from a neighbour who witnessed the Četnik taking Dvanaest through the village and who noted Dvanaest’s appearance. Dvanaest still has not told her mother all the details of the assault. I asked her if she was glad she told her mother about the assault. Dvanaest said that she was not glad, but that she felt relieved. She later told others about the assault (e.g., her friend, her husband before they married).

Dvanaest told me that survival (e.g., searching for food) during the war took focus away from the sexual assault. She suppressed the trauma until years later when it was no longer possible. Her recovery took a turn for the better after seeking help from a doctor. Additionally, her work through the Association and listening to other stories has been helpful. She compares her trauma against the other stories of rape she hears. She does not know whether she is making a mistake in doing that, but she said that it makes her feel better that things could have been worse:

it’s not nice what I will say: I weigh those war experiences sometimes. Maybe it is a mistake but sometimes, maybe I give myself relief. Mine is the hardest for me, no one can ever compensate for my childhood nor my brother nor the loss of my father nor nor

my house (...) maybe I am making a mistake that I weigh [that] but I give myself relief: “it’s alright, I didn’t survive what she did, it’s alright.” A person, everything comes down to “it’s alright, it could have been worse. It’s alright.”

Dvanaest told me that although had been a witness at a trial, she could not testify against her rapist because he died during the war.

### **Z.J.**

Z.J., a Muslim woman, was 54 years old at the time of the interview. She had the equivalent of grade 9 completed and had stopped going to school when she was younger because she had found a job. Although she did work after the war (e.g., she worked at the Association for some time), she had been unemployed at the time of the interview and had been suffering from physical health issues. She was single and living in the same city she lived in before and during the war. She shared a home with her mother, stepfather, half-brother, daughter and refugee cousin.

Z.J.’s story began at the start of the “damned” war in 1992. She lived in a home with her husband and daughter, as well as her parents-in-law and sister-in-law. Her life was “ruined” in 1992 on a day that an exchange of individuals was scheduled. Before the exchange could take place, however, Četniks entered her home and raped her in front of her husband. Then, they slaughtered her husband in front of her. The rapist was a “complete stranger” to her (and she was raped once). The Četniks left her house after raping her and slaughtering her husband, but came back for her and her two-year-old daughter to shoot them. Z.J.’s neighbour came to her and her daughter’s rescue, took them in for a night and then brought them to a different part of the city from which she was able to reach her parents’ home, where she currently lives. [The neighbour was Serb, something that she told me later in the interview.]



Of walking out of her home, she told me that it was indescribable to take your child and step over your slaughtered husband's body:

I cannot describe it to you psychologically. Do you know what it means to go over a slaughtered person the way you are and cross over. In that moment, I – that moment, even now that I want to, I I cannot describe it even to myself let alone someone else.

Mmm it is indescribable. Really indescribable, that moment. For them to come into your house, then the first two hold down your husband then rape me, then slaughter him in front of my eyes and they leave, and I am taking my child and take her the way I am, meaning going over my husband's body. That is indescribable. Indescribable.

She described her appearance after the rape and her husband's murder as "horrible" and "indescribable." Her state of mind would have been compromised had she not had access to pharmaceuticals and injections – that is, she was a patient in a psychiatric hospital after her experiences and thinks she may have stayed there had she not received medicine. When she was saved and had arrived at her parents' home, she realized that she was bloody and had her own fecal matter on her, but was not conscious of it. The only thing she was conscious of during that time is holding her own child in her arms. During the war, eleven refugees lived in Z.J.'s parents' home. To help feed everyone, she enlisted in the army as a cook. She was also taking care of four children for some time (one was her daughter and three children were orphaned).

Z.J. searched for her husband's body for seven years at exhumations. It was not simple, she said, to go to morgues while carrying the pain of the rape she survived. She found her husband's body after a Četnik told her where it was. The body was buried in a tomb with nine others in an inhabited area, something that surprised her. She remembers the date that she found her husband's body every day.

Her husband's murderer has been arrested and brought to trial. There was intense media coverage when the murderer was arrested. Other countries sought for the criminal to be delivered to them for various reasons (e.g., he was another country's citizen, he owed prison time in another country). However, Z.J. said that she was the "crazy" person who fought for him to be delivered to BiH for judgement – something she succeeded in doing.

After she served as a witness at the trial for the first time, she had her heart attack and later had to go into surgery. However, the surgery coincided with the main hearing of her husband's murderer at which she was invited to testify. She described her resolve to testify to the point that she was willing to reschedule the important surgery. She thought that she must testify before her surgery, because she might die on the surgery table without ever getting the chance to testify: "what if I, god forbid, die on the [operating] table, what if something happens to me and I don't go to testify." Both the court and the hospital assisted in ensuring that Z.J. testified and then was able to have her surgery.

For a long time, no one knew Z.J. was raped and therefore did not understand her pain. She did not trust others with her "shame." The first person she told about the rape was her brother at the beginning of 1993 (during wartime; a few months after the rape) though she did not disclose to him the details that she later disclosed to the Association. Later, as an adolescent, her daughter had told her that she overheard her mother talking and knew about the rape:

how old was my daughter when me and my brother were talking and she heard? She was maybe eleven twelve years old then. We were talking and she said "mom, I know what happened." And she grew up with that knowing that her mom experienced humiliation.

Z.J. testified at her own rape trial in Bosnia and Herzegovina just months before talking to me. Although she was told that she could testify as a protected witness, she declined and

“snapped“ at the idea of being a protected witness noting that she was not at fault for the crime; rather, the perpetrator was at fault:

well, that was, I went through it a few months ago (...) they wanted me to be like a protected witness and for me to talk behind that there and in one moment I snapped “well, what for do I have to talk behind that there. Well, I didn’t bring him harm. He did that to me.”

While she was testifying, she recalled that she had a bad moment during which the court had to pause so that she can take nitroglycerin (a heart medication). However, she carried through with her testimony.

At the time of the interview, Z.J. informed me that the perpetrator of her rape was sentenced a few months prior to the interview to eight years in prison for her rape alone. Along with giving her statement to the Association, the guilty verdict was a factor in making her recovery from the rape easier.

## **Results**

Writing the results section proved to be a stage of analysis as well because it involved producing a narrative account from the established themes. I began by writing each woman’s story to situate the reader. Following IPA guidelines closely and writing idiosyncratic results (i.e., each woman’s transcript was analyzed as its own “case”) produced a results section that was approximately 250 pages long. To increase readability but also allow for each woman’s story to be captured, two adjustments to the results were completed: (a) I cross-analyzed the superordinate themes of the women; and (b) one superordinate theme that did not adequately answer the research question was moved to the Appendix for the purposes of the dissertation.

Cross-analysis of participants is an uncommon, but not absent, practice in IPA. Comparisons between transcripts have been made in at least one other study to “identify recurrent themes that reflect shared and divergent understandings and experiences” (p. 352) of a phenomenon – although the analysis, as outlined by IPA, explored the phenomenon from the experience of the individual participant (de Visser & Smith, 2007). Additionally, a recent article explored the idea of “multiperspectival IPA”: an approach to IPA that begins with the idiographic approach to analysis, but then extends to combine two or more perspectives within a sample (or, between samples; Larkin, Shaw, & Flowers, 2019). The authors cautioned that the objective of the approach is not to simply pool participants’ accounts and “generate a consensus”, but rather “demonstrate the ways in which accounts from multiple perspectives relate to one another and to reflect upon how those differences can co-exist” (p. 192). Though the cross-analysis was helpful in organizing the results in a readable way, I felt that the women’s strengths – central to the dissertation – were obfuscated. Thus, I made the decision to organize the internal strengths (found in superordinate theme “multi-faceted outcomes [consequences and strengths] of complex trauma in war”) portion of the results differently. I formatted the results so that each woman’s strengths are under her own subheading and her voice and the often ignored parts of her wartime sexual violence outcomes are visible and heard.

When I initially wrote the results section, after completing the cross-analysis, I was working with ten superordinate themes. Although three to five themes is the norm in IPA, it was difficult for me to assess whether that was an appropriate number of superordinate themes even for a project that had an atypically high number of participants (i.e., 13) such as mine. Nevertheless, writing out the results enabled me to see connections between superordinate themes I had previously not seen and I was able to arrive at the more commonly accepted

number of five superordinate themes. For example, two participants talked about the importance of family in their lives and often in a way that was not directly related to the wartime events. So, “importance of family” had been a superordinate theme. However, once I wrote the results, I was able to see that the theme was really about the strength of relationships in the wartime and post-war periods. Thus, I subsumed the superordinate theme “importance of family” under “external strengths” in the superordinate theme “multi-faceted outcomes (consequences and strengths) of complex trauma in war” (see page 102 for the definition of complex trauma I worked with). This proved to be a better fit, because the importance of informal and formal support systems and relationships had already been present in that superordinate theme.

The final five superordinate themes (Table 2) help answer the research questions. A sixth and additional superordinate theme is outlined in Appendix F, because it does not directly answer the research questions, but does help contextualize the findings. (Methodological reflexivity, including my reluctance to obscure idiographic accounts in favour of developing superordinate themes, is analyzed in more detail in appendix G – “Reflexivity.”) Of the five superordinate themes in the main body of the dissertation, two are parallel (i.e., superordinate themes all the women have in common, but with themes and subthemes that represent some variations in the women's lived experience): “multi-faceted outcomes (consequences and strengths) of complex trauma in war” and “life with intersectional identities.” Three themes are divergent (i.e., represent lived experiences that were not discussed by all women and thus are shared by only some women in this study): “loneliness”, “avoidance of the word ‘rape’”; and “culture as contributing to upholding patriarchal ideals in recovery process.” Additionally, although the parallel superordinate themes directly answer the research questions, the three

Table 2

*Superordinate Themes and Themes*

Superordinate theme	Theme(s)
1. Multi-faceted outcomes (consequences and strengths) of complex trauma in war	Consequences (five categories: short-term, medium-term, long-term, latent consequences, and unacknowledged consequences) Strengths
2. Life with intersectional identities	Gender Implicitly gender Nationality Gender and nationality Implicitly gender and nationality Other: Shift in identity alliance
3. Loneliness	
4. Avoidance of the word “rape”	
5. Culture as contributing to upholding patriarchal ideals in recovery process	
6. Restrictions/constraints on life*	

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\*Results for this superordinate theme are in Appendix F

divergent superordinate themes provide a more nuanced account of the women's outcomes of wartime sexual violence.

Bosnian translations (i.e., original superordinate theme name) were bracketed and italicized beneath each superordinate theme title. I have also added a prefix ("parallel" or "divergent") to each superordinate theme heading to further clarify which superordinate theme were common to all women and which were common to some. Due to the lengthy results and to increase comprehension of the results, I wrote a short discussion after each superordinate theme before delving into a complete and comprehensive discussion in the "Discussion" section. A "matrix" of the themes has been provided for a visual representation of the similarities and differences between the women in this study (Table 3; Larkin et al., 2019).

**Parallel: Multi-faceted Outcomes (Consequences and Strengths)**

**of Complex Trauma in War**

*(Višeznačajni ishodi (posljedice i snage) kompleksne traume u ratu)*

All of the women in this study experienced complex trauma within the context of war and talked about the outcomes of those traumas. Various authors have used slight variations of the definition, but for the purposes of this dissertation "complex trauma" is experiencing multiple or chronic adverse traumatic events in a relatively short period of time (adapted from Spinazzola, Ford, Zucker, van der Kolk, Silva, Smith, & Blaustein, 2017). The superordinate theme has two themes ("consequences" and "strengths") and addresses the overarching research question (how do women who have experienced wartime sexual violence conceptualize their post-rape outcomes?) by reporting the women's consequences as well as strengths gained or kept after the wartime events, including the rape(s). Additionally, "strengths" (the second theme in the

Table 3

*Superordinate Themes by Participant*

	Multi-faceted outcomes (consequences and strengths) of complex trauma in war ( <i>Parallel</i> )	Life with intersectional identities ( <i>Parallel</i> )	Loneliness ( <i>Divergent</i> )	Avoidance of the word “rape” ( <i>Divergent</i> )	Culture as contributing to upholding patriarchal ideals in recovery process ( <i>Divergent</i> )	Restrictions/cons traints on life* ( <i>Parallel</i> )
Jedan	X	X	X			X
M.O.	X	X		X		X
Tri	X	X	X	X		X
Četiri	X	X	X	X		X
Pet	X	X				X
B.H.	X	X				X
Sedam	X	X	X			X
Osam	X	X	X			X
Devet	X	X	X			X
Deset	X	X	X			X
Jedanaest	X	X	X			X
Dvanaest	X	X			X	X
Z.J.	X	X				X

\*Results for this superordinate theme are in Appendix F.



superordinate theme) answers the first sub-question (do the women identify any positive or strength-based outcomes; related to this, has activism or political involvement had an effect on the women's post-rape recovery and experiences?) by reporting the women's strengths, some of which include various forms of agency, including political agency.

This superordinate theme encapsulated a large amount of data and had I chosen a different qualitative methodology, perhaps this theme could have been divided into more themes. However, it is important for IPA that themes that cluster together should form one superordinate theme and I perceived strengths and consequences of complex war trauma to be intricately linked to one another and important for showing the complexities of post-trauma outcomes.

### **Consequences**

The consequences the women spoke about were often for the rape(s) endured, but sometimes were about wartime events in general (e.g., being imprisoned). At times, it was difficult to parse out whether the consequences the women experienced were due to the rape(s) specifically or some other wartime event. For example, although not all women had been imprisoned in a camp, all of them had been held captive during the war even if it was for a short duration during the rape(s). In addition to the captivity, many women told me that family members had been killed during the war or as a result of wartime events.

I organized the consequences into five categories: short-term (consequences women talked about living through shortly after the war or rapes), medium-term (consequences women talked about living through for some time after the war or rapes, usually after the war had ended), long-term (consequences women talked about living through to the present), latent consequences (a period of relative psychological or physical wellness which was then followed by consequences), and unacknowledged consequences (post-rape and post-war consequences

that women did not attribute to war or rape, but gave me some indication during the interviews that they may have been happening because of wartime events).

Further, many women talked about keeping silent during or after the wartime events (including rape), whether self-imposed (e.g., fear of worse things happenings if they talked about the rapes, fear of social isolation) or due to threats by others (e.g., rapists' threats to kill the woman's family). For some women, the silence was experienced during or shortly after the rapes, but many women – even those who have been otherwise open about the rapes they endured – continued to stay quiet about aspects of their wartime victimization. Thus, I have placed the “silence” subtheme under “long-term consequences” as it best describes the long-term impact of wartime events (including rape) on the women's ability and willingness to use their voice. Additionally, two women talked about the negative consequences of the sexual violence on their childhoods in subtheme “stolen childhood” and I have placed this under long-term consequences as it was evident to me that the perception of a lost childhood impacted them for a long time and continued to impact the way they perceived the wartime events.

**Short-term consequences.** The women talked to me about physical consequences such as weight loss, head lice, blood, malodour, hygiene issues, loss of appetite, unwanted pregnancy, and pain. Osam told me she slept on the floor when she was held captive in a camp and when she came home and slept in a bed, she was unable to get up: “we slept on the floor in the camp. When I came home, when I slept at my house in a bed, I could not get up the next day.”

Specifically about rape, Tri recounted that after she had been raped and came to, she was torn and bloody, and could not walk home:

“[I was] torn, bloody and all sorts. I crawled to a stream somewhere. That's where I lay. [I] washed [my face] a little, washed [myself]. (5 second pause) I returned home slowly after two three days because I couldn't even walk. I don't even know how I came [home].

Devet also talked to me about physical consequences of the rapes she endured. One of her strategies for dealing with the physical consequences was to go to a doctor “all the time,” something that had economic consequences for her because she spent any money she had to pay for the doctor visits: “from wherever I had any money, I went to that [doctor's] visit (...) [he] gave me some medicine and gave me something for calming [down].” Other women also talked about economic consequences such as a lack of income due to war.

Some women experienced housing consequences, such as Jedanaest who exchanged her long-time place of residence for another location due to the fear associated with seeing the people who helped break into her home and capture her and her family:

I traded an enormous apartment there for a city one because I could not survive. They did not do anything to me but it was enough that when I woke up in the morning and went on my balcony, under my window were the people who came to get me from my apartment, those who took me with the Četniks (...) those were all neighbours I knew before the war, one of them even even brought me milk to my door (...) so I traded my apartment and that helped a lot that I was not there because while I was there, there I, I thought I would psychologically end up in a hospital, that is how scared I was to live there.

Many of the psychological consequences women talked about were related to the rapes they endured, such as crying, feeling dirty, shame, guilt, humiliation, attempts to commit suicide,

fear, shock, panic, fear of pregnancy, nervousness, hypervigilance, disorientation, and depression. Sedam told me that the constant rapes left her in a state of nervousness, fear, depression, and being in her “own world”: “I was nervous, I was in my own world, I was scared, I was very depressed.” Emotional consequences included being filled with emotion for some women and loss of emotion for others. Dvanaest told me that she felt emotionally “dead” and empty after the sexual assault, like a zombie. She told me the little positivity she had left in her after the wartime atrocities she witnessed (e.g., murders, robberies) had died after the sexual assault. She could not even shed a tear after the sexual assault:

I did not have tears or crying, everything inside me was dead [after the sexual assault].

Simply a person was going, now I compare it to being like a zombie, you are going somewhere, not seeing light, you are just going somewhere, going. Like a zombie through some emptiness after something, empty. (...) simply, my soul was empty.

Because after everything I watched and witnessed, murders and robberies and taking of my mother and that violent behaviour and. Simply a person within themselves even that little positivity that was inside it died, empty, empty. Simply the emotions were empty, not even a tear Mia. Not even a tear.

Other short-term consequences included social consequences (e.g., fear of social judgement for rape victimization), sexual (e.g., did not want to have sexual relations), romantic, and psycho-physical (e.g., losing consciousness at threat of another rape).

**Medium-term consequences.** Some psychological consequences continued to be present for the women for years (e.g., crying, fear of facing reminders of trauma). M.O. told me that after the war when she wanted to start having children, she miscarried her first pregnancy and was afraid that all the trauma had affected her ability to carry a pregnancy: “and I was afraid when I

lost my first pregnancy, I survived so much trauma, I told myself I will not be able to have children. Something has been disturbed. Something has been done with me. I will not be able to have children.” Other women told me about psycho-physical consequences that had lasted for some time such as feeling physically ill and having a loss of vision. The fear associated with the events that had transpired in the camp had physical consequences for Osam. She told me that approximately ten years ago she returned to the village where she had been held captive and had defecated in her underwear. She never wanted to return to that place again:

I went there once [to the village where she was raped and held captive]. I literally shit my underwear. Literally. After the war, that was about seven eight years ago, maybe even 10, I can't remember anymore. And I would never go back there, never.

Other consequences included social consequences (e.g., negative social reactions to rape disclosure), sexual and/or intimacy-related consequences (e.g., difficulty having sex after getting married), not wanting to birth children, and romantic consequences (difficulty sleeping with husband).

**Long-term consequences.** All of the women had persistent negative consequences of the wartime events (including rape). Physical consequences included headaches, weight gain, spasms, and illness. Četiri told me that she had physical health problems due to the events that transpired in captivity (e.g., rapes). Some of the health problems, such as issues with her spine, had become worse over time:

I have big problems with my spine. Probably from those beatings and everything, I mean there was labour and all kinds of things. But I was beaten a few times, really beaten, I was all black, dark blue and maybe those are the consequences, and every little bit little

bit that spine. Now as years go by, it is harder and harder, the pain is bigger and I have bigger consequences.

Economic consequences continued to be felt by some women. Z.J. told me that the state did not adequately support some wartime victims and she felt the ramifications of that. Even on the day of the interview, nearly 20 years after the war had ended, she was not able to provide her daughter with monetary support (e.g., money needed for university):

this country has not secured us. I swear. There were moments and still today there are those moments that she [daughter] asks for something, I tell her no way. I don't know what she was saying, she needs 150 to submit something at the university, there isn't any [money]

Similarly, M.O. told me that the “system” does not recognize the pain of wartime survivors. The state expected survivors to return to their homes, but M.O. perceived spending even a night as difficult for those who have survived so much.

Romantic consequences also persisted for some women. Sedam, for example, tried to have romantic relationships but was afraid that the men in those relationships would also rape her:

I don't believe men especially. (...) I just live alone. That is the way it is. I tried, I tried to have [a relationship]. No no no no. I can't. I simply can't. there is something in me that I can't. I think he will act out too and he will show that too.

For some women who were mothers, parenting consequences had arisen (e.g. fear of letting children out by themselves, fear of intergenerational trauma). All of the wartime events had created confusion for Četiri about which values to raise her children with. She told me she wanted to raise psychologically healthy children, but that she was unsure of how to approach the

topic of ethnicity. Sometimes she tells her children that every nationality has good and bad people in it, but sometimes she tells them they should make classifications based on group belonging:

and I want my children to be healthy children. Psychologically healthy. But I do not know if I will succeed in that because because I am no longer clear on that (...) and I say, “children”, to this day I say “not all people are the same, children. In all nationalities, there are bad people and good people, like everyone in life.” But I don’t know, I say, I simply, half of me is like this half of me is like that, so one half says this and the other half says that.

She told me that she tried to find an equilibrium between being burdened and not being burdened with nationality, but had not been successful:

I don’t like it that it’s like that [that she categorized by nationality] because that’s the difference [laughs] what we talked about at the beginning, the difference between the way I used to think for 20 years and how I think now. And sometimes I ask myself, I ask myself the question, was it more correct [the way I thought] back then or right now. Was it better when I was completely unburdened or now when I am completely burdened. And I am trying to find a balance but I am not successful. However hard I try.

Social consequences continued to be present for some women. B.H. told me that she was no longer interested in socializing: “I am no longer the happy woman I was. I am not interested for any outings anywhere.” Jedanaest told me that, because of the rape, she did not trust others: “I don’t trust anyone ee I mean, I don’t have trust in people. It is horrible.” Deset’s distrust in others was about how they would react to her if she disclosed the rapes. She told me that she was afraid that others would judge her for not defending herself though she knew it was impossible:

“It stands somehow somewhere in the subconscious like that he will say, that someone will say why didn’t you defend yourself. That sounds off somewhere somewhere there. Even though it is impossible to do. Someone stronger than oneself and who is an aggressor [translation for “aggressor” does not quite catch the word used].”

Psychological consequences had stayed with all of the women, albeit fading somewhat over time. When Sedam described some of the effects that the rapes had on her, she told me that she could not divide up the consequences she experienced by year. The psychological effects always returned. She frequently had nightmares which caused her to have insomnia and hypervigilance. The fear continued to be present, but the long-term therapies helped her feel calmer:

**Sedam:** I don’t have that, I don’t have that so that I can say it was difficult for me the first year or two. It always comes back to me.

**Mia:** mhm

**Sedam:** I dream about that often. I dream about my house in that town and how they’re coming to me (...) and then I wake up that night, there’s no more sleeping. No no no. and then I have a feeling in my house where I live wherever something bangs, I jump. Simply even if I am in the deepest dream I feel something bang, I get up right away, walk, watch, listen. No. That happens to me all the time. There is not first year or second. That comes back to me all the time. I have fear all the time. (...) I am a little like I am a little more calm but those are long-term treatments, therapies at the doctor, talking, that I pushed it out of myself, that is all alright OK but when I dream and those crises come and that stress wakes up in me and then for a few days [I feel that way].



Thoughts of suicide were not uncommon. Četiri's thoughts of suicide began shortly after leaving captivity and continued at the time of the interview: "I tell you for a long long long time I wanted to kill myself. I had those phases for years, I mean that comes to me even now sometimes."

Osam told me that when she talked about the rape, she had a feeling of dissociation, as if the rape did not happen to her:

sometimes I am in a phase and when I am talking to someone about these things – I talk about it as if I watched some film, you know. As if that didn't, I swear, as if that didn't happen to me.

Post-war traumatic events added to the war and rape consequences for some women.

Jedan, for example, told me that she was full of fear because negative things seemed to be piling up in her life:

how long will this follow me for, and the fire, and the flood, and the war, and and, and and and and two times a flood and. Well how much longer. Now it should allow me to have a little time to breathe. Although that is all, that is all, I am full of fear. I am full of fear.

Četiri and Sedam felt conflicts and dualities within themselves as a consequence of the wartime events, including the rapes. Četiri told me that she still felt conflicted at times about where the fault lied with the rapes. When I spoke with her, she still had moments where she felt guilty and ashamed, as if she did something "ugly" and not that someone else wronged her: "I felt guilt and shame, as if I did something ugly and not that someone did something ugly to me. And even now now from this perspective (...) I still have those moments." For Sedam, the openness about the rapes both weighed her down and took the load off her. She tried not to think about the rapes, because when she talked about them, she was not well for a few days.

Simultaneously, she felt that she must talk about them, because talking about them “unloaded” her and she saw that she was not alone. She saw the rapes as behind her, but also as a part of her. She felt strengthened and better overall, but there existed a part of her that was still fearful and careful when interacting with others.

Like Sedam, Jedan also felt conflicted about aspects of the post-rape outcomes. Jedan struggled to understand whether the physical survival was worth the price of psychological consequences. She repeatedly spoke about the importance of staying physically alive after the rapes (e.g., “thank god I stayed alive”; “and this [the rapes], like that can be survived, you understand, get out alive and the rest [will be] how it may be”) despite psychological difficulties and “spiritual” death (“they did kill my soul”). Despite this attitude, at one point in the interview, Jedan spoke about her troubles falling asleep and the thoughts that run through her head, one of them being that if there was a war and something happened to her daughter [she insinuated that the something was rape], she would kill her daughter and then herself: “I’m scared, everything passes through my mind, hope to god that no one unexpectedly comes on [daughter’s name redacted], what would I do if there was a war right now, (...) what would I do with my child, first I would kill her and then myself.” With this, Jedan demonstrated conflicting points of view on surviving the rapes: on the one hand, physical survival was important regardless of psychological/mental consequences; alternatively, the consequences she lives with are so dire that if her daughter were to be raped, she would kill both herself and her daughter.

Četiri most clearly expressed how the rapes impacted her in such a way that she had conflicting feelings and thoughts. She told me that although she understood the rapes were not her fault, she still had moments when she felt guilty or ashamed. She then talked about how she simply did not understand herself at times because she felt like she had two selves sometimes: a

reasonable self and an unreasonable self. The reasonable self, she told me, was a little smarter and tried to advise the unreasonable one, but the unreasonable one did not listen to her:

I simply do not understand myself at times. There are times when I have two halves in my head. One understandable and one who does whatever she wants. And the other one is, she's a little smarter so she advises but she doesn't listen. And that's how I feel sometimes. (...) I really sometimes have two selves in me, a nice one and an ugly one. And the nice one advises the ugly one but the ugly one does not listen to the nice one.

Other long-term psychological consequences on the women included: crying, insomnia, pain, flashbacks, depression, nervousness, memory loss, shame, hypervigilance, and reminders of trauma. The psychological consequences were oftentimes not felt as strongly as they had been in other periods of the women's lives. However, the rape was still a part of them. Deset summarized it well when she told me what her psychiatrist said to her: no matter how much she fights and no matter how strong she is, the rapes will always be with her, like a shadow that follows her:

what she said, oh, I am coming back to to the psychiatrist again, she said ee no matter how much you fight it will follow you to the grave, it will hunt you down more or less, you fight ee to repel it and you are, she said, very brave and you are very dignified but it is of no use, that is behind you, following you like a shadow.

Some women had experienced the long-term effects of emotional consequences (e.g., losing control over emotions, emotional distance from hometown), sexual consequences (e.g., lacking sexual desire), and legal consequences or consequences related to testifying (e.g., threats, blackmail, others revealing protected identity, and dissatisfaction with court proceedings). Finally, some women talked about consequences such as "silence" and "stolen childhood" that

seemed to be pervasive in various parts of their lives and could not be categorized as short-term, medium-term, or long-term nor simply as psychological, social, etc.

*Silence.* The following examples are instances of silence related to the rapes the women endured and are predominantly related to the consequences of the rape(s). The consequences ranged from short-term to medium-term to long-term. However, because many of the women told me that they were not completely open about all of their wartime experiences to just anyone, I have placed the subtheme in long-term consequences. Data in this theme are also part of the superordinate theme “restrictions/constraints on life” under theme “restrictions on voice/silence” (Appendix F). However, the portion of that theme that is directly related to consequences of the rape was examined in depth in this section. [I have written in depth about the silence and restrictions the women experienced during wartime and in relation to sexual violence in the appendicized theme (“restrictions/constraints on life”). Although those particular pieces were not related to wartime sexual violence outcomes, they did help illuminate the context in which women were silenced (e.g., Deset was raped in a camp where the soldiers were likely raping in secret and were using tactics to make it appear that women were not being systematically raped, other women talked about being physically constrained during the sexual violence).]

M.O. told me about a fellow prisoner who had also been raped and had ultimately saved M.O.’s life when she had thought about killing herself after she had been raped in the camp. She told me that her fellow prisoner figured out that M.O. had been raped while they were in the camp even though M.O. never actually told her. M.O. indicated that when she ran into her fellow prisoner, they still did not talk about it:

[name of fellow rape survivor redacted] probably knew what was happening with me. We never, not even to this day, when we meet up, we do not mention that topic at all. I mean,

absolutely absolutely, it is as if, I do not know (inaudible) [it is] tied up and welded well, only so that it could not be talked about.

M.O. did not speak to anyone about the war or rapes for a long time. The people she did eventually tell, she wanted her identity protected. Her husband did not know about much of what happened to her. She said that it hurt her that he did not know, but she felt like she could not tell him after so many years had passed: “if I did not say something at the beginning, I cannot now, believe me. It eats at me, it hurts me but I cannot and end of story, done.” Even women who were otherwise very open publicly about the rapes they endured would not discuss everything that had happened to them. B.H. told me that she endured “humiliation“ that she had not talked about yet and did not want others to know about: “there are some things that I still, I only talked about it once in one place which I do not want others to hear about, this one humiliation.”

There were a multitude of reasons as to why women kept quiet about the rapes. Tri could not tell her husband what had happened, because she was scared of what he may do to her. When she saw her husband the first time after the rapes, she acted as if nothing had happened even though she was in pain: “when the man came home, I had to get up again, as if nothing had happened.” She also felt that she could not tell her children about the rapes:

**Tri:** well, I don't know, my son was very young and my husband was an alcoholic

**Mia:** mhm

**Tri:** so I did not even have someone to share that with.

Although she told her neighbours eventually, she asked them not to tell anyone about the rapes.

It took her 19 years to open up about the rapes.

For some women, it was the rapists' threats that they would kill her if she told anyone that drove the silence (e.g., Devet). For most women, it was fear of others' reactions. Jedanaest

talked about being “silent” about the rape and not being brave enough to talk about the rape she endured to anyone but her husband (“I wasn’t brave enough to say what happened to me, that I was raped.”). Deset spoke about being “silenced” about her rapes for two reasons. One, she felt too ashamed to share what had happened to her with her children. Two, she felt that others would not understand her experience. She told me that after she was raped, she returned to her fellow prisoners and did not know what to tell them, because she felt humiliated and ashamed, and did not think they would understand her:

when you get back to your women, you don’t know what to say, nor can you tell them anything, nor will they understand you, nor can you from the shame from the pain from the humiliation (cries) from – I am a mother of three children. Is it even possible what happened? And at the end of it all, what wrong had I done?

Feeling too humiliated and ashamed to tell anyone about rape was common to all the women who said they were silent about the rapes and felt a restriction on talking about it.

It is likely that the shame and humiliation the women felt and the fear of social reactions was rooted in a society that Četiri described as being behind the times. Četiri viewed herself as quiet before the war, someone who was ashamed of others resenting her (in general). She reflected that her lack of a voice did damage to her, because she was not open about the rapes for fear of others' reactions:

**Četiri:** it cost me a lot [thinking about] what people would say to me, you know. I think that buried me a lot. (...) what someone will say, how will I from shame go out

**Mia:** mhm

**Četiri:** on the street

**Mia:** mhm

**Četiri:** or if someone finds out

Četiri said that, at the time of the interview, she was not brave enough to openly talk about the rapes, because she lived in an outmoded society in which it would take a brave woman to talk about rape: “I mean, we are so behind as a society, where that [talking about rape] is bogey, that’s why I say that not all women have the same bravery, not all women, not everyone can carry the same with the same problem.”

Z.J. told me that raped women did not know about each other for a long time because no one spoke about it; the collective silence silenced and hurt her. Z.J. suffered quietly (e.g., “I suffered silently.”) and silenced herself. And though she could talk about it at the time of the interview, other women did not. The most extreme example from this research was the interview I conducted with Osam. As mentioned earlier, two attempts were made to interview Osam, with the first attempt ending minutes into the interview because she had trouble talking about wartime events. During the second attempt at the interview, she did not reveal much about what had happened to her and when asked if she would like to tell me more about the rape, she replied that she did not want to (“well, you know what, I don’t want to.”). Osam was emotional while talking to me about the war and wartime events: she cried or teared up during most of the interview.

***Stolen childhood.*** Two women I interviewed, Osam and Dvanaest, were children when they were raped. Her young age was an important factor for Osam when talking about being in a camp and being raped. She was a child and may still not have fully understood what had happened to her: “I was a child. Maybe I don’t know even now what happened to me.” The war and rape essentially stole her childhood. She told me that the war and rape affected how she lived

her childhood. She started living her adolescent and teenage years when she was an adult at the age of 18: she was “late” living out these years, because she lost out on being a child:

all the things that were supposed to follow me in those years as a child, I did not have.

Neither because of the events [rape] nor because of the war. I did not have them.

Meaning, all the things I was supposed to live through from the twelfth to let’s say eighteenth year, I was living through from the eighteenth until twenty-something.

Because you were late. You were late with everything. (5 second pause) (...) I wanted to be a child, I should have been a child.

Unlike Osam, Dvanaest was adamant and clear that her childhood was taken from her: she did not lose it; it was stolen. She often described herself as a child or minor when telling me about the war or sexual assault (“minor”, “child”, “I am a child”). Her childhood was spent in war and what should have been a beautiful time in her life spent with family and friends was stolen and destroyed, and created into something she did not want:

but I say that period, my childhood was spent in war. That most beautiful childhood was ruined for me. Meaning, that period was stolen from me, when I should have been enjoying, when I should have been maturing, spending that period with mine, with my parents with my brother with my family, friends. But that was stolen from me. Simply, someone else was creating my childhood which I did not want under any circumstances.

**Latent consequences.** Seven women described experiencing latent consequences – typically consequences that were suppressed or not felt immediately – and the consequences described were largely due to the rapes endured. Women described a period of relative psychological or physical wellness, or not thinking about the rape(s). This was usually followed by consequences which, for some women, were at their most extreme years after the rape(s).



Women talked to me about suppressing their trauma, being frozen or in a spasm, or not being in ideal circumstances (e.g., war) to think about what they had endured. All of those descriptions led me to interpret their consequences as latent (present but not yet active).

Pet's experiences exemplify many elements of other women's stories as well. She did not have time to think about the rape, because physically surviving the war and its effects consumed her. The consequences manifested physically, psychologically, and psychophysically much later. She experienced the first "symptoms" of the rape in 1999, seven years after it happened: "the first symptoms of that experience I survived, in fact some of those first traumatic symptoms I am experiencing in '99." Pet's symptoms began after the war, when she had created a home, a place where she felt safe. She described feeling like something was beginning to smother her in her dreams:

simply in 99 percent of cases it began to appear when you had some, your own intimate space in which you were safe. Meaning, the first time eee I am alone with my husband and children, we have something like our own roof, let's call it our roof, it was an alternative accommodation. Ee he began to work and then you calmed yourself down, alright he is working, we got an apartment, we are living, we have kids and maybe then you're unladen. Eh then came those, them those problems came. they simply began to suffocate me in my dreams. And [you] swallow, swallow, [but] you can't. it is as if I swallowed something and it just stopped there, could not go up nor down.

For Pet, the physical consequences consisted of heart arrhythmia, fatigue, and an inability to fall asleep on her right side. Psychological and psychophysical consequences included fear, particularly fear of officials such as police officers and loss of consciousness. It seems that the

fight for survival delayed the psychological consequences of the rape. Finally feeling safe was the impetus for the onset of the consequences.

Iterations of this (i.e., delayed onset of consequences due to fight for survival; feeling safe as the impetus for the onset of consequences) were not uncommon in the women's stories. B.H. did not think about the rapes, because she was in shock about everything that was happening around her including the rapes. She also told me that her menstruation ceased during the war, but only after she had left occupied territory. The cessation of her menstruation due to stress was a latent physical consequence, because she experienced it when she was in a relatively less stressful context (i.e., unoccupied territory). Četiri became more aware of what had happened to her, the more relaxed she became. And Dvanaest told me that she thought about the assault, but was too busy trying to survive the war. Although she did have nightmares, it was not until a few years later that other consequences began to manifest. She suppressed the trauma of the assault until her body could no longer take it and the consequences of the sexual assault reached their peak in 2006. Dvanaest saw reminders of the rapist in anyone who had a beard, she could not listen to crying and she could not be in crowds. She described feeling anxious and itchy, chained, and cramped. She had trouble concentrating, she cried without reason, and felt a sense of unrest. The trauma “snapped” inside her and that is when she searched for help from a doctor:

after all those years of repressing that trauma and what I survived, simply there was a period where it snapped in me. When it snapped, when the organism could no longer handle it. I simply fought against that but in 2006 it snapped in me, when I needed to seek help from a medical professional because I could not [handle it] anymore. I simply felt discomfort in my own body. My skin was, I had a feeling that chains were tightening me

and then goosebumps so I was always scratching, I wanted to go crazy. I was simply confined, closed in, squeezed.

While Z.J. experienced psychological consequences shortly after the rape (e.g., crying), she also told me that she felt like she was in a state of “spasm” for some time after the rape and that she did not have time to think about it during the war, because she was trying to survive. She described herself feeling worse after 1995 than she did for the few years after the rape indicating that there may have been an element of latent consequences. After giving a statement to the Association, she felt better:

I did not have, I did not have time to, you know, and if you sit down and ee cry and then you see those kids scared so you hide somewhere then, you know. And you did not have time in the moment because you, because I, I was worse from '95 and on, but in that period I was in a spasm. Because I was on the line [army line], I leave my child in god's hands every time I go on the lines. Meaning, in those moments, but I mm you know you cry, what are you going to do when you're this and that. (cough) I shared that with my brother and that is that. And I could not share it with anyone else because how do I say it, and I would be ashamed to tell someone over there but then again why would I be ashamed, I am not at fault - in that moment, I would talk with myself. (...) and always that spasm until the Association when I told them.

While Z.J. described a “spasm,” Deset's words for a similar experience were that of a “frozen potato.” Twice during the interview, she used the metaphor of a frozen potato: she described the effects of the war and rapes having had hardened her like a frozen potato for about six months:

I say again what that priest told me aaa “it will hold you, you are a frozen potato but when you begin to thaw, it will be difficult. Now you are frozen and cannot be touched” and that is how it was. And when later, I mean after surely half a year, maybe not half but that hardness lasted about that long.

When she began to thaw, she began to feel physical, spiritual, and psychological consequences such as pain all over her body, lack of will to work, lack of will to get dressed, head spinning, and nightmares about the rapes. Finally, although Devet did not describe being frozen or being in a spasm, she did tell me that she felt better as time went on, but then she became physically ill. For the women that experienced “latent consequences,” consequences post-rape and post-war were experienced, but it was not until after a period of delay that the consequences had reached their peak.

**Unacknowledged consequences.** Osam spoke about a bad period in her life after the war when she used drugs and drank alcohol. I asked her if there was a relationship between the drugs and alcohol, and the rape. She answered that they had nothing to do with the rape:

**Mia:** are-

**Osam:** there

**Mia:** you connecting that what you said drugging and that ee you drank, are you connecting it then to that event, what happened?

**Osam:** no no no I'm-, I am not connecting anything mm i am not connecting anything to that event.

However, Osam made subtle connections between the two, indicating that there may be unacknowledged consequences of the rape. For example, when talking about the drugs and alcohol, she said that she needed to “live” regardless of what had happened (e.g., rape, war) and

inferred that the drugs and alcohol were taken to help her relax as a “young person” (italics added for emphasis):

in the last 10 years I had ee totally some things some problems ee ee concerning life, *concerning living, concerning – that regardless of what happened you have to live, you have to, you know.* And then when you see that after after everything, that is waiting for you too. Only then do you see you are totally, that you have to extract yourself, you have to pull yourself out. What way will you choose to pull yourself out, that is your own thing but you have to pull yourself out, not just me but everyone, from that. From that I am, I am, I don’t know. I did everything, I drank mmm I don’t know I don’t know what I didn’t do, I used drugs (...) *I was young and and and how much you needed as a young person, how much you needed something to relax, to be alright.*

Additionally, she spoke about how the war and rapes had impacted her childhood in such a way that instead of living out her teenage years at the appropriate times (i.e., when she was twelve to eighteen years old), she was living them out from the age of eighteen to “twenty-something”:

all the things that were supposed to follow me in those years as a child, I did not have. Neither because of the events [rape] nor because of the war. I did not have them. All the things I was supposed to live through from the twelfth to let’s say eighteenth year, I was living through from the eighteenth until twenty-something. Because you were late.

### **Strengths**

Another outcome all women reported was strengths they developed as a result of the war or rape(s), or simply strengths they retained in spite of the negative wartime events. I categorized the strengths the women spoke to me about into two subthemes: external strengths and internal strengths.

**External strengths.** External strengths were strengths that came from outside of the women or were tied to others such as relationships or people that helped them with survival or coping. Many of the external strengths were women actively seeking outside help (e.g., medication, talking to others about the rape). The help that they were able to receive, in many cases, runs counter to what we know about some of the consequences of wartime rape such as social isolation (Mukamana & Brysiewicz, 2008). The fact that women sought help from someone or something outside of themselves made the acts not only “strengths” but strengths from external sources (thus the name “external strengths”). External strengths were further categorized into access to support via formal or informal means.

Access to support via formal means included access to professionals and their professional support (e.g., doctors, legal support, prescription medication). Deset told me that she had received help from religious leaders for the events she endured during wartime, including the rapes and her husband’s death. One priest in particular gave her strength to fight after she was released from the Serb-run camp. His words, telling her not to give up and to hold her head high for her children, were still with her, even on the day of the interview:

when I came out of [name of camp redacted], you know what [a priest] told me. He said “do not let your children be ashamed of you, do not bow down with your spirit and under no circumstances do not not fight, or fall.” (...) “so that your children are ashamed, but bravely hold your head high so that they say this is my proud mother.” And that advice meant a lot to me (...) “go forward alone and only forward and do not think about what happened, you overcame everything and you will overcome this too, just hold your head high.” And those words are with me.

The Association had also provided women with strength. Since giving the Association her statement in 2006, Z.J. felt different. She cited the Association as being her biggest source of help over the years. She remembered telling herself that if other women in the organization who were broken could survive then she could, too:

I was helped the most in 2005 or 2006 when I went to the Association and down there. (...) it's different, I swear, when you find yourself in the midst of people with the same wounds who, and and even bigger wounds – those who lost their children and that. And somehow is it different surviving with those people. It was different for me then, that is when I sat down and had a talk with myself: “well if that [woman] can when they killed her two children, and [that woman] whose three [were killed] and then [her] husband and killed all of hers, they only left her and raped her. You left her to suffer, to really break her so she cannot, so she cannot, cannot go on. Well, if she can go on, and then I tell myself why couldn't I [go on]?” it is different when there is that gathering and that association was good for many women, it was good for me first of all, but I guarantee [it was good] for many women. Many many (...) but it is a lot different after the statement at the Association. I am different.

For Dvanaest, the formal support, particularly that of psychotherapy, had been helpful in her recovery. She saw herself as someone who wanted to live and someone who was stronger, more understanding, and able to create her own life post-war:

I am a lot stronger because of those therapies, a lot more understanding eee I simply care about living, having having the possibility of creating my own life, of not having to look back on something that was because, as our psychotherapist said “this is 2016, not '92.” We create our lives now, our future, as much as we can, however much our current

situation allows us. And there is no more war, no more shooting, no more rifles. Now we have the court, law, there is a law against the perpetrators.

Regarding both the wartime events generally and the sexual assault specifically, she told me that having access to formal support in her mother tongue was important and not something that every woman had access to outside of the urban area in which she lived. She told me that women living outside of BiH may have had trouble communicating in therapy with someone who did not understand what had happened in BiH.

Many women talked about having access to therapy, but they were not always positive experiences. Z.J.'s relationship with pharmaceuticals was mixed. She had access to doctors for both war- and rape-related trauma and spent two months in a psychiatric hospital, which she found helpful. Though prescription medicine did not help her when she first started taking them years ago, they eventually did. At the time of the interview, she tried to avoid taking them and instead focused on natural medicines such as herbal teas. However, there were times when she still found prescription medicine helpful (e.g., when she had to testify for her husband's murder). Osam's experiences with formal support systems was less mixed. She told me that she had only started receiving support not too long before the interview and that what she received to that point had not been enough. She told me that trips to psychologists or psychiatrists meant that she received prescription drugs. She was critical of this approach and hated the drugs, because they did not let her function well enough to perform her daily tasks (e.g., meal preparation, taking care of her children):

you did not have any help until, I don't know, a few years back, well you don't have it even now. So you go to a psychologist to a psychiatrist ee ee ee ee what do they give you, they give ee the same stuff, here is some Citram [antidepressant], take some Citram.



Listen, “take Citram”, you take it. Take Citram so you can’t function, you lay ee in the house, you take it, go [directed at psychiatrists]. Here, you take it. Here, you [the psychiatrist] are under stress too, take Citram. Please, come on. And make lunch, and fold [laundry] and unfold and and change the kids and this and that, come on. I took it twice, I would never take it again in my life, neither that [Citram] nor Leksilium [anti-anxiety drug] nor anything. Begone to all tablets [medication]. I hate tablets.

Osam did, however, describe having access to informal means of support. Specifically, she found having obligations helpful. Having to care for her children, for example, helped her be distracted from the rape because she was so occupied that she did not have time to think about the rape. Like Osam, Jedan also focused on her children to help her survive. She recalled that one of the times she was being raped, she prayed that she would stay alive so that she could see her children: “Just pray to god that you stay alive, to see those kids” And, B.H. told me that she was glad she had survived the rapes, especially because of her children: “ Later you were simply glad that you survived, no matter what. If not for anything else then for your children.”

It was common for women to talk about their families as a source of informal support (i.e., unpaid support or support that is not professional support) both during the war and after the war. Osam told me about her parents' support during the war when they had organized her escape from the war zone and into safety. Similarly, during the war, Jedanaest had support from her sister-in-law who helped her manage her way around parts of town she was not used to. Jedanaest and her family also had help from other family members and people they knew with instrumental support (e.g., temporary housing). It was her husband, though, that provided Jedanaest with immense support after she told him about the rape she endured. He continued to be helpful until he died, shortly after the war ended. She recalled that sometimes at night and in

the dark she would try and leave a room but could not find the exit: she would lose her orientation and begin to scream. Her husband was always with her in those moments and helped her. There were times when she could not make her way back to their bed, so she would fall asleep on a chair or on the floor. When she would wake up in the morning, she would see that he had fallen asleep beside her:

and very frequently he would fall asleep beside me or I can't get back to bed, I can't – then – or on the chair or on the floor ii would very frequently sit against the wall and that, and then in the morning when I wake up, I see he is beside me. So, we survived that together always. Mm he helped me.

Family continued to be an important source of support to the women. For Pet, her husband was a source of emotional support. She felt free to speak to him about the rape any time.

Z.J. told me a story to demonstrate how much of an impact family and friends can have on a raped woman. She remembered working at the Association when a woman came in to give a statement about wartime rape. Z.J. called her “granny” [in Bosnian, the word conveys respect for an elderly woman] until she took her identification card [for the purposes of the statement to the Association] and realized the woman was the same age as her. The rape, Z.J. reflected, had broken that woman, not because of the event itself but also because she had an alcoholic husband and a problematic mother-in-law and child. Z.J. herself had a family that made her happy and from whom she received support, especially her brother, her daughter, and her daughter's boyfriend. When she had moments when she did not feel well, her daughter and her daughter's boyfriend would take her out and try to make her feel better:

when I get some moments now and I am not well, she [daughter] and her boyfriend will right away say to me “go get ready. We will take you somewhere, come on.” You know.

“nah, it’s hot.”. and he says “there is air conditioning in the car. Come on.” That means a lot a lot a lot. And it means [a lot] for every victim, [who you are in] the midst [of] means a lot and that (...) your circle of either friends or family help a lot. It helped me.

Z.J. talked to me several times about her daughter who was clearly a great source of pride indicating that having a family life that was not problematic or stressful could be an indirect source of support for women who have already survived so much trauma.

Some women felt the support of family and friends even though they had not shared their stories of rape with them. Deset had not told her family about the rapes, but she suspected they knew. Her son noticed when she was not feeling well and tried to make her feel better by taking her out and getting her to socialize:

after the war he [son] saw it on me that something is not alright, that is when he says “my mamička [endearing name for mom]” he says “mamička”, “you go get ready, you and I will go for a walk, we will go drink a coffee, we will go to town, we will go to my cousin’s ee somewhere for coffee” and that. He feels some unrest in me and he sits me in the car, takes me out and we, I come home a little refreshed.

Her son had also taken her to the Association so that she could give her statement about the rapes. She felt protected by her family who, Deset says, looked out for her and defended her. Jedanaest also told me that although she had not told them about the rape or other wartime experiences, her female friends had been a source of support.

Z.J.’s friends knew what she had survived. They were positive toward her and invited her to socialize, which meant a lot to her. She told me that she had also received support from the community (e.g., her boss, strangers). Additionally, she found inspiration in others. She told me of a time when she heard a story of a woman who was raped and who was also told by a Četnik

to get a knife for him that he later used to slaughter her child in front of her. Z.J. thought the woman's experiences were worse than her own and it gave her the inspiration to give the Association a statement about her own rape:

she [woman from the Association] gave me such inspiration, it is unbelievable. She found a knife that a Četnik told her to find. Poor her, she did not know they were looking for it to slaughter her son in front of her. I, that, I said well there are worse things than [what I went through]. And I went and told [my story] down there [to the Association].

Other than family and friends, Dvanaest found positivity in the fact that she lived in an urban area where she had access to everything she needed and did not have to live in the city where she had been sexually assaulted. She found it problematic that women had to return to places where they were victimized and worry about the perpetrator murdering them:

Maybe women who live in other cities maybe there is more difficulty, especially women where where the war criminals are still around. That is already aggravating where there is no, she has the will, actually she is compelled to come back to live in that area where the criminal is. That is a different more difficult theme. Perhaps one of the most difficult. (...) because no one cares if I come face to face with a war criminal. And I want, I think about whether he will knock on my door and kill me, take revenge on me.

Dvanaest told me that the state has not resolved this problem of women having to potentially face the perpetrators of crimes committed against them during wartime. Thus, her experience of not having to live in a city where she had been sexually assaulted had been a strength in her recovery process.

Three women (Deset, Dvanaest, and Z.J.) talked to me about the positive impact their belief in god has had on their survival as well as their recovery from wartime events. Although

one could argue that belief in god could be categorized under “internal strengths,” the way the women talked about god was more about the relationship with him and the way he exerted control over aspects of their lives which is in line with the way I had defined external strengths (i.e., strengths that were tied to others such as relationships or people that helped them with coping or survival). Deset and Dvanaest credited god for helping them survive wartime events. When Dvanaest was sexually assaulted, she prayed to god to stay alive. She believed that god wanted her to stay alive and tell her story. For Deset, there were times when she wanted to commit suicide after experiencing trauma during the war; when she would have blown herself up had she had access to weapons she needed to do that. But, god did not let her have a moment to do that:

there were situations when I would have rather that I didn't exist, if I had had a weapon or a bomb I would have blown up myself and the house. I wouldn't have been sorry [for the house] at all. But you don't get a moment like that [to do it], god made it so that you don't have that moment.

Z.J. talked to me about believing in god and the role it has played in her recovery from wartime events. When she was telling me about the lack of state help she had with schooling her daughter, it was her faith in god, more than any pharmaceuticals, that helped the problem. It was with Allah's help that she took out a loan and was able to pay for her daughter's graduate school education: “I just say ‘dear god, in you I trust, you help me more than any medicine.’ So I go and take out a loan and pay the university and my daughter has a master's degree with Allah's and mine help.” She was “holding on” with god's help: “I am holding on with god's help, until when – probably by every name, there's an end date [date of death] and that's that.” From Z.J.'s point of view, it is god who decides how long she will live.

Dvanaest told me about god's help in her life and specifically with the post-sexual assault recovery. After the assault, it was her faith in god and his judgement of others that allowed her to think reasonably and not yearn for revenge:

when I was assaulted, I just prayed to god to stay alive. Why was I saying that, I don't know. And maybe that god wanted me to stay alive, to talk about that [what happened]. It is just the faith in god that lets me live the way I live now, to think the way I think, to think rationally, to not yearn for revenge. Because to us in islam, and other faiths too, one should not yearn for revenge because, there is that one that judges everyone equally. That is simply ee faith in god that whoever did whatever, they will be judged. It doesn't have to be in this [world], they will be judged in the other [world].

When she feels abandoned by others, she knows Allah still gives her strength. When she asks him for relief or help with a problem, she gets a strength within herself. Dvanaest told me that she believes that god's judgement extends to events happening around the world today. The international community could have prevented the murders during the war, but allowed them to happen. God's revenge to these enemies is the unfortunate events happening around the world:

it is a little wrongful from the international community too, they could have prevented this bloodshed but they did not. They allowed it, so. But this what is happening in the world, that is not for nothing. That is not for nothing. Some time revenge comes. That is what they say "god, take revenge upon every enemy who has the mind to do evil to another." None of this is happening for nothing. All of this is god's punishment. You had

an opportunity to prevent this massive bloodshed but you did not. And all it needed was a signature. But you did not [sign], and that is why this is happening.

**Internal strengths.** In addition to external strengths, many women talked to me about their own internal strengths that helped them survive or cope with the wartime events, or strengths they retained despite the wartime events. The subtheme “internal strengths” is crucial in answering the first research sub-question (do the women identify any positive or strength-based outcomes; related to this, has activism or political involvement had an effect on the women’s post-rape recovery and experiences?), because the women talked to me about fighting for survival, political agency, and openness about their victimization.

I had originally intended to write this portion as I have written others in the document (i.e., as a cross-analysis), but thought it may be beneficial to summarize each woman’s strengths under her own subheading much like the Herstory section. I have been clear from the outset that one of the goals of my research is to expand on the limited literature on women’s strengths post-sexual violence. One way to meet this goal is to dedicate this section to each woman’s strengths not only to demonstrate the types of strengths the women had, but to also do justice to the women who had survived atrocities and continued to fight in some manner.

**Jedan.** Jedan is a fighter who tried and succeeded in escaping her captors. She also demonstrated her inner fighter through the stories she told me about her life before and after the rapes. For example, she described herself as “fighting” and succeeding to make a life for herself after her house burnt down and her partner died: “a person fights. I went through that, I even went through a fire, everything burned, when the man [husband] died (...) I succeeded again a little, actually not a little but a lot.” She also told me that her sense of humour has remained after the rapes.

When Jedan made her escape from captivity, a police officer had approached her and had wanted her to leave with him. Jedan verbally resisted. She refused multiple times and ultimately was able to get away, possibly avoiding further imprisonment and rapes. She later found out the police station the police officer had come out of was known for rapes and murders during the war.

Jedan told me about things she had done in her life before and after the war that can be described as self-confidence – a trait that has remained after being raped. She spoke about verbal abuse by a former husband before the war, which led to her seeking a divorce from him. She also used the word “rape” to describe what happened to her and other girls and women in captivity. She used the word “rape” despite the rapists and other soldiers using other words (e.g., “fucking”). Additionally, she was not ashamed that she was raped and showed little interest in whether others believe her:

they say some people are ashamed to talk about that and that – I am not ashamed. I was struck by that [those circumstances]. But thank god I stayed alive, as they say, and [get to] talk [about the rapes] whether you believe it or not. I did not like that it happened.

This confidence in herself and how she should be treated has remained post-war: she was not ashamed of being raped, she did not care whether someone believed that she was raped, and she saw herself as a hero for the rapes she endured. Jedan had confidence that she could take care of herself: she did not need a man (“I don’t need you for anything.”) or anyone else (“I don’t need anyone.”).

Jedan also talked about instances of retaining or fighting to retain some control of her life, showing agency in her life. She spoke about being in captivity and fighting to stay alive no matter what was done to her. When she faced difficult times, Jedan was able to find ways to



make herself feel better. Finally, Jedan told me that her experience in this interview had been different than others. In the last interview she did about her wartime experiences, she cried: “When I gave my last interview down there, I cried [so much] I could not talk. And now look at me, simply normal.” However, in this interview, she was feeling “normal.”

*M.O.* demonstrated several instances of verbal resistance during the war. When the soldier (soon-to-be her rapist) initially approached *M.O.* and told her to come with him, she questioned him and told him that she has no need to leave with him. Eventually, the soldier used physical force to take her outside:

he said (...) “you need to come out.” I said “but why will I go out? I have no need to leave this apartment.” “you do, you do. You need to see something.” I said “if I need to see something, bring it here and I will see it.” “I told you that we are leaving” and of course he grabbed me, he grabbed like this. “I told you to leave so you will leave, do not resist me.” And he really grabbed me by the hand like this. And he took me out.

During the rapes, *M.O.* begged the soldier [not to do it] and tried to talk him out of raping her.

*M.O.* demonstrated legal agency predominantly as it pertains to rape, but also war in general. She spoke out about the rape to the state investigative forces – State Investigation and Protection Agency (SIPA). She wanted the perpetrator/rapist to face justice and was ready to testify. She also spoke to international investigators about wartime crimes despite having given birth the day prior and having to breastfeed her newborn:

so I said “I am leaving the hospital. I was in labour, I was in labour the day before.” [he?] said “they have arrived, landed, at the airport in [name of city redacted] so I said “what am I going to do, let them come, no other option.” I said “we will take breaks because I have to nurse the baby.

As a result of the rapes, M.O. showed political agency by fighting for women's rights and economic strengthening of women:

I engaged a lot in women's rights (...) and then eee very, at one point wanted to go into politics but then I withdrew. And then I participated a lot in seminars for economic strengthening of women.

Her personal agency, as a result of both the war and rapes, was demonstrated by her willingness and ability to draw herself out of psychological unrest. After her statement to SIPA, she walked around by herself before going home in order to find her "peace": "first I needed to find peace, sit somewhere in a park, to walk, to walk from shop window to shop window, to turn my attention [elsewhere]. And only then did I go home." She told me that she had become braver because of talking about the rapes and that the wartime events she had endured had made her stronger: "I do not have any nice experiences [in the war]. The only thing I have is that it strengthened me. And I come back to that once more that whatever doesn't kill you makes you stronger."

Other strengths demonstrated by the M.O. included surviving the rapes and war ("survive" was a word she used consistently throughout the interview) and being a fighter (e.g., during war ensuring the survival of her cousins's baby and her own brother with special needs). Finally, she had the attitude that life must go on despite saying that life carrying on was an illusion, because she was reminded daily of the rapes:

it appears to you that life goes on. But a million things, during the day at least six times it takes you back, that psychologically breaks a person, in this case a woman. From day to day. I cannot, even if it is a little, a violent scene on television, I get a flashback.

She did, however, find hope in her family: “Well, essentially, my life is somehow after the war, with that marriage and that getting, of course, my beautiful daughters and everything. It is a little aaa not a little but a lot, a splendor in the grass [indirect translation] of hope for life.”

**Tri.** Tri told me that she had not developed any strengths post-rape, but there were several examples of strengths throughout the interview, as well as her own words indicating that seminars, education, and communication have “strengthened” her. Though it took her some time, she opened up about her rapes. First, she told her neighbours. Then, nearly 20 years later, she opened up “publicly.” She said that opening up about her story helped her with social interactions, so that she could carry out work outside the home and communicate with others:

**Tri:** so with opening up with the story and, and ejecting it out of me, [things] got better

**Mia:** mhm

**Tri:** so that now I can communicate. With everyone.

**Mia:** yes

**Tri:** and with children and with adults and everything. Until then I did not, I did not even enter social organizations. However, now it’s all the same whether I will enter city hall and this and this, the hospital or the post office or those social organizations where, where there is a job to be done.

**Mia:** mhm

**Tri:** but until then I didn’t. So I can communicate now.

It was her personal agency that helped her achieve this openness and eventual communication with others: her agency to seek out education and medical help regarding the rapes she endured. She has developed a sense of community with other raped women: “concerning strengths and political engagement, I also developed that feeling of belonging with women in the community. I

socialize and we communicate and and we go to gatherings and [things] like that.” She also was living her life toward positivity: she was not concerned with the destiny of the perpetrators and she had come to a point in her life where she could recognize both the dangers in others as well as positive things in others. Tri conceptualized herself as having “survived” the wartime events, including rape. She was able to see her life before her: “days are going now, the days and life is in front of me.”

*Četiri.* During wartime, Četiri’s was instrumental in organizing herself and others to free herself from captivity and then later from her occupied hometown. In captivity, she worked with her mother and neighbour to convince the owner of the house they were captive in to call a family member for help. Once she was out of captivity and in her parents' apartment (but still in her occupied hometown), she worked with her mother to access money that would eventually help her leave her hometown. The aforementioned examples showed Četiri’s willingness to survive, her agency, and her resourcefulness. Četiri also exhibited control over her own life such as taking herself to therapy and creating a life for herself where she was free of wartime reminders.

Četiri’s most apparent strength as a result of the rapes was her developed independence and her resolve to her teach her children (especially her daughters) that independence. When asked about whether she developed strengths as a result of the rapes, she described herself as always being in defense mode. She liked this aspect of herself, but also told me she was not like this before because she had been a quiet individual in the past:

in principle, I was always very quiet, and I was not cutting [read: rude] neither socially nor anywhere, I did not like to stand out. And I was ashamed to have someone rebuke me. But now I am in some phase that I am always like waiting like for someone to attack

me. So I am always in some defensive mode (laughs). I am a second short of mm I can get into an argument in a second. Before I was very quiet and calm, avoided arguments, avoided disputes, always walked the line of least resistance. Whereas now I noticed in myself mm and I think it is better that way, I wish I was always like that, but there you go.

She told me that she wished she had always been the way she was at the time of the interview and had taken to teaching her children that independence, because it “cost” her a lot in life to care what others thought of her:

but simply eee I want them [her children] to have their “I” and that they can make some decisions. To be independent. And and and then then I think that it will affect them less in life what someone says to them if they act like that. Because I, it cost me a lot [thinking about] what this person will say, what that person will say, you know. I think, I think that that buried me a lot.

She said that this independence was particularly important for daughters, because men in the BiH culture were always looked at as being a step above women:

they [her children] need to be as independent as possible, to believe in themselves. And not to permit for anyone to oppress them in life. Neither in peace nor in war. (...) I especially mean that for female children. Here, males uuu in our society [are] always a step above all, I mean whether we want to admit that or not. That is generetionally transmitted, always men have some more rights compared to girls. But, I mean, why?

Četiri’s humour was present, even in difficult moments. She recalled being able to make herself and her doctor laugh during a difficult time in her life. In the interview, she was able to laugh during poignant moments such as giving residents of BiH the label of being in a “group

depression”: “we all have group depression (laughs) and are sad and dissatisfied.” She told me that she viewed her willingness to participate in this study as a large step for her: “and this and this that I came to this [interview], here [it is] a huge step forward. I mean, for me years and years of psychiatry and counselling and talking and, I mean for me that is also a step forward.”

*Pet.* Pet told me that she “survived” the rape and though the process has been long, she had been recovering. After the rape, she was open about her victimization. She told me she wanted to look for the positive that had come out of her trauma, such as being able to speak about her rape when other women cannot:

I don’t know, many women survived that, they don’t want to talk about that. Maybe it happened to me so that I would be in this organization now. I don’t know. Maybe, maybe [it happened] to me because maybe I am ready to talk about that. I don’t know for what reason, simply I find one, I want to look for positive things.

She was self-confident about what had happened to her and how she and other women needed to be supported. She never blamed herself for the rape: “I never put myself in the role of the culprit.” She told me that she tells every woman who comes to the Association and is afraid to tell her husband about the rape that the woman needs to leave the husband:

Now I tell every woman who comes here and says “I can’t tell my husband.”, immediately I say “Leave him. Leave him, woman [indirect translation], you have enough of your own suffering to then be afraid of him. I would leave him even if he was made of gold. [Even if] I had ten children, five to you, five to me, and done.” I could not do it, no way, not after this.

The rape has strengthened Pet. When asked about developing post-rape strengths, she spoke of self-confidence, saying that when she visits her hometown now, she resolves all problems with anyone on the street. She does not let anyone maltreat her anymore:

And now when I go to [name of hometown redacted], any problem I have and with whom, I will solve it on the street. I am not at all interested in who it is. Because because I think what happened to me cannot be any worse, though of course it can, god forbid, the situation. But simply I do not let anyone take shots at me [indirect translation]. I refuse, no matter who is in question.

Pet was agentic in many ways regarding the rape she endured. She took control of her own life by not letting the rape or rapist constantly be a part of her life for the rest of her life, but this took a long time to happen:

it took a long time for me to sit down and clear up some things with myself, to tell myself “wait, that someone was with you because it was his [the rapist’s] will.” Eee I cannot allow myself for that someone to be a part of me my whole life. I have more important people in my life.

Her legal agency was seen through her willingness to give SIPA a statement about her rape, her wish for processing her rapist, and her fight in solidarity with other women to fight for laws that protect women. She told me that although the women know what happened to them (i.e., the rapes), without a verdict it is as if it did not happen [in the eye of others]:

of course it is normal that women organized [themselves]. Let’s say, the Association alone alone gathers those women and it is very important that we gather here, we socialize, whoever comes at the door we know we are the same, that we survived the same [thing], that we fight with the same things, that we are strong, that we are brave,

that we succeeded in a lot, meaning with our strengths we fought for law, for protection of those women, that with our witnessing we are proving what happened regardless [of the fact] that we know that. But if there is no verdict then it did not happen.

Pet's political agency was practised through the Association. She organized seminars and programs for women rape victims, and ensured that women who may not be ready to talk about their victimization have access to their brochures and can come later when they are ready:

then we organized seminars, 50 women (inaudible) across four five days. Restful(?) rehabilitation through work, I don't know, various programs. There is movement. And then we worked a lot, let's say, on working on our self-help brochures, so some women who come as witnesses for someone have survived that [sexual assault]. However they are not ready to talk so they take that book [that has been created for self-help], then let's say in two months when they work over all that, they come to say that they survived it [sexual assault] too.

The Association was also a vessel through which Pet was able to communicate with other rape survivors and tell them that although their trauma will never be forgotten and is a part of them, it is important that it is not with them all the time:

through my my engagement in the Association, I try to somehow tell the women that we will never forget that. Never. But we simply need to give everything of ourselves to learn to live beside that. That is a part of me, OK, it is a part of me. But it cannot be with me 24 hours. I do not allow it. I do not allow it.

Pet was agentic in relation to the war as well. During wartime, she undertook action to clean her family home, bring food to the table, improvise a home when she did not have a secure one, and cooperate with others to survive. After the war, she had control over who she socialized



with and when and where she was able to speak her mind. Her political agency was seen post-war when she was unafraid to use her voice to battle nationalism and stand up for herself and others. She told me a story of being at a seminar shortly after Karadžić, a Serb war criminal was arrested. People of all three major ethnicities were present at the seminar, and a Serb dressed in nationalist gear showed up. Pet recalled standing up in the middle of the seminar and telling the organizer that she needed to look at nationalistic gear in 1992 (during wartime), but that now she did not want to nor did she need to:

and I know that I, let's say, the second day after Karadžić's arrest, I was at a seminar in Jahorina [mountain in BiH]. And a guy came (inaudible) with a shirt on which there was a drawn cross and four S's. And in the middle of the seminar, there were Croats and Serbs and Bosniaks, I know that Karadžić has been arrested and all, and I got up and said to the organizer that I needed to look at this in '92 and that I won't now. Simply I do not want to and will not.

**B.H.** B.H.'s political agency, specifically relating to the rapes, was central to her strengths. After the rapes, she was responsible for giving herself strength to become the head of The Association “Woman Victims of the War” and fight against impunity: “the only thing is that I strengthened myself [after the rapes] eee that I am the head of this Association that fights for impunity.” She had been fighting for the economic strengthening of women and changes in law that benefit women and men who had been raped, and has been chasing criminals. Through the organization, she has made it possible for women who were raped during war to come forward even when they were not ready to give a statement to investigative forces or to testify in court. B.H. said that wartime criminals in her hometown think of her as something like an executioner who hunts them down: “but the system is like that now there [in hometown] that, for example, I

am an executioner [rough translation] for them who hunts, who, if it were not for me none of them would be arrested. What can I do?" She told me "that is their problem."

B.H.'s legal agency was seen through her giving a statement to investigative bodies about her rapes and her testimony in court. She said that when she used to visit her hometown, she was insulted by the perpetrators of the rapes. Now, however, they run away from her and she has lived to see them punished for their crimes, making her the winner:

I had the chance to see that those perpetrators would be punished and that you see that they run away from you. Because in the last five years you bow your head when you see them because they mock and insult you. And now when I come to my [name of hometown redacted] and any other town, they recognize me, they run and I am the winner. They are now afraid of me. But I am no longer afraid of them.

B.H.'s personal agency centred around her bravery and resourcefulness in wartime (including the rapes). During wartime, she verbally resisted and planned to physically defend herself, amidst the danger that she was in. She was also central to herself and other people escaping a village that had become captured. She was open about what happened to her during wartime, including the rapes. Despite the openness, she said that after they began to give their statements, the women were scared because their rapists used to tell them they would come back and kill them if they talked about the rapes: "after all that, we began to give statements, talk about what we survived and saw, but there was a big fear within us because they said 'we will come back' and now if you talk, they find out then you will be killed." However, she said that those who were raped were given an opportunity for the first time to tell the truth. And why keep silent, she asked, when the stories can help future generations know what awaits them: "we were

given an opportunity for the first time that we can tell the truth. And why keep quiet? Future generations should know how to carry themselves and what is waiting for them.”

A meaningful and culture-specific part of her personal agency was her fight because of “inat.” Inat is something like, but not entirely, “spite.” She said that inat was her impetus for organizing women, registering the Association, and continuing to live. She overcame her fear after the rapes with thoughts of inat, that her fight against the criminals was her revenge:

I overcame that [fear] with that, I mean aside from all the therapies, with that inat and pride to prove “yes you destroyed my life but here I am alive and I will fight on.” That holds me, that is my revenge.

She considered herself the happiest woman in the world, someone who was proud and defiant, and someone who would fight as long as her health allowed her to:

well let me tell you, I am in essence the luckiest woman in the world. Believe me. Ee I am proud and defiant and I live out of inat. Really out of inat. Until when? I am not interested at all. Aa my whole life is directed toward hunting war criminals. And I think I will fight until I my health serves me.

The rapes and the humiliation strengthened B.H. She perceived herself as a winner against war criminals and rapists specifically. She was self-confident (e.g., she is not interested in what the community's opinions are about the rapes she endured), offered help to others, saw herself as deserving of support (regarding the rape), was happy, and used her own form of therapy (i.e., farming).

**Sedam.** Sedam was satisfied with her life and recovery, and continued to believe in the right of people to love and be with whomever they choose. Being open about the rapes had helped Sedam. She said that when she gave a statement about the rapes and then told her family,

she did not feel alone anymore. She was calmer when she talked about the rapes and although she was not well for a few days after talking about it, she felt better than if she had never talked about it:

I do not want to think about that but here when the theme starts up then I am not well for a few days but I have to talk about it. If I had never talked, it would have been harder.

Already now that I have given many interviews given many statements, given, already now I say I am not alone, there are other people like that mmm I have partially unburdened myself.

Sedam showed personal agency – a sense of control over her own life. She was able to save herself from continued rapes by escaping her city. She did not talk about the rapes for a long time, but when she began to talk, she felt strengthened and that she was a different person from the quiet one she used to be right after the rapes and the person she was when she had only told one friend rather than having been very open:

**Sedam:** when I began to talk about that, I got stronger.

**Mia:** mhm mhm

**Sedam:** before that, I was not. I was very silent, I did not communicate very much with others, I said only what I had to say. Since I started to talk, I am a different person. When I began to talk about everything, to talk, I talk. Then when the family found out, when I was giving statements through ee media, then I strengthened completely. Now I am totally different different compared to how I was until ee while I did not tell anyone except that friend.

She told herself to gather strength and tell her story to anyone who asks. This has made her feel more at ease: “I told myself ‘I will talk to anyone who asks. I will gather strength to talk’ and I

am talking. And it is easier for me.” Sedam broke her silence about the rapes and it strengthened her.

Sedam gave a statement about the rapes she endured to the Association and she has testified in court about them, thus demonstrating legal agency. When asked what gave her strength to testify, Sedam replied that she wanted to prove the truth of what happened to her and other women. Though she was disappointed by the court system, she would testify again to show what happened to her and other women:

To prove the truth that that happened to me and that what happened happened to all those women in Bosnia. And tomorrow I would go testify again, though the court is like that [i.e., disappointing] but I would go to talk whether they wrote that I was right or not. But I would go to say it again. I would not hesitate even a little to go and talk and say what happened.

Sedam was a fighter who was self-confident and had strengthened over the years since the rapes. She has not let the rapists “ruin” her (“they [the rapists] humiliated me, destroyed me but I say ‘well no, they did not destroy me. I will be strong. They did not destroy me.’ And that is that.”) and said that the strength she has gathered since the rapes would allow her to stand in front of her rapists if they showed up again. She had “crises,” but she fought with them and saw herself as doing well compared to how she used to be. Sedam enjoyed being social and physically active: “I socialize a lot, I am very active, I go a lot to I go socialize with women walk, go to pools, mountains. I go everywhere.”

*Osam.* Osam has been recovering from the rape (“the farther farther it gets ee you are better and better, of course you are better.”) and her post-war problems (e.g., drug and alcohol use). She had agency over her post-war life. She told me that she has done everything she has

ever wanted to do: “ everything I wanted I did [after the war]. I did what I wanted [indirect translation for “I fell by myself, I killed myself” – an expression], everything I wanted I did. Everything. I wanted to dance, I danced.” When, in addition to having been raped, she faced post-war life challenges, she was decisive about having to “live” and pull herself out of her problems:

in the last 10 years I had ee totally some things some problems ee ee concerning life, concerning living, concerning – that regardless of what happened you have to live, you have to, you know. And then when you see that after after everything, that is waiting for you too. Only then do you see you are totally, that you have to extract yourself, you have to pull yourself out. What way will you choose to pull yourself out, that is your own thing but you have to pull yourself out

Although some women told me they found a voice after the rape(s), Osam said that she learned to stay quiet which was a positive quality for her. She said that she could not stay quiet before, but now she can control herself when, for example, others are angry and using inappropriate language:

the only thing I learned is to stay silent. There. That is and that is positive. That is a positive thing to me. Before I did not stay silent with anyone. You know, let’s say, I stay silent no matter where something is happening, whether it is happening on the street, in the car, you know how people are nervous [read: moody], you know. He’s swearing at you, you’re swearing at him. I don’t swear at anyone anymore. I haven’t sworn in 10 years.

She also told me that others perceive her as having a sense of humour.

Osam is very happy with and loves her post-war life: “ my life is wonderful after the war.

I love my life, I love my life and I wouldn't trade with anyone for anything. There. With anyone for anything. I am not in desire of anything. I do not desire anything."

*Devet.* Devet was and continued to be hard-working, something that she took great pride in. She worked until the war started ("I worked until the war.") and described the pre-war period as a time in her life when she was so busy working outside and inside the home that she could barely keep up:

I only worked and barely kept up and stayed up late in the night to catch up. For the kids to go to school clean and tidy, and that [food] is cooked and done and and to do dishes. I barely kept up with all of that.

She and her husband worked their entire life and had just finished building a home for themselves and their sons when the war began.

Devet was agentic in a variety of ways during wartime: she fetched water for herself and others, searched for her husband, found a way to inform her sister that she was alive, and searched for a way out of her city. When she was captured and raped, she verbally resisted:

They started to, lay down, jerk[ed me] around. "Come on", I said, "well how, don't, how are you acting like that?". I was like [sigh] nice to them, [told them] to to (sigh) let me go. No way.

She was open about the rapes with other women who were raped from the Association which, along with time had helped with her recovery. Other strengths included Devet's survival and her resolve to keep living.

*Deset.* Deset's internal strengths included openness about what happened to her during the war, including the rapes. Sharing the stories of the rapes with other women helped her: "It is easier for me when I threw that out of myself." She was recovering from the rapes and did not

look at everything as “all black” anymore. She wished to live a full life. During the interview, Deset shared several examples from the war and rapes that showed how very defiant she was despite the objective and obvious danger she was in. When she was taken by Serb soldiers from her home, she recalled being questioned by a soldier who asked her how many weapons her neighbours had. Her neighbours were all Serbs who had many weapons:

that I tell him [the soldier] how many ee weapons my neighbours have. So I questioned him “do you know Mister [name redacted] who my neighbours are?” And he said “I know.” [I said] “Do you know where my house is?”, [he said] “I know.”, [I said] “You know for sure, you know? Well, my neighbours have weapons to over their heads.” All of my neighbours were Serbs.

However, instead of answering the soldier directly, Deset defiantly questioned him asking him if he knew where she lived and who her neighbours were. I understood the situation to be one wherein Deset was being questioned about things she knew the interrogator already knew about her. And, instead of answering him directly, she questioned him instead – thus undermining his authority within a context in which Deset's life could very well be under threat.

Stories and examples of agency were plentiful in the interview. Deset told me a story set in the post-war period during a time when she did not have money, but needed to do repairs on her house. She said a power entered her to go to a shop selling building materials where she sought out the person in charge and told him what she needed for her house, but that she did not have money or anything to guarantee that she will pay him back. Instead, she told him that if she did not pay him back, he could take the materials back. The person in charge gave her everything she needed:



some power entered me so that I came to a construction material [company], I didn't know the director nor the boss nor anyone. [I said] "who is the boss here?", [he said] "me." Or he was in the office upstairs. I knocked [and said] "good day." [He said] "good day." [I said] "Listen man, I need this this this, but I don't have money." The man looked at me "are you normal?" [I said] "I am not normal nor do I have to be." [he asked] "what do you vouch with?" [I said] "I cannot vouch with anything but you have your people, you have your cars. If I don't repay you for, let's say the roof, come and take off the roof and take it away." The man looked at me, I mean, [like I was] unhinged. [I said] "I have not fallen off the wagon [indirect translation]." He gave me a whole roof [worth] over 5,000 BAM, bricks and all that.

Deset told me that if she needed something, she asked for it directly.

The personal agency displayed in relation to war was most poignant in her search for her husband's body. Upon being released from the Serb-run camp, Deset learned that her husband was presumed dead and his body was missing. She took over searching for his body from her son, partially because one of her sons told her that she needed to find his dad. She gave herself the "crazy" task of finding her husband's body so that her children would know where their father was. Other examples of her personal agency included finding food while in captivity, finding work during wartime, and pulling herself out of bad thoughts.

Deset's political agency was apparent when she told me about a political meeting she went to where there was an opportunity for attendants to ask a question. She took the opportunity to tell the politicians and the audience that she had been a shepherdess and always knew if and which of her sheep were missing. And, if the sheep were mangy, she was ashamed to be in the presence of other shepherdesses. She used the analogy to shame the politicians for not taking

better care of the country, including their inability to keep the youth in the country. She recalled receiving applause and others (presumably in a joking manner) telling her she could be imprisoned again:

I went to that gathering (...) “does anyone have any questions?”, I signed up to talk but I did not prepare anything, I just, I simply came out, I told them “I am not educated, I only finished four grades and finished school long ago. And I don’t know political or or something something but I will tell you using ordinary language. How can you, I was a shepherdess and took care of 100 sheep and if my sheep were lepered mangy, I was ashamed as a shepherdess to go near other shepherdesses. So aren’t you ashamed that we are mangy lepered, your country? I will tell you [this] in the most vulgar way. I have 100 sheep, gave a name to each one and knew when I was missing Roga [name of sheep], Zrna [name of sheep] or I don’t know. I knew [she was] missing but you are missing thousands of youth and you don’t see that they’re missing. Well who, how are you not ashamed to be politicians of some mangy country, some miserable people, some some. All you will have left is the elderly and and disabled, and you a politician in that country. How are you not ashamed? If you are going to rule, rule with the foundation of youth and and and school” (...) and I said it like that. And I received applause. When I was leaving, they said “you could go to jail again” (laughs)

Deset found positives in horrifying conditions. She told me that the positive in her being held captive was that she was the only one in her family to have been held captive, so only she was tortured unlike mothers who had children with them and had to watch them suffer. Because she did not have family with her, she was the happiest prisoner, she said:

I told myself I was the luckiest prisoner that was imprisoned, the luckiest because I did not have with me neither a child nor mother nor father nor husband nor anyone. If they scarified me, it was only to me. But mothers who watched [it happen to] their own children and then again her, that is a double victim. And in that in some way, if I was starving [then] I was starving. A mother that hears her three or two year old daughter cry at night “my bellybutton hurts”, her bellybutton hurt from starvation. That is a mother victim. Not only because because she is imprisoned but because her child suffers beside her. And with that I somehow concluded that I was the luckiest prisoner. My life there [on the plate], here you are.

Deset said that after the rapes, she wanted to prove that she was not a nobody and that the rapists did not kill her spirit. She wanted to prove that she was a somebody, so that after she is gone, her children and grandchildren have something nice to say about her: “I can prove that I am somebody that ee my children or grandchildren say something nice about me later, and not ugly. And I am fighting to leave only beauty after me.” Other strengths included testifying in court for atrocities experienced in the Muslim-run camp, pride in being perceived as an honest person (i.e., in court), knowing that the rapes were not her fault and a hope for a better future.

***Jedanaest.*** Jedanaest’s internal strengths included the road to recovery from the rape (e.g., no more nightmares, was able to converse with others) and war (i.e., memories of the war were fading). She said that openness about the rape with her doctors and husband helped her. When asked if she was glad that she told her husband about the rape, she told me she initially felt relief after which they helped one another cope.

Jedanaest's agency related to the rapes was most apparent in her ability to help herself. She told me that when she had flashbacks, she was able to calm herself down at times:

because right away the pictures (i.e., flashbacks) as soon as I laid down, as soon as I calmed down, those pictures came to my eyes. And and then I tried to calm myself down to to ee with some [power of] suggestion to to calm myself down and mm sometimes I even succeeded.

Jedanaest told me that she realized that she must fight for her own recovery and sought psychological help early post-rape (i.e., during the war). In recent years, she has dedicated herself to yoga which has helped her find her inner peace:

later I dedicated myself to yoga. Yoga helped me a lot, yes. That, I forgot say that because I have been training in yoga for ten-ish years and and and I have very much achieved that nn that inner peace with that yoga and with with and and to this day I know to do that when I cannot sleep, then I meditate a lot and and that helps. That helps.

Post-war, although Jedanaest said that she has not been engaged politically, she did see her participation in the Association as political, thus demonstrating political agency related to rape: “I never neither engaged, I never neither ee neither politically nor like this. Alright, except that I come to this association mm we talk, we talk and that’s that.”

In relation to the war, her agency was apparent in her stories of searching for and finding food and other necessities for herself and her family. Her agency was strongly exemplified after she was freed from the camp and successfully petitioned for her husband’s release:

he [husband] stayed another, I think, month. Only then did they, they let him go when I intervened [on his behalf] at Amor Mašović [person responsible for negotiating prisoner exchanges on Bosnian side], and then they performed that exchange.

Jedanaest was a fighter: a woman who fought for survival during and after wartime, and who fought not to think about the rape she endured: “simply I fight not to ee that I don’t think

about those things [rape]. I fight.” She was also resistant to authority. When she told me about an army coming to her home to take her and her family away, I noted how resistant she was to them. When they called her on the telephone to surrender themselves, she told them in defiance that her family would not surrender, they would not go outside, and they would stay in their own home.

Jedanaest shared several wartime experiences with me that showed how caring she was: the difficulty of watching her daughter and other children be hungry, giving her daughter the meals that she received as payment for working, finding happiness in helping others, protecting her daughter from potential rape, and giving up her bed in the camp so that children could sleep more comfortably. When women told me stories in which they cared for others, I saw it as a testament to their humanity to be able to care for others when facing so much adversity.

Other noted strengths included Jedanaest’s creativity (e.g., during wartime, she improvised making a stove so she could make food for her family), humour about wartime events, the happiness she found in her children, her general lack of self-blame for the rape, and her work ethic during the war.

***Dvanaest.*** Dvanaest’s internal strengths included the road to recovery from the sexual assault and war. She told me stories that demonstrated how personally agentic she was regarding both the sexual assault and the war. She had been open about her experiences of sexual assault, normalized it, and helped herself overcome difficult times. When she looked back to how she was after the negative wartime experiences (e.g., caring about what others thought, not caring

about her own thoughts) and compared it to how she was at the time of the interview (e.g., stronger), she saw a different person now – a winner over the person she was:

I feel like a winner ee like I winner over myself. After all those negative things which happened to me, I feel like a winner. A winner over everything that was in that period. A winner over myself because it strengthened me and I realized that that that I became stronger than I was. And every day I am stronger and stronger. (...) because simply I compare myself from before and now. Those are two different people, different identities. Because before I was always aaa vulnerable, weepy, I didn't have my "I", I always placed importance in other people's opinions - mine wasn't important. However, that is changing now mm it changed, it changed a lot. (...) I describe myself as a winner over myself and that trauma, a winner over negative energy, a winner over certain people, that I overcame that negative energy if I can say that. I am a lot stronger in that. And that gives me motivation for for for going further, for life. That is, what people say: one ee ee motto – meaning, a winner over that.

The power of self-help was dominant in this interview.

Being open about the sexual assault had been helpful. The first time she told anyone about the assault was to her mother, but she had since told her friend and her husband (before they married). Dvanaest believed that there should not be any shame for individuals to talk about sexual assault and that it takes strength to openly talk about sexual assault. Being open and talking about wartime events, including rapes, was important to Dvanaest because she thought this would ensure the atrocities would not happen again.

Dvanaest had not been ashamed to be open about needing psychotherapy: "I am not ashamed to say 'I need psychotherapy. I need to have a session with [name of psychotherapist

redacted] for half hour, an hour.’” She told me that she had also changed herself and her reactions to things sometimes, because she did not want to transfer her trauma to her son. As part of her job, Dvanaest listened to others' stories of wartime victimization, including rape. She helped women who do not have access to therapy by listening to their stories. However, she was able to put a barrier between herself and the emotional stories she heard at the Association, because she would go “crazy“ if she did not draw a line and, she says, drawing a line is necessary because she loves herself:

I work with the most vulnerable category. I listen to diverse stories, but I have learned for that story not to touch me. Meaning, I listen to everything but I put a, if I don't put a line, if I allow others' emotions [and] pain to touch me, I would go crazy. However, I put that barrier between the story and and myself. Because, after all, I love myself more.

During the war, Dvanaest's agency was apparent in her fight for survival (e.g., tried to run away from a Četnik). Post-war, she has taken actions to create a positive life for herself in which she has control over her life. She talked about wartime crimes she witnessed or experienced and had come to a point in her life where wartime criminals run from her when they see her. She has no issue telling former Serb neighbours that she did not want them speaking to her. She talked to me about creating her own post-war life and destiny, something that she deemed a success after everything she had been through:

this is now my second life. (...) it's like they say “I don't want to live with that criminal.”

I live life with my husband, my child, mother. I have nothing else to add. I create the life

I want. And that is, that is success to me, after everything.

Creating her own life extended to choosing her own friends and who she would socialize with.

Dvanaest's political agency regarding the sexual assault was primarily seen through her work at the Association. She said that through her position she helped other women or helped them seek help through psychotherapy. She was happy to help other women and saw it as a contribution to those women, to sexually assaulted individuals, and to society as a whole:

And then sometimes I say I end up being like rehabilitation (laughs) [for women in the Association] and then I talk about some of my experiences from psychotherapy and then they seek help from the psychotherapist which I am glad for because there is only one life. Those are some of my experiences which I have contributed to this society, this population, these women. And through various activities. I am glad when I can help someone with something, that I can help in that situation. That makes me happy.

Dvanaest told me that while she found the work difficult, she also loved it. Helping sexually assaulted individuals meant a lot to her, because she saw the family of that individual also benefitting such that they would no longer be traumatized:

and I love, I mean, it is difficult to do this job but I also love it. I love it. I have difficulties, of course, and I have difficulties sometimes, but then again I have that “I helped someone, I shared something nice with someone.” I never talk negatively. I cross that a little and that is always something positive, life goes on. So [she] says “yes”, so you need to direct yourself toward that. That is something I, my contribution to that community, this society, this country. Simply, when you heal someone, it means a lot. It means that that family will not be traumatized. And that means a lot in these areas.

Dvanaest demonstrated defiance in returning to her hometown at times post-war. The same town was once a scene for ethnic cleansing, a town which the war was supposed to rid of people like her – Muslims:



in [name of hometown redacted], as far as I know, no Serb civilians were killed. They were predominantly Muslims, Bosniaks killed in the [inaudible] way. Simply to [ethnically] clean you, expel, set fire, so you don't have the will to come back. But I have the will. I have the will. That [land] is mine. It is no one else's; it is mine.

Despite the victimizations experienced and bad memories, including the sexual assault, Dvanaest loved her hometown: "it means that someone, [name of hometown redacted] is some bad experience that I did not want. But, I go there, I love that city. But I remember it only by bad memories, not by nice ones."

Dvanaest's other internal strengths included bravery (i.e., did not give away the names of men in her town for fear of the Četnik killing them) and testifying in court (not for her sexual assault, because the perpetrator died during the war).

**Z.J.** Z.J.'s internal strengths included personal agency as it pertained to both war in general and rape specifically. During the war, she joined the army to help ensure that her family would have access to some food. She also fought for creating a wartime income to help her family. In the post-war period, she had taken charge of her own life. She had refused to share her story in a film, because she was worried about her future self who might see the film on television one day and have it ruin a nice moment because of flashbacks or bad memories. Although she was critical of the lack of support from the state, she has not allowed the barrier to prevent her from schooling her child. She took out a loan and was able to put her daughter through school. She told me that Četniks did not break her and she would not allow the state to do it either:

and then you tell yourself "you will not break me. Četniks did not destroy everything, and you won't either" and you go take out a loan and educate your child. That that [is what it

looks like to] give yourself a goal. That [Četniks] didn't [destroy me], well you won't either.

The goal to educate her child had been one of many goals Z.J. had set out in her life.

It was clear that Z.J. felt control over her own life after the rape. She told me that she did not allow the rapist to see her suffering and that he has broken her. She worked on herself and gave herself courage:

I am sick, I have those diagnoses, I get that yellow minute [expression for losing one's nerves] but again, how I say that using my own wording, "I give myself courage, I won't give myself up yet, I will stay a little longer."

Z.J. spoke to me about the importance of self-help and that it was more important than pharmaceuticals: "that what's there, there is no tablet, no doctor who can heal until a person themselves does not come clean with oneself." The self-help in her own life had been more important than pharmaceuticals for recovery. The self-help consisted of finding comfort in knowing there are women in worse situations, treating herself with natural medicines, looking to the future (e.g., she wants a grandchild), creating goals, and not letting herself get completely broken. Z.J. also enjoyed her post-war control in her own life (e.g., choosing her own friendships).

War-related political agency was noted when Z.J. spoke to me about not allowing her husband's murderer to be extradited which resulted in the murderer being tried in BiH, as Z.J. had wanted. She found it important to be a witness at the trial for her husband's murder. When she was called to testify at the murder trial, at first she said she could not come because she had a scheduled surgery:

the court calls me, I have to come tomorrow because there is testifying for that criminal. And in the moment I say this and that, “I have to go up to the hospital, they called me” and that . and I finish that conversation with the judge, he says “alright, we will postpone, so [come] when you can.”

Although the judge was willing to reschedule, Z.J. told me that she realized after having the conversation with the judge that she could die on the operating table and never have the chance to testify: “I finish the conversation with him and figure what if I, god forbid, die on the [operating] table, what if something happens to me and I don’t go to testify.” She quickly called the judge back and told him she would testify before her surgery.

Z.J. testified at trial for her rape as well as the murder of her husband, showing court/legal agency. She told me that the strength to testify for the rape came from two sources. One source of strength was giving a statement to the Association approximately 10 years earlier. She explained that she did not think the statement would lead to arrests or court. However, when she received a call from the Association that the rapist was arrested, she was in a state of such disbelief that she had to call back the Association to check that she had heard them correctly:

when she called me from ee she works down at the Association, to tell me that he was arrested (...) I could not believe it. I called again and said “did you say that to me right?”, she said “I said it right. He has been arrested.”

Recalling that moment to me in the interview brought her goosebumps.

The second source of strength came from the experience of rape itself. She described that the rape was done *to* her and that she did not do anything to the perpetrator [in general, not rape-related]. Further, the perpetrator raped her in front of her husband, someone she loved very much. Those reasons gave her strength and persistence to testify at the trial of the rapist. Z.J.

even asked the rapist at trial why he did “that“ to her, to which the rapist had no response:

“well why, why did you do that [i.e., rape] to me?” and I asked him that, it’s there in the verdict. “why? What did I do to you? We’ve never even met, nor did I know who or what you are. Why? Why?” He just stayed silent.

She undertook organizing and finishing the paperwork needed for the rape trial. When she testified, she said there were times she was unwell, but she continued to testify. Z.J. was adamant about not having her identity protected at the rape trial. It was the perpetrator, not she, who did something wrong: “they wanted me to be like a protected witness and for me to talk behind that there and in one moment I snapped ‘well, what for do I have to talk behind that there. Well, I didn’t bring him harm. He did that to me.’” She felt better now that both her rapist and her husband’s murderer had been convicted.

Z.J. told me that she never recovered from the rape. However, she did feel better (e.g., the nightmares are not as bad they used to be). Being open about her rape has helped her cope. Though she was ashamed of talking about the rape to others, she also knew she had nothing to be ashamed of. She “opened up [her] soul” to her brother and told the Association what had happened. Opening up to the Association meant a lot to Z.J. and was a sort of interruption to her silence about the rape. She was persistent in giving her statement to them even though she felt unwell while doing it. She did not want to stop or come back later. She wanted it done. After giving her statement, she saw that she was not alone and felt as if a weight had been lifted.

Other internal strengths included showing a great deal of care for others (especially her daughter), being a happy person, singing, persistence (e.g., she looked for her husband's body for seven years), and finding happiness in difficult situations (e.g., she helped others during the war and found happiness in that). Z.J. saw herself as strong, without shame, and having survived

despite her husband's murder and her having been victimized by rape. Z.J. characterized herself as someone who has fought for survival because she has fought her way through life since she was young. At the time of the interview, she felt like a “prisoner” in her own home because she was unable to leave the house to work, something that she has done her whole life and enjoyed doing. Z.J. had survived, helped others, and raised five children, all while living with the pain of what she had survived:

I see myself there as strong. Really as strong. Through everything I talked about (cough) I see myself as strong and I appreciate myself exceptionally and I love that I survived and that I helped many, that I raised my own and plus I raised four more orphans besides my own child, with my anguish and my wounds. I see myself as very strong. Strong woman. Believe me. I am no longer ashamed. (...) But I am broken inside but I fight to be strong.

Despite feeling broken, she fought to be strong.

### **Brief Summary of “Multi-faceted Outcomes (Consequences and Strengths) of Complex Trauma in War”**

The complex wartime trauma, including that of rape, produced complicated outcomes for the women which were categorized as consequences and strengths. In support of the trauma of rape discourse, the women reported consequences that had persisted to the day they were interviewed. However, the women reported varied outcomes, beyond psychological, which did not follow a linear trajectory (i.e., effects of rape trauma moderating over time). The women also reported retaining or acquiring strengths post-rape. In “external strengths,” the women accessed support systems through both formal and informal means. Although the formal means such as access to medication and medical professionals (e.g., psychotherapists) partially supported the

trauma of rape discourse (i.e., the idea that women work on their recovery with the support of others; Gavey & Schmidt, 2011), the informal means of support were often a reminder that women did not seek others to work on their healing and recovery, but rather focused simply on their relationships and the strengths and support of those relationships (e.g., importance of family in some women's lives). Additionally, women's "internal strengths" such as political and personal agency as a result of the rapes were crucial in understanding the strengths women acquire or retain post-trauma, and adds greatly to the wartime sexual violence literature.

### **Parallel: Life with Intersectional Identities**

#### *Život sa međusektorskim identitetima*

The purpose of my second research question was to understand if there were aspects of the women's post-rape outcomes that were associated with their ethnicity and/or the ethnicity of the perpetrator. Accordingly, I asked the women if their ethnicity or the ethnicity of the perpetrator played a role in how they felt or thought about the rape(s). I also asked them specifically: "Do you think that your recovery process had anything to do with your ethnicity? The ethnicity of the perpetrator?" For the aforementioned group of questions, rather than talk about the recovery process, many of the women instead talked to me about why they thought they were raped. This was in addition to women talking about motivations for the war and the sexual violence without being prompted by an interview question. As such, this superordinate theme is primarily about the women's perceived motivations for the war and sexual violence they endured.

Nationality and gender were mentioned in every interview in some capacity. There were five dominant ways of talking about the perceptions of the reasons or motivations for the rapes or wartime events: explicitly gender; implicitly gender; nationality/ethnicity; gender and

nationality/ethnicity; and implicitly gender and nationality/ethnicity (see Table 4 for summary of how women talked about the perpetration of wartime events). Every woman talked about gender and about nationality, and often the intersection of the two, demonstrating that the women's identities were not simply about gender or nationality/ethnicity and that the perceived motivations behind the atrocities they experienced were complicated.

### **Gender**

Most women talked about gender explicitly as a motivation for the rape and other wartime events. The way that gender was implicated varied across women. Some women were clear about the gendered aspect of the rape(s). For example, Četiri saw the rapes not just as rooted in gender (e.g., she labeled other women as brave for speaking out about the rapes they endured, she recognized women hiding the rapes for fear of social reactions) but also as part of greater violence against women, who are oppressed, even in the post-war period:

**Četiri:** I think that girls should have more freedom, how long will women be silent, be oppressed, we are always oppressed. In war you are oppressed, of course you are oppressed when you lived through what you lived through, when someone has enough courage to do what was done.

**Mia:** mhm

**Četiri:** and in peace, it is the same. In peace, you have rapes and assaults and maltreatment. And why does someone think they have the right to assault someone else? Right, I mean, how much violence against women is there to this day.

Sedam also talked to me about the intention of the rapes being to destroy everything in women so that nothing positive stays inside her and that women lose all feelings towards men

Table 4

*Perception of Motivation for Perpetration of Wartime Events by Participant*

	Gender	Nationality	Gender x nationality	Subconsciously gender	Subconsciously gender x nationality	Shift in identity alliance
Jedan	X		X	X		X
M.O.	X	X	X			
Tri	X				X	
Četiri	X	X	X			
Pet	X	X	X	X	X	
B.H.		X	X	X	X	
Sedam	X	X	X	X		
Osam		X	X	X	X	
Devet	X				X	
Deset	X	X		X	X	
Jedanaest	X					
Dvanaest		X		X		
Z.J.	X	X	X	X	X	



and life in general. She described the town that she lived in as being very difficult to live in, because the goal was to humiliate women by raping them: “in my city where I lived, it was very difficult, it was very difficult. It was an endeavour to humiliate all women.” The gendered nature of the rapes seemed to have also been fuel for Sedam to testify. She wanted to prove that the rapes happened to her and other women. She was happy that a woman stood up before them and urged them to tell the truth about the rapes and that women began talking about their rapes:

I am glad that it began to be talked about, that those organizations exist, that my association exists, that a woman stood up in front of all of us and said this cannot be done anymore, that we have to tell the truth, we have to prove what happened to us. I am happy that everything is visible now, that all women have spoken out.

Yet, other women were less explicit (but still clear) about the role of gender in the rapes such as expressing solidarity with other women and hesitation toward men post-rape. For example, M.O. referred to the women in captivity with her as co-sufferers (“around me again were my co-sufferers [used female form of the word] together with me.”) and perceived women and girls to have fared the worst in the war (“I think the traumas are those which were survived - were the biggest which were survived by women, young women [she used a specific term for a female that would be aged between a girl and a woman], women. And even girls, very many [of them] unfortunately.”). She also told me that although she had hate in her after being released from the camp, upon hearing stories from Croat and Serb women [while noting that most crimes were committed against Muslim women], her view of the world changed and she prays that the current generation of people in BiH will go down a better path, one that will not allow for “political scum” to divide people by ethnicity:

after leaving the camp, a man is full of hatred. (...) and when I hear those stories that an Ana [Croatian female name] experienced something like that, when you hear stories that a Radmila [Serbian female name] has experienced that, then you a little – to be clear, the majority of the crimes are something else. That is why there are organs that will determine the gravity of the crimes and and it is a fact that Bosniak women in this war have suffered one hundred percent more than other nations, that other nations had smaller crimes (...) so that, honestly, my world view chnged. It changed – somehow differently – I pray to god that this generation goes some better route, that they do not listen to these, I will use an ugly term, these political scum who only look to throw a bevel between us [i.e., a phrase to show that political “scum” are interested in creating inter-ethnic issues].

That is, for some time after the rapes, M.O. held negative attitudes toward those who perpetrated crimes against her (i.e., Serbs). However, once she heard that women of other ethnicities were also raped, she seemed to have changed her perceptions such that she saw the rapes as committed predominantly against Muslim women, but also women in general; that the rape was, at least in some respect, a gendered crime.

M.O. further cemented this viewpoint when she talked to me about her generalized hesitation toward men (e.g., had fear when thinking about letting her daughter out with a boyfriend, hesitating in talking to men about the rapes), told me that the sexual violence had such an impact on her that she had difficulty “laying” (i.e., having sex) with her husband, and that she would not have married had she been able to have children on her own:

when I got married, and when I had to lay with my husband, do you know what a load that was for me (...) and I say I would really never have gotten married, if it was this [present] time, if there had been that artificial insemination and that [back] then. I would

have never married to have a man beside me. I only married because, to have that family of my own.

Deset, too, told me that after the rapes she was disgusted by men and had her husband not died she was not sure she could have laid in bed with him: “my god, if I had found my husband [alive], I don’t know if I could have [gone to] bed with him. I had that crazy feeling that I would no longer [be] with a man. Because I was disgusted by [them] all.” Thus, rape and sexual violence can leave women distrustful of men – a crime that some women perceived to be gendered.

### **Implicitly Gender**

Some women pointedly and clearly told me that they and other women were raped because of their ethnicity or nationality (e.g., raped because they were Muslim or Croat). However, when they talked about the rapes at length, it became apparent through their use of language (e.g., use of female pronouns for victims; male pronouns for perpetrators) that they conceptualized men as perpetrators and women as victims. Therefore, gender as a motivation for the rapes had been implicated. For example, B.H. saw the war and rapes as rooted in nationality: non-Serbs, particularly Muslims, were victims of crimes. But she also used female pronouns when discussing individuals who were a part of the Association (and male pronouns when discussing rapists) even though she had made it clear that male victims were also part of the Association. Also part of this implicit perception was B.H. talking about rapes and raped women without discussing nationality or religion and her focus on female victims (e.g., raped women finding comfort in one another during wartime, a woman's right to choose whether she testifies against her rapist or not). Additionally, she told me that no one in BiH talked about women who were raped and then killed: “while other [raped women], [they] say that ‘they raped me but killed

those [women] and those [women], [they were] taken'. In fact, later you find out that those women are no more, because women who are raped and killed are not talked about in Bosnia and Herzegovina.”

Other women also focused on women as victims or were more concerned with their daughters as potential victims than their sons. Pet, for example, was very clear that nationality/ethnicity was the reason she and other women were raped: “we were raped only because we [are] Muslim [male or “gender neutral“ term for Muslim].” Further, it was Serbs who raped Muslims. However, she also told me that she went through a very difficult time coping with the rape, only realizing after that she was scared for her daughter who had just turned 19 – the age Pet was when she was raped: “the most difficult period to bear was when my daughter turned 19 years old.” Though she has a son who would have been around that age at the time of the interview, she did not mention her son or his age being a trigger for anything similar.

### **Nationality**

Every woman talked about ethnic identity or nationality playing a role in perpetration of wartime crimes (including rape) or in the process of recovery. Četiri summarized most of the women’s perceptions of the war when she said that it was a “national war“ in which people were divided because of their names [markers of ethnicity] and experienced what they experienced simply because of nationality/ethnicity. For the Muslim and Croat women, the most often (but not exclusively) mentioned perpetrators were Serb(ians) and Montenegrins. For example, Dvanaest specified that Serbs killed and raped Muslims in the war. She explained that Serbians came to her town to displace, rape, and kill Muslims – to ethnically cleanse the area. They knew who the Muslims were because Serbs in that town – neighbours – told people from Serbia where the Muslims lived:

why did he not kill my neighbour, a Serb. Someone from Serbia does not know who I am. But they knew because Serb neighbours revealed [those with Muslim ethnic identities]. Why did he not make a mistake and go to a Serb home to expel, rape, kill. No. because we are Muslim. Simply to ethnically cleanse one territory. That is that, nothing else. That prevailed the most. And I was told that by a Četnik, to retaliate against the Turks. He came to defend the Serbs, to retaliate against the Turks. That is what he told me. I did not make that up. That was said and it has been proven.

She told me the Serbs said they perpetrated the crimes to carry out revenge against the Turks (sometimes used as a derogatory term for Muslims in BiH). Dvanaest was adamant that she was not Turkish: she was Bosnian of Muslim faith.

Jedanaest was different from the other women, because it was her identification with a Yugoslav identity and not with any of the three major ethnic groups (i.e., Muslim, Serb, Croat) that she saw as the motivation for the perpetrators to victimize her. She saw the war as the context in which she was forced by external forces (e.g., soldiers) to choose a non-Yugoslavian identity. Until the war, she declared herself and identified as a Yugoslavian. When she was taken to the camp during wartime, the army asked for her national belonging and she identified as “Croat” though she felt forced to do so and told them she has always identified herself as Yugoslavian. She was also a non-nationalist (in the form of not choosing sides in the war based on ethnic identity of others) which may have been another reason she was targeted by the perpetrators. She was asked by her captors during an interrogation if she supported a Muslim politician, to which she answered that she supported people and not those in power. To her, she said, it was important that people acted humanely and not like animals. Her captors took issue with her answer, became violent, and raped her:

am I for Alija [the then-president of BiH], they asked me that. Alija Izetbegović was the president of Bosnia and Herzegovina when the war started. And then I said I was just for people, I am not at all for a human, a human who rules. But be a human to me and I will be to you and nationality is not important to me, or religion, to this day it is not important to me. It is important to me that you act like a human and not like an animal. There were many of them in that room, one was interrogating me, and I guess someone else was listening. When I said that, be a human and not an animal, they grabbed me. “and who is the animal, who is this” and then they grabbed me, brought me out of that room, dragged me down a hallway, I don’t know, them three four. I don’t know, they threw me in some room and that condition and that [rape] happened.

The rapists told her the rape was revenge because Jedanaest did not want to speak against certain politicians:

I don’t know how long it lasted [the rapes]. The four of them were living it out [i.e., best English translation for the phrase]. After they did not pull me out of the room. That was a revolt and revenge because I do not want to say anything against Alija and against, instead, Karadžić [Serb politician] and all the others I was apparently attacking but I do not want to say anything against them, and that is revenge, they said.

The war had been over for 20 years when I conducted these interviews and many women continued to struggle with their feelings about ethnicity and nationality. This seemed in large part due to the fact that before the war, they lived in a society where ethnicity did not seem to matter and then suddenly, as Četiri said, the war divided people based on ethnicity. Dvanaest, for example, struggled to understand her own feelings toward ethnicity and her own prejudices. She told me that she differentiated between Serbs from her hometown and those she knew who were

not from her hometown. It was the Serbs that she knew that could have saved her by telling her to run. However, there were several instances in the interview when Dvanaest grouped all Serbs in one category. The most obvious examples were when she talked to me about being saved by Serb neighbours from death. In the following example, she reminded me that a Serb neighbour saved her, possibly because he had a soul even though he was Serb (insinuating that Serbs do not have souls): “I say, a Serb saved me, maybe he could not stand to watch it, probably he had a soul, though he is Serb.”

During the interview, Četiri and Pet struggled with their prejudices. They both told me that their pre-war and post-war attitudes about nationality/ethnicity have been different. Before the war, neither was concerned about nationality/ethnicity but the wartime events had impacted them in such a way that they classified people by their nationality and ethnicity, and more specifically they had prejudices against Serbs. Četiri described her prejudices against Serbs as “aversions” that she did not have before the war:

even now I have people dear to me who are Serb. Regardless of the war and everything but, when I meet someone and find out, there is some small aversion, I don't know why, probably because of everything we lived through. (...) but in that first moment, I have to admit I have to be honest there is something like distance. And I won't really put in effort to become closer and that. But simply there exists a small dose of aversion that stayed which I did not have before.

The two women also struggled with whether they had prejudices. In the following excerpt, Četiri began by saying she did not hate anyone, then asserted that she hated only individuals [individual Serbs]. Finally, she spoke about initially keeping her distance from any Serbs she meets:

**Četiri:** I don't hate, I mean, I don't hate (3 second pause) I hate individual people

**Mia:** mhm

**Četiri:** but I don't hate generally. But I say again, again there is some sort of, everyone should stay on their side, if I come into a situation where I meet someone and they sit well with me, you feel they're a good person, then OK. But, at first, at first there is always that distance, like Serbs (inaudible)

**Mia:** mhm

**Četiri:** or Serb [woman], so a person is like.

Similarly, Pet said that she does not have “problems” with any nationality, but in the same portion of the interview she spoke about teaching her children that they cannot have Serb friends:

Look, I don't have a problem with people of any nationality, absolutely. I was saying that before. Simply, I teach my kids that Serbs cannot be their friends, that is the way it is for me and that's it.

As the interview progressed, Pet's dislike of Serbs became very clear and in conflict with other instances in her interview when she spoke about either not having “problems“ with people of any nationality or simply having problems with specific Serbs from her hometown. She told me that she did not allow her children to bring Serbs into her home. Toward the end of the interview, she also stated that she did not believe in a coexistence with Serbs, citing specifically her experiences with court proceedings (i.e., wartime criminals' female relatives defending the criminals) and fear that criminals may start to countersue the victims:

**Pet:** I don't know, all I know is that there is no life with them

**Mia:** with them



**Pet:** with them

**Mia:** with

**Pet:** with Serbs. Certainly there isn't. Alongside them, yes. But I do not believe in that coexistence because there has been no judgement or witnessing where one of theirs, be it their mother or wife or sister or anyone else that says yeah he did it, I'm sorry, I didn't birth him or live with him for him to be a slaughterer. No, [they say] they didn't do it and that's it. I almost asked the court why do you arrest people who aren't guilty? All I need now is when I make a complaint for rape for him to sue me for lying.

### **Gender and Nationality**

Gender and nationality working together as motivation for wartime crimes was most apparent when women talked to me about rape victimization. For example, many of the Muslim women told me that although women in general were victimized, it was Muslim or Bosniak (i.e., a newer term to denote a Bosnian Muslim person) women that fared the worst (e.g., M.O.: "it is a fact that Bosniak women in this war suffered one hundred percent more compared to other nations, that other nations had less crime.").

Z.J. told me that the rape was degrading and not about sex. The rapists could have had girlfriends and wives to have sex with:

I came to that conclusion that the rape of Muslim women was the worst humiliation which they did. Why would they rape women. Every one of them could have maybe had a girlfriend, wife, and been with their wives and girlfriends.

Instead, they raped Bosniak women to hurt them knowing that it is dirty in Islam. The rape was used to humiliate:

why did they rape us Bosniak [women]? To hurt us because we are Muslim [women].

Why? That's my view of that. Because knowing as much as I know about Islam and that that is dirty for a woman and they were conscious of that and they went to do that to us.

Because why else? He did not come to rape me because maybe he did not have a girlfriend, but to humiliate me, insult me and that.”

Twelve out of the thirteen participants described feeling shame or humiliation, but not all described the rapes as a method used to humiliate. B.H. told me once during the interview that the purpose of the rapes was to humiliate, but did not talk about it at length as Z.J. did.

The way Z.J. saw the rapes – as a purposeful tactic used by perpetrators to humiliate Muslim women – is contextualized with how Dvanaest described the role culture played in the shame she felt post-assault (Superordinate theme: “culture as contributing to upholding patriarchal ideals in recovery process“). That is, both the rapists and the women they raped were aware, due to the culture they shared, that the rape would bring shame to the *women victims* and especially, according to Z.J., Muslim women victims. It is not surprising then that many women I interviewed did not tell others about their victimization(s) and that some women continued to stay silent to anyone outside of the Association.

### **Implicitly Gender and Nationality**

How did I know that women were talking about gender implicitly when talking about nationality or ethnicity? The Bosnian (or Croatian or Serbian) language has a male default in language. When a person is described, they are described with male nouns and pronouns.

Additionally, to refer to someone as a Muslim, Croat, or Serb woman, the noun is gendered so that if you are referring to a woman, it is reflected in the word and most often the suffix. For example, a “musliman” is a male Muslim and “muslimanka” is a female Muslim. Some women

made blanket statements about the rapes being rooted in ethnicity but then told me they were raped because they were (for example) “*muslimanka*.” In these cases, I analyzed it as her perceiving the rape as being ethnic- or nation-based, and also *implicitly* gender-based because she used the feminine form of Muslim. The women used straightforward statements to indicate the role of ethnicity and nationality, but the gendered nature of the language they used implied that at some level of consciousness, they believed that they were raped also because they were women.

When I asked Z.J. whether her ethnicity played a role in how she felt or thought about the rape then or since then, she talked about the rapes being perpetrated against Muslims, that they were guilty only because they were Muslim: “the fault was our ethnic, because we are Muslim. I just told you because we are now we are called Bosniak, then we were Muslim to them. That is why we were guilty.” However, she then used the female form (i.e., “*muslimanka*”, “*bošnjakinja*”) exclusively (emphasis added): “why would I be guilty because I am *muslimanka*.” She added that she was raped because she was a Muslim [woman] and cannot understand why she was guilty in someone’s eyes just because she was a Muslim [woman]. For some women, it was not just about who they were from a gendered or ethnic perspective, but also who they were not (i.e., Serb women). Osam told me that she wished she had not been a Croat and instead had been Serb, so that she would not have been raped. She had used the feminine word for Croat and Serb (in italics): “I would have liked it if I were not a Croat [woman]. I would have liked it if I were a Serb [woman], so what was happening to me was not happening.” Deset emphasized this point and added that the rapists raped because those they victimized did not belong to the same ethnic group as them. The perpetrators were Serb and she explained that she thought they raped

her because she was not a Serb, but she used the gendered “srpkinja“ (italics added) to denote the gendered victimization:

my opinion is that they did that [raped] because I am not a Serb [woman] because we are not of the same [ethnic] belonging, I really do not know, I just think they did that because I was not a Serb [woman] because I never looked at anyone the wrong way or conflicted with anyone.

And, finally, for some women, the recovery process was impacted by their ethnicity and implicitly gender. Tri told me that she was a national minority where she lived after the war and it affected her recovery process, because she felt that she did not have the freedom to express herself: “you were simply an ethnic minority [or national minority], so you were not free to express yourself.” She used the word “jedinka” in female form which not only means that she was the only Serb, but the only Serb woman, indicating that the effects were implicitly tied to her gender.

### **Other: Shift in Identity Alliance**

Jedan talked to me about her identity in a unique way. She took a journey of identity alliance from the beginning to the end of interview: believing in the beginning that the shared nationality and ethnicity with her captors and rapists would protect her and then coming to the realization at the end of the interview that the rapists only cared about her gender – she was victimized because she was a woman. Specifically, she identified with Serbs and Montenegrins through much of the interview, until the end where her identity alliance turned to “women” in general. She spoke about being in captivity and being glad at first because she was with her people: “I was glad because I was with my people.” She also talked about how her captors had aligned her ethnic identity with theirs as well: “you see this bitch? She came back to her people.”

She noted that it was not easier for her that a Serb raped her. She also told me that when it became apparent that she was going to be raped yet again, and this time by a Montenegrin, she pointed out to him that she was a fellow countrywoman, in hopes that he would not rape her. From the way she told me the story, it sounded like she was truly shocked that he would rape someone who shared his country of origin and very much believed that he would not rape her when she drew his attention to that fact. (The tactic did not work. He did rape Jedan.)

Toward the middle of the interview, at a point in her story where she had escaped the captors, Jedan's identity alliance became unsure. She periodically talked about Serbs and Montenegrins as the "other", such as belonging to the ethnicity of her parents (e.g., "how do I tell dad 'fuck your Serb, your Montenegrin'."). It was, however, during the last few minutes of the interview that Jedan made a statement that cemented her deidentification with Serbs and Montenegrins [men] and her identification with women in general: "to them [the rapists], the only thing that mattered was let it be a woman and done."

### **Brief Summary of "Life with Intersectional Identities"**

The women perceived nationality/ethnicity and gender to be a motivating factor for the wartime crimes they endured. Sometimes the perceived motivating factors were clear and explicit (i.e., nationality/ethnicity and gender in "explicitly gender", "nationality/ethnicity", and "gender and nationality/ethnicity"); sometimes, the perceived motivating factors were more complex and implicit (i.e., gender in "implicitly gender" and "implicitly gender and nationality/ethnicity"). The wars in Yugoslavia, and the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina specifically, have often been described as "national": people's nationality was salient in wartime. Thus, the women's explicit focus on nationality/ethnicity and the role they perceived in the motivation for the wartime events was not surprising. Although seeing their nationality/ethnicity

as motivation for the rapes supports the rape as genocide framework, the women's use of a gendered lens for the rapes (whether gender was implicitly or explicitly perceived as a motivation for the rapes) bring into question whether rape as genocide is sufficient in explaining the women's perceived motivations for the rapes and, thus, their experiences. Additionally, the intersection of gender (whether implicit or explicit) and nationality/ethnicity was an important perceived motivation for the rapes, showing that the women see their intersectional identities as important motivations for the criminal acts (including rapes) they endured. Thus, the rape as femicide framework would be a much-needed addition to understanding women's experiences, both in academia and in international law.

### **Divergent: Loneliness**

*(Samoća)*

The women sometimes experienced loneliness as an outcome of wartime events, including sexual violence. However, because loneliness or feeling alone was not always described as a direct consequence, it made more sense to present it as a superordinate theme of its own and not subsumed under "multi-faceted outcomes (consequences and strengths) of complex trauma in war." The theme in and of itself does not answer one particular research question, but it does show the role loneliness played in post-rape outcomes (i.e., contributed to the understanding of the overarching research question) and the role that the women's ethnicity may play in loneliness (i.e., contributed to understanding the second research question about aspects of women's post-rape outcomes that are associated with their ethnicity and/or the ethnicity of the perpetrator).

Eight women talked to me about experiencing loneliness: Jedan, Tri, Četiri, Sedam, Osam, Devet, Deset, and Jedanaest. None of the women for whom this was a theme were

Muslim. For six of the women, the loneliness was directly related to the rapes they endured; for two of the women (Jedan and Jedanaest), the loneliness was likely related to the rape victimization but the connection was not directly made by the women themselves. All of the women described loneliness during and after the war and, for most women, the loneliness continued to be felt, even if it was lessened. The loneliness that the women described was felt either because of (a) being an ethnic/national minority (i.e., Croats and Serbs are population minorities in BiH) or (b) feeling like they had no one to talk to about what happened to them (i.e., the rapes).

Tri and Osam talked to me about feeling alone because they were each ethnic/national minorities either when the rape happened or post-rape. Tri expressed feelings of being alone after the rape and for a long time after. She said she could not share what happened to her with anyone, so she carried the events within herself. Although she wanted to share what had happened to her, she felt like she was alone because she was an ethnic/national minority where she lived:

**Tri:** well yes, you were simply a national minority, the only one, so you were not free to express yourself

**Mia:** mhm

**Tri:** all of that, yes. All of that had an impact on it [process of recovery] dragging on for so long. Yes.

She thought that if she had lived somewhere else, she could have found someone to talk to rather than feeling alone for much of the post-rape period. Tri was also hesitant to disclose her ethnic identity as Serb and only did so after I stopped recording and a stronger rapport had been established between us.

Osam recalled the loneliness she felt in captivity partially because she was the only Croat in the camp. This feeling of loneliness because of nationality is not something she thought about at the time, but rather something she realized years later:

**Osam:** (...) I was alone

**Mia:** mhm

**Osam:** you know, everyone had someone with them. I was in captivity, I had neither mom nor dad nor sister, no one you know and I was the only Croat there, everyone else with me was Muslim

**Mia:** mhm

**Osam:** you know, wonderful people of course, but I want to say and then that brotherhood wasn't, it wasn't important to me but now when you think about it you understand that it was all Muslims, after years and years you know, because you didn't call anyone Marko or Ilija [typical Croat names] you know

She also felt alone because she was captured with no other family with her. She remembered leaving the camp and hearing one soldier tell another how sad it was that Osam was all alone:

I cannot be alone. I can't. I can't. I remember, I remember this one sentence when there was a [prisoner] exchange and they let us go [from the camp] and there was a line of people from the camp and one soldier was sitting there and another one comes to him and says "look at this little girl, so sad, she's all alone."

The fear of loneliness and the hatred of the word "alone" has followed her through life since that day. The feeling of being "alone" was also present for Osam for some time after the rape until she found out there were other people who were raped (she does not specify the gender or ethnicity of the others she found out were raped) and she was not alone.



Other women shared that they felt alone because they had no one to talk to either in captivity (e.g., Sedam did not have anyone to talk to during her captivity about the rapes) or after (e.g., the rapists threatened Devet not to tell anyone about the rape). Deset told me that she felt like a “black sheep” and alone until she found out there were other women who were raped. Jedanaest felt alone after her husband’s death, the person she shared her experiences of rape with, but felt better once she found a group of female friends. She told me that though she does not talk about her wartime experiences with them, she talks to them about everything else: “we talk about everything. I never talk about these things. My friends don’t even know.” Jedan, on the other hand, told me that because of where she lives (on the outskirts of an urban area) she does not even have anyone to drink coffee with. She told me that because of the wartime experiences, she just does not feel like socializing the way that she used to. She tried to be more social, but said that she lost interest and retreated into her home and to her laptop, telling me that she does not need anybody.

For many of the women, feeling alone or lonely had consequences that continued (e.g., Tri felt separated from “the world“ and Sedam noted a relationship between being secluded and feeling depressed). Četiri spoke about the loneliness she felt during the war and after the war. Some of the loneliness was connected to the complex trauma and was the precursor to unwelcomed thoughts and memories: “when a person is secluded, it comes back again. Simply, those are thoughts that come that you cannot stop.” In other instances, the loneliness was tied specifically to her experiences of rapes. When she escaped captivity and began to re-live the rapes, she felt that she had no one to share her experiences with (“Then simply you begin to dream, begin to re-live it, you cannot share it with anyone because (crying) it suffocates you”). There was a period in her life when she was not as active (e.g., she worked less, spent less time

with her children because they were older) and had more time to be alone. When she was alone, she began to have flashbacks and periods of “crisis“ that led to hospitalization.

Although Tri and Osam explicitly told me that ethnicity played a role in the loneliness they felt, the superordinate theme was identified in interviews with other women, all of whom were not Muslim. Thus, based on my analysis, ethnicity played a role in whether women experienced loneliness during and after the war. The loneliness was expressed by Croat and Serb women, the ethnicities that are largely implicated in perpetration of war and war crimes (although Croats are implicated less so).

### **Brief Summary of “Loneliness”**

Loneliness or feeling alone was experienced by Serb and Croat women in this study in a variety of ways. Some women felt lonely as a consequence of wartime events (including sexual violence). And, some women felt lonely because of other sexual victimization outcomes (e.g., feeling lonely because they were silenced about their victimization). Yet other women felt lonely for reasons unrelated to wartime events, but the feeling of loneliness was the impetus to feeling the consequences of wartime sexual violence (e.g., Četiri spent more time alone as her children got older and spent less time with her, and the increased time spent alone led to her having mental health consequences related to sexual violence victimization). Nevertheless, for many of the women, loneliness was inextricably linked to wartime sexual victimization. The superordinate theme showed that ethnicity plays a role in women’s experiences of wartime events and the impacts experienced in a war and post-war environment. Specifically, for women who would be unable to situate their experiences within the dominant rape as genocide discourse (i.e., non-Muslim women in this study), loneliness is a salient part of their wartime and post-wartime experiences. Additionally, the trauma of rape discourse is brought into question,

because the women's experiences demonstrate that the outcomes of wartime sexual violence may not be clear cut, but rather experienced more like a web of consequences wherein one consequence may cause another or wherein unrelated life circumstances elicit wartime sexual violence victimization consequences that, perhaps, would not have otherwise surfaced.

### **Divergent: Avoidance of the Word “Rape”**

#### *Izbjegava riječ “silovanje”*

Three women (M.O., Tri, and Četiri) avoided using the words rape or sexual assault or sexual abuse to describe what had happened to them. The women belonged to all three representative ethnic groups (i.e., Muslim, Serb, and Croat). There were five specific instances when M.O. could have referred to the rapes as “rapes”, but instead she used a variety of other words (“events”, “what happened to me”, “main detail”). Instead of using the word “rape” or related words, Četiri used words such as “that” (italics added for emphasis; e.g., “Then simply you begin to dream, begin to re-live *it*, you cannot share *it* with anyone because (crying) it suffocates you”). Finally, much like M.O. and Četiri, Tri avoided using the word “rape” to describe what had happened to her. There were seven specific instances when the word “rapes” could have been used, but instead she used other words (italics added for emphasis; e.g., “I could not even mention *this, what happened*. I don't know what would have been more difficult, that he [husband at the time] beats me or *what I had survived.*”, and “*that* what happened”).

M.O. and Četiri both used the word “rape” in the interview, but it was used in a way that was emotionally distant and not directly describing what happened to them. M.O. used it to describe what happened to other women and girls (e.g., “when I just read a heading that a girl is raped (...) I cannot read the text to the end.”), in a general sense about war or the camp she was held captive in (e.g., “you have one side where one beats you and another one defends you. One

raped you, another one defended you.”), and in a way that insinuated that she was using the word to describe what happened to her (e.g., “you have one side where one beats you and another one defends you. One raped you, another one defended you.”). Četiri had used the word “rape” to describe watching rapes in films before the war, the feeling of “waiting” to be raped during the war (“you are only waiting for the moment when someone will kill you, when someone will beat you, when someone will rape you, when they will simply slaughter you I mean, there was that, knife under the throat, I mean, all kinds of things.”), and that rapes happen in peacetime as well (“in peace time there are rapes and beatings and maltreatment.”). There was one instance in which Tri used the word “rapists.” When asked if the experience (i.e., rape) made her see the world or people differently, she told me that rapists will always remain rapists: “well I don’t know what to tell you. Rapists always remain rapists.”

### **Brief Summary of “Avoidance of the Word ‘Rape’”**

There is no question that these women were raped. Instead, it was interesting that the women distanced themselves from the word “rape” to describe what happened to them even though it was obvious that they understood that the actions constituted rape and they had reported the rapes to formal organizations (e.g., M.O.’s contact with SIPA and international investigating forces, all women had given statements to the Association). Additionally, in the context of post-war BiH, wartime sexual violence has been publicized creating an ethos of wartime sexual violence acknowledgement by the international community and (arguably) in BiH.

Although the superordinate theme does not directly answer the overarching research question (i.e., how do women who have experienced wartime sexual violence conceptualize their post-rape outcomes?), it may illuminate women’s various strategies for coping with and labelling

sexual violence. Namely, although the women had clearly acknowledged in a variety of ways (e.g., reporting to state police, consenting to be a part of this study, calling the perpetrators that victimized them “rapists”) that they had been raped, avoiding the words “rape” and “sexual violence” to describe what happened to them during the interview with me may have been done to create a sort of emotional distance between themselves and what had happened to them.

**Divergent: Culture as Contributing to Upholding Patriarchal Ideals in Recovery Process**

*(Doprinos kulture/zajednice u podržavanju patrijarhalni ideala u oporavku)*

I asked all of the women if family or community played a role in how they felt or thought about the sexual assault/rape when they were victimized or since then. Dvanaest was the only woman who made a direct connection between her process of recovery with how the culture views sexual assault and sex. As such, she helped set the context for why women feel some consequences (e.g., shame) post-assault.

She told me that she had not thought about the role of community before and the contribution it made to the shame she felt post-assault, both during the war and after the war. She explained to me that the mentality of a Muslim woman, particularly of one living in a village, is to feel shame for talking about sexual assault and to feel shame for any sort of culturally deemed “sexual” dress (e.g., wearing shorts). These cultural attitudes contributed to the fact that she suppressed her trauma. She felt ashamed to say anything, particularly because of others' reactions:

our mentality in Bosnia and Herzegovina of a Bosnian woman, a Muslim woman, that upbringing is different. It was always shameful and it was always looked at, because before every time something is done, shorts are too short, it's a shame. Especially because I lived in a village. It's a shame to talk about, especially about that. And maybe

that, not maybe but certainly that affected my suppression of trauma, that shame of saying something. That it even contributed to it. There, I didn't even think about that but that shame and what people will say

Later in the interview, she told me that the shame is not a phenomenon in Muslim subculture only, but rather in Bosnian culture as a whole (i.e., present in other faiths as well):

99 percent it was that shame [of reactions from the community] that is still in our Bosnian woman. Because that exists in other faiths, that Bosnian shame of what someone will say.

Dvanaest thought it was wrong that the culture shames women into staying quiet about sexual assault, because talking about it in the past could have saved women from being assaulted. She told me that if their grandparents talked about what had happened in World War II then perhaps it would not have happened in this war:

I think it's a big mistake that, especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It's a shame to talk [about sexual assault], a shame. I see that as a big mistake. And that's why, there should be talk of what happened in the other war too. If our grandmothers, our grandfathers talked in that other period [WWII], there wouldn't have been the same scenario in this war. Nothing is shameful. It's shameful to steal, lie to a fair person.

She added that, especially for Muslim women in BiH, someone ruining the "innocence" of a woman is particularly horrible for the men in the woman's family (e.g., father, brother): "I see that mentality of a Bosnian woman in Bosnia and Herzegovina, that home upbringing especially for Muslim women. Because to ruin someone's innocence, that is very awful. Especially for a father, a brother."

Dvanaest also criticized the lack of governmental involvement in the issues of wartime rape (The Association is a non-governmental organization that helps those victimized by wartime

rape.). She said that although survivors of rape may need daily therapy (at least in the beginning), there are no existing centres that offer psychotherapy for raped women: “the state should ensure that there is some centre, those psychotherapists, not psychiatrists but psychotherapists who will rework that trauma (...) because this population needs someone to work on them every day.”

### **Brief Summary of “Culture as Contributing to Upholding Patriarchal Ideals in Recovery Process”**

Dvanaest's wartime sexual violence outcomes were impacted by the cultural attitudes about rape. Namely, if a woman or a girl is sexually assaulted, it is a grievance against the male members of her family. She must stay silent, because speaking about it is shameful. The culturally-enforced silence comes at a great cost to survivors. Dvanaest herself suppressed the trauma for more than a decade and the psychological and psycho-physical consequences were great (e.g., feeling anxious and itchy, chained and cramped). She had the advantage of finding therapy to help her on her road to recovery, but the lack of state-provided centres where women can seek therapy is a problem for many survivors. The way Dvanaest talked to me about the impact of cultural attitudes on the recovery process made it clear that the consequences of wartime sexual violence do not happen in a vacuum; instead, a variety of factors including sociocultural norms shape the way trauma affects women and their psychological well-being (Campbell et al., 2009).

## **Discussion**

The goals of this dissertation were to add to the wartime sexual violence literature by examining post-rape outcomes, including strengths, of a multi-ethnic sample of women. The research question was intentionally kept broad (how do women who have experienced wartime sexual violence conceptualize their post-rape outcomes?), so that women's comprehensive outcomes could emerge. Both the goals and the research question were in response to the overreliance on two discourses in wartime sexual violence research: the trauma of rape discourse (Clark, 2018; Gavey & Schmidt, 2011) and rape as genocide or ethnic cleansing. As a whole, the results of the study show some support for the discourses, but also significant points of departure. Below, I discuss each superordinate theme and use the popular discourses as a backdrop to understanding how they may or may not be useful in understanding women's experiences.

### **Multi-faceted Outcomes (Consequences and Strengths) of Complex Trauma in War**

The multi-faceted outcomes the women talked about showed that women's post-rape outcomes are complicated and consist of both consequences and strengths. In many ways, the consequences the women talked about in this superordinate theme supported the trauma of rape discourse. However, portions of the theme (e.g., latent consequences) as well as the strengths did much to challenge the discourse.

**Consequences.** The short-term, medium-term, and long-term consequences support the trauma of rape discourse, because they support the idea that the effects of rape never completely fade (Gavey & Schmidt, 2011). The discourse was also sometimes reinforced by professionals the women came in contact with though it may have been perceived as useful. Deset's psychiatrist, for example, told her the rapes will always be with her. Deset seemed to be



validated by those words – a reminder that although the trauma of rape discourse is problematic, it continues to serve its original purpose to this day: bringing to light the oft-ignored psychological consequences of sexual violence and normalizing women’s negative outcomes when they are present.

However, the consequences the women talked to me about were not primarily psychological, as is commonly the focus in the trauma of rape discourse (Gavey & Schmidt, 2011). Instead, they talked to me about serious physical, economic, and social consequences, some of which were still present at the time of the interviews. Additionally, rather than the effects of the rape(s) moderating with time (Gavey & Schmidt, 2011), over half of the women talked to me about experiencing some of the most extreme consequences years after being victimized (i.e., “latent trauma” subtheme). And, although for many women the consequences have faded over time, other women talked to me about consequences that would be best described as coming in ebbs and flows (e.g., Četiri’s thoughts of suicide, Sedam’s nightmares). Thus, the consequences do not follow a linear path that is typically described in the literature that is the foundation of the trauma of rape discourse.

I have not come across any work in wartime sexual violence that examines anything like the subtheme “latent consequences” in which women talked about experiencing consequences or the height of the consequences often years after the rape(s). Many of the women had told me that either they were too busy to think about what had happened to them because they were fighting to survive during wartime or they had been establishing a safe space in the post-war period. Maslow’s theory of motivation (more popularly known as the hierarchy of needs) posits that physiological needs such as hunger dominate all other needs, so that even if other needs were present (such as coping with rape), they would “be pushed into the background” (Maslow, 1943,

p. 373). Once physiological needs are met (e.g., when war is over and food is easier to access), other needs begin to dominate in a hierarchical fashion: safety, love, esteem, and self-actualization. During wartime, the women's ability to meet basic needs would have been thwarted by a lack of, what Maslow (1943) called, "preconditions for the basic need satisfactions" (p. 383) such as freedom to speak and express oneself, freedom to defend oneself, and freedom to seek information. All of these elements of freedom were absent for the women during wartime (see Appendix F for superordinate theme "restrictions/constraints on life"). It is likely that when the safety needs began to be met (e.g., the establishment of a home post-war) and love needs were met (e.g., being able to interact with loved ones in a non-restricted environment), the esteem needs began to dominate or emerge again. Maslow (1943) characterized esteem needs as a desire for, among others, adequacy, confidence, independence, and freedom. It is quite likely that the women who experienced latent consequences began to think about the rapes more actively, as a way to meet esteem needs after meeting physiological, safety, and love needs.

**External strengths.** All of the women in this study had disclosed their victimization to someone before me. Although many of the women did not disclose to formal support systems (e.g., therapists, police organizations such as SIPA) for quite some time, disclosure to informal support systems such as friends, neighbours, or family members was not uncommon and was typically done within a couple of years of the rapes (it had been over twenty years since the rapes, so the women did not give me an exact timeline). This is in line with peacetime sexual violence research wherein most of the first disclosures are to informal support providers (e.g., Ahrens, Campbell, Ternier-Thames, Wasco, & Sefl, 2007). In this study, the disclosures to informal support systems was at least in part due to the fact that the rapes were situated in a more

public context. That is, women described others knowing they were raped without them telling anyone because either the sexual violence happened in front of family members, or neighbours had seen the women's post-rape state and had come to their own conclusions of rape. Thus, some women had limited or no control over who knew about their victimization and thus their disclosure. Rapes in Rwanda were also characterized by their public nature (Mukamana & Brysiewicz, 2008) suggesting that whereas the more developed literature on peacetime sexual violence disclosure may be helpful in understanding aspects of wartime sexual violence disclosure, a major point of departure may be the lack of control some women have over who knows about their victimization.

The women in this study have received some positive formal and informal social support (e.g., emotional, instrumental) in regard to both the war and the sexual violence victimization. They have expressed that responses to their disclosures have largely been positive and described feeling relieved or glad that they told someone. The informal support they received was fairly consistently cited as helpful in various ways (e.g., direct help coping with wartime events such as rape or simply being able to enjoy the company of their families and friends). There were some mixed experiences with formal support systems (e.g., lack of perceived state support for women who have to face their rapists, inadequate support from psychologists and psychiatrists) and some women had wanted more access to formal support systems (e.g., psychotherapists).

The more positive perceptions of informal social support than formal social support is in line with peacetime sexual violence research. For example, in their sample of women who had been sexually assaulted, Ahrens et al. (2007) found that positive reactions were more common than negative reactions. Additionally, women received more positive reactions when they sought informal support providers and more negative reactions when they sought formal support

providers (though they did find that women received exclusively positive reactions with formal support providers when the support providers initiated the disclosure; Ahrens et al., 2007). It has been suggested that negative social reactions from formal support providers are difficult to avoid because those who are victimized are dependent on the providers for tangible help or instrumental support (e.g., medicine; Ullman, 1999), something that is also true for the women in this study who use prescription medication.

**Internal strengths.** The women in this study had survived so much and showed remarkable strength. Many of the women's strengths can be conceptualized as them being active agents in creating their own lives, something that was scarce during the war and in the immediate post-war period but is abundant in the present day. These experiences of dictating one's own life may seem as small (but significant) as choosing whom you speak with (e.g., Dvanaest telling former Serb neighbours that she does not want them speaking to her), or as large as addressing nationalism in front of a crowd of people (e.g., Pet's insistence, at a seminar, that she does not need or want to look at someone dressed in nationalistic gear), or as routine (but notable) as seeing yourself as a proud and defiant being, or as disruptive as breaking away from gendered social scripts (e.g., Jedan's confidence in being able to take care of herself – without a man), or as important as breaking the silence about the rape(s) endured (e.g., Sedam feeling strengthened by her own voice). The women's strengths to create their own and better life touches others' lives and inevitably and surely makes them better. For example, B.H.'s impetus for co-creating the Association seemed to be the personal threats she received upon returning to her hometown post-war. Now, however, the Association is not only a place where those victimized by wartime sexual violence can tell their stories (and likely feel some relief), but also a place that fights for impunity, something that can have far-reaching (positive) implications at a political and

international level (e.g., human rights), as well as a personal level (e.g., victims have someone fighting on their behalf). The strengths the women showed were sometimes consistent with the existing literature on women's wartime sexual violence outcomes such as being open about the rapes (also found in Mukamana & Brysiewicz, 2008), finding their voices and seeing themselves as fighters (also found in Mookherjee, 2006), perceiving rape as a crime (also found in Skjelsbaek, 2006), and testifying in court (also found in Skjelsbaek, 2006). The biggest contribution to wartime sexual violence literature, however, is what has also been found in some peacetime sexual violence literature: women engaging politically and socially post-rape (e.g., Bergen, 1995; Danzer, 2011), and women bending gendered social scripts (e.g., Draucker, 1999; Draucker, Stern, Burgess, & Campbell, 2000).

Although the purpose of this research was not to understand the specific coping strategies used by women victimized by wartime sexual violence, two strategies were identified within the "external strengths" and "internal strengths" subthemes. Namely, reframing and downward social comparisons (Festinger, 1954; Wills, 1981). Reframing was used by some women to shift the way they had perceived their trauma (e.g., Deset told me about her awful conditions in captivity, but told me that she was the luckiest prisoner because she had no other family members she had to see be tortured) to a more positive perception. Downward social comparisons were used by some women to feel better about their own experiences when they heard stories of women whom they perceived to have had a harder wartime or rape experience (e.g., Z.J. heard a "worse" story about wartime events and it inspired her to give a statement to the Association; Dvanaest compares her story to the others she hears at the Association and it makes her feel better that things could have been worse).

**Final thoughts on current theme.** Both the internal and external strengths that the women displayed and talked about add significantly to the wartime sexual violence literature. Although one act of disclosure can have important and positive outcomes for women (e.g., Z.J. felt as if a weight had been lifted after giving a statement to the Association, partially because she saw that she was not the only one who had been raped), what the results of this study show is the strengths women derive from having positive relationships regardless of disclosure. Although other wartime sexual violence research has shown the importance of victimized women's positive relationships with others (Mukamana & Brysiewicz, 2008), the “external strengths” subtheme showed just how formal and informal support systems can be important to women even when they have not disclosed their victimization (e.g., love and support from family members and friends who do to know about the rape).

This superordinate theme, “multi-faceted outcomes (consequences and strengths) of complex trauma in war”, has put into question – for women victimized by wartime sexual violence – many of the key features present in the trauma of rape discourse such as: (a) depictions of the trauma as largely psychological; (b) the effects of the trauma likely moderating over time, but leaving a permanent “scar” and “lasting vulnerability” (p. 439); and (c) implication that those victimized by rape must work on their “healing” and “recovery” (p. 439) which requires the support of others (Gavey & Schmidt, 2011; though some women did express that they wanted more access to psychological support). The sexual violence experienced by the women in this study was unequivocally traumatic and the impacts were long-term and far-reaching; however, the consequences the women described often did not follow a linear pattern nor were they predominantly psychological. Additionally, the women's victimization was placed within the context of complex trauma which brought attention to the fact that other horrific

things happened to these women (e.g., mass killing of family members and friends), the effects of which sometimes could not be separated from the sexual violence victimization. Although the word “recovery“ had been used and some participants talked about working on themselves by accessing therapy or having access to informal social support, the support of others (i.e., “external strengths”) was complimentary to the women's internal strengths and the things they themselves felt and did as part of their post-rape life. In fact, the “internal strengths” subtheme was crucial in showing that negative consequences alone are not the definition of the women's post-rape outcomes. The women's internal strengths are important in creating a much-needed resilience discourse in wartime sexual violence (Clark, 2018), at least in part as an effort to create a revision of the trauma of rape discourse – a discourse that, although helpful, does not account for the strengths that women retain or acquire after wartime sexual violence.

### **Life with Intersectional Identities**

When the women spoke to me about the wartime events, particularly the motivations for them, they often applied a gendered or national lens. And, for some women, there was an unspoken struggle to understand what part of their identity (gender and/or nationality/ethnicity) was used as a motivation for the criminals’ behaviour which was evident in the themes “implicitly gender” and “implicitly gender and nationality/ethnicity.” In many ways, gender was perceived implicitly as a motivation for the atrocities whereas nationality/ethnicity were far more explicit. I saw Jedan’s shift in identity alliance as a poignant example of how dominant the ethnic/nationality discourse is in BiH culture – so dominant, in fact, that it can obstruct the role of gender in violence perpetration and victimization. In recent history, ethnicity and nationality have been important social categories in BiH. The republic that BiH was a part of before the war, the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, was a multi-ethnic and multi-national state built on

the ideology of “brotherhood and unity” (Simmons, 2007) that was intended to promote harmony between the Yugoslav nationality groups (Ramet, 1999). The “ethnic” wars of the 1990s marked the end of Yugoslavia and divided people along ethnic lines. The Dayton Peace Accords, a peace agreement that ended the war in BiH, was an agreement among “ethnic” or “national” representatives. No women from the warring parties were present at the peace negotiations and little attention was given to women’s rights (Lithander, 2000) even though the rape of women was rampant during the war. Instead, the negotiations focused on the conflict between nations and involved international representatives and national power elites, most of whom had directly or indirectly contributed to the conflict in BiH (Lithander, 2000). The country now recognizes three constituent peoples (Bosniaks – or, Bosnian Muslims; Bosnian Croats; and Bosnian Serbs) and has a three-member Presidency with a seat reserved for each major ethnic group. The common feature in the pre-war, war, and post-war period has been the salience of nationality and ethnicity.

The salience of ethnicity and nationality in BiH is not unlike the perspectives on rape in academia and international courts. In international courts, even the revolutionizing of rape as genocide requires wartime rape to meet the definition of genocide which necessarily means harming or killing others based on national, ethnic, racial, or religious belonging (note, again, the absence of gender). In academia, rape as genocide (MacKinnon, 1994) means that wartime rape is not perceived as the aggression of men against women, but rather aggression of some men (i.e., Serb) toward some women (i.e., Muslim and Croat) *because* they belong to specific ethnic groups. It is not surprising then that the women in this study perceived nationality alone and nationality and gender as motivations for the rapes they endured. Muslim women made up most of the women victimized by wartime sexual violence in BiH making the rape as genocide



framework important for shedding light on the use of systematic rape as a means of ethnic cleansing. However, the rape as genocide framework incorporates gender as secondary to a woman's experience as an ethnic or national being. Thus, for non-Muslim women or women who are Muslim but see gender as equally important for the rapes they endured, the rape as genocide framework is not enough.

Women in this study recognized the gendered nature of the rapes: men raped them. Regardless of the woman's ethnicity. And some women could not look at men the same way again. Regardless of the man's ethnicity. The way that some women (e.g., Četiri) perceived the violence is akin to Brownmiller's (1975) analysis of wartime rape as an extension of anti-woman politics: wartime rape is but one manifestation of the oppression of women; a tool used to destroy and humiliate women. Although international tribunals have acknowledged in some instances that wartime sexual violence is gendered, they have also drawn criticism for giving less legal importance to crimes against women than genocide and crimes against humanity (e.g., crimes based on categories such as ethnicity; Sharlach, 2000). As discussed in more detail in the introduction, academic literature is not much different (e.g., rape as genocide frameworks).

In fact, how the women talked about the motivating factors for the rape may very well be shaped by the rape as genocide framework. The themes "implicitly gender" and "implicitly gender and nationality" were often exemplified by women who explicitly saw ethnicity or nationality as the dominant motivation for the rapes, but then used language in such a way that conveyed that, at some level of consciousness, they also saw the gendered nature of the rapes. The explicit nature of the role of ethnicity/nationality and the often implicit nature of gender may be a function of the women's struggle or dissonance between their personal experiences of rape (i.e., seeing evidence of or knowing women of all ethnicities who were raped) and the dominant

discourse of rape as genocide (i.e., Muslim women as victims), or the struggles they have with what their dominant social identity is (are they gendered beings or ethnic beings?). Cognitive dissonance theory may not be applicable – but should be mentioned nevertheless – because I do not know if the women were “psychologically uncomfortable” with their beliefs (Festinger, 1957, p. 3). Additionally, rather than being an inconsistency in attitudes, as is commonly accepted in cognitive dissonance theory (Brehm & Cohen, 1962; Festinger, 1957), the belief that the motivations for wartime rape were ethnicity *and/or* gender does not mean that the attitudes were mutually exclusive. Thus, there is potential for the results to be incorporated into theories and laws on wartime rape such that gender is given equal importance to other social categories such as ethnicity or nationality.

Skjelsbaek (2001) examined three different ways wartime sexual violence has been conceptualized as a weapon of war (while retaining the gender analysis) in scholarly texts (e.g., social science articles, human rights reports). However, her results also help understand what factors scholars across disciplines perceive to be important in the motivation for wartime sexual violence. She examined 140 scholarly texts about the use of wartime sexual violence as a weapon of war and then grouped the articles into one of three categories (or ways of epistemologically conceptualizing wartime sexual violence as a weapon of war): essentialism, structuralism, and social constructionism. In the first, when researchers used essentialism, the empirical focus of the articles was on all women; the argument was that women who are in a war zone “are victims of sexual violence in order to assert militaristic masculinity” (p. 215). In the second way of conceptualizing, structuralism, researchers framed wartime sexual violence as being used on targeted women (e.g., Muslim women in BiH); the argument was that women who are in a war zone are victimized by sexual violence as a means of attacking the ethnic, religious,

or political group. Finally, Skjelsbaek (2001) found that the available empirical evidence examining the relationship between wartime sexual violence and its use as a weapon of war was best understood by social constructionism. Social constructionism was used as a framework in scholarly work in which wartime sexual violence was used on targeted men and women; the argument was that women who are in a war zone “are victims of sexual violence in order to masculinize the identity of the perpetrator and feminize the identity of the victim” (Skjelsbaek, 2001, p. 215).

Researchers who use social constructionism frame gender as a shared meaning that we give to “a particular class of transactions between individuals and environmental contexts” (Bohan, 1993, p. 13). Further, it is not the sex of the actors in these transactions that dictate what is feminine or masculine, but rather “the situational parameters within which the performance occurs” (p. 13). Thus, depending on the context people “do” masculine or “do” feminine (Bohan, 1993). Sexual violence is a preferred method of violence in war, because it is perceived to clearly communicate masculinization and feminization (Skjelsbaek, 2001). Skjelsbaek (2001) argued that researchers who use social constructionism simultaneously acknowledge that (a) all women (regardless of their other social markers like ethnicity) are more susceptible to wartime sexual violence than men; (b) some women are at greater risk than other women because of their ethnic, religious, or political belonging; and (c) men (and women) who are victimized are feminized through sexual violence.

Using a parallel application of Skjelsbaek’s (2001) argument, the women in this study perceived similar susceptibilities of victimization: (a) women were victimized because they were women (found in themes “gender” and “implicitly gender”); (b) women were victimized because they belonged to certain ethnic or national groups (e.g., Muslim women; found in themes

“gender and nationality” and “implicitly gender and nationality”); and (c) men were victimized (e.g., Jedanaest’s husband who died without ever telling anyone except his wife that he had been victimized by wartime sexual violence; the Association works with male victims, though the number has been quite small compared to the number of female victims). The current dominant discourse on wartime sexual violence in academia and international courts, however, underscores the second point (i.e., some women are at greater risk than other women because of their ethnic, religious, or political belonging; rape as genocide) at the expense of understanding wartime sexual violence as a potential weapon used against *any* woman and to feminize men and women.

The rape as genocide perspective is certainly important (and beneficial) in understanding wartime rape, particularly rape against Muslim (and Croat) women in the BiH war. However, the perspective does not take into account the “complex empirical reality” (Skjelsbaek, 2001, p. 211) of wartime sexual violence. It does not capture the entirety of why the women felt they were targeted and how gender played a role in what they experienced (i.e., sexual violence) and why they experienced it (i.e., misogyny, hatred of women). Further, it undermines the victimization of women who were raped, but identified with the ethnic identity of the war perpetrators (e.g., Serb women) and for whom the “genocide” portion of “genocidal rape” would be inapplicable. Given that both international courts and academia have sent a clear message that women’s stories and experiences matter, the stories of the women in this study and their perspectives on wartime rape should be incorporated into how wartime sexual violence is examined.

**Final thoughts on current theme.** The fact that women in this study who represented all three major ethnicities in BiH perceived the rapes to have a gendered component (whether explicit or implicit) should be the impetus for (a) the international courts to adopt “gender” under its definition of genocide (or define a “femicide” equivalent) and (b) for the sexual violence

research community to reflect on how the frameworks they use may be excluding entire groups of people. Men's victimization could fit well under my propositions for the changes in the United Nations definitions: either "femicide" or the added "gender" category in the genocide definition, because the "transaction" of sexual violence is gendered such that the victim is feminized regardless of their gender. The adoption of "femicide" or "gender" under the genocide definition would expand the number of victimized women who would have access to justice through international courts and would not negate the experiences and views of women for whom ethnicity and nationality are as important (or more important) as gender because they would still be able to seek justice under rape as genocide.

Social constructionism can be a useful theoretical framework for both understanding women's perceptions of motivations of wartime sexual violence and the ways in which the law and academia may be failing at capturing women's experiences. Within a social constructivist framework, the victimization (regardless of gender or ethnicity) makes sense, because the victim's gender and ethnicity are feminized through the act of sexual violence (Skjelsbaek, 2001). Additionally, it takes into account women's social identities (e.g., as women or as Muslims) and how their intersection (e.g., Muslim women) may have been used as a motivation for wartime sexual violence.

### **Loneliness**

The loneliness the women described, although not always a consequence of rape, was related to ethnicity or nationality, as well as a lack of people to talk to about what had happened to them. Why did some Croat and Serb women feel lonely? If wartime sexual violence is commonly framed as a form of genocide (i.e., acts committed with the intent to destroy a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group) or ethnic cleansing, it means that the ethnicity of the

victimized person is seen as the foremost reason for the victimization. Thus, a victimized Muslim woman could use the framework (i.e., rape as genocide, rape as ethnic cleansing) to situate the sexual violence perpetrated against her first and foremost because she was Muslim. She could then find solidarity with other Muslim victims who were victimized by other means (e.g., non-sexualized torture) but for the same reasons (i.e., their ethnicity). Additionally, Muslim women were victimized in much higher numbers than any other women. But, who would Croat and Serb women find solidarity with, particularly if there were fewer of them victimized than Muslim women? They were victimized, but their ethnic identity is seen as belonging to that of the perpetrator. Could they find solidarity with other women regardless of ethnicity? They could, but – as discussed earlier – sexual violence during the war in BiH is not commonly conceptualized as a tool used against any woman, rather against Muslim women specifically. Serb and Croat women would have a difficult time finding a narrative in which their victimization makes sense: they may not see themselves as having been victimized as a form of genocide or ethnic cleansing and if they see themselves victimized because of their gender, the discourse is not readily or commonly available. Thus, the loneliness described by Serb and Croat women makes sense within a context where they were raped in smaller numbers than Muslim women and where wartime sexual violence is largely conceptualized as a crime based on ethnicity/nationality rather than gender.

Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) is important in understanding that although women may share some common experiences as a result of traumatic events such as war and/or wartime sexual violence, they also have divergent experiences that may be related to the identification with other social categories such as ethnicity. Consequently, wartime sexual violence researchers

must be aware of these potential differences in experience and transparent about socio-economic characteristics of their participants and how these factors may impact the results of the study.

Although loneliness was not always a direct outcome of war or rape victimization, for many women it was inextricably linked to rape victimization. For some women, loneliness was an outcome of typical life events, but it led to feeling additional consequences of victimization. This was best exemplified by Četiri who told me that her children spending less time with her as a result of them getting older was one of the factors that led to her spending more time alone which then led to her having victimization-related mental health consequences that required hospitalization.

And, for some women, the feeling of loneliness or being alone was an outcome of their silence about the victimization. They felt isolated until they found out that other women were raped as well (e.g., Osam, Deset). There were many reasons the women in this study stayed silent about their rapes (see superordinate theme “restrictions/constraints on life” under theme “restrictions on voice/silence” in Appendix F) and some were tied to social reactions to the disclosure (e.g., Tri’s fear of further consequences by her husband) or threats to their well-being (e.g., the rapists threatened Devet not to tell anyone about the rapes she endured). The fear of social reactions and retribution contributed to the silence or fear of disclosure which in turn contributed to the loneliness, because the women could not comfortably tell just anyone about their victimization. Thus, the loneliness was the *consequence of a consequence* of victimization.

**Final thoughts on current theme.** The women's loneliness was representative of not just how interseating identities play a role in post-rape life, but also the intricate impact of sexual victimization. The consequences of sexual violence can be blatant (e.g., physical consequences such as pain, psychological consequences such as depression). But other consequences, such as

loneliness, are more intricate and may better be described as a web of impacts wherein one consequence (which may be seemingly unrelated to the victimization) can lead to another and then to another. Understanding that consequences of sexual violence victimization can take on this web-like form should be the impetus for researchers to consider using methods that allow for women's comprehensive outcomes to be captured. It was my decision to use a qualitative method that allowed for women's complicated post-rape outcomes to emerge that was an important component for understanding the role of loneliness in the lives of women who had been victimized by sexual violence.

### **Avoidance of the Word “Rape”**

Three women in this study who had experienced wartime sexual violence had avoided using the words “rape” and “sexual violence” to describe what happened to them even though they had acknowledged the act(s) as sexual violence (e.g., reporting to state police, calling the perpetrators “rapists”). This may have been done to create an emotional distance between themselves and what happened to them. Thus, although the superordinate theme does not directly answer the overarching research question (i.e., how do women who have experienced wartime sexual violence conceptualize their post-rape outcomes?), it helps understand how women cope with and label sexual violence.

I have not been able to find any literature to help me situate this particular way of coping (that is, acknowledging rape but then avoiding the word to describe what happened to herself) while taking into account the context of war in wartime sexual violence which can be very different than sexual violence during times of peace. However, in the rape (un)acknowledgement literature, Johnstone (2016) identified the “avoidant voice” (p. 281), a type of rape unacknowledgement characterized by acknowledgement that something wrong had been done



but preferring to focus on how specific behaviours were wrong rather than using a label that may have been stigmatizing (though the women in her study did use other labels such as “harassment”). Johnstone (2016) described it as a “conscious desire to not know one’s experience as rape” (p. 281).

Wood and Rennie (1994) interviewed eight women who had been raped, none of whom reported the victimization via any formal means (e.g., police) and similarly reported “avoidance” in labelling. The authors were interested in how the women formulated the rapes. They reported “avoidance” as one strategy women used in addressing the problem of naming their experiences; that is, the women avoided giving a name to what had happened to them. This was also true for a woman who said she was able to use the word “rape” in the present, but then continued to avoid using it (Wood & Rennie, 1994). The most common strategy in the avoidance of naming was through “false deixis” (p. 133) – using deictics (e.g., pronouns) in a way that the antecedent or reference are not identifiable – a common way of talking about sexual abuse (Penelope, 1990, as cited in Wood & Rennie, 1994). Thus, naming rape is a *process* that may be dependant on many factors. Wood and Rennie (1994) suggested that formulating one’s experiences of rape can be complex and difficult, that it may be a part of coping, and that more research needs to focus on it.

**Final thoughts on current theme.** Unlike the women in the aforementioned studies, it was clear that the three women in my study had, on some level, conceptualized their experiences as rape or sexual violence. War rape, after all, has been very publicly named nationally (in BiH) and internationally – something that very likely had an impact on women’s acknowledgment and labelling processes. However, like the women in the aforementioned studies, they had avoided using the words rape or sexual assault or sexual abuse to describe what had happened to them. Additionally, in many instances, they relied on false deixis. The women may have had a problem

in naming their experiences (as noted by Wood and Rennie, 1994 in their work) and perhaps a conscious desire (as noted by Johnstone, 2016 in her work) to not know their experiences as rape as part of their coping strategy in the moment. Their reluctance may also indicate that naming the acts you were victimized by (i.e., rape in this instance) is an ongoing process that may be dependant on many factors (e.g., political climate). The three women may have been avoiding naming the acts for a variety of reasons and perhaps only temporarily. To echo Wood and Rennie (1994), more research is needed that focuses on women's formulations of sexual violence through context and time.

### **Culture as Contributing to Upholding Patriarchal Ideals in Recovery Process**

The superordinate theme “culture as contributing to upholding patriarchal ideals in recovery process” sets the context for understanding that women's negative mental health sequelae are shaped by various factors including sociocultural norms (Campbell et al., 2009). Importantly, the trauma of rape discourse – through its assertion that women have to work on their healing and recovery – focuses on women's responsibility for their healing without examining the responsibility and role that society and culture (e.g., patriarchal cultural norms) play in the outcomes. From Dvanaest's account of the role of community in her post-assault recovery, it seems clear that patriarchal tenets (e.g., shaming women for men's crimes, men's rights to women's “purity”) are pervasive in BiH cultural and state politics. Thus, women who are victimized by wartime sexual violence negotiate their recovery process “within multiple hostile environments” (Campbell et al., 2009, p. 226).

The silence and the latent trauma some women experienced (see “multi-faceted outcomes [consequences and strengths] of complex trauma in war”) may very well be a response to the hostile and patriarchal sociocultural environment. Dvanaest was clear that the community played

a role in her trauma suppression, but many more women in this study stayed silent and experienced latent trauma without explicitly recognizing the role of community and society. Some women were afraid or felt shame at the thought of disclosing to family and friends – people who were ultimately affected by the same patriarchal cultural messages (e.g., how to respond to rape; Campbell et al., 2009). As Dvanaest suggested, culture and society (including the state) are important in mitigating the consequences women experience (e.g., funding centres where women can access therapy).

**Final thoughts on current theme.** Sociocultural norms are important for understanding women's mental health outcomes of wartime sexual violence. Norms can be used to alleviate or aggravate the consequences women experience. Within current sociocultural norms, patriarchal values negatively impact women's mental health (e.g., latent consequences). Women's mental health is not viewed as important. Instead, it takes a back seat to reinforcing patriarchal values of silencing women for the benefit of men and their egos. It is yet another reminder that, although largely seen as a crime against a woman, rape continues to be seen as a crime committed against another man (Brownmiller, 1975) and for which the victimized woman bears at least some blame (Backhouse, 2008) and many of the consequences.

### **Conclusion and Future Directions**

This dissertation was conducted with two goals in mind: (a) to add to the limited understanding of the impact of wartime sexual violence by including the experiences of ethnically diverse women (i.e., Bosnian Muslim, Bosnian Serb, Bosnian Croat) and (b) to expand on the limited available literature on women's strengths after being victimized by wartime sexual violence. Based on these goals, the interview questions were guided by the one over-arching question: how do women who have experienced wartime sexual violence conceptualize their

post-rape outcomes? Additionally, I was interested in whether women identified any positive or strength-based outcomes and if any aspects of their post-rape outcomes were associated with their ethnicity or the ethnicity of their perpetrator.

The goals and the research questions were developed primarily as a response to two popular discourses in wartime sexual violence: the trauma of rape discourse (Clark, 2018; Gavey & Schmidt, 2011) and rape as genocide or ethnic cleansing. Both discourses are important and serve particular societal purposes. The trauma of rape discourse is based on the idea that rape leads to trauma and it has been radical and helpful in establishing the harm done to women by sexual violence, particularly decades ago when the impact of rape was largely minimized and denied (Brownmiller, 1975; Gavey & Schmidt, 2011). The discourse is also obviously instrumental in international courts wherein the harm of victimization is a focus. However, it has been argued that women victimized by wartime sexual violence have been used by the prosecution and defence in reproducing victimization and reducing women to passive victims (Žarkov, 2006). The reproduction of victimhood is largely replicated in academic research with the overreliance on the trauma of rape discourse in the literature on wartime sexual violence (Clark, 2018).

Rape as genocide or ethnic cleansing is an important discourse in understanding how the rape of Muslim women and girls in Bosnia and Herzegovina was used as a tool of ethnic cleansing by (largely) Serb men. My main criticism of the discourse is that it leaves little room for understanding the experiences of non-Muslim women though we know that they were also victimized during the war in BiH (Stiglmayer, 1994). The discourse in BiH seems to be largely fueled by ICTY decisions which define genocide as acts committed with the intent to destroy a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group. Although some feminist lawyers have argued for the

inclusion of rape as a gendered crime under the United Nations' crimes against humanity (Copelon, 1994), I suggest that it is at least as important to include gender in the United Nations' Genocide Convention (under the genocide definition) or perhaps create a convention for femicide that is parallel to the current genocide definition and convention. The definition of femicide would be as follows (changes to the United Nations' genocide definition are italicized):

any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part a *gender* group, as such: killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; [and] forcibly transferring children of the group to another group. (adjusted from "Convention on the prevention and punishment of the crime of genocide," 1948; Office of the UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, n.d.)

Including gender under the genocide definition or creating a new femicide definition would ensure that all women, regardless of their national, ethnic, racial, or religious belonging would be able to seek justice through the international legal system without minimizing the use of rape as genocide.

There are aspects of this study that support both the trauma of rape and the rape as genocide or ethnic cleansing discourses. The short-term, medium-term, long-term, and unacknowledged consequences described by the women in this study in the first superordinate theme ("multi-faceted outcomes [consequences and strengths] of complex trauma in war") support the trauma of rape discourse by endorsing one of its main features: that the effects of rape never completely fade (Gavey & Schmidt, 2011). And, in the second superordinate theme

(“life with intersectional identities”), there is support for the framing of rape as genocide or ethnic cleansing within the theme “nationality” where women perceived nationality or ethnicity as the motivation for the wartime events they endured.

More importantly, however, this research provides evidence for why these two discourses are an incomplete picture of women’s post-rape outcomes. Even the consequences the women talked about (see “multi-faceted outcomes [consequences and strengths] of complex trauma in war”) were not dominantly psychological (as supported by the trauma of rape discourse; Gavey & Schmidt, 2011) but rather also included serious physical, economic, and social consequences. Additionally, the women talked about periods of relative psychological or physical wellness prior to experiencing the consequences of rape, thus showing that women do not experience post-rape consequences in a linear fashion but rather as something that ebbs and flows.

The most substantive evidence that counters the trauma of rape discourse came from the strengths the women talked about retaining despite or as a result of the wartime events (see “multi-faceted outcomes [consequences and strengths] of complex trauma in war”). The strengths either came internally from the women (i.e., “internal strengths”) such as acts of agency or from outside of the women such as maintaining relationships with people who helped them cope (i.e., “external strengths”). Although there has been some documented evidence of women’s “external strengths” (e.g., positive relationships with others) after wartime sexual violence victimization, the “internal strengths” made the greatest contribution in challenging the trauma of rape discourse. The women showed great strength (e.g., political agency, self-help) after experiencing so much trauma, thereby countering the idea that psychological consequences affects all domains of one’s life after rape victimization. Women are capable of taking control (of at least some portion) of their lives post-rape and experiencing strengths-based outcomes.

This study was grounded in intersectionality and allowed me to fully explore the social identities the women talked about playing a role in the wartime events and outcomes. The multi-ethnic sample was instrumental in showing that there are elements of difference in how wartime and post-war lives are lived by women of different ethnic backgrounds. Crenshaw (1989) discussed how the experiences of a Black woman cannot be articulated through anti-racist or feminist frameworks alone, but rather through the intersection of the social categories (i.e., race and gender). The experience of loneliness that non-Muslim women felt would not have been visible without attention to intersectionality. The fact that they felt loneliness suggests that they may have been unable to find kindred spirits or solidarity with other women in general or other men of their own ethnic background. For example, a Serb woman may not have experienced wartime events in the same way as a Serb man (i.e., she was a civilian who was raped and he likely was not raped nor a civilian) or as another non-Serb woman (i.e., a Muslim woman who was raped because she was Muslim).

Additionally, framing rape as genocide or ethnic cleansing has been insufficient to explain the women's experiences and conceptualizations of their victimization across multiple ethnicities. Although some women perceived nationality or ethnicity as the motivation for their victimization (in support of the rape as genocide or ethnic cleansing), the women also perceived gender (see themes "gender", "implicitly gender", "gender and nationality", "implicitly gender and nationality" in superordinate theme "life with intersectional identities") as a motivation for the victimization they experienced regardless of ethnicity. Thus, the rape as genocide or ethnic cleansing discourse is not only insufficient in capturing how a group of women with varied ethnic identities view the motivations behind their victimization, but also unnecessarily obstructs

the much-needed conversation about how women who belong to different social categories may experience the consequences of wartime sexual violence.

### **Study Limitations**

The two main limitations of the study were related to sampling issues. One, I recruited through a formal organization and thus interviewed only women who had previously disclosed their sexual victimization through formal channels. The results and any implications resulting from this study cannot necessarily be generalized to women who have never disclosed or to women who have only disclosed informally. Peacetime sexual violence research shows that informal social reactions predict mental health outcomes post-assault and that secondary victimization through the legal system can predict higher psychological symptomology (e.g., depression, Campbell et al., 2009). Women who, for example, have not disclosed to formal support channels but who have received positive informal support may differ in the consequences they experience from wartime sexual violence and, perhaps, show a greater number of or more diverse strengths-based outcomes than the women interviewed in this study.

A second important limitation of this study is the lack of inclusion of women who do not belong to one of the three constituent peoples in BiH (Bosniaks – or, Bosnian Muslims; Bosnian Croats; and Bosnian Serbs) such as Roma (pejoratively known as “gypsy”) women. There is limited knowledge on what Roma women experienced during wartime. This seems to be at least in part due to continuing discrimination toward Roma in BiH. A recent report shows that although there have been improvements in BiH in regard to protection of minorities such as Roma, they continue to face discrimination (United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 2017). The marginalization of Roma people would make recruitment particularly difficult. The discrimination toward Roma is not new in BiH. Given their marginalization and



this study's results showing that ethnicity plays a role in wartime sexual violence outcomes, it would be reasonable to assume that Roma women may have unique experiences of wartime sexual violence. It is important for future studies to examine the wartime sexual violence outcomes of women who are ethnic minorities, as well as those who are minorities in other social categories (e.g., religious, sexual).

### **Future Directions**

Aside from addressing the limitations of this study, future research should try to better understand women's strategies for coping with sexual violence, specifically processes of sexual violence acknowledgement and its impact on outcomes. While, the peacetime sexual violence is a good starting point for investigating the mechanisms involved in disclosures, it may be best for researchers to use qualitative methods to examine how and when women use the word "rape" to describe victimization by wartime sexual violence – at least in part because the process of formulating one's experiences of sexual violence can be complex (Wood & Rennie, 1994) and the literature could benefit from more research on the processes involved in acknowledgement across time and context.

Future research should also examine how women victimized by wartime sexual violence in other countries understand their experiences of victimization with a focus on comprehensive outcomes (e.g., strengths acquired or retained). To echo Clark (2018), there is a much-needed resilience discourse in wartime sexual violence research. As part of understanding women's experiences, it will be useful to understand how women from other war- or conflict-affected nations may conceptualize the role of gender and ethnicity (or other factors) in the motivations for their victimization. Intersectionality will be crucial for understanding the women's experiences. As an extension of that research, there should be a focus on how femicide can be

included as a crime equal to genocide in the eyes of the international community (e.g., passing the crime as a resolution in the United Nations) as well as the possible benefits and repercussions it may have on the lives of women victimized by wartime sexual violence.

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## Appendix A: Telephone Script Guidelines

Female worker: Hi (potential participant's name), it's (female worker's name) calling from [name of organization]. [pause] We have a Bosnian-born researcher from Canada doing some research through our organization. Her name is Mia and the work is for her doctoral dissertation. She's interested in interviewing women who experienced sexual violence during the war. She would like to talk to them about their experiences with the sexual violence, how the experience affected them and how this may have changed over time. [pause] So, to be in this study, a woman should have had this experience during the war and it doesn't matter who the perpetrator was or where it happened. Mia will pay 70 BAM for your time plus any child care costs. [pause] This is the only phone call you will get from me about this research. If you decide to meet with Mia outside of our offices, you can contact her directly. I can also arrange a meeting for you two. I'm calling a number of women who may be interested based on conversations they've had with me, the organization or media in the past. [pause] If you are interested, please let me know and we can set something up or I will give her your phone number. I understand that this is a busy time for many people, so if you are not available, that is alright.

*If potential participant says that she is not interested or that she is busy:*

Female worker: Alright, thank you for considering it. I will talk to you later.

*If potential participant says that she is interested setting up a meeting through the worker:*

Talk until a suitable date and time is found.

*If potential participant says that she is interested in contacting me directly:*

Female worker: Great. I will give your phone number to Mia and she will contact you in the next few days to set up a time and place to meet that works for you. What is the best time to call?

(potential participant answers)

Female worker: I will let Mia know. Thank you. Bye.

## Appendix A (Bosnian translation)

### Opći smjer telefonskog skripta

Radnica: Zdravo (ime potencijalne učesnice), zove (ime radnice) iz [ime organizacije]. [Pauza] Sa nama je kanadska istraživačica bosanskog rođenja koja radi neka istraživanja kroz našu organizaciju. Njeno ime je Mia i istraživanje joj je u vezi doktorskog rada. Ona je zainteresirana za intervju sa ženama koje su doživjele seksualno nasilje za vrijeme rata. Htjela bi da razgovara sa ženama o njihovim iskustvima sa seksualnim nasiljem, kako ih je iskustvo afektiralo, i kako se to možda promjenilo tokom godina. [Pauza] Dakle, da bi bila u ovoj studiji, žena mora da je imala to iskustvo tokom rata i nije bitno ko je počinitelj niti gdje se to dogodilo. Mia će platiti 70 maraka za vaše vrijeme plus ako imate ikakve troškove za brigu djece. [Pauza] Ovo je jedini telefonski poziv koji ćete dobiti od mene o ovome istraživanju. Ako se želite sastati sa Miom van naše kancelarije, možete je direktno kontaktirati. Također Vam ja mogu aranžirati sastanak.

Zovem brojne žene koje bi mogle biti zainteresovane na osnovu razgovora koje su imale sa mnom, sa organizacijom, ili medijom u prošlosti. [Pauza] Ako ste zainteresirane, recite pa možemo ja i Vi nešto aranžirati ili mogu dati Mii Vaš broj telefona. Razumijem da su mnogi ljudi u ovo vrijeme zauzeti, pa ako niste slobodni, to je u redu.

*Ako potencijalna učesnica kaže da je ne zanima, ili da je zauzeta:*

Radnica: U redu, hvala Vam na pažnji. Doviđenja.

*Ako potencijalna učesnica kaže da je zainteresovana da aranžira sastanak putem radnice:*

Razgovorajte dok se ne nađe prikladno vrijeme za sastanak.

*Ako potencijalna učesnica kaže da je zainteresovana da me direktno kontaktira:*

Radnica: Odlično. Daću Vaš broj telefona Mii pa će Vas ona kontaktirati u narednih nekoliko dana da se uspostavi vrijeme i mjesto sastanka koje Vama odgovara. Kad vama najviše odgovara da Vas Mia nazove?

(Potencijalna učesnica odgovori)

Radnica: Hvala, obavjestiću Miu. Doviđenja.

**Appendix B: Telephone Script Guidelines for Researcher Contacting Potential Participants  
(those who wish to speak directly to the researcher)**

Me: Hello, this is Mia Šišić calling. May I speak to (potential participant name)?

*If the participant is unavailable and it is a personal (not family/public) voicemail:*

Me: Thank you. I will try calling back again.

[Try calling the next day. If potential participant is still unavailable, leave my name and phone number with a message to call when they get a chance.]

*Message if participant is unavailable:*

Me: Hi (potential participant name), this is Mia Šišić. Could you call me back at (my phone number) when you get a chance? Thank you.

*If the participant is available or answers the phone:*

Me: Hi (potential participant name). You spoke with (female worker's name) today (or yesterday) about interviews I am doing for my PhD dissertation research as part of my program at University of Windsor. [pause] I am interested in interviewing women who experienced sexual violence during the war and looking at how the experience affected them and how things may have changed since then. It is possible that nothing has changed or many things have changed, some for better and some for worse. I would like to hear about it all. Interviews such as these typically take an hour and usually no more than two hours. [pause] If we meet for the interview, as a token of my appreciation, I will pay 70 BAM for your time plus any child care costs. You can choose to use your real name in the interview or you can choose a pseudonym. Would you be interested in meeting with me to talk about your experiences?

*If potential participant says no:*

Me: Alright, thank you.

*If potential participant is not sure:*

Me: I understand that this can be a busy time for people. I will leave my phone number with you and you can let me know if you can find some time to talk to me. My number is (phone number). Thank you.

*If potential participant says yes:*

Me: Great. When and where would be a good time to meet? (Proceed with phone call until a time and location has been set. If she cannot think of a location that is appropriate for the interview such as a low-noise location, I will suggest the office space I plan to rent in Sarajevo.) Thank you and I will see you soon.

### Appendix B (Bosnian translation)

Opći smjer telefonskog vodiča za istraživačicu koja kontaktira potencijalne učesnice (za one koje žele direktno pričati da istražiteljicom)

Ja: Dobar dan ili Dobro jutro, zove Mia Šišić. Mogu li razgovarati sa (ime potencijalne učesnice)?

*If the participant is unavailable and it is a personal (not family/public) voicemail:*

Me: Hvala. Pokušaću je opet nazvati.

[Try calling the next day. If potential participant is still unavailable, leave my name and phone number with a message to call when they get a chance.]

*Message if participant is unavailable:*

Me: Dobar dan ili Dobro jutro (ime potencijalne učesnice), zove Mia Šišić. Možete li me nazvati na (moj broj telefona) kad dobijete priliku? Hvala.

*If the participant is available or answers the phone:*

Me: Dobro jutro ili Dobar dan (ime potencijalne učesnice). Razgovarale ste danas (ili jučer) sa (ime radnice) o intervjuima koje radim za istraživanje svog doktorskog rada kao dio programa na fakultetu Windsor. (Pauza) Zainteresirana sam raditi intervju sa ženama koje su doživjele seksualno nasilje za vrijeme rata i kako ih je to iskustvo afektiralo, i kako su se stvari možda promjenile od tad. Moguće je da se ništa nije promijenilo ili da su se mnoge stvari promjenile, neke na bolje a neke na gore. Htjela bih da čujem od Vas o svemu tome. Ovakvi intervjui obično traju sat vremena i uglavnom ne više od dva sata. (Pauza) Ako se nađemo za intervju, kao znak zahvalnosti, platiću 70 maraka za vaše vrijeme plus ako imate ikakve troškove za brigu djece. Možete izabrati da koristite svoje pravo ime u intervju ili možete izabrati pseudonim. Da li Vas interesuje da se nađemo i pričamo o Vašim iskustvima?

*If potential participant says no:*

Me: U redu, hvala Vam.

*If potential participant is not sure:*

Me: Razumjem da su ljudi zauzeti u ovo vrijeme . Ostaviću Vam svoj broj telefona pa me možete kontaktirati ako budete našli vremena da popričamo. Broj telefona je (home number). Hvala Vam.

*If potential participant says yes:*

Me: Super. Kad i gdje bi bilo dobro da se nađemo? (Proceed with phone call until a time and location has been set. If she cannot think of a location that is appropriate for the interview such as a low-noise location, I will suggest the office space I plan to rent in Sarajevo.) Hvala Vam i vidimo se uskoro.



## Appendix C: Consent to Participate in Research



### CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title of Study: Outcomes of Wartime Sexual Violence in a Sample of Ethnically Diverse Bosnian Women

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by doctoral student Mia Sisic under the supervision of Dr. Charlene Senn, both from the Psychology Department at the University of Windsor. If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel to contact the principal investigator Mia Sisic by phone, [phone number redacted] or by e-mail, sisic1@uwindsor.ca. You can also contact my supervisor, Charlene Senn, by phone, +1-519-253-3000 x.2255 or by e-mail, csenn@uwindsor.ca.

The purpose of this study is to examine how wartime sexual violence affects women.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to talk about yourself including your experiences of sexual violence and how the experience(s) affected you. We are interested in whether things have changed for you. If they have, we would like to know how things have changed, either for better or for worse, or both. Interviews like this typically take between one and two hours. As a thank you for your time and interest, you will be paid 70BAM plus any child care costs.

You may withdraw from the study at any time and you may choose not to answer any of the questions without penalty or consequences to you. You may also withdraw your consent to participate at any time without penalty. You may remove your data (interview transcript) from this study any time up until you review (or decline to review) the typed transcript of your interview. The typed transcript, if you wish to see it, will be given to you approximately one month after your interview. If you choose to review the transcript, you will be given two weeks to do so and if you correct anything, I will note it in the transcript. If after two weeks you have not contacted me, it will be understood that the transcript is accurate as is. Your name will not be revealed to anyone if you choose to stay anonymous in the audio recording and transcript of the interview. The audio recording and transcript will be kept in a secure location. The recording will be destroyed once the doctoral dissertation has been defended. The transcript of the interview will be kept indefinitely and will only be identified by a pseudonym or your first name (whichever you choose).

There are few risks associated with this study, similar to the discomfort you may experience when you are seeing media coverage of rape during the war or talking about your experiences with friends, or family or workers at organizations like Žena – Žrtva rata. You are encouraged to share only as much as you feel comfortable sharing with me. I will check in with you from time to time to make sure you're OK. If you experience discomfort at any point during this study and would like to take a break or stop the interview, please let me know and we will do that. I will also provide you with information for therapist Besima Čatić Suljević at [phone number redacted]. You may benefit from involvement in the project by having an opportunity to engage in a conversation about how wartime sexual violence has affected you over the years and in a different way than you usually do.

The data gathered in this research will be used by the student to write her doctoral dissertation and may be used in subsequent studies. If you would like a copy of the research report, the researcher will take your e-mail address or postal address and mail it to you when the project is completed by April 30, 2017.

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact: Research Ethics Coordinator, University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario, N9B 3P4; Telephone: +1-519-253-3000, ext. 3948; e-mail: [ethics@uwindsor.ca](mailto:ethics@uwindsor.ca)

This research has been cleared by the University of Windsor Research Ethics Board.

[This recording indicates that you have read and understood this form and its contents and that you agree to participate in this study. The researcher has signed this form and given it to you for your information.]

[to be read into audio recorder] *I understand the information provided for this study. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction and I agree to participate in this study. I understand this is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time by requesting that the taping be stopped.*

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Signature of Researcher

---

Date

## Appendix C (Bosnian translation)



University  
of Windsor

### PRISTANAK ZA UČEŠĆE U ISTRAŽIVANJU

Naziv studija: Ishodi seksualnog nasilja u ratu u primjerku etničko raznovrsni bosanski žena

Od vas se traži da učestvujete u istraživanju koje vodi student doktorata Mia Šišić pod nadzorom dr Charlene Senn, iz departmana za psihologiju na fakultetu University of Windsor. Ako imate bilo kakvih pitanja ili zabrinutosti o istraživanju, molimo Vas da kontaktirate glavnu istraživačicu Miu Šišić na broj [phone number redacted] ili preko e-maila, [sisic1@uwindsor.ca](mailto:sisic1@uwindsor.ca). Također se možete obratiti mome mentoru, Charlene Senn na broj +1-519-253-3000 x.2255 ili preko e-maila, [csenn@uwindsor.ca](mailto:csenn@uwindsor.ca).

Cilj ove studije je da se istraži kako ratno seksualno nasilje djeluje na žene.

Ako pristanete da učestvujete u ovoj studiji, od vas će se tražiti da razgovaramo o Vama, uključujući vaše iskustvo sa seksualnim nasiljem i kako je to iskustvo (ili iskustva) utjecalo na Vas. Interesira nas da li su se stvari promijenile za vas. Ako jesu, želimo znati kako su se stvari promijenile, da li za bolje ili gore, ili oboje. Ovakvi intervjui obično traju između jednog i dva sata. Za zahvalu na Vašem vremenu i interesu, biće te plaćeni 70BAM plus troškove za čuvanje djece.

Možete se povući iz studije u bilo koje vrijeme i možete odabrati da ne odgovorite na pitanja bez ikakvih posljedica za Vas. Također možete povući svoj pristanak za učešće bilo kad i bez posljedica. Možete ukloniti svoje podatke (transkript razgovora) iz ove studije u bilo koje doba sve do pregleda (ili odbijanja pregleda) Vašeg otkucanog transkripta intervjua. Ako želite vidjeti otkucani transkript, biće Vam dato otprilike mjesec dana poslije intervjua. Ako se odlučite da vidite otkucani transkript, daću Vam dva tjedna da to uradite i ako nešto ispravite, označiću u transkriptu. Ako me ne kontaktirate nakon dva tjedna, podrazumjevat će se da je transkript ispravan kako jeste. Vaše ime neće biti otkriveno nikome ako odlučite biti anonimni u audio snimanju i transkriptu razgovora. Audio snimak i transkript će se držati na sigurnoj lokaciji. Snimak će biti uništen nakon odbrane doktorske disertacije. Transkript intervjua će se zadržati do neograničenog vremena i samo će biti identificiran sa pseudonimom ili imenom (koju god ste opciju izabrali) a ne prezimenom.

Učešće u ovoj studiji je povezano sa nekoliko rizika, slično nelagodi koju možda doživite kada vidite medijsku reportažu o silovanju tokom rata ili kada pričate o Vašim iskustvima sa prijatelj(ja)ma, ili porodicom, ili radnicama u organizacijama poput Žena – Žrtva rata. Ohrabrujem Vas da dijelite samo onoliko koliko Vam je ugodno dijelite sa mnom. Svako toliko

ću provjeriti da li ste Vi u redu. Ako Vam je neugodno bilo kada u ovoj studiji i želite napraviti pauzu ili zaustaviti intervju, molim Vas recite i prestaćemo. Također Vas mogu uputiti terapeutu Besimi Čatić Suljević na broj telefona [phone number redacted]. Možete imati koristi od učešća u ovoj studiji jer imate mogućnosti da sudjelujete u razgovoru o tome kako Vas je seksualno naslije za vrijeme rata afektiralo kroz godine i moguće je da imate priliku da to uradite na drugačiji način nego što obično radite.

Podaci prikupljeni u ovom istraživanju će se koristiti od strane mene, studenta, da napiše doktorsku disertaciju i može se koristiti u kasnijim studijama. Ako želite kopiju izvještaja ovoga istraživanja, istraživačica će uzeti Vašu e-mail adresu ili poštansku adresu i poslati Vam kada se projekt završi do 30. aprila, 2017. godine.

Ako imate pitanja u vezi svojih prava kao učesnica istraživanja, kontaktirajte: Research Ethics Coordinator (Koordinator etike istraživanja), University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario, N9B 3P4; Telephone: [+1.519.253.3000](tel:+15192533000), x. 3948; e-mail: [ethics@uwindsor.ca](mailto:ethics@uwindsor.ca)

Ovo istraživanje je odobrio University of Windsor Research Ethics Board (Komisija za etiku istraživanja univerziteta u Windsoru).

[Ovaj snimak pokazuje da ste pročitali i shvatili ovaj formular i njegov sadržaj i da se slažete da učestvujete u ovoj studiji. Istraživačica je potpisala ovaj formular i dala Vam ga za vašu informaciju.]

[Pročitajte u diktofon] *Razumijem informacije dane za ovu studiju. Zadovoljna sam sa odgovorima na moja pitanja i pristajem da učestvujem u ovoj studiji. Razumijem da je ovo dobrovoljno i da imam slobodu da se povučem kad god želim s tim da tražim da se snimanje zaustavi.*

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Potpis istraživačice

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Datum

## Appendix D: Semi-structured Interview Questions

### Situating

Tell me about yourself.

*\*How old are you?*

*\*Are you currently in a relationship?*

*If yes,*

*\*How long have you been together? Are you married?*

*\*Do you have any children?*

*\*Do you live with anyone?*

*\*How much schooling have you finished?*

*\*Do you work outside your home? Do you work for pay? Do you have regular pay?*

*\*Do you live in Sarajevo?*

Where did you live before the war? During the war?

How would you describe your experiences during the war?

**\*\*Are you OK to continue? If you need a break, we can take one.**

### Sexual Violence

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, many things happened during the war. You were invited to participate in this research because you experienced sexual violence during the war and I am interested in your experience. Can you tell me about your experience?

*(If the woman responds that she was victimized by sexual violence many times, I will ask her to focus on the one that stands out the most to her. However, I will tell her to feel free to talk about the other instances of violence during the interview process.)*

*\*Where did this happen?*

*\*Was it a place that was familiar to you in the past?*

*\*Did you know the person who did this to you?*

*\*How did you know each other before the war?*

*\*How many times did this happen?*

**\*\*Are you OK to continue? Do you need a break?**

Can you describe how the experience affected you at the time?

*\*How did you feel emotionally, physically and psychologically at the time or shortly afterwards?*

*\*Did you tell anyone what happened to you?*

*If not:*

*\*Why didn't you tell anyone?*

*If yes:*

*\*Who did you tell?*

*\*How did you feel about the conversation with this person? Were you happy you told them?*

How did the experience affect you over the years?

*\*How did you feel emotionally, physically and psychologically as the years went by?*

*\*For example, how did you feel within a year or two after your experience? In the decade after?  
In the last ten years?*

How does the experience affect you now?

*\*Has the way you experienced this event changed over time?*

*\*Did the experience make you see the world differently? Did it make you see people differently?*

*\*(If they have) You have told me about the negative effects of this experience in the past and*

*more recently. Some women who have had similar experiences have talked about some positive unanticipated effects or developing strengths after their experience(s). Have you noticed anything like this about yourself at any time?*

*\*Some women have talked about increasing their political involvement, developing a sense of community with other women who have similar experiences, or seeing themselves as strong or as a survivor or other positive things. Have you experienced some positive outcomes that you did not anticipate?*

Did your family or community play a role in how you felt or thought about your experience back then or since then? [If she has mentioned her family already: You've talked a little bit about your family, but can you tell me if your community played a role/part in how you felt or thought about your experience back then or since then?]

What role/part did they play?

*\*Do you think that if you lived somewhere else in Bosnia and Herzegovina, your experiences would have been different?*

*If a woman says that she testified in court for her rape:*

*\*Is there anything you want to tell me about your experience?*

*\*What gave you the strength to testify?*

Do you think your ethnic background played a role in how you felt or thought about your experience back then or since then?

If "ethnic background" is unclear to the woman: Do you think that you being [Muslim, Serb, Croat, or other] played a role in how you felt or thought about what happened to you, back then or since then?

*\*Do you think that your recovery process had anything to do with your ethnicity? The ethnicity of the perpetrator?*

Is there anything else about your experiences during the war that you would like to share with me?

Is there anything about your life after the war that you would like to share with me?

Is there anything else you would like to say about your experience? Is there something I haven't asked?

*\*Prompts*

*\*\*Checking in with participant to make sure that she can continue with the study*

### **General prompts**

Can you tell me more about that?

Can you give me an example?

How did you feel about that?

I don't understand. Can you tell me more about it?

Note: If a participant asks me about my ethnic background, I will disclose that I am from a mixed marriage ("I'm from a mixed marriage and I can tell you more about it at the end when I've asked you some questions. I'd really like to focus on your for now."). If the participant asks follow-up questions and is insistent on knowing my ethnic background, I will disclose that I am part-Muslim and part-Serb. The revelation may have an impact on the tone of the interview, so I will have to make note of this in the research notes.

**Appendix D (Bosnian translation)**  
Semi-structured interview questions

**Situating**

Recite mi malo o sebi.

\* *Koliko imate godina?*

\* *Da li ste trenutno u vezi?*

*Ako da,*

\* *Koliko ste dugo zajedno? Jeste li udani?*

\* *Imate li djece?*

\* *Da li živite s nekim?*

\* *Koliko ste škole završile?*

\* *Da li radite van kuće? Da li radite za plaću? Da li imate redovnu plaću?*

\* *Da li živite u Sarajevu?*

Gdje ste živjeli prije rata? Za vrijeme rata?

Kako biste opisali svoja iskustva tokom rata?

\*\* Je li u redu da nastavimo? Ako Vam treba pauza, možemo napraviti stanku.

**Sexual Violence**

U Bosni i Hercegovini se dosta toga desilo za vrijeme rata. Vi ste pozvane na ovo istraživanje zato što ste doživjele seksualno nasilje za vrijeme rata i zanima me Vaše iskustvo. Možete li mi reći o Vašem iskustvu?

*(Ako žena odgovori da je bila žrtva seksualnog nasilja mnogo puta, pitati ću je da se fokusira na onaj koji joj je najviše značajan. Međutim, reći ću joj da slobodno može pričati o drugim slučajevima nasilja u toku intervjuja.)*

\* *Gdje se to dogodilo?*

\* *Da li Vam je to mjesto bilo prije poznato?*

\* *Da li znate osobu koja Vam je to uradila?*

\* *Kako ste se znali prije rata?*

\* *Koliko se puta to desilo?*

\*\* Možete li nastaviti? Da li vam je potrebna pauza?

Možete li opisati kako je na Vas to iskustvo utjecalo u to vrijeme?

\* *Kako ste se osjećali emocionalno, fizički i psihički u to vrijeme ili ubrzo nakon toga?*

\* *Jeste li kome rekli šta Vam je bilo?*

*Ako ne:*

\* *Zašto niste nikome rekli?*

*Ako da:*

\* *Kome ste rekli?*

\* *Kako ste se osjećali o razgovoru s tom osobom? Da li Vam je bilo drago što ste im to rekli?*

Kako je to iskustvo utjecalo na Vas tokom godina?

\* *Kako ste se osjećali emocionalno, fizički i psihički kako su godine prolazile?*



*\*Naprimjer, kako ste se osjećale u roku od godinu ili dvije nakon toga?  
Deset godina poslije?*

*U posljednjih deset godina?*

Kako na Vas ovo iskustvo utječe sad?

*\*Da li se način na koji ste doživjeli ovaj događaj promjenio tokom vremena?*

*\*Da li vas je taj događaj natjerao da gledate na svijet drugačije? Da vidite ljude drugačije?*

*\*(Ako su tako rekle ->) Rekli ste mi o negativnim efektima ovoga iskustva u prošlosti i nedavno. Neke žene koje su imale slična iskustva su rekle da su imale neke pozitivne neočekivane efekte ili da su razvile neke snage nakon svojih iskustava. Jeste li Vi lično ikad primjetili nešto tako?*

*\*Neke žene su razgovarale o tome da su postale više politički angažovane, razvile osjećaj zajednice sa drugim ženama koje imaju slična iskustva, ili se vide kao jake ili žene koje su preživjele ili neke druge pozitivne stvari. Da li ste vi doživjeli neke pozitivne rezultate koje niste predvidjeli?*

Da li je vaša porodica ili zajednica igrala ulogu u tome kako ste se osjećale ili razmišljale o Vašem iskustvu tada ili od tada? [Ako je već spomenula svoju porodicu: Razgovarale ste malo o svojoj porodici, ali možete li mi reći ako je Vaša zajednica odigrala ulogu u tome kako ste se osjećale ili razmišljale o svom iskustvu tada ili od tada?]

Kakvu su ulogu igrale?

*\*Da li mislite da bi Vam vasa iskustva bila drugačija da ste živjele negdje drugdje u BiH?*

*Ako žena kaže da je svjedočila na sudu za svoje silovanje:*

*\*Da li mi želite reći išta o Vašem iskustvu?*

*\*Šta Vam je dalo snagu da svjedočite?*

Mislite li da je Vaša etnička pripadnost igrala ulogu u tome kako ste se osjećali ili razmišljali o Vašem iskustvu tada ili od tada?

Ako je "etnička pripadnost" nejasna ženi: Da li mislite da je to što ste [muslimanke, srпкиnje, Hrvatice ili drugo] igralo ulogu u tome kako ste se osjećali ili razmišljali o tome što Vam se desilo, tada ili od tada?

*\*Da li mislite da je Vaš proces oporavka imao kakve veze sa Vašim etničkom pripadnošću?*

*\*A etničkom pripadnost počinitelja?*

Želite li mi reći još nešto o Vašim iskustvima za vrijeme rata?

Želite li mi reći još nešto o Vašem životu nakon rata?

Da li mi želite reći išta drugo o Vašem iskustvu? Je li ima nešto što nisam pitala?

*\*Prompts*

*\*\*Checking in with participant to make sure that she can continue with the study*

### **General prompts**

Možete li mi reći nešto više o tome?

Možete li mi dati primjer?

Kako ste se osjećali zbog toga (o tome)?

Ne razumijem. Možete li mi reći nešto više o tome?

Note: If a participant asks me about my ethnic background, I will disclose that I am from a mixed marriage (“I’m from a mixed marriage and I can tell you more about it at the end when I’ve asked you some questions. I’d really like to focus on you for now.”/Ja sam iz miješanog braka i mogu Vam reći više o tome na kraju kad završim sa pitanjima. Htjela bi zasad posvetiti pažnju Vama.”). If the participant asks follow-up questions and is insistent on knowing my ethnic background, I will disclose that I am part-Muslim and part-Serb. The revelation may have an impact on the tone of the interview, so I will have to make note of this in the research notes.

**Appendix E: Contact Card for Participants**

Contacts you may find useful

Besima Čatić Suljević (Therapist from Žena - Žrtva rata) [phone number redacted]

**Appendix E (Bosnian Translation)**

Kontakti koji bih mogli biti korisni

Besima Čatić Suljević (Terapeut iz Žena - Žrtva rata) [phone number redacted]

## Appendix F: Parallel: Restrictions/Constraints on Life

*(Restrikcije/ograničenja na život)*

The superordinate theme, “restrictions/constraints on life”, was common to all of the women interviewed. The following themes were captured by the superordinate theme: wartime external control (control exerted on the women during wartime); welcomed external control (external control and restrictions placed on the women that were seen as a benefit to the women’s lives); restrictions on voice/silence (restrictions on speaking and being silenced about their experiences); post-war restrictions (the lasting direct and indirect impact of wartime events on post-war life). The themes’ common ground was the lack of control women had over their own lives in the conditions created by the war either during war or post-war.

Many, but not all, of the themes were also coded into the superordinate theme “multi-faceted outcomes (consequences and strengths) of complex trauma in war.” However, because some of the codes in the analysis process were not the result of wartime events, another superordinate theme (i.e., “restrictions/constraints on life”) was created to best capture the data. That is, this superordinate theme also captures women’s experiences that were not directly related to wartime trauma outcomes but rather experiences that may be inherent to war (e.g., being displaced) or things that were happening *while* the women were being victimized sexually or otherwise (e.g., being physically restrained). Thus, the superordinate theme “restrictions/constraints on life” helps understand the contexts in which the women were experiencing the outcomes of wartime events (i.e., situates the superordinate theme “multi-faceted outcomes [consequences and strengths] of complex trauma in war”).

### Wartime External Control

M.O. described the war as forcing her to mature overnight, even though she was still young: “I really do not have anything positive or some experience to tell you about except that life forced me to mature overnight.” Osam summarized it well when she said that civilians were forced into a state of war when the fighting should have been happening between those who were in uniforms (i.e., soldiers):

I understand that that those are wars, that it is Serbs, Croats, Muslims and Germans, Yugoslavs, it is all clear to me, it is all clear to me. And the war is clear to me and it is all clear to me, you are uniform, I am in uniform. It is all clear to me. And that we will kill one another and this and that, but I am in uniform and you are not. Why me? Leave me alone. I don’t care that you are fighting. Fight. I don’t care about that but it’s of no use, when it pulls you in, it pulls you in it pulls you in and you don’t even know it pulled you in. Horrible.

At the most rudimentary level, the women had restricted access to basic necessities. Many women told me they lacked access to food, water, electricity, basic hygiene, and sleep. This was across many contexts and did not matter whether the women had been held captive in a camp or not. Deset, for example, told me about her time in a camp where the prisoners had restricted time to tend to their hygiene and the women specifically had no time to wash themselves: “they give us little time in the morning to perform necessities, we can’t wash our face, we can’t we are unwashed, we women do not wash ourselves.” The restricted access to basic necessities had an impact on who the women were able to communicate with. Telephone service was cut and made it difficult to inform anyone of important news. Devet was thought dead for a long time during the war until she managed to let her sister, who lived in another city, know by word of mouth that she was alive. Her sister then informed others that Devet was alive:

then my sister shared [the news that Devet is alive] with everyone because we did not have telephones in [name of city redacted], there was no electricity, there was no water, there was nothing. Then, I mean. Everything was turned off.

Restrictions from communicating with family members were not uncommon. Četiri was taken from her parents' home and held captive with her mother and a neighbour. Army restrictions forced her to lose contact with loved ones and acquaintances. She was away from her husband and daughter, not knowing what is happening with them nor daring to ask anyone:

my child was left, a baby. The eldest daughter, I don't know what's going on with them, it was shooting, I mean, I know they stayed in their house, but I don't know anything that's going on. Nor can I inquire much.

Jedanaest described a similar lack of control over access to information. She described being taken away from her home with her husband and daughter and expecting that the army would kill them. It was eerie, she said, to hold her child's and husband's hands and not know what would happen: "I expected them [the army] to shoot continuously (i.e., rapid fire), that they will kill us I mean. That is eerie, holding your child, holding your husband by the hand and you don't know what will happen." The army took them away to a camp and separated the men and women. Jedanaest and her daughter were put in a room with one window with grates on it and four beds where over 30 women resided for the duration of her captivity:

and then they did not, they did not kill us. Instead, they put us in some van and took us [to the camp] (...) then they separated us (...) they took us upstairs to the women's pavilion and where they crammed us in some room. I mean, there were 2 or 3 beds mmm one two three four beds were there. And over 30 women were in that bed and children eee in that room. That was one window where we mm which was mm there was with grates because we could not leave anywhere nor get anything.

Jedanaest did not know where her husband was for some time and did not know what happened to the women that were taken from the room she was held captive in and who never came back: "they took out some other women later but those women did not return to the room. I don't know what happened with those women. Did they put them in some other room or, I don't know."

While being prisoners in camp, the women were maltreated, interrogated, physically abused, and had restricted physical movement. Deset was taken from her home to a camp on two different occasions. She recalled that the first time she was raped, a soldier slapped her and then the others forced her on a table: "when he slapped me, the others sprawled me on on on the table." After they raped her, the rapists kept her in the room where it happened and poured water over her so that it appeared to others that she was taken to be "refreshed." The male prisoners responded to the sight of Deset with: "lucky you, at least they let you refresh yourself a little." Deset shared with me that she thought the rapists raped in secret: not all the soldiers and prisoners knew that it was happening. It is likely that some soldiers used tactics of making women like Deset appear as if they had showered, so that they can control the perceptions the other prisoners had of the women (i.e., that they were getting special treatment) and thus hide that they were raping women at the camp.

For Jedan, it was clear that the rapes were not a secret where she was held captive. Similarly, though, she spoke about soldiers who placed constraints on her movement and speech while she was in captivity. She described being "saved" by a Četnik. But being "saved" meant that the Četnik kept her captive in his apartment and had he not, she would have fared much worse (e.g., would have been raped by more men):

then this one showed up, a person doesn't know which(?), a Četnik is a Četnik, a slaughterer is a slaughterer. But on the one hand he like like like saved me somewhat of what could have happened those 5 days (...) I figured at least I will be with one, he may protect me.

She specifically spoke about the lack of control over her body (i.e., rapes) and the lack of humanity to the rapes – that she was treated as an object:

**Jedan:** well, give me a job, send me, send me on the lines, don't let me be a like like a whore between you.

**Mia:** yes

**Jedan:** someone to take [stuff] out on, let me be of some use. just an object to take things out on and that's that.

**Mia:** object

**Jedan:** whore whore, no a whore is nice. I don't know how to say it, a slut. Not a slut either.

Other women also talked about the restrictions place on their bodies in relation to rape. Devet lacked control over her physical life when she was taken away from her home to be raped and consequently hid to help keep herself safe. For about a week, she hid in a basement, slept on charcoal, did not eat or sleep, and constantly lived in fear of being murdered:

listen, I was in a basement, I don't know, seven eight days laid on charcoal, slept. I did not know if I was cold nor warm nor nor, I only had fear in me. Nor did I eat, nor did I drink. I only watched for someone to come and kill me. I only thought about that.

Similarly, B.H. was physically maltreated by the army who threatened her with more physical violence or death if she did not do as she was told. While raping her and holding a dagger to her throat, the rapist told her if he did not have a good time, he would rape her children and slaughter her family: “and can you imagine how it is while you are being raped and you are told if I do not have a good time I will kill your whole family, rape your children, I will slaughter them, kill them. And when [he's] holding a dagger under your neck.” Living in a small town, her privacy was restricted and others knew when women were being raped even when the women had not told anyone. Neighbours saw women being taken and what they looked like when they came back:

**B.H.** it was known, mmm, it is a small town [name of hometown redacted]

**Mia:** mhm

**B. H.** you can see it, you cannot open your mouth from a neighbour when he sees them take you and when he sees what you are like when you come back.

For many women, the restrictions placed on them were not only in captivity but also in their own homes or whether in fact they escaped their home because they were forced to seek safety elsewhere. After Četiri managed to escape captivity, she sought shelter at her parents' home. This, too, proved to be a life with others in control. She told me that soldiers routinely came into the home to maltreat and rob her and her mother. She recounted to me that the soldiers would “ask“ her to give them the things they wanted, as if Četiri and her mother had any choice in the matter:

**Četiri:** they [the army?] came daily and maltreated us, robbed, literally – as they say – took the clothes off your back. “take off that shirt (inaudible) I like it.” Literally.

Anything that was worth something from the apartment, I mean, he comes and like he asks you

**Mia:** mhm

**Četiri:** like he asks you to give it to him, I mean (laughs)

**Mia:** mhm

**Četiri:** I mean, that is so ironic now, I mean

Četiri managed to escape her hometown after captivity. The escape to a different city did not bring her freedom, but it was easier to bear. She explained that she did not have access to basic necessities in the new city and was exposed to sniper bullets and grenades:

but, it was easier to survive that without water without electricity, you're living [when she escaped]. So there is shooting, a sniper could hit you or a grenade but, it is different when you are experiencing something when you are in the hands of, when you know that, that you have no way to leave [about captivity].

Even the restrictions on food and freedom of movement was easier to live through than being held captive and knowing you do not have a way out.

Some women perceived the war to have been allowed by the international community who idly stood by while atrocities, including rapes, were committed. It is important to note that of the four participants who talked to me about this (M.O., B.H., Osam, and Dvanaest), none were Serb – the ethnic group who is held responsible for starting the aggression or war in BiH.

Before the war in BiH, there was peace for decades. As obvious as this statement may seem, it is worth understanding that most of the women had spent their entire lives in peace until the war began. With peace, there had been access to food, shelter, bodily autonomy, etc. With war, access to anything that may have seemed routine before was restricted. The conditions of war the women described help contextualize the wartime consequences (e.g., some women experiencing “latent consequences” because they were too focused on survival) and strengths (e.g., the bravery required to be so defiant in the face of danger like Deset was in superordinate theme “multi-faceted outcomes [consequences and strengths] of complex trauma in war”).

### **Welcomed External Control**

Although welcomed, some women experienced restrictions or external control that they saw as a benefit to their livelihoods such as their oppressors providing some help. Deset spoke about surviving several times during the war because of others. When she was captured and held in a Serb-led camp, a new head of the army came to the camp and Deset had a feeling that he wanted to help her and the other prisoners. He asked the prisoners if they needed anything and the prisoners responded that they, especially the women, needed more time in the bathroom. The soldier's response was to give the prisoners more time to carry out their bathroom duties (e.g., washing their only pair of underwear and putting it back on themselves). Deset said that the particular soldier came to them every single day and credits him with saving them: “and that young soldier, that officer returned to us every day and he saved us.”

Devet told me that she survived at one point during the war because her life was in the hands of another person – a soldier whose team was supposed to kill her in her home, but after interrogating her, he decided to spare her life and advised her on how to leave her city to avoid being murdered:

he said “we brought you with the intention to kill you here, to kill you and this woman said she will kill you, but nobody will kill you” (...) “nobody will kill you,” he said, “I will take you home from where we took you and,” he said, “please get a document [to leave town], find a document, go through [name of town]” (...) he said “after 15 days are up, I am leaving, I will no longer be the commander here and,” he said, “please” and he said that a few times, “please,” he said, “take the document, look for it and get out and somehow,” he said, “get out and fend for yourself.”



Devet tried to escape the city using the advice from the soldier and applied for a document to leave, but was denied the leave

Though the women's lives were spared because of the aforementioned acts, it is worth noting that the acts did happen in a context where the women had little control over their lives. Deset, for example, had been imprisoned in a camp where she had been raped multiple times. Devet had been advised on how to flee the city by a man who was supposed to kill her and which she ultimately could not do, because she was not given proper documentation by authorities who controlled who could and could not leave the city.

The stories of Devet and Deset help illustrate how war is not often as straightforward as it may seem. Both women experienced some level of compassion from their oppressors/captors. The examples are important in demonstrating that as powerful as discrimination and in-group favouritism (Sherif, 1956; Turner, Brown, & Tajfel, 1979) may be, some individuals engage in acts that fight them. Ultimately, the compassion that the oppressors engaged in likely had an effect on the outcomes the women experienced and, in Devet's case, whether they lived to experience the outcomes at all.

### **Restrictions on Voice/Silence**

While all of the women talked to me about some of the aforementioned restrictions such as food, water, shelter, communication, and physical movement, some women also spoke about having restrictions on their voice or being silenced such as being afraid to speak in captivity. Pet, for example, told me that when the police officers came into her family's home, one officer said to her to do everything he tells her to do and to do it quietly: "now he says 'everything I say, you do, meaning quietly without' – so that he would not kill us. He does(?) all those threats which they directed to all of us." Similarly, M.O. talked about instances when she was threatened not to speak in the camps she was imprisoned. The remainder of the examples were related to the consequences of rape and were examined in detail under the theme "consequences" in superordinate theme "multi-faceted outcomes (consequences and strengths) of complex trauma in war."

### **Post-War Restrictions**

For many women, the constraints and restrictions they felt during wartime did not end when the war stopped. The events of the war impacted the way they lived their life post-war. Četiri described restricted physical independence at times due to the various events in captivity (e.g., inability to walk due to numbness in legs potentially caused by beatings while in captivity): "I can't go to the bathroom by myself, I can't do anything. I think those are all consequences of that [experiences in captivity]." Other women felt the emotional impact from the restrictions they faced during wartime. During the war, Deset often did not know where she was being taken (e.g., from location to location in camps) or what was happening around her, indicating her lack of control over access to information. The most poignant example of this is the events surrounding her husband's death. She was taken from him while he was still alive, but when she returned home, she was told that he died. His body was missing and she searched for a long time, eventually finding it. Even on the day of the interview, however, she did not know the circumstances surrounding his death and expressed negative emotions over it (e.g., she talked about how beautiful it was that some women are able to be by their husband's sides while they are dying).

In the post-war period, M.O. noted that although she has freedom, she has experienced lack thereof in some instances. Today, she said, the "system" in Bosnia and Herzegovina does

not acknowledge the pain she endured during wartime and expects the survivors to return home without understanding the pain the return home may have:

a person had survived a lot. He's [a person] surviving even today. Today you are surviving from your system. You are free, but your system does not recognize your pain. Your system tells you why don't you go back. Well, I would love to see anyone who survived go back, spend one night.

Osam told me that that she feels politics, especially wartime-fueled politics, are imposed on people post-war. She feels forced to think about nationality and politics when she does not want to: "and those political things are pushed under your nose all the time."

Although they were often indirect consequences, the restrictions women feel in the post-war period as a result of wartime events show that wartime constraints continue to have an impact even when shooting is over. A war does not necessarily end when the grenades stop falling and people stop shooting. The consequences continue to be felt – even 20 years after the events.

### **Appendix G: Reflexivity**

Shortly upon my arrival to Sarajevo to begin the process of conducting the interviews for this research, I took a walk in the city centre, my feet stepping on the reminders of wartime shell explosions and death – marked in the concrete with red resin. I was walking down the “Maršala Tita” street – a street named after the former President of Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia – and passing a relatively recently opened American fast food chain, when I heard a pop. I froze and thought of the wartime siege of the city I was in and my own experiences of war. In fear, I looked around me and saw every other adult frozen. In the background, I heard children laughing. A balloon had popped. The whole experience must have lasted less than two seconds, but I often came back to that moment as a somber but telling example of the way the women in this study talked about war and its impacts.

Although there are generations of people living in BiH who have not survived war, they are still touched by it. They are surrounded by people who have survived atrocities and, like the women stated, the consequences of the wartime events are carried on to the children through the choices people make in how they parent. The war may have ended over 20 years ago in BiH, but the reminders of it can be found in the most innocuous things and when an entire population has survived the same trauma, there are “group” reactions to it that are very similar (echoed by Četiri telling me that people in BiH are in a group depression). So, like the women who had survived the war and the people in BiH who continue to be impacted by the wartime events, I too survived the war and it has had impacts on this research. I wrote research notes throughout my three-month stay in BiH to record my thoughts, responses, and feelings after each woman’s interview, through the analysis, and the final write-up and the notes have been central in informing my personal, epistemological, and methodological reflexivities.

#### **Personal Reflexivity**

Personal reflexivity is centred on the researcher’s identity (e.g., my identity as a feminist; Wilkinson, 1988) and encourages researchers to consider “ways in which our own values, experiences, interests, beliefs, political commitments, wider aims in life and social identities have shaped the research” (Willig, 2008, p. 10). By recording my thoughts and feelings after each interview with a woman, I was able to explore what the women’s words meant to me shortly after the interview was complete and through the transcription process, thus setting the stage for personal reflexivity. This gave me insight into how my reactions to the women’s stories may be tied to my identity (as a woman, feminist, multi-ethnic person, war survivor, victim of genocide) and the effect their words may have had on future interviews with other women or the analysis of the transcriptions. The research notes I took once I was back in Canada (i.e., after the interviews were completed) allowed me to explore my reactions after some time had passed since the interviews. Once again, the notes were necessary in examining how my thoughts and feelings may have been influenced by my identity or how the women’s words may have impacted my identity.

I was very cognizant of the fact that being in BiH for the duration of data collection and surrounded by people who have experienced war as I have can be both a positive and a negative thing. The positive for me was that, unlike in Canada, I was surrounded by people who had similar experiences and there was a shared cultural understanding when we spoke about almost anything, including things that were not related to war. It was a solidarity that I rarely experience in Canada where I live. When Dvanaest told me in her interview that women who live outside of BiH may have issues telling their story to someone like a therapist because that person has not survived the war and the story cannot touch them in the same way, I knew exactly what she was

talking about. Even as I am writing this, I know that I cannot communicate the emotional gravity of the moment the balloon popped in Sarajevo to someone who has never lived through a war.

The fact that the “group” reactions can be similar because we have all been affected by war trauma means that we may have abnormal reactions to normal stimuli (e.g., a balloon popping eliciting a fear response because it sounds like a wartime weapon). I knew that living in BiH for three months conducting this research meant that I may start seeing the abnormal as normal because most people around me would be reacting the same way. To be very clear, for people who survived the war in BiH and who continue to live there, what constitutes as “abnormal” by Western standards could certainly be argued as adaptive in BiH. However, I was returning to live in the West where most people around me had never been touched by war and I wanted to ensure that any reminders of war I had during that period or reactions to them could be channelled properly so that it could inform, but not detract from, my work.

I worked with a Canadian-based psychologist who was very open to having therapy sessions with me through a video chat application. I had sessions with him multiple times through my three-month stay and found the sessions helpful in recognizing ahead of time which parts of the women’s stories could be triggers for me and then developing strategies for coping. This was done to ensure that I would be emotionally touched by the women’s stories, but in such a way that I could continue to be attentive to them and their needs during the interview, but to also ensure that my mental health was protected. This was particularly helpful in two situations that had found their way through most interviews: (a) when women talked about “mixed marriages” and (b) when women talked about their children living through the war or women who themselves had been children during the war.

My “mixed” status as a child of parents who do not share the same ethnicity is one of the most salient characteristics to me when there are any conversations regarding the war in BiH. It shaped my experiences of war and it continues to shape how and whether I talk about the war to this day. Women from all ethnicities in the study mentioned mixed marriages in some way: they were victimized because they were in one or they saw others victimized because of it. I know that Muslim women made up the majority of those victimized by wartime sexual violence, but there was a part of me that, probably because of my mixed ethnicity, wanted every woman regardless of her ethnicity to have an opportunity to be heard and to have her experiences written down in history. This shaped my dissertation focus.

I have a vivid memory of a moment during wartime when I heard that a girl – a six-year old girl – was raped. I was about eight years old at the time and I remember being scared. The memory was just a memory to me through much of my life and I did not think about it much until I began to write this dissertation. But, the fact of the matter is that even though I did not grapple with what the memory meant to me until after I interviewed the women and analyzed the results, I see now that it played a role in my emotional responses in the interviews. I felt a different connection with Osam and Dvanaest than with other women; especially Dvanaest who often talked about how her childhood was spent in war. In many ways, the impetus for this research was reflecting on my own experiences of war and understanding that who I was – a small *girl* who was not “*clean*” (yes, people from former Yugoslavia still refer to those whose parents are not the same ethnicity as “not clean”, as someone who is essentially dirty) – was central to my identity formation (as I see it now).

### **Epistemological Reflexivity**

Epistemological reflexivity is centred on the assumptions we have made about knowledge and the world in our research projects, and urges us to ask questions such as how our

research question was defined and if it limited what type of results we find (Willig, 2008). I wanted to capture the most comprehensive lived experiences of the women who had been victimized by wartime sexual violence and maintain that my research question (how do women who have experienced wartime sexual violence conceptualize their post-rape outcomes?) did not limit my findings.

The interview questions were guided by the research question and were carefully crafted to ensure that they were open-ended enough so that participants only disclosed as much information as they felt comfortable disclosing. Most of the women shared a lot of detailed and unsolicited information with me. There were also many women who were (understandably) emotional and cried. However, like Clark's (2017<sup>b</sup>) experience interviewing survivors of war rape and sexual violence in BiH, the women told me that they feel better talking about what happened to them (though they often anticipated not feeling well for a few days). This is in line with research showing that some individuals participating in trauma research report distress during or immediately after participating, but that the negative reactions are not long-lasting (Legerski & Bunnell, 2010).

I believe that the environment I created for the women (i.e., that they talked about only the things they wanted to talk about) was an important reason that I was able to interview so many participants who ended up sharing things with me that they had not shared with others (e.g., Jedanaest told me that her husband had also been raped). On one occasion, however, it may have been the reason for a dilemma I had. Specifically, when I was interviewing B.H., parts of her story seemed familiar and a couple of details seemed similar to my previous interview with Pet. It was a passing thought at the time, but after another woman had casually mentioned that B.H. was Pet's mother, I had to think about whether and how their relationship would affect the results of the analysis. Would I have to ask them directly about their relationship? If I did, would this bring into question that an important feature of each interview is that the women should only disclose what they feel comfortable disclosing? Would it shake the rapport I had built with the women? Could this even affect the results in a noticeable way? If it did affect the results, did it matter? Ultimately, after examining each of the transcripts and building a sort of timeline of their war and post-war lives, I decided that their stories did share important family moments (e.g., being tortured in their own home, seeking shelter together), but that they survived the war in their own way and coped with the consequences in their own way. Recognizing that each woman survived the war in her own way and relating that to the foundation of IPA (i.e., my interpretation of the participant's interpretation) with the understanding that an experience or an interpretation of an experience cannot be duplicated, it became easier to work through my dilemma and the questions I had posed to myself. No, I did not have to ask B.H. and Pet about their relationship, but I definitely needed to disclose that to the reader so that they understand more of the context of B.H. and Pet's stories.

### **Methodological Reflexivity**

As with many doctoral dissertations, there is "the ideal" research project and there is "the practical" research project. Though I went beyond the practical by investing personal funds into conducting this international project, there were some decisions I made that were not ideal and they were mostly concerned with sampling issues. The women did not seem to hold class or financial privilege (though they were recruited via phone which means that they had the means to pay for monthly telephone bills), but they were privileged in some ways. The women all belonged to the three constituent peoples in BiH (Bosniaks – or, Bosnian Muslims; Bosnian Croats; and Bosnian Serbs). Thus, I do not know how the experiences of minority women (e.g.,

Romas) may be similar to or different from the women in this study. When I had first conceived the project, I thought I was being inclusive. Upon telling the Association that I was interested in experiences of women of all major ethnic groups including any minorities such as Roma (as well as atheists), the response I was given was that they do have Romas as part of their organization, but that I could not be able to understand their dialect. I have had very limited interactions with Romas in BiH, so I accepted that reasoning without much hesitation. If I were to conduct this research again, I would ask the Association to invite Roma women to participate as well. From that point, if the employees at the Association were willing, I would work with them to ensure that Roma women could participate (e.g., hiring a translator). I realized after the data collection was complete that, in some ways, I fell for the nationalistic narrative dominant in BiH politics by focusing only on the women who belonged to the three constituent peoples. I hope that these sampling issues will be addressed in future studies, because we may be ignoring the stories of some of the most vulnerable women in BiH.

In a related sampling issue, I had anticipated that it may be difficult to recruit Croat and Serb women. I had anticipated the difficulty with recruiting Croat women to be based on numbers alone as they are the smallest majority in BiH. The trouble with Serb women, I thought, would largely be based in the idea that they would still be reluctantly seen as victims because of their ethnic identity. I was both right and wrong. To recruit enough Croat women, I had to travel, so the Association did make it possible to recruit five Croat women which was the same number of Muslim women I had recruited. I was able to interview two Serb women, but I suspect there was some reluctance to see Serb women as victims. At one point near the end of my data collection, I spoke with the two employees of the Association that I had been in frequent contact with and reiterated again that I would like to include women of all ethnic identities in the research. Because at that point I had far fewer Serb women than Muslim and Croat, I added that if I could interview one or two more Serb women, that would be great (but noting that I understood if recruitment would be difficult). One of the employees, "A", seemed upset and when I had finished an interview and was leaving the Association for the day, I noticed that she was absent. I asked the other employee, "B", about the absence and "B" had implied that "A" had gotten upset over something related to war and left for the day. "B" assured me that "A" would be fine. It took me some time, but I do think that "A" had been upset that I was actively trying to recruit more Serb women. It also made me think about how the two Serb women I had interviewed before that happened had not disclosed as much as the other women particularly anything about ethnic identity. However, when I stopped taping, both women stayed and talked to me for quite some time and shared intimate details about their lives (but not about the rapes). The experiences made me think that it is possible that the women felt the discrimination at the Association which, at the time, was staffed only by Muslim women. Additionally, the women I interviewed had all been recruited by the Association and none of them had been raped by a non-Serb (though Tri did not know the ethnicity of those who raped her). Whether it was conscious or not, I often wonder if the rape as genocide or ethnic cleansing discourse was the primary way of understanding the rapes by the employees of the Association. It would help explain why all of the known perpetrators of the rape in the study were Serb men, why there was hesitation in recruiting more Serb women, and why the Serb women did not discuss ethnicity in their interviews with me.

The overarching goal of this research was to provide a space in research for women as multidimensional people: women who are shaped by multiple social identities (such as gender and ethnicity) and women who have varied outcomes of traumatic experiences. I believe that

semi-structured interviews and IPA allowed the space for women to do just that, because qualitative methods do not impose unnecessary barriers that are inherent in other methods such as structured surveys or structured interviews. Specifically, IPA's concern with the lived experiences of individuals shifts the focus directly on the individual. And, understanding that the results are an interpretation of an interpretation (i.e., I interpreted the women's interpretations of their experiences) makes it transparent that IPA is not about the "objective" experience and that a researcher affects the research process and the findings (Willig, 2008).

In one specific instance during the write-up of my results, I grappled with my interpretation of Osam's consequences as "unacknowledged" and calling them as such partially because it reinforces the trauma of rape discourse by suggesting that a woman who does not acknowledge post-rape effects is in denial. Additionally, I am engaging in the very behaviour that I supported Gavey and Schmidt's (2011) criticism of the trauma of rape discourse for: interpreting a woman's experience for her. My interpretation of Osam's consequences (e.g., making subtle connections between her victimization and the later drug and alcohol use) as "unacknowledged" is in line with Smith's (2004) description of IPA as having many interpretive levels as well as research showing that childhood sexual assault is a risk factor for substance abuse (Neumann, Houskamp, Pollock, & Briere, 1996; Putnam, 2003).

Particularly helpful was Smith's (2004) description of IPA as having many interpretive levels that are largely rooted in two hermeneutics: (a) hermeneutics of empathy and meaning recollection and (b) hermeneutics of questioning and critical engagement. Smith (2004) suggested that an empathic reading of the text comes first, but may be followed by a more critical interpretation that a participant may even be unlikely to acknowledge themselves. When I first noticed the subtle connections Osam made between the rape and drug and alcohol use, I was hesitant about calling it unacknowledged and engaging with that particular level of interpretation. I read articles on IPA and searched for any indication of other researchers engaging with their work in this way. I found a portion of one of Smith's (2004) articles to be directly relevant to my dilemma. In the article, he included an example of his own work and the "fine grained analysis" (p. 45) he had done at a high level of hermeneutics (Smith, 2004). The foundation of the interpretation was the participant's changes in the use of temporal referents and thus the focus on language and its seeming inconsistencies was similar to my interpretation of Osam's interview. Naming Osam's consequences as "unacknowledged" still makes me uneasy, but I do think it captures the results optimally at this point.

Another and important way (but not mutually exclusive with the above interpretation) I have come to understand Osam's text has been by conceptualizing it as wartime events playing an important role in her sense of identity. She told me that she had lasting consequences of war (e.g., will not return to the village where she had been imprisoned and raped) *and* she told me that she likes her post-war life (see "internal strengths" subtheme). That is, for Osam (and all of the other women who were interviewed), consequences of wartime events can co-exist with post-war strengths. And, for Osam, this may include striving to focus on the positivity of her life without giving credit to *all* of the ways that this traumatic event (i.e., the war) has affected her.

Keeping in mind that IPA is about the lived experience of an individual, it was difficult to write the results section of this dissertation. I was "led" by each woman's story, so that the final product of themes were not all direct answers to the research question. Additionally, the final results were approximately 250 pages long with each woman's transcript having been analyzed as a sort of case study. I was very reluctant through the whole process to produce overarching themes and to cross-analyze the results, because I was afraid that the nuance of the idiographic

accounts would be lost. The resistance to generating common themes does not seem to be an uncommon dilemma with IPA researchers (Wagstaff et al., 2014). None of these “issues” were really issues. They really get to the heart of IPA, and qualitative methodologies in general, that the questions you want answers to are not necessarily what the participants will give you. And that is alright, because it still helps us understand the lived experience of the person. However, I do have a dissertation to write (and pass) and, as such, I had to find solutions to these issues. Most importantly, I had to find ways to present the results without losing each woman’s story and identity as a person with a unique experience. Eventually, I did this by creating the “Herstories” section of the dissertation and showcasing the strengths through idiographic accounts while the remainder of the results were written as the cross-analysis I performed in addition to the traditional IPA analysis.



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