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BOSNIAN AMERICAN DIASPORA: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL
PERSPECTIVE**

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**EXPERIENCES OF CULTURAL DISCONNECTEDNESS AMONG
BOSNIAN AMERICAN DIASPORA:
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE**

By

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M.A., University of South Dakota, 2020
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A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Psychology

Clinical Psychology Program
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The members of the Committee appointed to examine the dissertation of Azra Osmančević, M.A. find it satisfactory and recommend that it be accepted.

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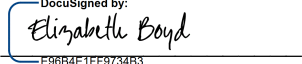
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ABSTRACT

Diaspora, including immigrants and refugees, undergo various experiences in their new host countries related to cultural identity formation. One of the factors related to cultural identity development within the United States is feeling caught in between two identities, resulting in never truly feeling “here or there” (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Experiences of cultural disconnectedness have been highlighted among the Bosnian American diaspora in numerous studies over the last two decades. Previous studies briefly described the challenges associated with diaspora balancing their native Bosnian cultures and host American cultures. The current study focused on the gap in the literature by gaining a deeper understanding of the universal experience of cultural disconnectedness among Bosnian American diaspora and the subsequent impacts of these experiences on their psychological well-being using a phenomenological perspective. The findings revealed that experiences of cultural disconnectedness among seven Bosnian American participants were comprised of nine major themes. Regarding psychological well-being, a wide range of emotions and behaviors related to experiences of cultural disconnectedness were reported, such as sadness, anger, frustration, defensiveness, pride, avoidance, hiding their Bosnian culture, and desires for cultural connectedness, underscoring how the balancing of two cultures can look different and have varying consequences. Results provided a novel contribution to the literature and gave a voice to Bosnian American diaspora, describing their lived experiences and providing helpful insights and experiences that need to be considered in future research.

Dissertation Advisor 
Elizabeth Boyd, Ph.D.

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A dissertation is a massive undertaking; and when your dissertation happens to be about one of your own lived experiences, it changes from just a project that gets you your doctoral degree, to a form of self-exploration and growth. Over the last few years, I have learned a lot about who I am as a cultural being, and this project has been a large part of that. First, I would like to thank my advisor and research mentor, Dr. Beth Boyd. Your support has kept me grounded for the last five years, and without you, I would have been lost. You have taught me that the difficult challenges that life brings us can be learning experiences. I will never forget your Lakota buffalo metaphor; it really helped me get through the last difficult push of completing this project and my pre-doctoral internship. You are more than a mentor to me; you are like my family. Next, I would like to express appreciation to the Bosnian American diasporic community. My community's endless support and willingness to help each other grow is so admirable. I saw this willingness and compassion in each of my participants, and it was an honor to hear your stories. Thank you for trusting me enough to put your lived experiences into words. I am so proud to be a part of the Bosnian American diasporic community. Lastly, I would like to express my deepest love to my parents. You escaped the horrors of war and created this amazing life for my sister and myself, all while believing in our big dreams. I am forever grateful for you both. *Volim vas.*

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Introduction

Refugees undergo a wide range of experiences during their pre-flight, flight, exile, and resettlement periods in new host countries that they now call “home.” The current study examined experiences of cultural disconnectedness associated with never truly feeling “enough” for either Bosnian or American culture among the Bosnian American diaspora in the United States using a phenomenological perspective. Experiences of cultural disconnectedness have been described as feeling in the margins of two cultures or being caught in between two identities, resulting in never truly feeling “here or there” (Clark, 2007; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Diaspora is defined as a type of consciousnesses (Clifford, 1994; Gilroy, 1993), an experience (Hall, 1990), a context (Axel, 2004), or an interpretative frame (Brah, 1996) composed of individuals who are outside the homeland due to dispersal or immigration and includes six core attributes: transnationalism, community, dispersal, and immigration, outside the homeland, homeland orientation, and group identity (Grossman, 2019). Overall, the term “diaspora” may be used to refer to both the experience of migration to a new country and the people who, themselves, have experienced it in the new host countries.

Transnationalism can be referred to as immigrants and their descendants who maintain connections with and are socially embedded in both their sending (i.e., native) and receiving (i.e., host) countries, as well as with members of their national or religious group dispersed elsewhere (Grossman, 2019). As a result, transnationalism can be understood as diasporic individuals who not only maintain ties with their homeland, but also remain involved and invested in their host country’s politics, economy, society, and culture, creating symbolic and material bonds with their host society and possibly with group members in other locations (Grossman, 2019).

Community, including “bounded” and “imagined” community, denotes both a social/organizational formation and a feeling of cohesion and can include belonging to a group, having a personal stake in the community, understanding and maintain its boundaries, perceiving membership as rewarding, being able to influence the collective, and sharing an emotional connection with other members (Grossman, 2019; McMillan & Chavis, 1986). A broader “imagined” sense of community can be used to discuss an entire diasporic population (i.e., the Bosnian diaspora), while the “bounded” definition may point at a specific segment of this population (i.e., the Bosnian diaspora of the United States or Bosnian American diaspora; Grossman, 2019).

The core attribute of “dispersal and immigration” can be understood as groups that have been forcibly displaced from their native land or have left because of a traumatic event (Grossman, 2019). This also includes groups that have engaged in any movement across state borders, including voluntary migration (Brubaker, 2005; Cohen, 2008; Grossman, 2019). For a group to be considered a diaspora, they must also live “outside the homeland” that they collectively regard and remember as their homeland, which is understood as the “hallmark of diasporan identity” that differentiates between diasporas and other ethnic communities or nomads (Butler, 2001). These connections can be maintained through various activities (Grossman, 2019), such as tourism; participation in the homeland or subnational politics; political mobilization for or against homeland policies; economic, financial, and commercial exchanges (e.g., buying a property in the homeland); and cultural and religious exchanges (e.g., displaying cultural or religious objects and artifacts from the homeland).

Lastly, the core attribute of group identity refers to a particular notion through which individuals or groups define themselves and are defined by others, particularly through specific sets of characteristics expressed in certain ways (Grossman, 2019). As a result of this, both individuals and groups may endorse and display certain characteristics to emphasize who they are and distinguish themselves from others (Story & Walker, 2016). These group identities may be based on common cultural, religious, or linguistic traits (Brah, 1996). They may also be based on a shared history of displacement, nostalgia to the homeland, a real or symbolic return to the homeland, contacts with the homeland, and participation in diaspora organizations (Butler, 2001; Clifford, 1994; Ghorashi, 2004; Safran, 1991). Discrimination and marginalization, which may be a result of racism, by the host society are additional experiences that compose a group identity (Callahan, 2003; Creese, 2018).

The diasporic identity is complex and interesting in that it has been described as a symbolic differentiation from the sometimes “oppressive” ethnic minority label (Ang, 2003; Clifford, 1997). It has also been stated that the diasporic identity can impart a sense of belongingness among people with historical roots and backgrounds outside of the time/space of their host nation (Ang, 2003; Clifford, 1997). For example, Ang (2003) described the liberating feelings associated with the diasporic identity within the transnational Chinese diasporic community by explaining how a minority Chinese individual can rise above the national environment, in which they may have previously felt socially and culturally excluded, by belonging to a respectable imagined community (i.e., a diasporic community). As a result, this community becomes something that instills pride in one’s identity precisely because it is so much larger and more encompassing than any geographically and territorially bounded nation

(Ang, 2003). This example underscores the benefits associated with a diasporic identity, especially among groups that may have experienced difficulties with marginalization or feelings of belongingness in their new host countries.

This sense of transnational belonging and connection among individuals from similar ancestral roots through a unified diasporic identity is not only powerful but has also been described as a “double-edged sword” (Ang, 2003). On one hand, the diasporic identity can result in experiences of both support and oppression, freedom and confinement, and solidarity and division (Ang, 2003). These stark differences can often result in diaspora feeling criticized for “not being enough” for their particular cultural group or being “too Westernized/Americanized” as people who do not know their “roots” (Ang, 2003). The “double-edgedness” of the diasporic identity has been highlighted among the Bosnian diasporic community in several studies as well (Bransteter, 2017; Clark, 2007; Dorner, 2017; Lucken, 2010; Moseelson, 2006; Sadikovic, 2017; Weine et al, 2006). The complexities associated with this identity can, thus, be both exclusionary as much as it is inclusionary for individuals who identify as Bosnian diaspora and can often result in broad issues with identity and belonging, such as feelings of both support and oppression, freedom and confinement, and solidarity and division as described above.

Studies have revealed experiences of cultural disconnectedness among both refugee and immigrant groups, including the Bosnian diasporic population (Bransteter, 2017; Clark, 2007; Dorner, 2017; Lucken, 2010; Moseelson, 2006; Sadikovic, 2017; Weine et al, 2006) due to various factors, such as lack of native language competency or lack of connectedness to the native community or religion. The experience of cultural disconnectedness has been described as feeling in the margins of two cultures or being caught in between two identities, resulting in

never truly feeling “here or there” (Clark, 2007; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). These feelings are associated with ethnic and cultural identity development, differing levels of acculturation, and important cultural factors within immigrant and refugee populations (Bransteter, 2017; Clark, 2007; Dorner, 2017; Lucken, 2010). The unique experiences of Bosnian refugees following their resettlement in their new host countries after escaping the horrors of war in the mid and late 1990s have been documented in the literature as well (Brunner & Johnson, 2018; Lucken, 2010). A handful of studies have highlighted the experiences of cultural disconnectedness among Bosnian Americans; however, no known study has taken an extensive look at this phenomenon and its impact on well-being for this cultural group. More specifically, no known study has explored what experiences of cultural disconnectedness are like for this population, and how Bosnian American diaspora particularly experience cultural disconnectedness.

This study addresses these gaps by particularly examining the phenomenon of experiences of cultural disconnectedness associated with different cultural factors and cultural and ethnic identity development among the children of Bosnian refugees, a group that has also had their own unique experiences growing up in the United States. These experiences include, but are not limited to, serving as cultural brokers for their refugee parents, balancing both their Bosnian and American cultures, and achieving their own or their family’s “American Dream” through various achievements (Clark, 2007; Gibson, 2002; Sadikovic, 2017). The cultural identity development of Bosnian American youth has been described as complex (Clark, 2007) and differs from their refugee parents due to these important aforementioned factors. It has also been found to be impacted by feelings of disconnectedness or lack of belongingness to particular

cultures (Bransteter, 2017; Clark, 2007; Dorner, 2017; Lucken, 2010; Sadikovic, 2017; Weine et al, 2006). This has been described by Bosnian American diasporic youth as feeling “too Bosnian for Americans and too American for Bosnians” (Osmančević, 2020). Bosnian American diasporic youth have also reported worries regarding the psychological impacts of this feeling of disconnectedness, including a “significant sense of not belonging” or feeling as if they are “put in a box” by either their American or Bosnian peer counterparts (Osmančević, 2020). As a result, taking an extensive look at this feeling of disconnectedness and its impacts among the Bosnian American diaspora is important. This study will provide a deeper understanding of the universal experience of cultural disconnectedness among Bosnian American children of immigrants/refugees from the war in Bosnia and the subsequent impacts on their psychological well-being using a phenomenological perspective.

The following literature review will first present the history of Bosnia and Herzegovina, particularly including the history associated with Yugoslavia, the Bosnian War, and the resettlement of Bosnian refugees in the United States. Second, it will highlight the documented experiences of Bosnian American diaspora in the United States, including the meaning of the label “diaspora” and how this has impacted Bosnian Americans. It will also describe ethnic and cultural identity development among Bosnian Americans and important cultural factors that impact this development, including education, language, religion, community, work ethic, intergenerational trauma, race, age, and adopting the American identity. Further, it will review the literature regarding the prevalence and effects of experiences of cultural disconnectedness among the Bosnian American diaspora and how this population manages feelings associated with these experiences. It will also compare these same factors associated with the feeling of

disconnectedness among Bosnian Americans with broad research findings from other cultural refugee and immigrant groups. This review will conclude with an overview of the current study.

Literature Review

History: Yugoslavia, The Bosnian War, and Resettlement

The history of Bosnia and Herzegovina traces back to the mid-1400s, including being a part of the Ottoman Empire until the first quarter of the 20th century (Lucken, 2010), and then part of Yugoslavia beginning in 1918, shortly after World War I (Brunner & Johnson, 2018). Yugoslavia consisted of six republics, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Croatia, Macedonia, Slovenia, and Montenegro, as well as two provinces, Kosovo and Vojvodina (Brunner & Johnson, 2018; **See map of the Former Yugoslavia on the following page,** Wikimedia Commons, 2020). In 1945, Yugoslavia was a communist country led by Josip Broz, better known as “Tito.” During Tito’s authoritarian leadership, ethnic differences in Yugoslavia were suppressed and distinct ethnic identification was discouraged to cultivate national identities within a communist ideology and federalist political system (Godina, 1998; Lucken, 2010; Sekulic et al., 1994; Vujačić & Gagnon, 2007).



Despite efforts to produce a government that valued socialism, Yugoslavia experienced much social conflict (Osmančević, 2020), including strikes and protests from workers and students, coupled with crippling economic debt (Robertson, 2017). In addition to this, republics such as Serbia and Croatia began to break away from Yugoslavian political parties and launched nationalist campaigns that were determined to fuel distrust and separatism between the nations (Allcock, 2019). This ultimately resulted in the downfall of the Republic of Yugoslavia, the separation and autonomy of its various republics, and conflicts between ethnic groups within the region. This resulted in a civil war within numerous areas of Yugoslavia between the years of 1991 and 1995, with armed conflict beginning in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1992 (Pullis, 1998).

Between 1991 and 1995, individuals from numerous backgrounds suffered the consequences of war. Bosnian Muslims (i.e., Bosniaks) were targeted by Serbians who were determined to create a dominant Serbian state called “Greater Serbia” through ethnic cleansing (Craig et al., 2008; Miller et al., 2002). Bosniaks were exposed to various forms of violence and

traumatic stress, including physical and psychological torture, mass rape, disappearances of loved ones, inhumane imprisonment in concentration camps, and much more (Becker et al., 1999; Mooren & Kleber, 2001). In November of 1995, the Dayton Peace Accord was signed, officially ending the war between Bosnia, Serbia, and Croatia (Spasojevic et al., 2000). In all, nearly 250,000 people, including 17,000 children, were estimated to have been killed, nearly three million people internally displaced, and another 1.3 million sought asylum, predominantly in Western Europe (Becker et al., 1999; Komolova et al., 2018; Mollica et al., 1999; Pullis, 1998).

The survivors who stayed in Bosnia and Herzegovina took on new challenges following the war, while other survivors of the war were scattered all over the world. They were forced to adapt to unfamiliar societies and cultures of new countries, such as neighboring European countries, Australia, the United States, and numerous other countries. Some Bosnian refugees were offered “temporary protection status,” which enabled them to find safe havens in countries such as Germany until these countries eventually tried to repatriate them back to Bosnia and Herzegovina (Komolova et al., 2018). Repatriation of refugees was met with considerable public resistance, and some Bosnian refugees remained in Germany while some were relocated to Australia, Canada, and the United States (Komolova et al., 2018). Between 1992 and 2007, more than 130,000 Bosnian refugees resettled in the United States (Smajkic et al., 2001; Clemetson, 2007). Bosnian refugees experienced unique stressors throughout their pre-flight, flight, exile, and resettlement/repatriation periods that impacted their overall psychological, emotional, and social well-being (Porter & Haslam, 2005; Howell et al., 2015).

In summary, the Bosnian War (1992-1995) was among one of the bloodiest conflicts in European history since World War II, consisting of ethnic cleansing, genocidal campaigns, prolonged sieges, massive destruction of the country's infrastructure, and numerous other traumatic events (European Commission, 2012). This war left a long-standing mark on the Bosnian people and their descendants, primarily various forms of psychological impacts among both adults and children (i.e., psychological distress, depression, anxiety, acculturative stress, posttraumatic stress, etc.). For a more complete review of the history of Bosnia and Herzegovina and psychological distress among Bosnian refugees, see Osmančević (2020).

Bosnian Diaspora in America

An estimated 500,000 Bosnian American diaspora of full or partial (i.e., individuals coming from inter-ethnic marriages) Bosnian descent live in the United States today (Bosnian Americans, 2020). The word "identity" in the Bosnian language is *identitet*, while the term *istovjetnost* can also mean identity, community, oneness, sameness, and commonality. To understand this group's diasporic identity, it is important to understand the meaning of the Bosnian identity over time. Being a "Bosnian" has carried radically different meanings at different times in history, including under Ottoman rule, during the Tito era, after the rise of the sovereign state of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and among Bosnians who were forced to flee the country following the Bosnian War (Lucken, 2010). The term "Bosnian" was originally used to define a geographical region within the Balkans and held little sociohistorical significance; however, over time, this term has developed multilayered religious and political connotations in the aftermath of the war (Lucken, 2010). Today, the term "Bosnian" not only designates ethnicity, but also a collective cultural identity that is associated with numerous factors identified

within the literature, including language, religion, education, community, intergenerational trauma, race, and age.

Rebuilding a single, post-war national identity, culture, and language has been a challenging and difficult endeavor for Bosnians living in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Lucken, 2010); and the Bosnian diaspora attempt to continue this as they weave together a new image of their home territory while living so far from home. In the quest of understanding this identity, the post-war sovereign Bosnia has struggled with determining which values and cultural components are essential to Bosnian identity (Lucken, 2010). Lucken (2010) describes the difficulties associated with defining what it means to be Bosnian among Bosnian diaspora in an ethnographic study that focused on Bosnian identity maintenance in a post-migration setting within the eastern United States. Identity categories determined by participants varied and reflected class, regional, national, and religious affiliations (Lucken, 2010).

The Bosnian identity is so heavily layered in historical narrative, and bound by community and group experiences, that being Bosnian has meant many things to this diverse group of individuals. Lucken (2010) further unveiled that the younger generation of Bosnian youth in America viewed their home nation differently from their refugee parents and generally idealized Bosnia as the “home of their kinfolk and the land of their ancestors,” with an overall completely different understanding of Bosnia compared to older generations. Bosnian American teens reflected high levels of Bosnian pride online, with descriptions from Bosnian refugee adults regarding Bosnian diasporic youth such as (Lucken, 2010):

You know teenage Bosnians have a whole different level of understanding about Bosnia. A lot of them were born in Germany. Some of them were born here. But they still have a very strong attraction to Bosnia. One example is my brother's friend who is 14. He is so

in love with Bosnia. Everywhere in his room are flags of Bosnia. He's actually one of the dancers in the Bosnian Community Center for Resource Development (BCCRD) (p. 181).

In addition to this, this same participant described how these teens view Bosnia when they have such little experience there:

I think people have now transferred the way they felt about the old Yugoslavia to Bosnia, and they idealize Bosnia because they think it's the perfect country. But for my parents, if they were to go back, I don't think they would feel the way they feel about Bosnia now. Because it's not the old Yugoslavia (p. 181).

This participant account from Lucken (2010) highlights the generational differences in adjustment and attachment to ethnicity and home country among Bosnian American diaspora. To further understand these differences for younger Bosnian American diaspora, compared to their older counterparts, it is important to understand ethnic and cultural identity development broadly within this group.

Ethnic and Cultural Identity among Bosnian American Diaspora

Ethnic identity is the extent to which a person retains the attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors of their ethnic group as their own (Keel & Drew, 2004). Ethnic identity has also been referred to as the different perceptual and cognitive processes that connect an individual to others of the same ethnic group, and to the affective or attitudinal processes that join one to another (Aboud & Doyle, 1993). These processes have also been deemed to be ongoing and under constant redefining by different groups (Drzewiecka, 2001). On the other hand, the term ethnicity is a phenomenon based on common objective criteria; for instance, an ethnic group is defined as a group united based on common biology, linguistics, culture, or religion (Liebkind, 1992). Although ethnic identity and ethnicity are often used interchangeably, ethnic identity is

believed to be a more fluid and multifaceted construct relative to ethnicity (Keel & Drew, 2004). Within the Bosnian culture, ethnicity is highly significant, due to the salience of ethnicity in the political rhetoric surrounding the breakup of Yugoslavia and the atrocities that occurred during the Bosnian War (Clark, 2007). During immigration, ethnogenesis, better known as a collective identity shift, has been recognized as a critical feature of immigration and is seen as essential to the integration process (Clark, 2017). However, the formation of a primarily “American” ethnicity after arrival to the United States may not be consistent with the significance and history of ethnicity as described by Bosnian Muslim refugees due to Bosnians’ strong connections to their Bosnian ethnic identity before resettlement (Clark, 2007).

Ethnicity is significant for the process of identity construction for Bosnians in Bosnia as well as Bosnians in the diaspora (Clark, 2007). Leaving Bosnia and moving to the United States has increased the importance of ethnic identity among many Bosnians (Clark, 2007). A narrative qualitative study by Clark (2007) also focused on the role of schooling in the cultural identity development of adolescent/young adult female college students from Bosnian Muslim communities who entered the United States as refugees. One participant in the study described the increased importance of ethnic identity among Bosnians:

I would say the Bosnians...they have to differentiate themselves. Like, they have been discriminated against, so now they’re gonna reevaluate their identity. Now they’re really Bosnian, and they really are proud of that heritage. You know? ‘Cause [immigrating] makes you reevaluate who you are. ‘Cause when you’re safe in your own surroundings, like, it doesn’t really matter. Everyday kind of passes by, and you’re just feeling the same thing you’ve been feeling since you were born. And now here, you’re kind of isolated, and you want to get to know really who you are, I think (p. 168).

In addition to this, ethnic identity takes on a heightened significance for the Bosnian American diaspora when it relates to honoring the dead and remembering the atrocities committed by another ethnic group (Clark, 2007).

Cultural identity is an additional important factor to consider for the Bosnian American diaspora. Cultural identity is multidimensional in the sense that it includes groups of individuals in terms of cultural or subcultural categories, such as ethnicity, nationality, language, religion, and gender (Ibrahim & Heuer, 2013). Further, cultural identity can also be understood as the relationship between individuals and members of a group who share a common history and language and similar ways of understanding the world (Norton, 1997). Therefore, to understand and describe the facets of identity that may be significant to immigrants and refugees, particularly the Bosnian American diaspora, both cultural identity and ethnicity are important to consider.

Ethnic identity and cultural identity are equally important and salient for refugee and immigrant groups. Ethnic identity becomes an important factor in refugee life, particularly for refugees from what was once Yugoslavia; strong ethnic identity constructions were formed in the dynamic interplay between different social and political contexts of everyday life before, and during, the Bosnian War (Eastmond, 1998). An essential aspect of the acculturation process is a questioning of one's cultural identity and the determination about whether to maintain identification with one's culture (Keel & Drew, 2004). Immigrants and refugees arrive in new countries with differing attitudes about retaining their culture of origin and becoming part of the new society (Phinney et al., 2001). Dealing with these different cultural contexts can be difficult for these groups and it has been argued that refugees and immigrants manage to acquire and

maintain different identities that can coexist and function without conflict in different contexts simultaneously (Trueba, 2004). Experimenting with these different identities has been described as a natural part of the adjustment process within a new culture, and these resulting multiple identities can be viewed as powerful instruments that facilitate adaptation to new multiethnic and multicultural environments, roles, and circumstances (Clark, 2007; Treuba, 2004; Zou, 2000).

Despite the benefits associated with gaining multiple identities following immigration to new host countries, research has also highlighted the troubling effects of immigrants' and refugees' construction of multiple ethnic and cultural identities (Clark, 2007). The primary issue occurs when one identity is associated with beliefs that inherently devalue another identity and the individual may feel pressure to adopt an oppositional stance toward one of the identities (Clark, 2007), resulting in difficulties with not only conflicting identities but overall adjustment and identity formation. Understanding the benefits and consequences associated with ethnic and cultural identity development for refugees and immigrants thus involves important stages, including assimilation, readjustment, adaptation, acculturation, accommodation, resistance, and rejection (Clark, 2007).

To understand these important factors, models of acculturation and identity formation are helpful resources to consider. Berry and Sam's (1997) Fourfold Model of Acculturation has been used to increase the understanding of cultural identity construction among refugees and immigrants. There are four common scenarios outlined in this model, including assimilation, separation, marginalization, and biculturalism (Berry & Sam, 1997). Thus, instead of focusing on economic structures or immigrant-group-level processes, as in a segmented assimilation theory, Berry and Sam (1997) look at individual responses to moving to a new culture. To do so, they

have identified four scenarios that commonly arise in the case of moving to or introducing a second culture to measure acculturative stress, including assimilation, separation, marginalization, biculturalism (Berry & Sam, 1997). In assimilation, the original culture is lost in favor of the new culture if the individual associates primarily with members of the new culture and devalues the original culture. Conversely, separation can also occur if the individual clings to the original and rejects the new culture by only socializing with members of the original cultural group. Marginalization can occur when cultural identity construction and cultural competence are not fully achieved in either culture. Lastly, biculturalism occurs when the integration of two cultures occurs, resulting in the individual constructing a bicultural identity that allows them to function well in either cultural world. This scenario involves the individual possessing the power to move between cultures regularly and comfortably according to the various social situations (Berry & Sam, 1997; Clark, 2007).

Bicultural identity formation consists of developing a cultural identity while moving across two separate cultural worlds. Research has shown that individuals can have a sense of belonging in two cultures without compromising their sense of cultural identity (LaFromboise et al., 1993). The achievement of a bicultural identity is also known as “acculturation,” “additive assimilation,” “transculturalism,” or “cultural integration” (McBrien, 2005). Biculturalism can also come with stressors and conflicts associated with moving across cultures, including processing conflicting cultural demands and expectations (Benet-Martinez et al, 2002). Concerning refugee and immigrant bicultural identities, having a strong identity connected to a culture, even if it is to the home culture, can help individuals from these populations become bicultural (Clark, 2007). This may occur because the feeling of belonging to a culture and a peer

group can help individuals feel psychologically grounded and willing to explore a second culture as well (LaFromboise et al., 1993). Several studies have analyzed the bicultural experiences among various immigrant groups (Bransteter, 2017; Clark, 2007; Dorner, 2017; Lucken, 2010; Sadikovic, 2017; Weine et al., 2006) and have identified elements that groups hold to foster the maintenance of a bicultural identity, including a sense of a “fluid identity” and “multidimensionality and malleability of self” among Japanese immigrants (Yeh et al., 2003) and the use of narrative life histories among Native American groups for bicultural identity construction (Garret, 1996). Bicultural identity development is thus complex, yet beneficial for both refugees and immigrants.

The behaviors associated with negotiating a bicultural identity have been called the “cultural frame switching effect” (Hong et al., 2000, pp. 709-711). According to this theory, individuals switch their cultural rules when they are faced with a culturally significant stimulus, such as a conversation with a peer in the language of one culture or exposure to a social situation of another culture (Clark, 2007). As a result, some researchers have even proposed that bilingual individuals have “two personalities” that can be switched on and off depending on the language that they are using or the culture they are immersed in (Ramirez-Esparza et al., 2004). This has been described as having “compatible” bicultural identities. On the other hand, some individuals may describe their bicultural identities as “oppositional” because they tend to react to being in one cultural situation by comparing it with their other cultural identity (Benet-Martinez et al., 2002). Some individuals may also experience oppositional cultural identities that are not integrated while still identifying with both cultures. As a result, they may experience having a high awareness of the discrepancies between each culture and see the discrepancies as a source

of internal conflict (Benet-Martinez et al., 2002; Clark, 2007). This internal conflict may, thus, cause a separation of the two parts of their identities and results in functioning as one or the other, but not both at the same time (Benet-Martinez et al., 2002; Clark, 2007).

Following arrival to their new host country, both refugees and immigrants experience a process of adjustment that is also associated with a changing sense of identity. These individuals may feel a threatened loss of culture, language, and other elements that are central to one's sense of self and identity (Trueba, 2004). This type of loss has been compared to grief in many ways among immigrants and refugees (Clark, 2007). As a result, some individuals may undergo the process of "identity enhancement" or "identity negation" depending on their desire to associate with or dissociate from an identity they have been given (Deaux & Ethier, 1998). The cultural adjustment can thus be either harmful or helpful depending on varying contexts and factors for refugee and immigrant groups.

Refugee and immigrant families also experience shifts in roles during resettlement, known as parentification (i.e., role reversal), which also may contribute to the feelings of identity loss. This is evident within the Bosnian diasporic community with Bosnian youth often taking the responsibility of translating for their parents and communicating with essential parts of outside society, for example with utility companies (Chambon, 1989; Foner, 1997; Klein-Parker, 1988; Schapiro, 1987), and underscores the developmental differences related to acculturation within the Bosnian diasporic community. For example, children of Bosnian refugees are often thrust into the role of serving as interpreters and negotiators of cultural norms for their parents, and with this, issues associated with respect for authority arose (Snyder et al., 2005). Intergenerational tension is another issue that refugee and immigrant youth often feel throughout

their lives, and Bosnian refugee youth experienced and continue to experience the pull of two vastly different worlds: those of their American peers and that of their parents (Mayadas & Segal, 2000). Overall, the strong capacity for the English language acquired by Bosnian youth following immigration to the United States represented progress in their stages of acculturation; however, it also revealed the presence of additional pressure to continuously help smooth their parents' acculturation (Gibson, 2002). In addition to this pressure, taking on the role of a cultural broker for the family can result in the reversal of power roles within the family, which can cause broader issues of gender and generational roles and relations among refugee groups (Clark, 2007).

Refugee and immigrant families experience additional stressors that are associated with resettlement, acculturation, and identity, particularly including parents feeling more tied to their home culture and language than their children do (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). These family concerns regarding youth losing their parents' cultural heritage, identity, and values often extend to worries about the influence of American culture on youth (Clark, 2007). Bosnian refugee parents have expressed the feeling that they need to protect their children so that they do not become "overtaken by American ways" so rapidly (Weine et al., 2006). Bosnian family members, especially parents, have also reported being disturbed by American social life, with its "openness, individualism, and lack of discipline and restraint," and often report that their children are getting "Americanized fast." (Weine et al., 2006). As a result of this, parents worry that their children are at considerable risk for negative outcomes (Weine et al., 2006), while Bosnian youth subsequently report often feeling as if they are alone, with zero guidance in balancing the two cultures (Snyder et al., 2005). This evidence continues to underscore the

developmental and generational differences in acculturation and its effects among Bosnian American diaspora.

Cultural Connectedness among Bosnian American Diaspora

To understand how the Bosnian American diaspora balance their two cultures, it is critical to identify and review important Bosnian cultural factors that are salient in the formation of both ethnic and cultural identity. Four core cultural and family beliefs have been identified in the literature for Bosnian youth and Bosnian refugee families: obliging family, keeping tradition, working hard, and living through children (Weine et al., 2006). Other important cultural factors associated with Bosnian youth and Bosnian refugee families include traditions, such as knowing the Bosnian language, being involved with the Muslim religion, and the ritual of drinking coffee together; along with family togetherness, reminiscing on and retelling war stories and memories, and economic opportunities (Weine et al., 2006). The importance of education, community, intergenerational experiences tied to the Bosnian War and refugee life, and race are additional essential cultural factors (Clark, 2007; Dorner, 2017; Lucken, 2010). Among the various cultural values, it has been found that family loyalty and cultural and familial pride are some of the most important values that continuously influence the Bosnian diaspora throughout their lives (Colic-Peisker & Walker, 2003; Gibson, 2002).

Obliging Family

Obliging family is considered by parents to be the most important obligation; parents and youth have claimed, “Family should be together,” and “Youth should have respect for elders” (Weine et al., 2006). To fulfill this obligation, youth are expected to spend time and share experiences with family, stay involved with extended family and respect the values, lifestyles,

and opinions of the older generations (Weine et al., 2006). Living through children has also been found to be a core cultural and family belief among Bosnian families. This belief stems from the emphasis that Bosnian parents place on as the reasons why they came to America (Weine et al., 2006). Bosnian parents often proclaim that they immigrated to the United States for their children and that their lives were completely dedicated to their children (Weine et al., 2006), underscoring the high level of connectedness within Bosnian families.

Furthermore, Bosnian parents often report that they realize their generation will never reclaim what they have lost (i.e., career, education, etc.) but feel as if their children have an open future in a new country, with possibilities for peace, happiness, education, and a career that Bosnian parents believe could not have been achieved in their home country due to genocide and war (Weine et al., 2006). This has resulted in Bosnian youth reporting that they view themselves as responsible for their family's future (Weine et al., 2006). The family has been found to furnish a sense of belonging and the basis of a positive self-identity for both refugees and immigrants (Haines, 1996). All these important cultural beliefs have thus played a role in the formation of ethnic identity, and it is believed that these beliefs continue to shape ethnic identity within this population.

Keeping Tradition

The core cultural belief of keeping tradition includes language, daily rituals, religious beliefs, and the structure and values of families (Weine et al., 2006). Concerning language acquisition, Bosnian parents have stated, "Kids should learn our language," "Kids should keep our tradition," and "Kids should maintain our dignity" (Weine et al., 2006). Language allows individuals to negotiate their sense of self or identity by using language in different social

contexts (Clark, 2007). Further, language has been described as the medium through which all culture is learned and transmitted (Zentella, 2002). It also serves as an identifier of cultural and ethnic identity, which underscores the concerns of many refugee and immigrant families regarding the loss of the native language among their children (Clark, 2007). Language plays an important role within the Bosnian American community, and language barriers present a major challenge to cultural connectedness within the community. Also, the children of Bosnian refugees often serve as translators for their parents, and the ethnic community is the main source of support for people who do not speak much English (Colic-Peisker & Walker, 2003).

Bicultural identity formation is highly dependent on the competency of language (LaFromboise et al., 1993). If an immigrant or refugee does not feel comfortable socializing in languages from both cultures, they subsequently become naturally limited in the depths of constructive social relationships that they can build that are essential for bicultural identity development. As a result, language becomes the means by which individuals are allowed or denied access to social relations within cultures, particularly among refugees and immigrants. A person's sense of identity can be threatened when their language is threatened due to either hostility from mainstream society or potential language loss (Clark, 2007). Among the Bosnian American diaspora, linguistic competence in both Bosnian and English allows for flexibility and freedom in constructing cultural identities that incorporate an individual's experiences in both Bosnian and American social contexts (Clark, 2007). Bosnian American diaspora that display linguistic insecurity have reported adverse effects on not only social integration with Bosnian peers but the construction of a bicultural identity as well (Clark, 2007). Levels of language acquisition, particularly of the Bosnian language, can thus result in experiences of either cultural

connectedness or disconnectedness among the Bosnian American diaspora. This interconnectedness between the important cultural factors of language and cultural identity development are thus important considerations for the Bosnian American diaspora.

Working Hard

Bosnian families also express the importance of the cultural belief of working hard. It is believed that parents and youth must work hard to earn money to build a better life in America (Weine et al., 2006). Pursuing economic opportunities through hard work was found to be a top priority for Bosnian families, and parents also expected youth to apply this same work ethic to their schoolwork (Weine et al., 2006). In addition, Lucken (2010) described high levels of industriousness and resiliency among the Bosnian American diaspora following migration to the United States. Bosnian diaspora reported willingness to work two or three jobs to excel in the United States, to ensure that their families are comfortable, and to build a life in America. In addition to this, homeownership is a core value associated with working hard among Bosnians (Colic-Peisker & Walker, 2003; Lucken, 2010). Homes played a central role in the Bosnian community life before the war and represented a symbol of stability after the population faced forced migration (Colic-Peisker & Walker, 2003). Bosnian American diaspora is often found to be willing to work multiple jobs to purchase homes and pay mortgages (Lucken, 2010).

Living Through Children & Education

Bosnian refugee parents have also expressed that their greatest hopes for their children are to finish school, have normal growth and development, and have a good future (Geltman et al., 2000). Education is an intrinsic value among the Bosnian diaspora (Lucken, 2010). Other previous studies have also described how education has been used to reclaim cultural pride

(Sadikovic, 2017). Sadikovic (2017) examined the impact of a college education on Bosnian refugee women who resettled in the United States and found that parents encouraged their daughters to pursue higher education and provided moral support and financial assistance, despite parents' lack of knowledge regarding the American educational system (Sadikovic, 2017). It was stated that parents encouraged their daughters to pursue higher education primarily because they realized, early on, that education is a gateway toward social and financial mobility within their new host society (Sadikovic, 2017). In addition, education fostered a sense of bicultural identity among the Bosnian American diaspora, which helped all the women in the study navigate from their native Bosnian culture to their new host culture and engage in both communities. These women pointed out that being connected to both cultures and communities was “essential” to their existence (Sadikovic, 2017).

Another study described the parental pride associated with the smooth adjustment processes of Bosnian youth to their post-migration environments (Lucken, 2010). Bosnian parents not only feel a sense of pride but also report viewing the success of their children as a key aspect of their happiness in this country after several years of dislocation and resettlements (Lucken, 2010).

Intergenerational Experiences tied to the Bosnian War and Refugee Life

Intergenerational experiences tied to the Bosnian War and refugee life are other fundamental cultural aspects within the Bosnian culture. Reminiscing on and retelling war stories and memories are important for the Bosnian American diaspora families regarding cultural identity construction (Weine et al., 2006). Also, experiences with refugee status and immigration to the United States are important cultural factors to consider. In a study that focused on the

identity construction of Bosnian adolescent female refugees in the United States, an important part of their identity construction was their refugee experience, which included escaping a war-torn country, living without citizenship, and knowing one's family may never return to their hometown (Mosselson, 2006). Based on these findings, it was concluded that cultural identities are contextual and that identities and cultures (i.e., contexts) also change over time (Dorner, 2017).

Race

Race is a cultural factor that has also been considered important for the Bosnian American diaspora cultural identity development in the United States. A narrative qualitative study by Clark (2007) focused on the role of schooling in the cultural identity development of adolescent/young adult female college students from Bosnian Muslim communities who entered the United States as refugees and found that race played an important role in cultural identity development. All the students were aware of the pervasiveness of White privilege and the degree to which their adjustment was easier than that of other refugee and immigrant peers because of their race (Clark, 2007). A 2017 qualitative study by Dorner and colleagues that examined the racial, linguistic, religious, and migration experiences of Bosnian youth in St. Louis revealed that despite often being marginalized as Bosnian/Muslim, Bosnian diasporic students also have noted that they recognize their privilege to “pass as White Americans” (Dorner et al., 2017). One participant in this study considered herself as an “international person,” but was also aware of the pervasiveness of her White privilege, particularly due to the racialization of immigrants within the U.S. (Dorner et al., 2017). She described how most U.S. born individuals did not view her as “international”:

Actually, I don't think [many people] realize that immigrants come in all different shapes, sizes, colors. It's not just the African guy or the Mexican guy or the Indian guy. Looking at both myself and 'em, I don't think you would think that we're immigrants until you hear our names or hear our accents. The way we look, appearance wise, you would never think "oh she lived in Bosnia or she lived in Germany," because a lot of us don't have accents (p. 26).

This individual's description underscores the fact that Bosnian Muslims are recognized as White, by White Americans due to their skin color and European facial features, which inherently gives this group privileges in the United States that play a role within their cultural identity development.

Religion

Being involved with the Muslim religion is another critical cultural factor related to cultural identity development among the Bosnian American diaspora (Weine et al., 2006). Cultural and ethnic identity and religious identity are inevitably linked in the Bosnian culture (Clark, 2007). Both are so central to cultural identification within this culture that they even comprise the name by which individuals in the cultural group are known and subsequently called: Bosniaks (i.e., Bosnian Muslims). It has also been found that religion has become more of a salient cultural factor for Bosnians following the Bosnian War (Clark, 2007). Bosnian American diaspora has described Islam as the "glue for Bosnian identity;" however, they have also described how Bosnian diaspora view Islam from a pluralistic and multicultural point of view: "The Bosnian understanding of Islam is more like the American way of understanding religion, questioning and open" (Lucken, 2010). These accounts thus underscore the significance of Islam within the Bosnian culture.

Community

Lastly, the importance placed on community is also a strong cultural value for Bosnians, especially after resettlement into new host societies. Cultural identity is informed greatly by the community, as well as family, among Bosnian American diaspora, with factors furnishing a sense of belonging and the basis for a positive self-identity (Haines, 1996). For refugees whose families were broken up through death or separation, local communities may play an additional familial support role (Clark, 2007; Tenhula, 1991). The Bosnian diasporic community is also heavily supportive of individuals from the community and encourages participation in traditional cultural or religious events, such as traditional dancing and attending Islamic cultural centers and social gatherings (Bransteter, 2017; Clark, 2007; Lucken, 2010).

However, the traumas that refugees are typically exposed to can sometimes slow the formation of mutually supportive communities due to a lack of trust among refugees (Tenhula, 1991). In addition, the swift pace of American life can impact the degree of community cohesion and social interaction within the Bosnian diasporic community (Lucken, 2010). For example, the Bosnian cultural tradition heavily values hospitality and unscheduled visits to relatives and friends, which often becomes seen as obligations that are difficult to achieve in the new American cultural environments due to things such as long work schedules and children in school. Lucken (2010) demonstrated this in her ethnographic study that focused on Bosnian identity maintenance in a post-migration setting within the United States. One Bosnian in her study described issues with obliging the cultural value of hospitality and unscheduled visits (Lucken, 2010):

Basically, my father would never call me to come and see me. And even if he did and I said, I can't now, I am busy, he would come anyway, and he would get mad at me for a day or so. That is not something we are used to. Now we check everything. Now we have calendars (p. 123).

This illustrates the role of community for individuals from refugee or immigrant groups and perceived experiences of cultural disconnectedness and/or connectedness within these respective groups.

It has also been found that Bosnian Americans who do not speak much English rely on the Bosnian community for social support, guidance in navigating the American system, and ethnic identity maintenance (Lucken, 2010). Bosnian American diaspora has described the importance of community within the culture and among interethnic groups (i.e., Bosnian and Serbian individuals) with statements such as (Lucken, 2010):

People help each other. If you grow up in an environment like this, you are different. Neighbors stop by to help you... These friends are like family, and they are not chosen because of ethnic background, but because of their character (p. 192).

In a study by Colic-Peisker & Walker (2003), which focused on human capital, acculturation, and social identity of Bosnian refugees in Australia, a Bosnian refugee also described his view on community life:

People rely on each other a lot. That's why they settle in the same area. People have had community support from the very first day... before the bilingual services were established... from relatives, neighbors, acquaintances, friends, and people who speak the same language. People help each other, accompany each other to a doctor's appointment... community support is very important for Bosnians... it is an old Bosnian custom (p. 353).

Colic-Peisker & Walker (2003) highlighted the impacts associated with a long-term reliance on the community, including the Bosnian diaspora's inability or unwillingness to move out of their initial resettlement quarters after almost 10 years of life in the United States. Living near fellow

Bosnians immerses diaspora in their native culture and enables them to form dense ethnic networks (Colic-Peisker & Walker, 2003). One participant described this situation, saying, "That's what makes us come together. How we came, what we get, what we don't get... that's how you build friendships" (Colic-Peisker & Walker, 2003). These narratives from the Bosnian American diaspora noted above underscore the importance of community regarding Bosnian cultural values and cultural identity development.

In sum, these cultural values are believed to play a role in experiences of cultural connectedness among the Bosnian American diaspora due to the high prevalence of these factors reported within this cultural group. The next section will review experiences of cultural disconnectedness among the Bosnian American diaspora.

Experiences of Cultural Disconnectedness among Bosnian American Diaspora

Experiences of cultural disconnectedness are common among refugee and immigrant groups. Disconnectedness has been described as feeling in the "margins of two cultures," resulting in never being truly "here or there" (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Belonging to several cultural groups at the same time can be associated with complex feelings of group membership, particularly for immigrants and refugees (Cheng & Lee, 2009; Ryder et al., 2000). When individuals from these groups fail to adopt the customs of the mainstream culture and fail to maintain the customs of their native culture, their abilities to successfully navigate their social realities may be at risk and they may feel a painful sense of loss (Berry, 2001). Some may also feel "marginal," in that they feel disconnected both from their native culture and the mainstream culture of the society in which they live (Berry, 2001). Immigrants and refugees who report this marginalization, particularly as experiences of disconnectedness, also reported feeling

more stressed and depressed (Bhui et al., 2005; Kim et al., 2006; Nakash et al., 2012) and troubled with lower self-esteem, life satisfaction, and achievement (Berry & Sabatier, 2010; Berry & Sam, 1997; Pham & Harris, 2001; Pfafferott & Brown, 2006). However, other culturally disconnected individuals have also reported living happily despite being detached from their cultural groups due to feelings of individual uniqueness and perceiving that their uniqueness is valued (Brewer, 1991; Snyder & Fromkin, 1980). The balancing of two cultures can thus look different for everyone and can have varying consequences as well.

The term “disconnectedness” in the Bosnian language is *nepovezanost*. Among Bosnian American diaspora, experiences of disconnectedness have been documented in numerous studies over the last two decades (Bransteter, 2017; Clark, 2007; Dorner, 2017; Gibson, 2002; Komolova et al., 2018; Lucken, 2010; Mayadas & Segal, 2000; Osmančević, 2020; Sadikovic, 2017; Snyder et al., 2005). Each study described the experiences associated with the paradoxical activity of embodying two cultures simultaneously and the benefits and challenges associated with moving between and balancing the Bosnian and American cultures. However, it is important to note that each of these studies has only highlighted the occurrence of this sense of disconnectedness among the Bosnian American diaspora, and no known study has taken an extensive look at this experience.

The experiences of disconnectedness among the Bosnian diaspora were identified soon following the large influx of Bosnian refugees to the United States after the Bosnian War. Early on, Bosnian refugee youth described experiencing the pull of two different cultures, those of their American peers and that of their Bosnian parents (Mayadas & Segal, 2000). This was further explored by Gibson (2002) who specifically focused on the impact of political violence

on the adaptation and identity development among Bosnian adolescent refugees after two to four years of resettlement in the United States (Gibson, 2002). It was found that young Bosnian diasporic adolescents in the study were being influenced and shaped by their new environment while retaining cultural and family values (Gibson, 2002). Bosnian diasporic youth also reported struggling with the search for what it means to be either a Bosnian in America or a Bosnian American; however, pride in their Bosnian-ness was found to be a common theme associated with their developing identities. Gibson (2002) hypothesized that these youth would experience challenges with ethnic identity search due to continued encounters in America when their Bosnian-ness is identified or experienced as different.

Bosnian diasporic youth are torn between the beliefs, customs, and values learned in their native culture and the expectations of their new culture (Snyder et al., 2005). One way in which Bosnian American diaspora reported that they managed experiences of disconnectedness was through speaking the native language, Bosnian (Weine et al., 2004). Speaking in the native tongue was found to not only be a connection with cultural heritage, but also an affirmative expression of ethnic and national identifications after ethnopolitical violence and forced migration (Weine et al., 2004). Bosnian American diasporic youth reported enjoying mixing Bosnian and English and stated that it was a way to “contain and creatively manipulate” the linguistic and cultural differences, such as disconnectedness, that confronted them (Weine et al., 2004). Despite these strategies to manage issues such as disconnectedness, pressures to assimilate to the cultural norms of their new country and integrate different aspects of their various identities (i.e., native Bosnian culture) were found to be extremely stressful and impacted the formation of cultural and ethnic identity among Bosnian American diaspora (Snyder et al.,

2005). Overall, these studies identified some of the first known experiences of disconnectedness among the Bosnian American diaspora, which became a pattern seen in other studies as well.

A narrative qualitative study by Clark (2007) also highlighted experiences of disconnectedness among the Bosnian American diaspora. This study focused on the role of schooling in the cultural identity development of adolescent/young adult female college students from Bosnian Muslim communities who entered the United States as refugees. Each woman in this study arrived in the United States during either late elementary school years or late high school years and was either enrolled in a community college or undergraduate public/private university during the early 2000s (i.e., 2005-2006). The results of this study revealed that the Bosnian diasporic women had a common desire to develop bicultural competence in social as well as academic settings. They also described the importance of following Bosnian cultural traditions, despite living in the United States, to stay connected to their Bosnian culture, such as living with their parents until they marry rather than living in a dormitory or apartment, adopting traditional gender roles such as cooking for fathers and brothers, following traditional restrictions regarding dating, talking about marriage in their future, and stating they would only marry a Bosnian man (Clark, 2007). One participant described the importance of “keeping” her culture through engagement in the aforementioned traditions and how she felt like other Bosnian diasporic youth were “losing” their culture when asked about issues associated with balancing the two cultures (Clark, 2007):

Definitely. Definitely, yeah. Like, I know, I mean, like going out with an American and getting married to them and stuff. I would never do it. It's not that I have anything against Americans. I don't think I could, just because there's so much difference, you know. Like the religious difference—like, I wouldn't know how to raise my kids and stuff, you know. Like, I think once you get married to, like an American or something, I mean not

just an American, but any guy that's like not of your ethnicity and stuff, it's like, different and it's really hard to keep up both of them, you know. Even if you get married to someone that's also foreign to this country, you know, like a German or somebody. It's just totally different. I don't know. But, and like, like my little brother speaks Bosnian so bad. Like, he totally forgot German. And like, he's really good at speaking English. And all the younger kids are, because they go to school and stuff. But like, on one side you can't even notice that they are Bosnian, you know. Most of the time it's the way they talk, they don't really have an accent. And you know, like they don't really know anything about Bosnia. All they know is the United States, 'cause you know they've grown up here and stuff. So, I mean, if it's, like the parents probably have to take them back to Bosnia to see what it's like and stuff like that. I mean, it is hard, and they are gonna, like they're becoming American, and eventually, like one day they'll have kids, and their kids will definitely be American. They probably won't have any ties back to Bosnia, and stuff like that (pp. 101-102).

Another participant described a different experience with her process of “Americanizing” and returning to a Bosnian identity (Clark, 2007). She described this process as a back-and-forth negotiation between cultures rather than a process of focusing on both cultures simultaneously:

High school, like I adapted so quickly, like, my parents were scared. [laughs] Like, I forgot Bosnian. I went through my phase. The Americanized phase. In high school, like I was already, I barely had any accent, any sort of an accent. So, like all my friends were Americans, especially my freshman year, like I didn't have any Bosnian friends. Like close friends. There was everybody like, “Hi, hi”. But I observed that Bosnians with higher accents like the black girls chuckled and laughed at. [i.e., African American girls mocked the Bosnian girls who spoke with thicker Bosnian accents.] And so, I observed it but didn't experience it. Yeah, yeah. The whole like greeting each other by a kiss. Like, we got a lot of attention for that. I don't know, like my freshman year I didn't have any Bosnian friends so, I kind of looked at Bosnians weird too, even though I knew what they were doing! But later on, when I started, people were like, “What you doing?” “I'm just gettin' involved in my culture!” (p. 104).

This participant highlighted her varying levels of disconnectedness with the Bosnian culture as she described assimilating socially with American-born students as she entered high school and distanced herself from Bosnian classmates who retained their foreign accents or cultural practices, such as greeting friends by kissing on the cheek, a common Bosnian cultural practice.

Also, she described feeling torn between aspects of two cultures and feeling completely at home in neither of them (i.e., experiences of disconnectedness; Clark, 2007).

Language was another factor that was found to play a role in experiences of disconnectedness among Bosnian diasporic youth in this study, particularly lack of competency with the Bosnian language (Clark, 2007). As a result of these experiences, the youth reported feeling like they also were “losing” their culture due to their struggles with the Bosnian language. To manage these issues, many participants described the value of visiting Bosnia and Herzegovina and how the visits inspired them to not want to lose their language or culture anymore. However, other participants also described opposite experiences, such as feeling “oppressed” when visiting Bosnia, which also contributed to experiences of disconnectedness (Clark, 2007). Another participant described how her trip back to Bosnia resulted in “feeling out of place,” both culturally and linguistically (Clark, 2007); however, this feeling of disconnectedness fueled her desire to recover some of her Bosnian heritage and culture. In the excerpt below she described how she felt “more Bosnian” following visiting her native homeland:

Oh, definitely more Bosnian. And I try to be. [Jasmina makes a remark that it’s because of her boyfriend and we all laugh.] No, I try to be. ‘Cause I... went...I went to Bosnia...like, here, I didn’t have Bosnian friends. And then when I went to Bosnia, everybody was like, “Well, she doesn’t speak really good Bosnian,” so I was left out there too...And like, so, I would have more...This past year when I went back, I felt like more like it was my home (p. 161).

Concerning community, it was found that students who were more connected to other Bosnians in school were also those who followed more traditional Bosnian customs as adults (Clark, 2007). Other participants who reported being less connected to other Bosnians in school

expressed regrets about the loss of their Bosnian cultural identity, further underscoring varying levels of disconnectedness among Bosnian American diaspora. For example, one participant described the differences between her and her Bosnian peers and how she felt like an “outsider” among her Bosnian cultural group in this excerpt from her narrative (Clark, 2007):

They had a lot more, like, nationalism toward Bosnia. And like the language, and the music. So, like, they would know Bosnian music that I’ve never heard and that I don’t particularly like ‘cause I didn’t, like, grow up listening to it. Or, they really like going to Bosnia and still have friends there, whereas I can barely, like, speak. ... Um, so, and for that reason too, I didn’t like too much to hang out with Bosnians. Like, I don’t think I could have a relationship with a Bosnian guy ‘cause I couldn’t express myself deeply enough in Bosnian. And they’re all like that because they spent...like...they grew up as teenagers with each other, and they spoke Bosnian. And they probably, their English is probably not as good as mine, ‘cause I spoke English. And I hung around American kids (pp. 117-118).

Participants in this study also described the significance of multiple “uprootings” that Bosnian refugee students experienced. These multiple “uprootings” resulted in not only personal struggles, including academic issues, but also in cultural bereavement. It is important to note that cultural bereavement has been identified as a factor that disrupts refugees’ identity development following immigration to a new host country (Eisenbruch, 1988). As a result of these “uprootings,” the Bosnian refugee students who struggled academically often socialized together and formed “cliques,” which was further described as a way to reject the acculturating, socializing, and academic influence of schools, and therefore, resist the alteration and reconstruction of their cultural identities through the Americanizing force of schooling (Clark, 2007). Banding together to “survive the chaos” of a new culture and school system is a commonly noted reaction among cultural minority students, such as African American students, within a mainstream American school system (Berry & Sam, 1997; Clark, 2007). Overall, this

was another way in which disconnectedness between the Bosnian and American cultures was noted among Bosnian diasporic youth.

Race also played an important role in cultural identity development in this study, as all the students were aware of the pervasiveness of their White privilege and the degree to which their adjustment was easier than that of other refugee and immigrant peers because of their race (Clark, 2007). Through this White privilege, Bosnian diasporic youth found that they had the option of “stepping in and out of” Bosnian culture with the ability to “pass” as White American non-immigrants (Clark, 2007). This allowed them greater options when positioning themselves within their social fields, both with their Bosnian and American peers. However, being able to “pass” as a White American did not allow the Bosnian diasporic youth in this study to feel a balanced connection with both cultures. The participants’ Bosnian cultural heritage and identity ultimately resulted in issues with truly fitting in with their American peers, particularly due to being exposed to discriminatory behaviors from their American peers (Clark, 2007). This experience was heightened for participants who felt like “outsiders” within their Bosnian cultural groups as well and resulted in increased feelings of disconnectedness towards both their native culture and new host culture (Clark, 2007).

Lastly, students in this study described the challenges of multiple relocations faced by many refugees who are forced to leave their home country for another country where they may live several years, only to resettle yet again in a third, permanent country of residence (Clark, 2007). As a result of multiple forced relocations, participants described being torn between aspects of two cultures and feeling completely at home in neither of them (Clark, 2007), which has been identified as a common cultural dilemma among children of immigrants (Suárez-

Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). In sum, this study uncovered the unique experiences of Bosnian diasporic women balancing two cultures, which ultimately resulted in experiences of disconnectedness.

Bransteter (2017) explored war and post-war experiences among Bosnian refugees, through focusing on the meaning-making of their experiences via personal narratives. Results uncovered seven domains, including pre-immigration experiences, arrival process to the United States, adjustment experience, the influence of war and post-war experience, current lifestyle, mental health and well-being, education, and resources and recommendations (Bransteter, 2017). Within the domain of “adjustment experience,” the category of “sense of belonging and social activities within the Bosnian community” emerged (Bransteter, 2017). This category represented participants’ perceptions of connection and cohesiveness within the Bosnian community and social activities that take place within it, including how strongly one feels like part of the community (Bransteter, 2017). Interestingly, the results revealed no major differences between participants who expressed having a strong attachment to the Bosnian community and participants who expressed that they did not have a sense of belonging (i.e., disconnectedness) with the Bosnian community (Bransteter, 2017). Both groups reported similar community social activities that were believed to be able to offer support, connection, and belonging, such as religious services, concerts, and other social gatherings. However, these groups differed in benefits from activities that are supposed to foster connectedness to the community regarding managing war and post-war experiences, including the consequences of war and challenges of adjustment. Some participants reported that belonging and participating within the Bosnian community was a way of coping with these issues, while others expressed that their increased

levels of connectedness to the community caused distress and reminded them of the negative experiences that they survived (Bransteter, 2017). Overall, this study underscored the varying ways in which Bosnian American diaspora manage their experiences of disconnectedness to the Bosnian culture and how this can be both beneficial and unhelpful for them.

Lucken (2010) focused on the Bosnian American diaspora through her study that explored Bosnian identity maintenance in a post-migration setting. This qualitative study revealed the contextual nature of identity, with participants describing various issues with becoming bicultural. For example, one participant described his disconnectedness to both America and Bosnia, and subsequent changes in cultural identification after returning to Bosnia and Herzegovina for a visit (Lucken, 2010):

You think you're going home, but when you're there, you don't belong. [He continued after a long pause] I belong to the *old* Bosnia, because when I'm there, I learn I'm not the way they are anymore...I'm Bosnian American now (p. 182).

This excerpt highlights the difficulties with balancing both cultures due to the contextual nature of national identities (e.g., feeling that pre-war Bosnia was different than post-war Bosnia) and resulting experiences of disconnectedness due to these difficulties.

Lucken (2010) also identified various ways in which participants from her study managed these feelings associated with experiences of disconnectedness, including spending more time engaging in Bosnian traditions and customs (e.g., *Sevdah*, folklore dancing, etc.); increasing their Bosnian language competency, similar to what participants described in Clark (2007); visiting the homeland; identifying only as Bosnian or refusing any labels that are linked with nationality, similar to management strategies mentioned in Clark (2007); and engaging in other traditional activities, including going to Bosnian bars and cafes, soccer games, and concerts; spending time

engaging in the traditional social gatherings called “*sijelos*” on the weekends. Lucken (2010) also specifically discussed the complexity of outcomes among Bosnian diasporic youth who “straddle two cultures,” and described the process of cultural identity development as “malleable and fluid.” Bosnian diasporic youth responded to this balancing act of two cultures either by staying closely tied to their home culture or by embracing the new culture entirely or partially, which allowed for a multiplicity of self-identifications to unfold (Lucken, 2010).

On the other hand, the challenges associated with embracing a host culture at the expense of one’s native culture also created a sense of distance from the familiar traditions and the community among Bosnian diasporic youth in this study (Lucken, 2010). Parents of the youth in this study also voiced their concerns with their children becoming “Americanized,” which paralleled the concerns from Bosnian American diaspora in earlier findings from the literature (Clark, 2007; Weine et al., 2006). One mother reflected her ambivalence about her children’s adaptations to their new American environments and the pain associated with watching them lose elements of their Bosnian heritage: “People are changing their identities here, they become American Bosnians – speaking English” (Lucken, 2010). This short, yet powerful perspective from a parent displays the varying factors that play a role in the Bosnian youth diasporas’ feelings resulting from experiences of disconnectedness within their different cultures. However, Lucken (2010) reviewed the various ways in which the Bosnian American diaspora manage these experiences of disconnectedness in their cultural worlds.

In another qualitative study by Dorner and colleagues (2017) that examined the racial, linguistic, religious, and migration experiences of Bosnian youth in St. Louis, authors revealed the importance of context and time regarding identity construction among three Bosnian Muslim

girls born during the war-time period (years 1992 and 1993) and highlighted experiences of disconnectedness among Bosnian diasporic youth. Many of the youth experienced marginalization due to their religious and refugee identification in the forms of Islamophobia and xenophobia. One participant described her experiences with Islamophobia and xenophobia following the September 11th terrorist attacks in the following excerpt (Dorner et al., 2017):

That's probably the experience I'll never forget...I was in sixth grade. It was a group of kids...I was walking home and I think there was like 10 or 12 of them, and they were older. Some were seventh graders; some were eighth graders...They were shoving me, and you know, saying, "Show me your green card, you retard." And all kinds of stuff. So, I mean, it was a scary moment...You feel bad that you're different. I know I really shouldn't. But, I just felt bad. I was like, "Oh, why am I not like everybody else? Why can't everybody get along with me?" (p. 23).

This excerpt underscored her experiences of disconnectedness to the American culture due to the discrimination and harassment she was experiencing. However, this participant reported managing these feelings related to experiences of disconnectedness by challenging others' assumptions and renegotiating her identity as a Muslim through education and advocacy in school (Dorner et al., 2017). This participant embraced her intersecting identities over time, which thus resulted in increased levels of connectedness to her American peers, and subsequently to her Bosnian culture as well (Dorner et al., 2017). This was accomplished by the participant standing up and speaking up for her native Bosnian culture, which improved her overall experiences within this cultural context and influenced her to help other migrants experiencing the same issues. Another participant in this study also discussed ways in which she managed her disconnectedness from a community-level, particularly through building community and solidarity among diasporic Bosnians, no matter their religious identification (Dorner et al., 2017). Overall, this study demonstrated how the Bosnian American diaspora

managed their varying levels of disconnectedness through consciously negotiating their identities over time, with different groups and changing contexts (Dorner et al., 2017).

Experiences of cultural disconnectedness among the Bosnian American diaspora have also been highlighted in a recent qualitative study by Sadikovic (2017), who examined the impact of a college education on Bosnian refugee women who resettled to the United States. Sadikovic (2017) found that after gaining cultural and social capital through education, participants were able to build social networks and “bridge” from one culture into another. Their educational experiences thus reduced their experiences of disconnectedness by allowing them to navigate from their native Bosnian culture to their American host culture. This resulted in the women playing an integral part in connecting their host culture and their native culture within their communities as cultural brokers (Sadikovic, 2017). The participants described how being connected to both cultures and communities was “essential” to their existence and the results uncovered how their roles as cultural brokers allowed the women to see their duty to “give back” or “pay it forward” to their native Bosnian community. Therefore, it appears that these women used their education as a primary tool to manage their experiences of disconnectedness that they felt in both cultures.

Bosnian American young adults in other studies have also described experiencing a sense of “otherness” among their Bosnian and American cultural groups due to experiences of discrimination from their American peers (Komolova et al., 2018; Mosselson, 2006). This feeling of disconnectedness was seen soon after migration to the United States in a study that focused on identity constructions of Bosnian adolescent female refugees in the United States (Mosselson, 2006). Bosnian American diasporic youth reported that they felt isolated and

depressed by student and teacher stereotypes, including feeling viewed as “alien” and teachers asking questions “like I came from some kind of jungle;” however, the girls worked hard to maintain high grades, in part to move attention away from themselves (Mosselson, 2006). Rather than constructing a positive bicultural identity, the Bosnian American diasporic students seemed to complete their academic requirements while quietly suffering from either cultural separation or marginalization due to experiences of disconnectedness caused by discrimination and/or prejudice from their American peers and teachers.

More recently, Komolova and colleagues (2018) conducted a study that explored Bosnian refugee experiences with discrimination. This study was composed of three generations of Bosnian refugees, including adolescents (12-17 years old), young adults (18-25 years old), and middle-aged adults (33-68 years old). Participants in this study described their experiences of discrimination as painful and judged the behaviors of perpetrators to be wrong; however, many participants in this study did not dwell on their hurt feelings, which typically results in negative feelings related to experiences of disconnectedness, but instead explained perpetrators’ behaviors (Komolova et al., 2018). Young adults primarily interpreted these behaviors in forgiving and generous ways by alluding to perpetrators’ ignorance and lack of familiarity with Bosnian people and culture that could be corrected with increased experience and familiarity with different groups, while middle-aged adults tended to discuss ignorance as a reflection of low intelligence or education (Komolova et al., 2018). Young adults also described discrimination as becoming less common as they began to adapt to and feel more connected to American culture, and many minimized the lasting impact of discrimination (Komolova et al., 2018).

In addition to negative discrimination experiences, this study analyzed experiences with positive discrimination among Bosnians (Komolova et al., 2018). Young adults in this study particularly described awareness that positive discrimination evoked cultural pride and self-affirmation (i.e., increased connectedness to the Bosnian culture), but also implied generalizations that deprived Bosnians of their individuality and highlighted their sense of “otherness” (i.e., increased experiences of disconnectedness; Komolova et al., 2018). In both negative and positive accounts of discrimination, young adult participants described that Americans’ benign concerns with and lack of empathy toward the struggles that refugees face came across as condescending. They also reported that Americans’ ignorant questions about Bosnian refugees’ background revealed assumptions about Bosnia as an uncivilized and poor place, and came across as patronizing, implying images of pity and inferiority (Komolova et al., 2018). For example, one young adult participant stated:

It’s just annoying when people start asking you about - like out of nowhere in class, like, “oh tell us about the Bosnian war,” just putting you on the spot, like oh you poor war child, you do not know anything, oh you’re so blessed that you’re here...that’s kind of condescending you know...I haven’t been through a lot you know, yeah the moving and this and that, but it’s not you know, a lot of people in - from Bosnia, my friends and family members have been through so much worse (p. 105).

Overall, this study revealed yet another way in which discrimination associated with different salient Bosnian cultural factors, such as religion, the refugee experience, and language, can influence experiences of disconnectedness among Bosnian American diaspora. This can therefore influence individuals’ balancing of the two cultures as well.

Lastly, the most recent known study to identify experiences of disconnectedness among Bosnian American diaspora was the researcher’s master’s thesis, which focused on ethnic

identity, perceived parental sacrifice, and psychological distress among Bosnian American college-aged students (Osmančević, 2020). This study included an exploratory qualitative portion that explored the overall phenomenon of understanding of parental war sacrifices among Bosnian American college-aged students. This exploration resulted in 14 codes and five major themes, including War Exposure, Stigma, Parental Sacrifices, Education, and Intergenerational Trauma. The theme “Intergenerational Trauma” included the code “cultural belongingness,” which described Bosnian American diasporic youths’ struggles with cultural belongingness as children of refugees living in the United States (Osmančević, 2020). Several participants voiced their concerns and experiences with disconnectedness:

I think it's important to address the challenges that the children of refugees face. Many of us were lucky to feel a connection to our heritage and our culture and were able to keep the language and the traditions alive. But a lot of us also had parents who worked long hours and not a lot of close family near. We adapted to many American norms and now are too Bosnian for Americans and too American for Bosnians. There's a significant sense of not belonging and that can have a big psychological impact which should be addressed as well.

I feel both strongly attached and disconnected from both cultures. Americans find out I'm from another country and they put me in that box, people back home say I'm American, even Balkan people here will say, “oh you're too Balkan” or “oh no you're so American, don't call yourself one of us.”

I believe you should address the feeling of diaspora and being caught in between two identities. In one sense, I grew up in the U.S. and feel American, yet I am not American according to people here. On the other hand, when I visit Bosnia, I am branded an American and not a true Bosnian (pp. 75-76).

Each of these excerpts above parallels the findings discovered over the last two decades among Bosnian American diaspora regarding experiences of cultural disconnectedness.

Interestingly, participants continue to describe this experience as “being caught in between two identities.” However, previous studies have only briefly highlighted this experience among

Bosnian American diaspora despite participants' recurrent reports of experiences of cultural disconnectedness. In addition to this, studies focused on the Bosnian diaspora have significantly dropped since 2010 (approximately only five specific studies have been found that focus on the experiences of Bosnian diaspora after their exposure to the Bosnian War), suggesting that current research is needed among this cultural group. The minimal studies currently available about this population underscore the need for further information about what has occurred to Bosnian diaspora since the Bosnian War (i.e., studies shifting focuses from the impacts of war exposure to cultural identity development). It is apparent that this population is resilient and has evolved since their migration to new host countries after the Bosnian War, as evidenced by the wide range of findings in previous studies. Despite this growth, the lack of up-to-date research with this population is concerning for several reasons, such as stereotypes about Bosnian diaspora remaining to be war-exposed refugees suffering from PTSD. The lack of current literature maintains potentially negative and harmful views about this population and does not focus on their strengths or how they have grown since exposure to the Bosnian War, particularly among children of Bosnian refugees, who are currently young adults, which suggests the importance of continued research with this population. Taking an extensive look at experiences of cultural disconnectedness and its impacts among the Bosnian American diaspora is important to consider and will add to the literature not only for Bosnian diaspora, but other cultural groups as well.

Research with Trauma-Exposed Individuals

Ethical considerations are essential when working with populations that may have been exposed to direct or indirect forms of trauma. There are key ethical concerns in the design of human research, including the promotion of safety, minimization of costs relative to benefits, and

accuracy of conveying information about these considerations to participants (Newman & Kaloupek, 2009). When ethical considerations are recognized throughout the research design, data collection, and data analysis process, this may meaningfully impact the data quality and validity of the results by affecting the way individuals engage with study procedures (Newman & Kaloupek, 2009). For example, participants may indicate willingness to repeat the experience or have no regret about participation in the study. In addition, positive experiences throughout this process may increase participants' willingness to volunteer again in the future and promote word-of-mouth encouragement to other potential participants (Newman & Kaloupek, 2009).

Trauma-related research primarily aims to understand whether, or under what conditions, individuals who have been exposed to trauma or developed PTSD might require special precautions when enrolled in a research protocol (Newman & Kaloupek, 2009). These precautions include, but are not limited to, changes to recruitment procedures, informed consent, or aspects of the research protocol itself (Newman & Kaloupek, 2009). Additionally, protective measures are required for any potential research subject that is considered "vulnerable." There are various groups and classes of individuals that are considered vulnerable. These individuals include children, prisoners, pregnant women, embryos, adults with intellectual disabilities, members of ethnically or economically disadvantaged groups, members of marginalized groups, and individuals with incurable diseases (Newman & Kaloupek, 2009). Additional demographic variables associated with participation-related distress include older age in adults, younger age in children, economic difficulties, a history of homelessness, being single, and not having health insurance or a health care provider; and psychological variables, including low self-efficacy,

depression, neuroticism, self-destructiveness, aggression, and anxiety (Carlson et al., 2003; Galea et al., 2005; Newman & Kaloupek, 2009).

The ethical principles that are important to consider when working with trauma-exposed individuals are autonomy, respect for persons, beneficence, and non-maleficence (American Psychological Association, 2017). To maintain an individual's autonomy and protect them from harm, it has been determined that addressing vulnerability in research should be examined in terms of individual characteristics and not be based on group membership (Newman & Kaloupek, 2009). If researchers engage in categorization based on group membership rather than consideration of individual strengths and weaknesses, vulnerability becomes an imprecise construct to consider through the research process (Levine et al., 2004). As a result, categorization may inadvertently result in stereotyping individuals rather than providing them protection from harm (Levine et al., 2004). Instead, vulnerability is better understood on a continuum that varies over time and situations for each individual (Levine et al., 2004). Overall, considering ethical principles and understanding the varying levels of vulnerability among trauma-exposed individuals is essential to promote safety, minimize costs relative to benefits, and maintain the accuracy of conveying information to participants.

The informed consent process is one aspect of the research process that is also essential to research ethics. The major focus related to the ethical principle of autonomy is an individual's capacity to consent to research (Newman & Kaloupek, 2009). It has been found that, in the absence of brain impairments such as serious brain or acute psychosis, even severely trauma-exposed adults can competently consent to research (Rosenstein, 2004). The process of informed consent is also based on the belief that participants can accurately determine whether it is in their

best interests (e.g., safety) to participate in a particular study and act accordingly (Newman & Kaloupek, 2009). Many individuals with trauma-exposure or from vulnerable groups exercise their autonomy by declining or stopping participation or by not answering certain questions (Brabin & Berah, 1995; Hlvaka et al., 2007; Newman & Kaloupek, 2009). In addition to this, most adult and child participants in trauma-focused studies have endorsed statements indicating that they feel able to refuse participation, to stop or skip questions, and to tell research staff when they do not like aspects of the research protocol (Kassam-Adams & Newman, 2005; Ruzek & Zatzick, 2000). Despite this evidence, it is still important to recognize that some individuals experience trauma-focused research situations as coercive; however, it also shows that broad categorizations regarding “vulnerable populations” do not always apply.

For true informed consent to occur, participants must fully understand the risks and benefits associated with a research study (Newman & Kaloupek, 2009). A study does not have to be “risk free” if effective informed consent is in place and the scientific value of the study is clear (Kilpatrick, 2004). As researchers take this information into consideration, they can implement many techniques throughout the research process to ensure ethical practice with trauma-exposed individuals. For instance, researchers should communicate the voluntary nature of research participation in writing, verbally, and nonverbally during the consent process (Newman & Kaloupek, 2009). It is also suggested that researchers periodically ask participants whether they wish to continue at points during a protocol rather than requiring them to raise the topic (Newman & Kaloupek, 2009).

Researchers may also implement informed consent procedures that emphasize the research question rather than direct personal benefit to underscore that a clinical study serves to

answer a scientific question, in contrast to clinical services that are aimed exclusively at meeting personal needs (Collogan et al., 2004; Newman & Kaloupek, 2009). High levels of detail within the informed consent documents noting cautions aid in helping potential participants weigh the personal costs and benefits of the experience, encourage trust, and provide information that helps participants anticipate and manage emotional reactions during the research protocol (Becker-Blease & Fred, 2006). However, high levels of details with explicit cautions may also promote undue anxiety or expectations for an unpleasant emotional experience and inadvertently reduce beneficence (Becker-Blease & Fred, 2006). Researchers may also benefit from using quiz-type questions as part of the informed consent process to address misconceptions or misunderstandings before participation occurs (Newman & Kaloupek, 2009). Researchers may also benefit from using self-report measures to assess satisfaction with information imparted by the informed-consent process (Newman & Kaloupek, 2009). Lastly, some trauma researchers have also encouraged participants to consult with family members following the study to promote reflection (Collogan et al., 2004).

The APA ethical principles of beneficence and non-maleficence obligate researchers to both maximize possible benefits and minimize possible risks and to not harm participants (Newman & Kaloupek, 2009). The primary focus of researchers who work with trauma-exposed individuals is the potential for distress due to research participation (Newman & Kaloupek, 2009). Despite this, it is important to distinguish transient discomfort (i.e., cost) from lasting psychological or physical harm (i.e., risk). Thus, unexpected distress can be considered as either a cost or a risk depending on the intensity. Minimal risk is defined as: the probability and magnitude of harm of discomfort anticipated in the research are not greater, in and of

themselves, than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2005).

Assessing for risk in the moment may be difficult for researchers because it is often unknown how the degree of emotional upset experienced during a research protocol compares to the magnitude of distress participants confront during their daily lives (Newman & Kaloupek, 2004). It is also unknown whether any emotional upset reflects acute intensification of existing symptoms or emotional responses that are uncharacteristic of the individuals (Newman & Kaloupek, 2004). One way to address this issue is through structured post-participation questioning that involves obtaining information that is directly relevant to minimal risk categorization (Newman & Kaloupek, 2009). For instance, a researcher may ask participants whether the study task was more or less distressing than other things encountered in day-to-day life (Cromer et al., 2006; DePrince & Freyd, 2004). It is also important to note that if levels of emotional distress during participation are reported as both manageable and typical for an individual, that it may reflect emotional engagement in the research project rather than being an indicator of harm (Newman & Kaloupek, 2004). Additionally, negative emotional reactions during studies have been found to be associated with perceived personal benefits from participation (Edwards et al., 2009). Overall, this underscores the importance of understanding the difference between transient discomfort from lasting psychological or physical harm in trauma-focused research studies.

A vast amount of qualitative information has been collected about the sources and types of distress that research participants in trauma-focused studies experience (Newman &

Kaloupek, 2009). For example, in a study of adults in inpatient psychiatric care, researchers found six categories of distress-type within the research context: remembering/reliving the past, the detailed nature of the questions, painful insights, negative emotions, dissociation, and embarrassment (Carlson et al., 2003). Additional research-related reactions reported by research participants have included: research studies bringing forth painful feelings related to trauma and non-trauma experiences, interfering with daily routine, confronting painful realities, and symptomatic distress (Disch, 2001).

In general, distress within the research context appears to be multifaceted; however, researchers typically administer face valid questions about upset at the conclusion of interviews. These questions often come from the Reactions to Research Participation Questionnaire – Revised (RRPQ-R; Newman et al., 2001; Kassam-Adams & Newman, 2002). In addition, evidence suggests that participants who take these types of surveys following the study and report distress during study procedures do not remain upset at completion (Boscarino et al., 2004; Galea et al., 2005). Additional methods that address these issues in trauma-related studies include asking participants to consider their experience as a research participant and the importance of the research topic (Cromer et al., 2006) or simply asking if the experience was positive, neutral, or negative (Martin et al., 1999). It thus remains good practice to routinely ask participants about emotional state at the end of a study and to recontact those who reported distress (Newman & Kaloupek, 2009).

Despite the multifaceted types of distress that trauma-exposed participants may experience in trauma-focused studies, they also may experience numerous benefits from participation in these studies. A qualitative analysis of benefits reported by 100 research

participants found that participants reported a sense of helping others, along with personal benefits, such as providing a helpful review of life events, increasing self-awareness, and reducing self-perceptions of blame (Disch, 2001). It has been noted that participants explained the usefulness of their experiences in trauma-focused studies in terms of potentially aiding others, but also in terms of clarifying memories, generating feelings of relief, and facilitating recall of positive aspects of life (Carlson et al., 2003). Studies that have used the structured RRPQ-R items have found high endorsement levels for a general sense of benefit, personal meaningfulness of participation, positive self-esteem, and pride in helping others (Kassam-Adams & Newman, 2005; Newman et al., 2001; Ruzek & Zatzick, 2000; Walker et al., 1999; Widom & Czaja, 2005). It has also been found that the aspects of studies that are most upsetting (e.g., remembering the past, recognizing memory gaps, experiencing painful insights, and discussing the trauma) are also the ones cited as most beneficial to participants as well following the interviews (Carlson et al., 2003). Lastly, it is important to note that trauma-focused studies that administer interviews have equal or more favorable benefits to participants than questionnaire-based studies (DePrince & Chu, 2008; Newman et al., 1999; Walker et al., 1997). Interviews typically involve a greater level of participant burden in terms of time and potential upset, but they also appear to offer greater perceived benefits, an outcome that might be attributable to greater interpersonal interaction with the interviewer (Newman & Kaloupek, 2009). Overall, careful attention must be paid to ethical issues in research planning and execution, particularly when working with trauma-exposed individuals, including Bosnian American diaspora that have underwent experiences of cultural disconnectedness.

Current Study

The current study focused on the gap in the literature on understanding experiences of disconnectedness among Bosnian American diaspora, particularly by gaining a deeper understanding of the universal experiences of cultural disconnectedness among Bosnian Americans and the subsequent impacts of this on their psychological well-being using a phenomenological perspective. A phenomenological perspective describes a common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The purpose of this approach is to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of “universal essence.” Examples of human experiences that may be a phenomenon include, but are not limited to, insomnia, being left out, anger, or grief (Moustakas, 1994). Following data collection from individuals who have experienced the phenomenon, the researcher develops a composite description of the essence of the experience for all the individuals, which consist of “what” they experienced and “how” they experienced it (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994).

There are seven assumptions within the phenomenological approach identified by Creswell and Poth (2018). The first assumption states that the phenomenon that is being explored is to be phrased in terms of a single concept or idea, such as the psychological concept of “grief.” Next, the exploration of the phenomenon is conducted with a group of individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon, thus a heterogeneous group may vary in size from three to four individuals to ten to 15 individuals. Third, phenomenology consists of understanding the lived experiences of individuals, which includes both subjective experiences of the phenomenon and objective experiences of something in common with other people. As a result, this approach

refuses to take on a subjective-objective perspective and thus lies on a continuum between qualitative and quantitative research.

Next, the phenomenological researcher also brackets themselves out of the study by discussing personal experiences with the phenomenon. Bracketing does not take the researcher completely out of the study but identifies personal experiences with the phenomenon that may result in biases and helps to partly set them aside so that the researcher can focus on the experiences of the participants in the study. This approach also consists of data collection procedures that involve interviewing individuals who have experienced the phenomenon. Phenomenology also follows the assumption that data analysis can follow systematic procedures that move from narrow units of analysis (e.g., significant statements), on to broader units (e.g., meaning units), and on to detailed descriptions that summarize the two elements, including “what” the individuals have experienced and “how” they have experienced it. Lastly, this approach assumes that the researcher concludes phenomenological research with a descriptive passage that discusses the “essence” of the experience for individuals, which is the culminating aspect of the study and includes the “what” and “how” of experiences. As a result, it is believed that cultural disconnectedness would be best understood using phenomenology because of the comprehensive way in which this approach attempts to acknowledge and understand a lived experience for a group of individuals.

Using qualitative methods with marginalized or minority groups, such as diaspora, have been found useful, particularly for changing or influencing the lives of participants, the institutions in which they live and work, or even the researchers’ lives (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As these issues are studied and exposed, researchers amplify participants’ voices, especially

participants from marginalized groups, in addition to raising their consciousness and improving their lives (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Qualitative work is thus practical and collaborative because it is completed “with” others rather than “on” or “to” others (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Experiences of cultural disconnectedness are prevalent among both refugee and immigrant groups, including the Bosnian American diasporic population (Clark, 2007; Gibson, 2002; Lucken, 2010; Osmančević, 2020; Weine et al., 2004). This experience has been described as feeling in the margins of two cultures or being caught in between two identities, resulting in never truly feeling “here or there” (Clark, 2007; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). These feelings are associated with ethnic and cultural identity development, differing levels of acculturation, and important cultural factors within immigrant and refugee populations (Clark, 2007; Dorner et al., 2017; Lucken, 2010; Sadikovic, 2018). The unique experiences of Bosnian refugees following their resettlement in their new host countries after escaping the horrors of war in the mid and late 1990s have been documented in the literature as well (Brunner & Johnson, 2018; Howell et al., 2015; Lucken, 2010; Porter & Haslam, 2005). Despite this recurrent pattern of issues with cultural disconnectedness among Bosnian Americans, no known study has taken an extensive look at this prevalent issue within the community. Given the lack of information in the literature, it is important to examine how experiences of cultural disconnectedness impact this cultural group and their psychological well-being as described above. It is believed that the current study will add to the literature not only for Bosnian diaspora, but other cultural groups as well. For Bosnian diaspora specifically, this study demonstrated how this population has evolved since their exposure to the Bosnian War, which has been minimally documented in the research literature since the mid-2000s. Phenomenology is one qualitative method used to capture the

essence of these experiences. Thus, the overall phenomenon, or lived experience, that was analyzed for this study is experiences of cultural disconnectedness among the Bosnian American diaspora.

Qualitative researchers, particularly those who use the phenomenological approach, prefer to use first-person in their writing to provide rich, compelling, thought-provoking descriptions of lived experience that may be generalizable to others (Finlay, 2012). This approach also allows researchers to employ reflexivity within a broader study and critically focus on their personal experience of the phenomenon or research process (Finlay, 2012). As a result, from this point on, I will be writing in a first-person voice for this manuscript.

Method

This study was based on a qualitative phenomenological research design. Phenomenology seeks to understand or reveal the meaning of a phenomenon under study (Lester, 1999), and it is believed that a phenomenon manifests itself through something that is perceived and can be explored (Moustakas, 1990). The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the experiences of cultural disconnectedness among the Bosnian American diaspora. As a result, I used the phenomenological approach with this community, not only to capture the universal essence of their experiences with cultural disconnectedness, but to also provide a voice for participants and potentially raise their self-awareness or ability to improve their lives.

There are seven assumptions within the phenomenological approach identified by Creswell and Poth (2018). The first assumption states that the phenomenon that is being explored is to be phrased in terms of a single concept or idea, such as the psychological concept of “grief.”

Next, the exploration of the phenomenon is conducted with a group of individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon, thus a heterogeneous group may vary in size from three to four individuals to ten to 15 individuals. Third, phenomenology consists of understanding the lived experiences of individuals, which includes both subjective experiences of the phenomenon and objective experiences of something in common with other people. As a result, this approach refuses to take on a subjective-objective perspective and thus lies somewhere on a continuum between qualitative and quantitative research.

Next, the phenomenological researcher also brackets themselves out of the study by discussing personal experiences with the phenomenon. Bracketing cannot take the researcher completely out of the study but identifies personal experiences with the phenomenon that may result in biases and helps to partly set them aside so that the researcher can focus on the experiences of the participants in the study. This approach also consists of data collection procedures that involve interviewing individuals who have experienced the phenomenon. Phenomenology also follows the assumption that data analysis can follow systematic procedures that move from narrow units of analysis (e.g., significant statements), on to broader units (e.g., meaning units), and on to detailed descriptions that summarize the two elements, including “what” the individuals have experienced and “how” they have experienced it. Lastly, this approach assumes that the researcher concludes phenomenological research with a descriptive passage that discusses the “essence” of the experience for individuals, which is the culminating aspect of the study and includes the “what” and “how” of experiences. Given these assumptions, it is believed that cultural disconnectedness would be best understood using phenomenology

because of the comprehensive way in which this approach attempts to acknowledge and understand the lived experience of a group of individuals.

In addition to these seven assumptions, phenomenological studies also have five general standards that should be adhered to in order to produce high quality level studies (Creswell & Poth, 2018). These standards include producing a clear articulation of the phenomenon, conveying an understanding of the philosophical tenets of phenomenology, using phenomenological procedures for data analysis, communicating the overall essence of the experience of the participants, and embedding reflexivity throughout the study (Moustakas 1994; van Manen, 1990). Reflexivity may involve the author explaining the process and outcomes of reflexive thinking, particularly with the author examining their own beliefs, judgments, and practices during the research process and how these may have influenced the research. These five criteria are used to judge the quality of phenomenological studies and were considered and used by this researcher throughout the current study.

Phenomenological studies commonly utilize small, carefully selected, somewhat homogenous samples, with sample sizes ranging from typically 6-8 individuals; however, phenomenological sample sizes can range from a single case study to 30 participants as well (Smith et al., 2009). Small sample sizes allow for a more in-depth analysis of participants' accounts. One way of deciding on the number of participants is to add participants until saturation of themes is achieved. Saturation occurs when the phenomenon has been fully described and the researcher believes that new participants would not contribute new data to the analysis, or new understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Furthermore, saturation can be understood as a "matter of degree," where reaching the point that further data

collection becomes counterproductive and new data does not necessarily add anything to the overall story of theory (Saunders et al., 2018). Other researchers have described saturation as experiencing the point at which there are “diminishing returns” from further data collection (Mason, 2010). Some researchers have also understood saturation as reaching “conceptual depth” whereby the researcher considers whether sufficient depth of understanding has been achieved in relation to emergent theoretical categories (Nelson, 2016).

Saturation has been described as an “essential” methodological element in all qualitative research that has become “the gold standard by which purposive sample sizes are determined in health science research” (Saunders et al., 2018; see also Guest et al., 2006). Saturation is also closely related to the notion of theoretical sampling, which is the idea that the sample is guided by the necessary similarities and contrasts required by the emerging theory (Saunders et al., 2018). As a result, this approach causes the researcher to combine sampling, data collection, and data analysis, rather than treating them as separate stages in a linear process (Bryman, 2012; Saunders et al., 2018). I collected participant data until saturation of themes was achieved as described above. I chose to include this methodological element in my study because of the support that is shown for this definition of saturation within the literature (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Guest et al., 2006; Saunders et al., 2018). This methodological element also supports the overall goal of phenomenological method and theory, which includes unearthing previously unnoticed or overlooked issues and exploring the meaning of a specific human experience through providing rich descriptions and interpretations that aid in understanding (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Saunders et al., 2018). The use of saturation thus aids in the commitment that a phenomenological researcher makes to understanding the experience of the phenomena as a

whole and as it is lived by the person, rather than specific parts or behaviors of that experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Saunders et al., 2018). See **Participants** section below for additional information about how saturation was achieved in the current study.

Participants

Participants included individuals who identified as Bosnian American diaspora between the ages 18-30 from varying parts of the United States and who reported having experienced cultural disconnectedness within their community. Exclusion criteria included individuals who were outside of the predetermined age range, did not identify as Bosnian American, and who did not live in the United States. Participants were recruited via snowballing techniques through major social media platforms, specifically Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com>) and Instagram (<https://www.instagram.com>; see **Procedure** section for further information about snowball sampling techniques). The sample size consisted of seven participants (see **Descriptive Statistics** section for further information).

Originally, I planned to interview 10 participants, including five males and five females for the study. Only seven people signed up, and saturation was apparent by the 5th participant as evidenced by participant responses and patterns identified in the data during the initial analysis of data while in the field. Initial analysis of data occurs while in the field occurs the field, primarily with field notes. As I was writing my field notes during each interview, I noted any real-time participant behaviors and comments and researcher thoughts and reflections using a phenomenological method called bracketing (see **Procedure** section below for additional information about this technique). In addition to coding participant behaviors and general

comments, I also noted any overlapping phrases, comments, or stories that I heard by each participant.

More specifically, participants were saying identical phrases and stories, such as stories about being a cultural broker and being judged by Bosnians while visiting Bosnia and Herzegovina. In these stories, they used the same phrases to describe their experiences related to experiences of cultural disconnectedness in various themes. For example, participants often used the phrase of being a “guest” when visiting Bosnia and Herzegovina. They all also described how their families, friends, and community members call them “Americanized.” All participants discussed how their experiences of cultural disconnectedness using the same or similar terms as well, including a “reality” or something they have “accepted.” All of them also provided stories about being cultural brokers, such as having to “translate government documents” for their parents from a young age, among other similar tasks (e.g., attending doctors’ appointments, calling billing companies, going to the store).

In addition to similar participant responses, patterns in the data were apparent by the topics that the participants discussed, such as the areas of religion, language, culture, seeking support, acceptance, family, race, community, and being “too Bosnian” or “too American.” Saturation thus became apparent by the 5th participant. As I reviewed my field notes after each meeting, I recognized at the 5th meeting that we had reached the point where adding new participants would not contribute new data to the analysis or a new understanding of the phenomenon. I had thus reached “conceptual depth” (Nelson, 2016) in the data, and believed that there was sufficient depth in the data to make meaning of the emergent codes and themes. Despite this, at the time I had realized I had reached saturation, I already had two additional

interviews scheduled from initial participant recruitment and snowballing methods (i.e., one participant was referred to the study by another potential participant that did not meet inclusion criteria; see **Procedure** section below for more information about participant recruitment and snowballing methods) and could not tell the participants that we were no longer interviewing people. I primarily did not turn away the two additional participants due to Bosnian cultural norms related to going against your word. Had I turned them away, it would have seemed disrespectful and broken the trust they felt with me.

Measures

As described above, the Reactions to Research Participation Questionnaire – Revised (RRPQ-R; Newman et al., 2001) was administered to the participants following the completion of the initial interviews. An anonymous online survey including the RRPQ-R questions was administered to participants to assess satisfaction with and reactions to their participation in the study. This measure was also used to ensure trustworthiness of the qualitative data and data analysis in the current study (see **Trustworthiness** section for additional information). The RRPQ-R is a 23-item self-report inventory that was designed to assess participants' satisfaction with and reactions to their participation in research studies. The measure examines five different factors related to participant satisfaction with and reactions to participating in research, including the Participation, Personal Benefits, Emotional Reactions, Perceived Drawbacks, and Global Evaluation Factors (Newman et al., 2001). The factors were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree (no), and 5 = strongly agree (yes)). Regarding scoring, higher scores represent more favorable reactions to the research experience. Certain items in the Perceived Drawbacks and Emotional Reactions Factors (items 3, 5, 6, 10, 16, 18, 19, 20) were reversed

score to indicate high levels of positive emotional reactions, high levels of perceived benefits from participation, and sound ethical considerations. These factors were scored by summing all the items in each respective factor for total factor scores (i.e., total Participation Factor score, total Personal Benefits Factor score, etc.) Ranges for the scores within each factor consisted of mild (include numbers here), moderate (include numbers here), and high (include numbers here). Ranges were determined by the researcher as no ranges were noted in the literature.

The Participation Factor includes items that assess the perceived cost-benefit ratio for participating, adequacy of requirement procedures, and general satisfaction with participation. Examples of questions from the Participation Factor include, “I was glad to be able to participate” and “I like the idea that I contributed to science.” The Personal Benefits and Perceived Drawbacks Factors align with the ethical constructs of benefit and cost-risk ratio described above. Questions from the Personal Benefits factor asked in this measure include, “I found participating in this study personally meaningful” and “I gained insight about my experiences through research participation.” Regarding the Perceived Drawbacks Factor, examples of questions asked from the RRPQ-R include, “I found the questions too personal” (reverse scored question) and “Had I known in advance what participating would be like, I still would have agreed to participate.”

The Emotional Reactions Factor examines participants’ positive and negative emotional reactions to their participation in research studies. All the questions in this factor were reversed scored. Examples of questions from this factor include, “The research raised emotional issues for me that I had not expected” and “I experienced intense emotions during the research sessions and/or parts of the study.” Lastly, the Global Evaluation Factor consists of items relating to faith

in confidentiality, scientific quality, and the research teams' respect for the individual. Questions in this factor include, "I was treated with respect and dignity" and "I trust that my replies will be kept private." See **Appendix D** for all questions from the RRPQ-R and **Participant Reactions to Research** section for results from RRPQ-R in the current study.

This scale has also been used in previous studies that have examined participants' satisfaction with and reactions to their participation in various studies (Kassam-Adams & Newman, 2002; Kimble et al., 2021; Kirkner et al., 2019; Lambert et al., 2019; Newman et al., 2001; Roberts & Allen, 2012). Generally, the internal reliability of the RRPQ-R has a Cronbach's alpha in the range of .82-.83, which is moderate/good (Newman et al., 2001). For example, in a study by Kimble and colleagues (2021) that examined student reactions to traumatic material in literature, used the RRPQ-R. In this study, the Cronbach's alpha level for this sample was also moderate/good (.80). In another study by Roberts and Allen (2012) that explored student perceptions of the educational value of research participation, internal reliability was also moderate/good, with a Cronbach's alpha of .82.

Procedure

Participants were recruited via snowballing techniques through major social media platforms, specifically Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com>) and Instagram (<https://www.instagram.com>). I recruited a total of seven participants, and concluded interviews once saturation was achieved (see **Participants** section for more information about how saturation was achieved).

Social media has been recently used as a reliable source for recruitment and data collection (Bull et al., 2012). Additionally, it has been increasingly used by research funders and

teams to publicize information regarding research programs and communicate and disseminate findings (Schnitzler et al., 2016). I have used these social media recruitment methods with the Bosnian American diaspora population in a previous study and experienced success with a large sample size ($N = 566$; Osmančević, 2020). This recruitment method also helped increase my important connections and networks with other Bosnian American diaspora throughout the country (Osmančević, 2020). During this previous study (Osmančević, 2020), I did not need approval from Facebook or Instagram for the use of their social media platforms for research recruitment, which resulted in seamless data collection. Therefore, it was believed that using the aforementioned snowball-sampling techniques with various Facebook and Instagram pages would be useful in maintaining and gaining increased connections to the Bosnian American community throughout the country, as evidenced by previous success with these techniques (<https://www.facebook.com>; <https://www.instagram.com>; Bull et al., 2012; McCormick et al., 2017; Osmančević, 2020; Schnitzler et al, 2016; Zolkepli et al., 2015), and would result in a rich and diverse participant pool and dataset. It is important to note that this data recruitment method using social media and technology naturally excluded portions of the Bosnian American population between the ages of 18-30 that did not have Facebook or Instagram or access to technology like smartphones or computers, which were required for participation in the study.

More specifically, participants were recruited via direct message and private message on Instagram and Facebook, respectively, using an Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved message (See Appendix B). Everyone was sent the same message, which included the purpose of the study, procedures to be followed, duration, and statement of confidentiality, in addition to the researcher's contact information to schedule the interview. Each participant was also informed

that the message had been approved by the University of South Dakota's IRB. I began searching for potential participants by using public Facebook and Instagram Bosnian-American pages with large followings of people. As I scrolled through their followers, I looked for any notes on people's profiles for age, Bosnian names, and Bosnian American status. It was observed that people often noted on their profiles their full names, ages, and if they were either "Bosnian" or "Bosnian American," typically through writing out their identification or using emojis of Bosnian flags or both Bosnian and American flags. I began by messaging four individuals, two male and two female individuals, that identified as Bosnian American as noted on their social media profiles. I messaged one male on Facebook and another male on Instagram after finding them on public Bosnian American pages with large amounts of followers. I followed this same technique with the two females. One male declined participation and stated that he did not experience cultural disconnectedness, and the other male participant accepted. Both female participants agreed to participate. As I was recruiting, another female that participated in my previous master's thesis research study that focused on the Bosnian American population had also reached out to me asking if I was doing any additional research studies. I informed her that I was and sent her the IRB-approved message. This person did not meet inclusion criteria due to her age (over 30 years old at the time, reported that she was 32). After this, I messaged two additional male individuals. One of them accepted, and the other individual stated that he was too old to participate (over 30 years old, reported that he was 31).

Following this, I messaged the final two participants (one male and one female, for a balanced gender sample size) on Instagram, who both agreed to participate. I scheduled interviews a few weeks apart at times to accommodate for participants' schedules, and I

scheduled all these meetings before conducting the 2nd interview, with data collection occurring between June 2021-August 2021. After my fifth interview, I reached saturation, as evidenced by participant responses and patterns identified in the data during the initial analysis of data while in the field (see **Participants** section above for further information about how saturation was reached).

In addition to this, one final female participant emailed me per referral from her cousin (the third male who was messaged and did not meet inclusion criteria due to his age). I agreed to meet with this final participant and decided to continue with other scheduled interview after reaching saturation due to due to Bosnian cultural norms related to going against your word. Had I turned the final two participants away, it would have seemed disrespectful and broken the trust they felt with me. See **Participants** section for additional information about participants and **Descriptive Statistics** section for additional information about participant demographics.

All participants that agreed to participate were then required to read an informed consent document before the beginning of the study (See Appendix A). Participants were informed that their private information and responses would be completely anonymous. Additionally, the consent form informed participants that I would be using direct quotes from each participant and that I would use pseudonyms to disguise their identities. Additionally, they were informed that their direct quotes may be published or presented in public conference proceedings using their pseudonyms to ensure anonymity. They were informed that their interviews would be transcribed and sent back to them to verify and check their responses for accuracy (i.e., verifying that the information is what they intended to say). Participants were informed of the nature of the study and about confidentiality with a brief description of the general purpose and content of the

interview. Lastly, the consent form included a statement regarding a feedback/follow-up Zoom meeting after the interview, which involved the researcher sharing an abstract of the findings with them and verbalizing support should participants need assistance with trauma triggers or issues, including experiences of disconnectedness from their Bosnian American community and other current world events. In addition to providing each participant with general phone numbers of support lines and a list of federal resources (e.g., Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration [SAMHSA]), I also worked with the participants who verbalized needing additional support or assistance by assisting them with locating mental health or community support within their local areas and other support resources (See **Field Notes** section for additional information about the follow-up meetings and types of support provided to participants).

Interviews were completed via Zoom Video Communications due to the recent COVID-19 pandemic and geographical restrictions to the population of interest to ensure accessibility to the population of interest, participant safety, and participants' willingness to meet. The interviews ranged from 43 minutes to an hour and 37 minutes in length. Audio and video during the interviews were recorded via Zoom and saved to the Zoom Recording Cloud using a University of South Dakota affiliated Zoom account, which also subsequently transcribed the text from the interview from both the participant and researcher. To ensure participant confidentiality, the recording was started after the participant created a pseudonym.

Throughout the interview, I coded any real-time participant behaviors and comments and researcher thoughts and reflections using a phenomenological method called bracketing (Creswell & Poth, 2018) in a separate researcher journal, which included the field notes and

corresponding time stamps from the original recording (See **Field Notes** section for additional information regarding the study field notes). Field notes are created by the researcher when observing a culture, setting, or social situation to remember and record the behaviors, activities, events, and other features of the setting being observed (Burgess, 1991; Webb 1991). The researcher reads the field notes to produce meaning and an understanding of the culture, social situation, or phenomenon being studied (Burgess, 1991; Webb 1991). Field notes are to be written as soon as possible after the observation and should contain the date, time, location, and details of the main participants (Burgess, 1991; Webb 1991). The researcher should decide what to record and when, where, and how to record field notes. In addition, they should identify their relationship to the field and to the members of the setting being observed (Burgess, 1991; Webb 1991). When writing field notes, the researcher should jot down a few words or short sentences that will help them recall something they observed, something someone said, or something that happened. Jottings are then translated into field notes and used to facilitate the researcher's memory of the session in the field. When preparing these field notes, the researcher provides a detailed, coherent description of what they observed. Analysis of field notes occurs as the notes are being prepared and while the researcher is still in the field because it fosters self-reflection, which is crucial for increasing understanding and meaning making (Burgess, 1991; Webb 1991). The preliminary analysis reveals emergent themes, which allows the researcher to shift their attention in ways that can foster a more developed investigation of emerging themes (Burgess, 1991; Webb 1991). I completed the field notes in the manner described above and then transferred the field notes to a separate password-protected Word document that was saved on a password-protected folder on a password-protected flash drive that will be stored in a secure

location at the University of South Dakota for three years (see **Self Reflection** section for further information about bracketing). Following this, the original notes from my journal were shredded. Following the completion of the interview, the saving of the audio and video on the Zoom Recording Cloud, and the transcription process via Zoom, the interview audio and video were deleted from the Zoom Recording Cloud. The transcription was transferred over to a password-protected Word document and was saved on a password-protected folder on a password-protected flash drive that will be stored in a secure location at the University of South Dakota for three years. These detailed steps were followed to ensure participant confidentiality (see **Data Analysis** section for detailed information about reviewing Zoom transcription).

Participants were asked various research questions throughout the interview (See **Appendix C**). The questions included two broad research questions, in addition to socio-demographic and supplemental open-ended questions that allowed participants to expand on their experiences of cultural disconnectedness. It was believed that these questions would cover the scope of topics needed to understand the universal essence related to experiences of cultural disconnectedness among the Bosnian American diaspora. See **Appendix C** for the research questions, socio-demographic, supplemental open-ended, and check-in questions. Following the completion of the interview, I provided a link to an anonymous online survey (e.g., Reactions to Research Participation Questionnaire – Revised (RRPQ-R); Newman et al., 2001; See **Appendix D**) for participants to complete to assess their satisfaction with and reactions to their participation in the study.

Primary Research Questions

1. What have you experienced in terms of cultural disconnectedness within your Bosnian American community?
2. How have you experienced cultural disconnectedness within your community, specifically what contexts or situations have influenced or affected your experiences of cultural disconnectedness?

Ethical Considerations: Current Study

The largely reassuring body of evidence regarding ethical considerations when working with potentially trauma-exposed individuals in trauma-focused studies as described above in the *Research with Trauma-Exposed Participants* section, does not preclude the need for careful attention to ethical issues in research planning and execution. As a result, I took numerous steps throughout the data collection and analysis phases of the research process to address the ethical issues discussed above. First, I made a clear and detailed description in my informed consent documents of the purpose of the research study and the potential benefits and risks associated with participating in the study. I also made sure to review the informed consent documents with each participant prior to beginning the interview and emphasized the voluntary nature of research participation in writing, verbally, and nonverbally during the consent process. In addition, I routinely asked the participants whether they wished to continue during certain points of the interview rather than requiring them to raise the topic. These specific points are indicated on the research protocol in Appendix C. Following the completion of the study, I provided a link to an anonymous online survey (e.g., Reactions to Research Participation Questionnaire – Revised (RRPQ-R); Newman et al., 2001; See Appendix D for measure and **Participant Reactions to**

Research section for results from RRPQ-R) to complete to assess satisfaction with and reactions to their participation in the study.

Lastly, I had a feedback/follow-up Zoom meeting with each participant after the interview, which involved sharing an abstract of the findings with participants and verbalizing support should they need assistance with trauma triggers or issues, including experiences of disconnectedness from their Bosnian American community. In addition to providing each participant with general phone numbers of support lines and a list of federal resources (e.g., Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration [SAMHSA]), I also worked with the participants who verbalized needing additional support or assistance by assisting them with locating mental health or community support within their local areas. In sum, I took these steps throughout the research process to not only ensure the ethical considerations described above, but to also build trust with participants, provide information that helped them anticipate and manage any potential emotional reactions during the interview, and offer post-interview support that focused on feedback and additional processing of emotional reactions to the research study.

Self-Reflection

Phenomenological researchers understand that it is impossible to fully exclude personal experiences and how such experiences relate to the phenomena of interest (Smith et al., 2012). Thus, to account for personal biases, descriptive phenomenological researchers use a process called bracketing (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Bracketing is a process of setting aside or suspending one's personal bias or experience to see the experiences of the participants more clearly (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A common strategy used in bracketing is self-reflection. In the process

of self-reflection, the researcher acknowledges and writes down any beliefs or personal experiences related to the phenomena of interest. By writing down previous beliefs or biases, the researcher can set them aside and focus on engaging in the phenomenological research process without preconceived ideas (Creswell & Poth, 2018). See **Procedure** section for an outlined description of how bracketing was used in the study.

Self-reflection is essential during the qualitative research process. At the time of this investigation, I, Azra Osmančević, a White, Bosnian American, have had both professional and personal experiences with the population of interest. My parents and family were exposed to the Bosnian War and experienced several horrors of war (i.e., death, violence, family hardships, exposure to concentration camps, etc.). Following the Bosnian War, my parents were displaced twice, in both Germany and the United States, respectively. I was born in Hamm, Germany, in 1995 and immigrated with my family to the United States as refugees in 1997, specifically to Des Moines, Iowa.

I am also in the same age range as the population of interest (18–30-year-olds), and I immigrated to the United States with my parents in 1997. As I was growing up, I also served as a cultural broker for my parents in many ways through translation, attending various important appointments, and filling out important governmental documents. I have also been exposed to experiences of disconnectedness with both my native Bosnian culture and host American culture, which has resulted in feeling “too Bosnian for some Americans and too American for some Bosnians.” This has resulted in attempting to engage in bicultural identity formation, particularly

by gaining a deeper understanding of my Bosnian culture. To do this, I have engaged in various activities identified in the literature, including increasing my competence with the Bosnian language, visiting my homeland, and engaging in Bosnian traditions and customs, such as going to Bosnian bars, cafes, and restaurants, soccer games, concerts, and mosque.

In addition to this, my cultural background has resulted in me pursuing graduate-level training in a Clinical Psychology Ph.D. program. I have also collaborated with the Bosnian population professionally in the past, particularly as a presenter during the Bosnian American Professional Association (BAPA) annual forum. I have worked with the Bosnian American diaspora from a research perspective as well, particularly during my research for my master's thesis, which focused on ethnic identity, perceived parental sacrifice, and psychological distress among Bosnian American college-aged students. As a result of this, I have networked and made connections with various Bosnian American diaspora across the country. I state these beliefs and past experiences here to be completely transparent and to try to avoid letting my personal beliefs influence how I collect and understand the data.

I also have certain personal characteristics that may impact how I interpret the qualitative results of this study. These characteristics include my high desire for achievement and success in different areas of life, particularly academically. I also personally believe that my parents sacrificed a lot to immigrate to this country for a better future for my sister and myself. My experiences of disconnectedness from both my Bosnian and American cultures, in addition to my exploratory findings from my master's thesis research, inspired me to complete this study, and

thus may subsequently result in potential biases. Lastly, I believe that I have a strong connection to my cultural background and take great pride in being Bosnian, which may have also impacted the way I developed my research questions and may potentially impact how I collect data and interpret the results.

Knowing all the information described above in my self-reflection, I took extra steps through the bracketing process to note any personal biases that arose during the interview process in my researcher field notes (see **Field Notes** section for further information). In addition, I engaged in a personal reflection process following each interview, which involved writing any additional thoughts, feelings, and reflections about the research process (see **Field Notes** section for further information). Lastly, I met with my research advisor for biweekly meetings to reflect on the research process and with our research lab on a regular basis to engage in a form of peer review and reflection throughout the research process, which involved discussing any biases that arose during the research process (see **Field Notes** section for further information).

Data Analysis

Data analysis consisted of using qualitative data analysis methods derived from Lichtman (2014) for phenomenological studies. First, the transcript files that were transcribed by Zoom were reviewed following saving the audio and video files to the Zoom Recording Cloud to check for transcription accuracy (see **Procedure** section for detailed information about using Zoom Recording Cloud for transcriptions). Password-protected Word files were created called “Researcher Notes,” which were used to note any key ideas, feelings, and impressions (i.e.,

biases) that came about during the interview, transcription, and data analysis process (see **Procedure** section for detailed information about this during interview and transcription process; see **Field Notes** section for further information about researcher notes). Following this, I re-read the transcripts and identified significant statements, including keywords and phrases, and used the underline feature in Word to note the significance statements.

Once significant statements were identified, codes were assigned to each statement using the comment box feature in Word. Codes were generated through finding repeated patterns within each statement mentioned by each participant throughout the interview (e.g., discussing family, language, religion, etc.). A list of key ideas was initially noted for me to be aware of based on the significant information discussed in the literature review. This list included the key ideas of identity, culture, family, traditions, working hard, education, intergenerational experiences tied to the Bosnian War and refugee life (e.g., translating, relocations/migration, parental war sacrifices, etc.), race, religion, discrimination, language, community, and community social activities. These key ideas were discussed in the literature review as significant themes tied to experiences of cultural connectedness and disconnectedness among Bosnian American diaspora in various research studies. Following this, I asked two individuals from my research lab to review the significance statements and initial codes. Peer review began after I determined that I had reached saturation as described above in the **Participants** section. Codes were revised as needed until a list of final codes was generated. Next, categories of codes (i.e., themes) were identified by developing clusters of meaning from each significant statement (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The highlight function on Word was used to identify the codes that fell within each category (i.e., theme) that emerged.

This process was applied to all transcripts. I met with my major advisor and two individuals from our research lab to verify and discuss the categories/themes that were generated and additional factors, including the appropriateness of themes, newly identified themes, and if themes needed to be collapsed or expanded. Once all the transcripts were coded, I met with my major advisor and lab mates for the final meeting to reaffirm categories/themes and concepts. No discrepancies were noted by the lab or my major advisor when reviewing the categories/themes, and there were agreements across all categories/themes.

I created a textural description of what the participants experienced as well (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994), more specifically a description of “what” the participants in the study experienced with the phenomenon. Textural descriptions specifically include verbatim examples of the experiences (i.e., quotes; see **Results** section for further information about textural descriptions). In addition to a textural description, I also developed a structural description of “how” the participant’s experiences happened. To do this, I reflected on the setting and context in which the phenomenon was experienced or occurred (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994; see **Results** section for further information about structural descriptions). Lastly, I created a composite description of the phenomenon. The composite description incorporated both the textural and structural descriptions (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). This section of the data analysis is the universal “essence” of the experience for the participants. This approach, involving developing textural and structural descriptions in addition to identifying significant statements and themes, is called transcendental phenomenology (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). Following the identification of the “essence,” I

presented the understanding of the essence of the experience in written form within my results section.

Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of qualitative data and data analysis is characterized by credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Shenton, 2004). Credibility refers to the adoption of appropriate, well recognized research methods (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Shenton, 2004). It also involves developing an early familiarity with the culture of participating organizations within a study, a heavily detailed description of the phenomenon under scrutiny, examination of previous research to frame findings, and random sampling of individuals serving as informants (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Shenton, 2004). Triangulation is an additional method often used in qualitative research to confirm data and ensure credibility. The method involves obtaining information from multiple sources (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Shenton, 2004). Credibility also involves using tactics to help ensure honesty in participants and iterative questioning in data collection dialogues. The researcher engages in debriefing sessions with their superiors (i.e., research advisors), peer scrutiny of the project (i.e., peer review), and member checks of collected data and the interpretations formed from this as well (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Shenton, 2004). Lastly, credibility involves the use of “reflective commentary,” which may include researcher self-reflection (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Shenton, 2004).

The current study took these criteria into consideration to ensure credibility of the qualitative data and data analysis methods. I have a deep familiarity with the culture of the participating organizations within the study (i.e., the Bosnian American population). I identify as a Bosnian American and have had previous research experience with the population of interest,

which has involved developing expertise within this specific research area. As a result, I have provided a detailed description of the phenomenon under scrutiny (i.e., experiences of cultural disconnectedness among Bosnian American diaspora). I have used previous research to frame my argument in the literature review and plan on using the previous research to frame my findings as well. I engaged in random sampling, triangulation (e.g., using multiple forms of social media for data collection, post-interview questionnaire), and tactics to ensure participant honesty (e.g., the use of pseudonyms among participants). I also engaged in peer review with peers from my research lab and debriefed with my researcher advisor. I completed member checks with participants following the completion of the study to address any trauma responses and questions and to review the findings of the study as well. More specifically, the participants were provided with a post-interview anonymous online survey that assessed satisfaction with and reactions to their participation in the study. I also had a feedback/follow-up Zoom meeting with each participant after the interview, which involved sharing an abstract of the findings with participants and verbalizing support if participants needed assistance with trauma triggers or issues, including experiences of cultural disconnectedness from their Bosnian or American cultural groups. Lastly, I engaged in self-reflection to address any personal biases prior to data collection and continued to throughout the data collection and analysis process with various methods described above (e.g., journaling, bracketing, and researcher notes).

The next suggestion for trustworthiness of qualitative data and data analysis is transferability. Transferability measures a study's external validity and focuses on how the results of the study can be applied to other situations (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Shenton, 2004). I took measures to ensure transferability by providing extensive background data to establish the

context of the study. In addition, I provided a detailed description of the phenomenon of interest, experiences of cultural disconnectedness, to allow for comparisons to be made by other researchers in different contexts. I also continued to provide additional information for the context of the study through the data analysis process and findings to increase the study's transferability across cultural contexts.

Dependability involves addressing the issue of reliability by using “overlapping methods” and an in-depth methodological description to allow for a study to be repeatable (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Shenton, 2004). More specifically, the researcher uses techniques to show that, if the work were to be repeated, in the same context, with the same methods and the same participants, similar results would be obtained (Shenton, 2004). To ensure dependability of the study, I provided an in-depth methodological description to allow other researchers to repeat my study. I added information to these sections throughout my data collection and data analysis process to ensure further dependability.

Lastly, the concept of confirmability is the qualitative researcher's comparable concern to objectivity (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Shenton, 2004). The researcher takes steps to ensure that the findings from the study are the result of the experiences and ideas of the participants, rather than the characteristics and preferences of the researcher. For this, the researcher may use triangulation to reduce the effect of researcher bias (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Shenton, 2004). To achieve confirmability, a researcher may also admit their personal beliefs and assumptions, recognize the shortcomings of a study's methods and their potential effects, and provide an in-depth methodological description to allow for integrity of the research results (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Shenton, 2004).

These techniques described above were thus also used to ensure confirmability in numerous ways. For example, the participants were informed that their interviews were to be transcribed and sent back to them to verify and check their responses for accuracy (i.e., verifying that the information is what they intended to say). This step was taken to reduce the effect of researcher bias and to ensure that the findings from the study are the result of the experiences and ideas of the participants. I also engaged in self-reflection to address my own personal biases prior to the beginning of data collection and continued to engage in the reflective process throughout the data collection and analysis process using bracketing and researcher field notes. As previously mentioned, I also provided an in-depth methodological description to ensure integrity of the research results and dependability. In addition to this, I also recognized any shortcomings of my study following the completion of data collection and analysis, as mentioned in my limitations section within my discussion. Overall, the techniques described within the areas of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were all used to ensure and strengthen the trustworthiness of the current qualitative study.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics are reported for the final analysis sample ($N = 7$). A total of seven participants were interviewed for the current study before saturation was reached. Characteristics of the sample were obtained via demographic questions answered by the participants in the beginning of the interview. As mentioned in the methods, each participant developed a pseudonym and will be referred by their selected pseudonym throughout the results section. The sample consisted of seven participants, including four women and three men who were between

the ages of 18-30. Participants were from various geographical areas within the United States, including the Midwest, East, South, and Pacific Northwest regions. The regions that participants were from are representative of areas with large Bosnian communities in the United States (Osmančević, 2020). Sexual orientation ranged from six participants identifying as heterosexual and one participant identifying as homosexual. No gender differences were noted in the themes; interestingly, participants had more similarities across experiences in each theme despite gender/gender identity.

Religious identity among participants was primarily Muslim. One participant also identified as Jewish and one participant Atheist, respectively. Country of birth for participants varied, with reported countries including the United States, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Germany, and Croatia. Regarding country of birth, there were no major differences between responses from participants born in Bosnia and Herzegovina and non-Bosnian born individuals. Participants also reported the year their families arrived in the U.S. and their age when their parents left Bosnia and Herzegovina. Reported years of arrival to the U.S. ranged from 1994-2001. Two participants (Meho and Emina) reported that they lived in Bosnia and Herzegovina for part of their lives. Meho reported that he was born in Bosnia and Herzegovina and that he moved to the United States at age three, and then back to Bosnia and Herzegovina when he was in the 7th grade (i.e., 2005), with Meho and his family ultimately moving back to the United States in January 2008. Emina reported that she was born in Bosnia and Herzegovina and moved to the United States with her parents when she was two and half years old. After her father died when she was 10 years old, she moved back to Bosnia and Herzegovina and lived there until she was 19 years old and finally moved to the United States at that age as well. The remaining participants were either

born in Bosnia and Herzegovina or other countries listed above, moved to the United States at young ages, and stayed in the U.S. with no additional resettlements. Despite these varying experiences with resettlement between participants, no major differences in experiences of cultural disconnectedness or connectedness were noted by participants due to this factor. Interestingly, participants had more similarities across experiences despite resettlement differences. Ages when their parents left Bosnia and Herzegovina ranged from 2-3 years old, and three participants were born after their parents left Bosnia and Herzegovina. Every participant reported that their parents were refugees following the war. Lastly, length of stay in the United States ranged between 12.5-24 years for the participants. Table 1 and Table 2 below provide demographic characters as indicated by each participant.

Table 1.

Sample Characteristics

Participant	Age	Gender	Sex	Sexual Orientation	Religious Identity	Current Geographic Location in U.S.
1: Meho	28	Man	Male	Heterosexual	Atheist	Midwest
2: Lajla	18	Woman	Female	Heterosexual	Muslim	East
3: Josip	28	Man	Male	Gay	Jewish	Midwest
4: Medina	24	Woman	Female	Heterosexual	Muslim	Midwest
5: Sadina	24	Woman	Female	Heterosexual	Muslim	South
6: Armin	25	Man	Male	Heterosexual	Muslim	Midwest
7: Emina	24	Woman	Female	Heterosexual	Muslim	Pacific Northwest

Table 2.

Sample Characteristics (cont.)

Participant	Country of Birth	Year Family Arrived in U.S.	Age Parents Left Bosnia	Parent Refugee Status	Length of Stay in U.S.
1: Meho	Bosnia & Herzegovina	2001	3 years old	Yes	17.5 years
2: Lajla	United States	1998	N/A	Yes	18 years
3: Josip	Bosnia & Herzegovina	1997	2 years old	Yes	24 years
4: Medina	Germany	1998	N/A	Yes	23 years
5: Sadina	United States	1994	N/A	Yes	24 years
6: Armin	Croatia	1999	3 years old	Yes	22 years
7: Emina	Bosnia & Herzegovina	1999	2.5 years old	Yes	12.5 years

The Phenomenological Approach

The current study sought to describe a common meaning for Bosnian American diaspora of their lived experiences of cultural disconnectedness. More specifically, this study focused on gaining a deeper understanding of the universal experience of cultural disconnectedness among Bosnian American diaspora and the subsequent impacts of this on their psychological well-being using a phenomenological perspective.

Qualitative Results

From seven verbatim transcripts, 42 codes were extracted and used to categorize significant statements. The codes were arranged into clusters that resulted in nine themes. Participants were asked various open-ended questions related to the phenomenon of experiences

of cultural disconnectedness to assist with reflecting about these experiences. Table 3 below highlights the nine themes and their respective codes that emerged from participant significant statements.

Table 3

Themes and Codes

Themes	Codes
1. A variety of negative experiences with identifying as Muslim result in experiences of cultural disconnectedness for Bosnian American diaspora.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Not growing up religious b. Experiencing judgment c. Experiences of Islamophobia
2. Experiences of cultural disconnectedness related to language abilities and competencies are complex for Bosnian American diaspora.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Judgment of language abilities b. Getting made fun of c. Lack of competency with Bosnian language d. Learning/forgetting the Bosnian language e. Context influencing feelings of competency f. Connectedness due to language abilities
3. Culture becomes either a risk or protective factor for/against experiences of cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Connecting to your culture b. Context influences cultural identity c. Cultural resiliency d. Preserving your cultural identity e. Cultural norms

<p>disconnectedness that varies depending on context for Bosnian American diaspora.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> f. Cultural stigma g. Cultural factors
<p>4. Bosnian American diaspora engage in various strategies to seek support due to experiences of cultural disconnectedness.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Family b. Friends c. Social media d. Creativity e. Bonding with other minorities f. Traveling g. Avoidance of support
<p>5. Experiences of cultural disconnectedness have become accepted by Bosnian American diaspora.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Disconnectedness as reality
<p>6. Family plays a major role for Bosnian American diaspora, causing either experiences of cultural disconnectedness or connectedness.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Being a cultural broker b. Pressure from family c. Effects from the Bosnian War d. Familial connectedness
<p>7. Bosnian American diaspora struggle with feeling either “too Bosnian” or “too American.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Labeled as Americanized b. Intergenerational disconnectedness c. Disconnectedness from Bosnians d. Disconnectedness from Americans e. Generational differences

8. Race is a multidimensional factor that causes different types of experiences of cultural disconnectedness for Bosnian American diaspora.	a. Privilege b. Racism c. Experiences of marginalization
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9. Experiences of cultural disconnectedness within Bosnian American diaspora's communities varies and depends on contextual factors.	a. School setting b. Lack of connection to American community c. Lack of access to the Bosnian community d. Lack of connection to Bosnians in their communities e. Connectedness to the Bosnian community
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Narrative Description of Findings

The following provides a narrative description of each of the themes and codes that emerged when exploring the overall “essence” of experiences of cultural disconnectedness among Bosnian American diaspora. More specifically, each theme below will include a textural and structural description, including “what” the participants in the study experienced with the phenomenon of experiences of cultural disconnectedness (i.e., passages from verbatim transcripts) and “how” the experience happened (i.e., reflecting on the setting and context in which the phenomenon [experiences of cultural disconnectedness] was experienced). Additionally, each theme below will include a composite description of the phenomenon that

incorporates both the textural and structural descriptions to explain the “essence” of experiences of cultural disconnectedness among Bosnian American diaspora.

Theme 1: A variety of negative experiences with identifying as Muslim result in experiences of cultural disconnectedness for Bosnian American diaspora.

Theme one emerged from the codes of not growing up religious (e.g., families not being religious, being Muslim but feeling like you do not have a religion, experiencing a disconnect from people who go to *dzamija* (mosque) when not growing up going to mosque, difficulties connecting with people in their Bosnian communities who did grow up religious), experiencing judgment (i.e., being judged for not going to mosque and experiencing judgment and anti-Semitism), and experiences of Islamophobia (i.e., not wanting to tell others you are Muslim due to negative perceptions and experiencing direct discrimination from Americans for being Muslim).

The majority of participants stated that they grew up identifying as Muslim, yet also described experiencing disconnectedness because they did not grow up religious (i.e., practicing Islam). For example, one participant, Lajla, described that her friends view her as “not Bosnian enough” because she does not go to mosque. She continued by describing experiences of disconnectedness from these friends because she did not grow up as religious as they did, resulting in feelings of shame: “It makes me feel like weird and like bad at the same time, because it's just something like we haven't grown up with...Like okay, but how does that make me any less of a Bosnian?”

Another participant, Medina, also reflected on not growing up religious and experiencing a disconnect with people who went to mosque:

I have a disconnect from the people like I know that go to *dzamija*...the mosque...I've never been inside a mosque, I've never gone to mosque, even though I'm Muslim, because I grew up in the Midwest, where we had only an Arabic Mosque. My parents never took us, whereas here [different city in the Midwest with a larger Bosnian population] they have like a Bosnian mosque, where I live now. And so, sometimes, so like, I'll have friends that talk about things that happened at *dzamija*, and like things about the religion that I have literally no idea about, or like roles that certain people play in *dzamija*. I feel like there's always a disconnect there. I just have nothing to say about it because I don't know anything about it.

After being asked what this disconnection feels like, Medina continued by discussing how her husband's family is more religious than hers and how she feels a general disconnect from Islam.

In this passage below, Medina discusses how her family never engaged in traditional Islamic customs related to giving the mosque donations (i.e., *vitre*) and payments for membership to secure a burial plot (i.e., *vazifa*), resulting in her feeling shame and causing Medina to hide a part of herself and feeling like she does not have a religion:

My husband's parents are really religious...they're more religious, I wouldn't say really religious, but like during holiday times like I feel like I'm always asking them questions because, like you, should go to *dzamija* [mosque] and you have to like pay in like *vitre* [mosque donations] and all that, and I've never done that in my life, my parents have never paid *vitre*, they don't pay the *dzamija* for like a spot in the *mezar* [cemetery], but like I asked about it...I don't feel embarrassed that I don't know, I just...I feel like I also just kind of tuck that part of me away because I never really had access to it and didn't learn about it, and I was just kind of like, "yeah I'm Muslim, but like, I don't really have religion." *laughs*

Despite this, Medina continued to reflect on her increased desire to connect with Islam now that she lives in a larger Muslim, Bosnian community:

I think there's been some things that I made like decisions on now that I'm like in my own household and married, like I want to...maybe not right now, but like when we have kids, like I want to be part of that...where we're paying the *dzamija* for spots...When I think about it...it's like "where are my parents gonna go?" Like they don't pay to be here, and they live an hour away, and like do I bury them in like an American graveyard? Or do I...like my dad wants to be cremated, like what do I do?"...I want my kids to go into *folklore* and learn that. Um...as for *dzamija*, I don't really care, but if we decide together

to send them like on certain days to learn prayers, I would be open to that too, because those are things that I didn't get to experience.

Another participant, Emina, described not being raised religious and having difficulties with connecting to people in her community who are more religious:

It [experiences of disconnectedness] comes from the religious aspect as well. I, you know, even in Bosnia, I wasn't raised in a really religious family...I wasn't raised to be extremely religious and of course, I am...you know I believe in God, and you know I follow a lot of...of the religious norms that we...that we have...I found that a lot of people here that I know that are in the, at least in my community, you know, all gatherings are kind of religious gatherings there...it's usually based around the mosque, or you know, *iftar* [meal taken by Muslims at sundown to break the daily fast during Ramadan] and *teravije* [tarawih prayers performed during Ramadan], and that's just not something I grew up with, and that's why I find it really hard to kind of connect with the people here.

Another salient code within this theme that was reported by participants was “experiencing judgment.” Participants described being judged for not going to mosque and for identifying with a different religion (i.e., Judaism). Lajla described being judged by her peers who practice Islam and attend mosque regularly and how this increases her disconnectedness from her peers:

I don't like go to *dzamija* [mosque] a lot or stuff like that, I've never actually been and they like kind of like scold me for that almost for like not doing that...it's something I've never been like raised to do.

Emina also described receiving judgment from her community for not attending mosque (i.e., “pushing” her to attend mosque and other Islamic traditions – *teravija* [tarawih prayers performed during Ramadan] and *iftar*, the evening meal eaten by Muslims after sunset during Ramadan), with subsequent experiences of disconnectedness and feeling like she is “not Bosnian enough” (i.e., feeling unworthy) for her community:

Well, you know, pushing...pushing you to “why aren't you going to the mosque? Why aren't you part of the community?”...I've lived there [Bosnia and Herzegovina] for 10 years, and I've never had anyone asked me “why are you not going to the mosque? Why haven't you been to this *teravija* [tarawih prayers performed during Ramadan]? Why haven't you come to the *iftar* [meal taken by Muslims at sundown to break the daily fast during Ramadan]?”...A lot of the people here, when they see that they are like, “Oh, she just...it's like she just doesn't want to spend time with us or she's too, you know...we're not good enough for her. So, and that's again, where they start with religion, they're like, “well, you know, in Muslim...in Islam, we don't call them [dads] *tata*.” There's no specific saying of how you're supposed to call your dad.” So after, you know after that a lot of people are like, “ooh she's maybe not, you know, she's not religious enough or she's not Bosnian enough.”

The final code that emerged within this theme was “experiences of Islamophobia.”

Participants described experiences of disconnectedness due to the negative perceptions of Muslims and experiences of discrimination for being Muslim by Americans. Armin reflected on how he has experienced direct discrimination from Americans after they found out he was Muslim, using an example from when he was at work, which resulted in increased experiences of cultural disconnectedness with his American counterparts.

So, I remember working as a server I think I was late high school, and I was working as a server, morning shift, you know, I was talking to some people, and they hear a foreign name and they're like, “Oh, you know you must be born somewhere else. Where are you from?” So, no I don't mind talking to people letting them know where I'm from, getting to know someone, but once questions stop becoming like inquisitive and just borderline inappropriate, you know, in terms of like the religious aspect and stuff, that...that's what I realized, I was like “Oh, shoot like this is, you know, this is a real thing like people aren't really aware,” I was like “Oh!” and you know, in coming to America, it is a Christian predominant country, and I'm just like “oh wow, you know?” And they were like, “Would this happen to you if you converted religions? Or would this happen?” I was like “none of that would happen, like this is...this is the Midwest, like that's not going to happen here” so that's when I was like, “whoa this like this cultural disconnect is kind of real” ...it's very real.

He continued by providing more examples about inappropriate questions he has received from Americans for being Muslim that have caused feelings of shock:

Um yeah so, a typical one is like “Are you Muslim?” and I’m like “Yeah, yeah I am.” And then some inappropriate comments I’ve heard in the past are like, “Why do you have a bad person name?” Or “Who gave you that name? If you tried converting, will they kill you?” And those are just some of the ones off top my head, that I was like “no…” this is…people ask these questions as if it's normal, like that this was just kind of like a run of the mill conversation to me, like let me ask you this, which I was just kinda blown back by.

After I reflected to Armin that this seemed like an intense, hurtful experience, that caused confusion and anger he continued by saying:

Yeah, and the thing is, I genuinely think those people weren't aware of, like the magnitude of the questions they're asking to them, they were just like “Oh, you know, like oh, are you related to Saddam [Hussein] or, you know, do you have relatives in the Middle East?” Or “Are you a terrorist?” You know, that always comes to me, those are pretty common. Looking back on it, I’m like “you brush it off, like oh whatever, it's happened,” but in the moment it's a lot more intense and you're just like… I don't know… it's hard to keep your cool in those situations. So, it's like you rather just like walk away from it. So, I was like… I just went and got a different server. I was like, “hey can we switch places? This is getting like really out of hand, I’m not trying to like create a scene.” It ended before it got too like… like weirder or extreme.

Sadina also described a similar experience of not wanting to tell others she is Muslim, starting early in elementary school due to the negative perceptions that her American peers held towards Muslims and resulting feelings of discomfort from this. She continued by describing experiences of disconnectedness in school from other kids who were not Muslim.

Yeah, I think recently it's too… and when you're younger, I think it's a little bit harder to wrap your mind around you know, who you are, and what is this, and what is that… and like… Like for the longest time, I didn't even realize… like I remember in, I think, fourth grade, they were putting on this like… and I was starting as a new student at this school, and they were putting on some kind of play, or something, and it was like Christmas play, and so, I had gotten like transferred to the school too late, like to get a part in the play or some stupid thing, I don't even know, which was fine, I didn't really want to be in the play or anything, *laughs* and that was the reason I wasn't in it, but I didn't really tell anyone like that I was also like Muslim or anything, I didn't even understand like what that actually meant, like even in elementary school like I had no idea… I was just like “I don't celebrate, you know, Christmas, you know sorry,” and it was so like terrible now that I think about it, because it was me and like two or three other kids who are also

Muslim, they were from I don't know...Lebanon or something, and we would just go in the library, and we would have to like sit on the computer and like do other stuff like instead of participating and in like main activity that the other kids were in...and so, I guess, that's not really like a Bosnian example, but just in terms of like how we were talking about religion, how like that's a huge thing, like you don't even realize it and then you're put in these situations...and I always feel a little uncomfortable just because of how that whole perception is here in the US, like saying like, "oh yeah, by the way, you know I'm Muslim" and they're like "huh?" and sometimes it's easier not to even, you know, tell anyone but it's like...I don't know. *laughs*

Each participant reflected on an area within theme one that described their unique yet also overlapping experiences of cultural disconnectedness due to a variety of negative experiences with identifying as Muslim. Across each code, the majority of participants reported similar experiences of cultural disconnectedness, suggesting agreement across codes. More specifically, all participants provided textural descriptions of experiences of disconnectedness within this theme, due to not growing up religious, experiencing judgment, and experiences of Islamophobia. Regarding structural descriptions, participants expanded on how their experiences resulted in a variety of subsequent feelings and behaviors, including feelings of shame, unworthiness, shock, confusion, anger, and discomfort due to negative experiences with identifying as Muslim. Some participants also described how their behaviors were impacted due to these experiences of cultural disconnectedness, including "hiding" parts of themselves, not wanting to disclose their religious identity to others, and an increased desire to connect with Islam. In sum, these textural and structural descriptions demonstrated that negative experiences with identifying as Muslim are varied for Bosnian American diaspora and result in different types of feelings and behaviors due to experiences of cultural disconnectedness.

Theme 2: Experiences of cultural disconnectedness related to language abilities and competencies are complex for Bosnian American diaspora.

The second theme emerged from six major codes, including judgment of language abilities, getting made fun of (i.e., other Bosnians making fun of their poor language skills or mistakes in pronunciation/grammar), lack of competency with the Bosnian language, learning/forgetting the Bosnian language, context influencing feelings of competency (i.e., feeling more competent with the Bosnian language in certain settings versus other settings), and experiences of connectedness due to language abilities. Below are examples from various participants describing their experiences of disconnectedness and connectedness within each specific area of the language theme.

Lajla began by discussing her experiences of judgment from Bosnian people regarding her Bosnian language abilities and continued by discussing the second code within this theme, including ways in which she was “made fun of” by other Bosnians. She elaborated on how this judgment and getting made fun of for her language abilities has increased her experiences of disconnectedness from other Bosnians and subsequent feelings of sadness.

Sometimes like because I mispronounce like a lot of [Bosnian] words they'll [other Bosnians] like also “scold” me, if you will, for that, but it's like sometimes like I just can't pronounce a word or something and it's not like my fault, or like I don't know. Um it's like sad because, like, I feel like I should be able to like be proud of it and, like...like be able to talk Bosnian without people like judging me and like saying stuff. Like, literally like a couple...like a week ago, like this lady like tried to say something to me, and I asked her like, I was like, “oh what?” because I couldn't like hear her, and then she was like, “do you not know how to speak Bosnian?” and like I was like...really like taken aback, and I just like kept quiet and I was like that's like exactly the reason why, you know, I tried not to like talk to them.

When asked to elaborate on this experience of an older Bosnian woman judging her Bosnian language abilities, Lajla described feelings of shame as well:

Um, I was literally just sitting there, and I really couldn't hear like...there was...like the TV was on, and I was like up, in like the kitchen, and she was in the living room, and the lady, it was like a couple of ladies, and I was doing something, and she like said something and I was like, "oh, like what?" in Bosnian I was like, "Sto?" and she was like, "do you not know how to speak Bosnian? like *"sram i stid te bilo"* ["you should be embarrassed and ashamed"]. And I was like just like taken aback, and I was like, "no I just like really couldn't hear you" and she was like, "okay like don't lie, like you just don't know how to like say things" and then she like made fun of the way I said, like "red" and she was like, "she needs to get better at pronouncing" and I just...it made me feel like I was like, "ohhhh" like it made me feel bad in a way, and I didn't even like want to defend myself, because I just knew like it was...there's no point to because, like she was older and like...it was just, you know. *awkwardly laughs, with tears filling her eyes*

She also described how "getting made fun of" was present in multiple settings, including within the community (as noted above) and within the school setting:

I have like a different accent, kind of, then some Bosnians like around here...they're more from like...like *Srebrenica* [town in Bosnia and Herzegovina] and, like those places versus like my family's more kind of like a city and like we have like slightly different accents, so the way we say things...and like if I say like bread a certain way, and they say a different way, the majority of those in our school are all from *Srebrenica*, so they kind of like make fun of me in that aspect and it's just like...it's like differently...like having a different American accent, like people like to say, like water like weird or something, like it's still the same word, it's just like a different pronunciation, so I don't really know why it's that big a deal but that's like a lot of the thing.

When asked to describe how these experiences of disconnectedness from her peers due to her language abilities made her feel, she continued to report increased feelings of sadness.

It's sad, kind of, because it's like you can't really help it...um I don't know, like how do I describe it? It's just like they would probably feel bad if someone was making fun of them for the way that they're speaking, and like especially like if like they had an accent or something, and someone was making fun of them for that, like it's not like a good feeling and then making fun of someone else for it like makes no sense...it's like mostly in school or like I hang around with like this one Bosnian girl a lot um, because she's in one of my classes and she like tells me. Also, I happen...like one time in gym, like they [other Bosnian students] thought like I had left, I went back to the locker room to get

something, and they were like talking about it [her Bosnian language abilities] and, like I could hear them, and then like it's just like, it's mostly like in a school environment or social media as well too now.

Later, she described “hiding” parts of herself due to these experiences of disconnectedness by refusing to speak Bosnian:

Like hiding as in...mhhh like it's not like I make it like a big deal that like I'm Bosnian or I tell people like, “yeah I'm Bosnian” like “I'm from Bosnia” only...or like to other Bosnians, like I like refused to speak Bosnian to them like in a way, if they're ever talking just because, like them making fun of me is like always like a big worry and the way I talk or can't pronounce things, like I'd never like try to like make it a point to speak Bosnian or say anything, or like around adults like, especially because, like a lot of adults here will like judge and like speak in between each other.

Medina, Sadina, and Emina also described experiencing judgment from other Bosnians about their language abilities and subsequent experiences of disconnectedness within these settings. Medina began by reflecting on how Bosnians have judged her for her language abilities and how this increased her feelings of shame and resulted in subsequent defensiveness toward them:

Like there's been times, where I have to Google things, and you know somebody would be like, “that's your own language, like, how do you not know?” But I mean, having it be your second language you can't really...I mean you can't really know everything; I don't know every word in English either. Like I said, just kind of makes you feel like, I don't know, it's like I should have known that. *laughs* yeah, that's how it feels...Well, I feel like I get defensive because it's, you know, I tried really hard compared to my siblings, like my Bosnian's really good. My siblings like speak really poor Bosnian, so like I tried so hard to make sure that I knew the language and then, when somebody insults that, like my knowledge of the language, I just like...I just get really defensive.

Sadina also described a similar experience of judgment about her language abilities that resulted in increased experiences of cultural disconnectedness with her Bosnian peers within the area of language: “Like me, not knowing a certain word or...like language is another huge thing too, because I think sometimes people are like oh like, “*ona nezna*” [“she does not know”] or she

doesn't know how to speak the language, or certain words.” She continues by explaining how this judgment of her language abilities and being made fun of not only increases her cultural disconnectedness, but also makes her angry/irritated and question her cultural identity:

I think sometimes people...I don't know, not everyone, but a lot of people, are like, “oh you're trying and you're speaking it, that's awesome” you know, like “keep doing that” and then there's other people that are like, “Oh, she doesn't know,” or “she doesn't know this.” Or I don't know...it really rubs me the wrong way so... *laughs* It rubs me the wrong way, because I think if you are trying to speak it, and if you are at least, you know, like wanting to learn different words and stuff like that, I think that says a lot about how much you do respect the culture and how much you care about it. So, to be made fun of for trying to speak it and you know, maybe stumbling upon a word or something, I just think it's so like...like I'm okay, if you maybe correct me you're like “oh no, *vako je, znas*, this how you say it,” that's fine, like that...that doesn't upset me, but it's like people who are just like “oh my gosh, like you don't know how to talk” or...and it kind of makes you feel like, “Oh, am I even belonging to my nationality at all,” and then you start to question like your identity and it kind of goes back to that whole feeling of being like out of place even in your own community with your own people so... *nods*

Lastly, Emina reflected on how Bosnians have judged her for using words that are generally considered to be Croatian instead of Bosnian, and how this has resulted in disconnectedness from these people. Culturally, this judgment stems from linguistic variations, particularly in using language that fits different cultural or religious norms (i.e., Islamic influences vs. Catholic influences in the case of Emina). Linguistic variation refers to regional, social, or contextual differences in the ways that a particular language is used (Reppen, & Fitzmaurice, 2002).

Emina describes sociolinguistic variation occurring when saying the term father in Bosnian as she discussed the ways she refers to her father after his death. Sociolinguist variation involves speakers choosing between elements in the same linguistic context based on extra-linguistic factors (e.g., degree of (in)formality of the topic under discussion, the social status of

the speaker, cultural influences, the setting in which communication takes place; Farmer, 2012). Emina stated that she uses the term “*tata*” for father, a typical Croatian way for saying father, instead of the term “*babo*,” which is historically used more by Bosniaks (i.e., Bosnian Muslims) when saying father in Bosnian. The use of certain words and language varies regionally for Bosnians (i.e., different regional areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina use different language dependent on historical influences and majority populations in each area – Bosnian/Serbian/Croatian populations within the country).

Dialect also influences this experience that Emina is describing. A dialect is a variation in grammar, vocabulary, and sound (Ellis, 1999). The extent of dialectal variations can vary from extreme to small differences. Bosnian, Serbian, and Croatian languages have similar dialects, which makes these types of words (e.g., words for father: *babo* [Bosnian], *tata* [Croatian], *cale* [Serbian]) understandable within and across ethnic groups that speak the languages. This specific experience of cultural disconnectedness underscores the lasting influence that the Bosnian War, which was rooted in religious and ethnic conflict, has had on linguistic variation within and among different ethnic groups and settings in Bosnia and Herzegovina and among Bosnian diaspora in the United States. In addition, this influences what may be considered acceptable/not acceptable use of language by different groups. Below is Emina’s experience of this:

I’ve grown up in a family, where you know, instead of saying *babo* you say *tata*, and I’ve gotten used to that, and every time I...I refer to my dad I always say *rahmetli tata* [*rahmetli*: “god rest his soul” or “in memory of”] instead of *rahmetli babo*, and I’ve gotten like multiple comments and like weird looks of like, “you’re not supposed to say *tata*, like, we say *babo*.” And I’m like, “why does it matter how I call my dad? Like he’s my dad at the end of the day, just because you’ll hear a Croatian say that, you know, doesn’t mean it’s not a normal way to like say it.” The majority of my friends in Bosnia call their dad *tata*.

She continued by describing the different factors that influence linguistic variation for the use of the term “father” in the Bosnian language, and how this is heavily influenced by religious beliefs. As Emina did this, she reflected on how this has been an experience of cultural disconnectedness between her and Bosnian diaspora in the United States:

So, my mom is from the Bosnia part, she's from *Bjelašnica*, but my dad is from Herzegovina, and in Herzegovina, everyone says *tata* because it's been so influenced by the Croatian culture, which is really...you know Croatia's right...there's a lot of Croatian people there, and that's just something that I got used to, you know. When I was a kid, I didn't realize that there was, you know, that *tata* was more [of a] Croatian thing and *babo* was more of a Bosnian thing. So, and that's again, where they [Bosnians] start with religion, they're like, “well, you know, in Muslim...in Islam, we don't call them *tata*.” And I'm like, it has...there's no saying...like there's no specific saying of how you're supposed to call your dad. So after, you know after that a lot of people are like, “ooh she's maybe not, you know, she's not religious enough or she's not Bosnian enough.”

The next codes that emerged within this theme were lack of competency with the Bosnian language, learning/forgetting the Bosnian language, and context influencing feelings of competency (i.e., feeling more competent with the Bosnian language in certain settings versus other settings). Participants reported frustrations with lack of competency with the Bosnian language. Josip began with describing how this frustration with his level of competency with Bosnian is related to his experiences of cultural disconnectedness, particularly feeling too Bosnian for Americans and too American for Bosnians:

Yeah, it's frustrating, because I can speak it fairly fluently but the very first time I went to the Balkans, nobody could understand me so they said I had an American accent. It took a while for that, like to settle down, while I was overseas and then I don't know how to write in Bosnian, like barely, I always have to use like Google Translate on the phone um, but I can read it just slowly. Um, so that sometimes plays into a disconnect, where it's like “you're not American because you know another language, but you're not Bosnian because you don't know it 100% fluently” or like, you know, at an expert level, so, um, you're speaking in Bosnia, Croatia, Serbia, but people hear the American accent before they hear what you have to say so, and so they think you're American but you are

really literally from where they are, like an American hears you speaking Bosnian and they're like "oh they're not from here."

When asked to elaborate on his feelings related to this experience of cultural disconnectedness he stated:

It creates this weird cognitive dissonance where it's like okay like neither like you're too Bosnian for one...the Americans...we are too American for the Bosnians or you know everyone else in the Balkans, so it just feels like you can't fully like integrate into either community.

Medina reported that her lack of competency with the Bosnian language at times results in feeling "uneducated," further increasing her defensiveness toward people who judge her language skills and the overall experience of cultural disconnectedness: "I guess sometimes it's like you, almost feel like uneducated, I guess, like even though my Bosnian is really good sometimes I just don't know how to describe something or explain something or think of the word."

Sadina also described feeling a lack of competency with the Bosnian language at times, which resulted in feelings of helplessness and experiences of disconnectedness. She also continued by describing the issues related to learning and forgetting the Bosnian language (i.e., speaking it consistently with family members, traveling back to Bosnia and Herzegovina, etc.):

Sometimes I feel like my vocabulary is like limited in certain conversations. It's like I want to express myself and say certain things, but sometimes I'm just searching for that word and I can't even seem to find it like in either language, *laughs* and so I think that's a huge, HUGE issue, because if your parents didn't speak it to you growing up, or you didn't live with your grandparents...my grandparents lived with us when I was younger, so that definitely played a huge part in learning it. And so, as you get older yeah, if you're not going back home, if you're not surrounded by people who are also speaking it, you're going to forget it, and things like that. Um, I wouldn't say that I've ever really forgotten it, I just think there's certain instances where I like I'm like, "oh gosh, what do I say?" or "what's this?" or you know, constantly learning.

She continued by stating that her experiences of disconnectedness related to lack of competency with the Bosnian language have only increased her desire to connect with and become better with her native language:

It's only made me want to learn more and to you know, like, try harder, and educate myself, and ask a lot of questions, like I'm always asking my mom things you know, like "What does that mean? Please educate me on that."

When describing this experience with cultural disconnectedness and a lack of competency with the Bosnian language, participants also discussed learning/forgetting the Bosnian language. Medina reported that her experiences related to cultural disconnectedness (i.e., being made fun of for her lack of competency with Bosnian and feeling embarrassed for this) resulted in an increased desire to learn and become proficient with the Bosnian language. Below, she discussed how she practiced reading and writing in Bosnian before her summer trips to Bosnia with her family. These experiences underscore how experiences of cultural disconnectedness can lead to engaging in behaviors (e.g., practicing reading and writing, asking questions) to feel more connected to your culture:

I remember like once I got to like, I think I was like 12 or 13, I think it might have been the first time I went to Bosnia, like the whole year before I went to Bosnia, when I knew we were going to go the next year, like I practiced and I would like listen to music, and I would like force myself to read stuff in Bosnian, and I would like write things out, so that I could learn and then after I went to Bosnia, like I loved it so much and then, when I came home I just continue doing that, so that I could like be more proficient in the language because I didn't want to be embarrassed if I came there...and that's a perfect example of feeling too American for Bosnians, is like showing up to Bosnia and then not knowing how to talk to anybody and everybody would make fun of me.

Emina reported experiences of cultural disconnectedness due to lack of competency with the Bosnian language and a "fear" of forgetting her own language. Below, she elaborated on her experiences with lack of competency with the Bosnian language and her fears and wonders of

what her family back in Bosnia and Herzegovina would think of her when she returned to visit

Bosnia after our interview:

The disconnectedness with the language too, you know, you're...you are...sometimes there's times when I'm like talking and I'm like "wait, how do you say that word?" Or the fear of forgetting your own language, because you know, I've been here [the United States] for five years, and when I first moved here, I was like perfect at it [the Bosnian language] and it took me a while to actually get there, because when I first moved back to Bosnia and when I started high school...that's even years after I've been living there, I failed Bosnian, because I never had a good professor that would teach me the right way, you know because they all expect that you already know it, that's your language. And then, you know, now finally perfecting it [the Bosnian language] and learning it and coming back to America and speaking English almost every single day, you know, forgetting that, and now I'm going back to Bosnia in 10 days I'm like "well what is my family going to say...that I'm forgetting Bosnian. Oh, the like, "how do you say that word?"

Other participants also described how context influences their feelings of competency (i.e., feeling more competent with the Bosnian language in certain settings versus other settings).

For example, Josip reported that his feelings of competency depend on the situation, and he continued to describe an interaction that he had with a Black woman in Croatia, who spoke fluent Croatian and how this experience resulted in cultural disconnectedness and feelings of frustration for him:

I think it's very situational. I think it's like what you're discussing with Americans and what you are discussing with Bosnians when the situation that comes up. So, I would say it's 50/50. So, it completely depends on who you're with and what you're talking about. For example, um, probably like when I first went to Croatia, and I was in the airport, and I couldn't figure out like where to go. So, I spoke to somebody in the airport and asked for help, but it was actually like a really weird like dichotomy...like I start speaking to a woman in Croatian and she's like I have no idea what you're saying, and she was Croatian...But like I was like totally mind fucked, because she was a Black woman, I was like I didn't know there was like black people in the Balkans, and so that was like such a weird like situation where it's like there's a black Croatian woman who not...looking at her, nobody would think she's from the Balkans because everyone assume we're white and she doesn't understand me, but I'm also from the Balkans, and like I would be like more of a stereotypical example of somebody from the Balkans. So, I

just...it made you feel like...that just made me feel really weird because it was like a whole like...I don't think I was being racist or problematic, but I was like, "how is a black woman speaking the language like more fluently than I am, and like how does she not understand me? like shouldn't it be the other way around?"

Medina reflected on experiences of disconnectedness due to lack of competency with the Bosnian language in settings where she mixes Bosnian and English when around older groups of Bosnians:

I think with like Bosnians, the language is kind of a struggle, because we've been here for so long that even though my Bosnian is good, I still mix English and then when I'm with a group of Bosnians that's older and I start mixing the languages, it kind of feels like there's like a...either a disconnect or like they don't understand what I'm saying, and then I don't know how to explain it to them.

The final code within this theme is experiences of connectedness due to language abilities. Participants described how their competency of the Bosnian language makes them feel closer (i.e., more connected) to their cultural backgrounds and families, and more unique as a cultural being. Meho reported feelings of pride, particularly because his Bosnian language skills make him feel like he can connect and communicate with other Bosnians, especially older generations of Bosnians, more effectively, resulting in experiences of cultural connectedness. In the quote below, Meho not only describes his effective Bosnian communication skills, but also introduced how Bosnian language proficiency and communicating effectively with older generations of Bosnians (i.e., someone's parents) is a sign of respect:

Yeah, you know, somebody's parents...because I know you can meet somebody's parents and, you know, there are a lot of...a lot of people who have, for example, get surprised like "oh, how is he communicating so well with us?" or "How...How does he just know" or you know, something like that...it's not just me, but I have friends of my own, who will talk to my parents and my parents will be like "Oh, you know he's like talkative, he's like, you know, good, he's, you know, Bosnian and, you know, he didn't, you know, get Americanized." Because most of my friends are kind of Bosnian, like you know, Bosnian too, so I mean, we obviously speak both and mix all the time, but...and

that's like kind of like important to me, like, if you're Bosnian and you like come, you know to my parents' [house] or whatever I want them to be...I want you to be able to [communicate with them]...because that might come off rude, if you don't do or say some stuff okay, you know, like hey, obviously, you have to greet people all the time and otherwise, you might look rude if you don't.

On the other hand, Josip described how his Bosnian language proficiency made him feel connected with other natives while he was visiting Croatia, which decreased his experiences of cultural disconnectedness:

I would really just say being able to walk around and explore and then once I was in Croatia for a few days, like when I was in Dubrovnik, like anytime I had an Uber driver they spoke to me in Croatian and so being able to communicate with them 100% without any issues... not stick out as much, yeah.

He also expanded on these experiences of connectedness by describing how being bilingual makes him feel unique, especially when compared to his American, monolingual counterparts:

I feel like monolinguals are very annoying people, like I think being bilingual or trilingual kinda like shows that... I don't think like smarter is like the best...best word for it, but like, you know, I just feel like making that distinction that like I'm from another country and I speak another language, just like very truly sets you apart from Americans, who are like native and they don't speak other languages, where it's like then the assumption is kind of that like you're at least a little bit more cultured or open minded or worldly or not just like trapped in like the American bubble of like "we're the best and everyone else sucks."

Overall, each participant within theme two voiced their varying issues with their Bosnian language abilities. This agreement across codes was evident in participants' textual descriptions, where they described how these issues have resulted in experiences of cultural disconnectedness, such as experiencing judgment, getting made fun of by others, lack of competency with the Bosnian language, learning and forgetting their native Bosnian language, context influencing their feelings of competency. The structural descriptions within this theme revealed that participants experienced a variety of emotions due to their Bosnian language abilities and

competencies, including sadness, shame, and defensiveness resulting in “hiding” parts of themselves, “refusing” to speak the Bosnian language, and feeling “uneducated.” Other emotions described by participants in their structural descriptions were anger, irritation, resentment, and frustration, which caused participants to question their cultural identity and experience cognitive dissonance. They also reported feelings of helplessness, embarrassment, and fear which resulted in an increased desire to become more proficient with the Bosnian language and questioning how family members in Bosnia and Herzegovina would respond to their language abilities. In addition to these negative feelings that resulted from experiences of cultural disconnectedness, participants also reported positive feelings related to their high levels of proficiency with the Bosnian language, including feelings of pride and uniqueness, resulting in experiences of cultural connectedness. More specifically, participants within the code “connectedness due to language abilities,” reflected on how their Bosnian language proficiency has resulted in increased connectedness to their cultural backgrounds and older generations of Bosnians, suggesting more agreement across codes within this theme. Overall, this theme underscores the complexity involved with participants’ Bosnian language abilities and subsequent experiences of cultural disconnectedness and connectedness among Bosnian American diaspora, suggesting that the essence of this experience is multidimensional and can vary depending on various contextual factors.

Theme 3: Culture becomes either a risk or protective factor for/against experiences of cultural disconnectedness that varies depending on context for Bosnian American diaspora.

Theme three emerged from the codes: connecting to your culture, context influences cultural identity, cultural resiliency, preserving your cultural identity, cultural norms, cultural

stigma, and cultural factors. Participants described the importance of connecting to their cultural identities, particularly their Bosnian culture. Josip described ways in which he connects to his Bosnian culture, including through books, music (e.g., listening to a Serbian popstar, *Jelena Karleusa*), and television to “bridge the gap” between his experiences of cultural disconnectedness related to his Bosnian and American cultural identities:

I buy a lot of books about Yugoslavia or Tito or communism and, like the Yugoslav era. Um so, trying to like find things like read about or listen to. My mom hates when I listened to Serbian music, but you know, I really like *Jelena Karleusa*. So, like listening to like music, TV, to kind of bridge that gap, like utilizing technology.

Sadina also reflected a sense of hope regarding her experiences of cultural disconnectedness, and described how despite experiencing cultural disconnectedness, she believes that reconnecting to your culture and community is possible:

I think that [experiences of cultural disconnectedness] has a huge impact on, you know, maybe they [Bosnian Americans] do have this desire to go like...not only just go back home, but like become more connected, but they don't really know how, and I think with what I do, it's like you should know that it's never too late to like look for different ways to get in touch with your community, and you know, kind of find this newfound appreciation for your culture.

She continued by reflecting on how she experienced disconnectedness from her American culture and eventually realized that her connection to American culture is complex and includes many factors, such as her diverse friend group. She concluded by reflecting on her realization that she can hold two identities (i.e., Bosnian and American identities) at once, due to their parallels, which appears to result in feelings of balance and peace for her. This passage below emphasizes participants’ desires to connect to their cultural backgrounds and identities despite experiences of cultural disconnectedness:

I think being American has this whole like...how do you even say that...it has so many different definitions, like you, can't just say, you know, like that you have to like fried chicken to be American or something, you know. *laughs* Like whole other identity, I think, for me how I view it is, you know, I'm so grateful to have the opportunity, obviously, to have gone to school here to you know have friends...with people from so many different places that I probably would have never gotten to meet had we stayed in Bosnia, you know, that's something that I always think about, and I feel even more connected to that because I have a lot of friends. But before, yeah, it was definitely like feeling more disconnected and then I think I finally got to a place where I was like, you know "I am both, and there is no way to really change that," like "there's nothing that I can do to make me feel, you know, more prideful for one place or the other," so I think for me it's very like split kind of 50/50 and they just overlap all the time. So, yeah.

Another code within the theme three is "context influences cultural identity." More specifically, participants described engaging in code-switching with their Bosnian and American cultural identities depending on contextual and situational factors. Medina reflected on this process of code-switching (i.e., "adjusting my personality") due to experiences of cultural disconnectedness and stated that she engages in this process when she is around others who may be judgmental or hateful toward her other minoritized identities:

Yeah, I was gonna say again, that depends on like the situation and, like what's going on and where I'm at. Like, I will definitely, like, adjust my cultural identity depending on who I'm dealing with. Like...Like if I'm dealing with somebody that I can tell is like maybe hateful or like doesn't like other cultures or something, like I will adjust my personality, so that they don't pick up the I'm from somewhere else...because I would avoid the conflict of like them, not liking me or them getting mad at me or, you know, saying something horrible to me just because I'm from somewhere else.

Emina reported a slightly different experience with context influencing her cultural identity. Below she describes how she has "clashing" personalities and how her identities are "fighting" when they get activated in different situations. Emina reported that this is due to her living in Bosnia and Herzegovina for half of her life and moving to the United States for the other half:

I've also, you know, spent half of my life there and half of my life here, so my personality...my personalities clash even more, like you know, like I said, a lot of kids that have come here when they were two, three and they stayed here, so that's all they know of.

She continued by describing what it looks like when her Bosnian and American cultural identities are “fighting a battle.” This underscores how her experiences of cultural disconnectedness result in confusion and stress related to her cultural identity:

I think it's to a point where sometimes I just don't know how to act. You know, there are things that in some situations where my American...The American cultural part of me would be like, “okay, like this is how I'm going to act, this is what I'm going to do,” but then again, I pull back and I'm like, “Wait, this is the Bosnian way to do it, this is what I should do.” So, it's kind of like they're fighting against each other in a way, so my cultural identities fighting a battle *laughs* and I'm still trying to figure out, you know, what...I'm still trying to kind of, I guess, basically like wrap it up and be like “Okay, this is my identity.” I'm still learning like what works for me, what I believe in, what I want to follow, and I think it's just, you know it's just gonna progress along, you know, down the road I'll figure it out, but right now, I'm still kind of in that period of trying to figure out what exactly I want to do, and what I want to follow...It sucks. *laughs* It sucks to be...I think it sucks to be in that position. It's really hard and it's something that affects my mental health a lot, you know, it stresses me out a lot of the times, where I just don't know how much...sometimes I just feel like I'm not being true to myself and I'm not being, you know, I'm not showing my true personality, because my identities are still fighting.

Emina also provided an example of these contextual factors influencing her cultural identity within her relationships and resulting in stress and worry about the impacts that her identities have not only in the present but in the future as well (i.e., raising her future children to be connected to their native Bosnian culture). Again, emphasizing the experience of cultural disconnectedness within this major theme of Culture:

I think my relationships and specifically, it would be like relationships with boyfriends. I went from a relationship where I was with a Bosnian guy and then I went into a relationship with an American guy. And that's when, you know, that's where my identity kind of goes back because, like now I'm dating an American but now there's a lot of Bosnian in me, and how much Bosnian do I show like, “Is it okay to do this? Like will

you [her boyfriend] think that's not okay?" Or like a vice versa, like if I accept something of his and I follow like...if I do something that his family does, "how is my family going to take it?" And just you know, going from...going from you know, dating a Bosnian guy, dating American, it was...it was hard, because it's like, "what's your family going to think?" you know, "is this the right move to do?" and I think that in a lot of the decisions I've made there, you know, I wasn't...I was thinking more of what other people were...were going to think, rather than what I think and what's best for me. And that's another thing that comes from my Bosnian part, like "what is everybody going to think?" Cuz apparently everybody else is more important than you are. *laughs* So, I think that's where like a lot of the battle starts too. It's like well, you know, I need to keep that Bosnian culture, too, because obviously, I need a...I need to bring up my kids that way, and they have to have that in them, you know part of them would be Bosnian, maybe fully, you know, I never know what's...what's...what's going to happen in the future, but it's...it's just it's a struggle between like, "okay I can't be too American, I have to keep that Bosnian culture of me, and that religious part of me just so that I can pass it on."

The codes "cultural resiliency" and "preserving your cultural identity" also comprise theme three. Participants reported high levels of cultural resiliency despite multiple experiences of cultural disconnectedness. Meho reported hopefulness and feeling "stronger" due to his experiences of cultural disconnectedness related to assimilation after moving to the United States from Bosnia and Herzegovina:

You kind of have to just tell yourself, you know, "this isn't it, obviously, you're going to assimilate," you know, "it's gonna get better." But it would mean it would "suck" but um, you get used to it, you know and there may be [something] like [this] in other situations of life, not just you know moving [to the United States], you will get used to stuff you know, like "hey it might be tough now, but you know you're going to get through it and this is going to feel like a piece of cake" or "it's gonna be normal" or like, "I'm going to be, this is...this will be nothing, this won't bother me at all...but in time, you know, and couple, certain amount of time frames." But yeah, so yeah, it [cultural disconnectedness] impacts you kind of in positives and negatives, but mostly you know positives...don't wanna sound cliché, but you know it makes you stronger.

Lajla also reported increased levels of resiliency and feeling apathetic despite her multiple experiences of cultural disconnectedness related to her Bosnian peers in school "making

fun” of her and community members judging her language abilities mentioned above in theme two:

I feel like that's what's led me to be like “oh like I...I’m just like done”...like I don't really care like what those kids have said about me anymore, because it did bother me at first, and it's taken me like a while to like really just be like, “I don't like need those people” like they're the ones that like talk and like it's something that I don't need.

In addition to cultural resiliency, “preserving your cultural identity” was another salient code within this major theme. Participants reported desires for preserving their cultural identities and ways in which they do this to increase their connectedness to their Bosnian cultures. For example, Josip began by discussing the importance of preserving his Bosnian cultural identity by describing why he does not want his American culture to be the forefront of his cultural identity due to feelings of embarrassment related to being American:

I mean like I know Bosnia has its problems, but I think it's embarrassing being an American, *laughs* so I guess I feel like it's a really good way to like show that you know...it's like...it's...I feel like if people talk to you or me like they would just assume like White basic American bitches because we don't have accents, we you know, are White, and we speak clear English, but I don't want to be associated with that and also don't want to lose that identity, so I like expressing the fact I’m an immigrant, which is ironic, because then you're like “othering” yourself from like one of your identities...like I don't want the American part of my lived experience to be like at the forefront...Like the whole world hates us [Americans], like they think you know Americans are fat, stupid, lazy, warmongers, uncultured, rude, have no culture...um yeah, I just can't really think of like too many positive things, like you know, every time I’ve been living abroad or spending extended periods of time, or even on a holiday like, no one has anything good to say about the US.

He then continued by describing the significance of getting a Bosnian passport as a form of “physical, hard proof evidence” that he is Bosnian. Due to his previous experiences of cultural disconnectedness, attaining his Bosnian citizenship became a physical manifestation for Josip to preserve his Bosnian cultural identity:

Um well, I got a Bosnian passport like two, three summers ago. I thought that was like a very like symbolic gesture, um, that was really important to me. It's like I have like a physical manifestation of like my citizenship and like where I was born...um I don't know if that's a good...good example or not, but just like little things like that, like, you know, it's not just like me saying that "I am Bosnian" like there's like physical, hard proof evidence, like documentation that yes, like this is where I'm from... um I don't know if this is like a Bosnian thing or like something I picked up from like Jewish culture, but it's like, you know, in Judaism it's very important that your history not be erased, like there's a huge emphasis on history and like documentation in Judaism, like knowing exactly like who your family was, like where you came from, because, like that almost got entirely wiped out like during the Holocaust, and like now, I like...I've kind of carried that on to like my Bosnian identity...It's like I want my like certificates of citizenship, and my birth certificate, like my passport, it's like seeing like where I'm from it's like I don't want that to be erased.

Medina reflected on the importance of "maintaining" her Bosnian culture through engaging in cultural traditions and remaining proud of her Bosnian cultural background. Her experiences of cultural disconnectedness thus have resulted in an increased desire to preserve her Bosnian cultural identity and feelings of pride about doing so:

I feel, like everything about like my life has always been about being Bosnian...like you know these cultural...these traditions and these little things that we do around the house, and everything is just so like...it's just maintaining that, you know, and honestly, it's like you want to be proud of where you're from, like I could tell anybody like, "Oh, I'm American," and maybe they wouldn't even know if they didn't know my name, but I just feel like it should be known that there's other cultures that live among us, and to include them...especially the inclusion part of it.

Armin also described this same desire related to not "losing" his Bosnian identity. He emphasized the importance of his parents' sacrifices to come to the United States following the Bosnian War and how this, in addition to experiences of cultural disconnectedness, plays a major role with his desires to preserve his Bosnian cultural identity. In the passage below, Armin reflected on his pride related to preserving his cultural identity through speaking his native language, eating Bosnian food, and attending Bosnian cultural events:

I think the reason...the main reason is, you know, we were...the majority of us were born in Bosnia and came here, we were raised Bosnian. Great, I know, you know, we went to the American school system. We are...we do live in Americanized version of...of, you know, being Bosnian, but you can't avoid that, you know, we grew up in America, we're going to be Americanized to an extent. But in terms of like household, speaking your native language, eating native foods, culturally, growing up like that, going to cultural events, you know. I go to more Bosnian events than I go to like American events. Plus, it's...I feel like we're very proud people, you know, there's no...nothing wrong with, you know, America. I love America, I love the opportunities I got here, but I don't want to forget my roots, where I came from, where my parents came from. You know, again, the stuff they did have to sacrifice to make this possible, you know, I don't want to just throw it all away and just be like, "oh yeah, like I've assimilated into this now, I'm not Bosnian anymore," which I still am [Bosnian], so...

As a result of engaging in these behaviors targeted at preserving his Bosnian cultural identity, Armin describes his high levels of connectedness to his Bosnian culture. However, at the end of the passage below, he returns to describing why it is important for him to not "lose" his Bosnian cultural identity:

I would say I feel very connected to my Bosnian culture, and I feel like I've become more connected the older I have become. Um, when you're younger, like "oh yeah, I'm Bosnian, this and that," like it is what it is, but the older you get, the more you realize that it [maintaining your cultural identity] is a struggle, you know being 25 now...I couldn't imagine being 22 years old, not know the [English] language at all, having a kid, and then just getting up and leaving [Bosnia and Herzegovina]. So, you know it's...it's honestly like terrifying, it's like one biggest gambles that I could think of like in my life, and I really don't want to...I don't want to lose that identity, you know.

The final three salient codes within this major theme are: cultural norms, cultural stigma, and cultural factors. Participants reported how various cultural norms are present during their experiences of cultural disconnectedness and cultural connectedness. Meho and Sadina discussed the cultural norm of using humor to cope with difficult or uncomfortable situations, such as experiences of cultural disconnectedness. Meho stated: "I just, kind of...like most, like Bosnian is [revolves around] like humor or they [Bosnians] use humor to cope with things so...like

humor is a big key, you know.” Sadina also reflected a similar thought about the cultural norm of using humor: “Yeah, and I think it's so like funny how we use humor in general, almost like as a crutch for like talking about, you know, these really like traumatic or like just more sensitive subjects.”

Another major Bosnian cultural norm endorsed by participants was “respecting your elders.” Lajla and Medina discussed the importance of this cultural norm and how it has influenced their experiences of cultural disconnectedness and connectedness, respectively. Lajla specifically discussed how the cultural norm of “respecting your elders” maintained her experience of cultural disconnectedness when she was being judged by an older Bosnian woman (as previously described in theme two) for her Bosnian language abilities. She stated that she did not defend herself in this situation because she was upholding the cultural norm of “respecting your elders,” which ultimately impacted her in both positive (i.e., increased connection to her culture due to respecting norms, as described below) and negative (i.e., negative feelings toward the Bosnian community and refusing to speak the Bosnian language, as mentioned in theme two above) ways. She ends by describing how this cultural norm is starkly different from how her American peers treat their elders. This interesting experience underscores how cultural norms can influence levels of cultural disconnectedness and connectedness among Bosnian American diaspora:

Um, I feel like, if I were to like say something it'd be like “you're talking back to me, like why would you like talk back to me? like I'm an elder, like I'm going to tell your parents,” which even like if she...even if I did say something...even if she did that, like my parents would have sided with me just because, like, it's not like something that you should get yelled at for. Like culturally, if that thing like...like you said, when it does happen, I try to just do my best to like respect them and respect my elders, and it's like...it's hard because, like, I want to like say something, but I know if I do, it's not my

point, even if it is right, it's not going to be “considered right” because that's just how it is culturally, and like I think...I just...I think that whole idea and ideology...that has just affected me like in a way, where I shouldn't...I just don't say things back because, like that's just how it is and you just kind of take it. I feel like it's like in a way, I'm more connected with the culture, because, like that's just how the culture is. So, it's definitely like more Bosnian versus like I feel like some Americans, if that would happen to them, like they have no problem talking back, and like essentially...like school scenarios, like just like...I don't like...if a teacher says something to kid, yelling at their teacher in a way versus like me like that's a big like...an [American] kid has no problem, like, “no, no,” like...You just kind of like sit there, and like...like yes ma'am, yes sir.

Medina voiced a similar value for the cultural norm “respecting your elders.” Below she describes how differently Bosnians and Americans value and uphold this cultural norm. Medina emphasized how this cultural norm also relates to another important value for her, obliging and valuing family. Her response displays how she uses this cultural norm to increase her levels of connectedness to her Bosnian culture and, again, underscores the influence that cultural norms have on cultural disconnectedness and connectedness among Bosnian American diaspora. Below, Medina appears to emphasize the pride associated with taking care of and respecting your elders as a Bosnian American compared to her American counterparts:

I feel like “respect your elders” is a good one. I feel like we're very respectful to our elders and the people that aren't, you just kind of look at them sideways like, “who are you?” *makes a disgusted face and laughs* Because we were raised, especially our dads, to respect our old...our elders, and especially when it's like a male figure that's older than you, I mean women too, but like...I don't know, we were just raised, like our grandparents, like you should take care of them and, like I feel like in the American system it's so common to put your parents in a nursing home, and then for Bosnians, it's like “that's the last thing I would ever do to my parents,” like my parents raised me, my parents took care of me, *laughs* and I'm not going to put them in a nursing facility and...and never see them, you know? Like I feel like up until they die, like you should take care of them.

Participants also described the stark difference in cultural norms between Bosnians and Americans, and how these differences lead to experiences of cultural disconnectedness from

their American peers. For example, Josip, a gay man, described the difference between cultural norms related to public displays of affection (PDA) between Americans and Bosnians. He also reflected on the cultural differences between levels of acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community and how this is interrelated to PDA norms between the cultures. His description of this highlighted his experiences of cultural disconnectedness from his American peers related to his feelings of discomfort with levels of PDA shown by some of his American friends, underscoring the influence that cultural norms have on experiences of cultural disconnectedness:

I guess, I would come back, like the LGBTQ community where in like in the actual Bosnia, like it's just very underground or much more quiet, um and so I feel like that's one extreme...or like within Bosnian Americans or with an actual Bosnia like LGBTQ, people are like completely under the radar, um, but then like you know growing up in the US like when I was out, like in high school and college, I also have my Americans [friends] who like to be out and loud, as you know, PDA and everything else, but I'm also not like that, where it's like at least from my experience with Bosnians...it's like PDA is not really a thing and like that's something that I've always carried over into my personal life like people who I've dated have never understood that...it's like I don't think anyone should be kissing in public or like being overly affectionate in public, gay or straight, and like when I look back, like even when I've been to Bosnia I just have not seen a lot of like, you know, romantic affection between people um, I think it's a bit extreme...I think it's okay to like hold hands and stuff like I also don't think it's appropriate to like make out on the subway and so, like that's where I kind of like my Bosnian values can like trickle in like yes, like "you should be who you are and be able to live openly" but also like "your personal displays of affection should be private," so that's when I get to talk between the two, um yeah it would be a good example.

Armin also provided a rich example of how the stark differences in cultural norms between Bosnians and Americans lead to experiences of cultural disconnectedness from his American peers. Below he describes the Bosnian cultural norm of one person paying the tab during social gatherings. He elaborated on how this experience was drastically different with his American friends, who do not engage in this cultural norm of paying the entire tab when out for

dinner/drinks, resulting in Armin experiencing cultural disconnectedness from these American peers and feeling “weird” when this occurs:

We [Bosnians] go out and stuff and I’m sure you probably see a point in time, when you go out with one of your Bosnian friends one person buys dinner or something, and it's you know, you just look past it, it's like “hey ok, I bought it this time,” and it's just expected you pay next time you go. And this is crazy, I still can't believe it...I wouldn't believe what I saw...I saw it, you know, you go out with an American friend they buy your coffee and are like, “Hey Venmo me four bucks later” or whatever, you know what I mean? I’m like...that's just...that's so weird like, I don't know it's just a waste of time. Like, “hey, that was \$2.50.” Like, okay? I don't know...you know what I'm talking about, right? It's just so weird, so I think that really is a huge thing in our [Bosnian] cultural identity is [that] we're just so close knit.

Cultural stigma and cultural factors are the final codes within theme three. Within the code of cultural stigma, participants reflected on how heavily stigmatized mental illness and mental health are within the Bosnian culture. They not only described how this stigma has resulted in experiences of cultural disconnectedness within their Bosnian communities, but also how this stigma has resulted in a greater understanding of and feelings of empathy toward the Bosnian community's levels of trauma and mental health issues resulting from the Bosnian War. Josip reflects this in his passage below, highlighting how cultural stigma contributes to both cultural disconnectedness and connectedness:

You know, I would just say that [visiting Bosnia and Herzegovina] really like helped me like see like trauma, you know, meeting a lot of people, like understanding like how Bosnians like should value mental health, but they don't because, like they have like the societal stigma like “oh it's just crazy people” um you know “schizophrenics who should be going to a psychiatrist” or something. But then like also seeing how a lot of Bosnians have PTSD but they don't realize that they even have PTSD and then it affects like every single facet of their life, and I also kind of makes you like more understanding at the same time.

Emina also reflected on mental health stigma within the Bosnian culture. She described an experience of cultural disconnectedness, specifically her feelings of resentment toward her

Bosnian community regarding mental health stigma and her own mental health issues below.

Emina's experience also emphasizes how cultural stigma contributes to cultural disconnectedness:

I think we're...we're taught to you know that family's everything um and it is, I do agree with that, but I also think that we're...we're taught to not think about ourselves, sometimes. For example, mental health. We stigmatize mental health, you know, "there's nothing wrong with you, if, you know, if you're not feeling well, let's take you to a *hodza* [an Imam] and that's about...you know, he'll fix you." Whereas, you know, my friends openly talk about mental health with their parents and they're, you know, they're approving of that. Um, you know, when I was younger, I used to have a lot of panic attacks, and when my panic attacks first started, my mom was like...like "what? you know, like *prestani*, [stop it] like stop it...like that's not so serious." I'm like, "you do realize I just can't stop this, it's not something that's just stopped." And she, for someone who actually has mental health problems, she's not sometimes understanding of the ones that I have. And I think that goes along with you know...that goes along with a lot of our community, where mental health...like if you have cancer, if you're sick, like it's a big deal but mental health, is like "oh that's nothing" you know, like "don't worry about it, it's nothing we can't fix." Um, so, that's where we lose...like you're, you know, you're brought up to think about everybody else but yourself.

Participants also heavily emphasized the influence that cultural factors have on their experiences of cultural disconnectedness and connectedness. The final code within this theme was described by participants in a variety of experiences. Josip reported experiences of cultural disconnectedness from Americans and their approach to the cultural factors of work and leisure as compared to Bosnians, particularly feeling rushed in different areas of his life due to fast-paced American cultural norms. This passage below emphasizes how the ways in which different cultural groups value cultural factors in different ways can result in experiences of cultural disconnectedness:

Then also, I feel like um, disconnected from like the American aspect of it, where there's like a lot of things in Bosnian culture that I wish like people our age group and the United States like would embrace. Like everything is just like so like it's such a drive-through culture in the United States, where it's like there's no time like sit and have coffee or have

dinner with people...it's like you're coming home from work and you got to go through the McDonald's drive thru and then like eat while you're driving home and like also take a work call while you're doing that...I feel that disconnect a lot, just like in terms of like, I think, Americans think like...I've never been called lazy before, like since I've been told I don't have a sense of urgency, but I don't think it's that I don't have a sense of urgency, I feel like it's, just like the Bosnian part of me coming out where it's like in like general sense, like a European aspect as well, as just like you know work doesn't need to like take up every single second of your life, and it's like okay to take things at a slow pace. I kind of see that a lot with like, you know, the disconnect like too Bosnian for Americans, too American for Bosnians is really just kind of like the career and development, growth and values...If that makes any sense.

Other participants described that they connect to their Bosnian culture through different cultural factors, including food, language, history, hospitality, and music. Medina and Sadina discussed the importance of eating and making traditional Bosnian meals. Medina describes below how the Bosnian cultural factors of food and hospitality bring Bosnian people together despite the stress she feels at times when engaging in these cultural practices:

I feel like a lot of the stuff that I think about when I think of Bosnians, is like it all goes around like food, and hospitality, and family, and gatherings, even though those are the things that stress me out, like I feel like those are the things that connect us.

Sadina reflected similar views related her pride of and the importance of eating and making traditional Bosnian meals, and how she would like to pass this important cultural factor down to her future children:

Learning how to make the traditional meals and making sure that you know them. Like, I have a little recipe book, so anytime my mom wants to teach me something, I will you know literally verbatim like write everything down, so I have it. Yeah, you have to...and I saw the same thing happened, like my mom's mom... my grandma she passed away recently, and we were trying to like transcribe all of the recipes or like get her book, or like "where is this?" And so, like doing things like that to just like carry on the tradition, like you, don't really realize it too much in the moment like, but that is going to have huge impact and meaning in the future, just for other people, for your kids.

Despite Josip's experiences of cultural disconnectedness with the cultural factors of work and leisure, he reported the importance of other Bosnian cultural factors that increase his levels of connectedness to his Bosnian culture. Josip's two different reflections about experiences of cultural disconnectedness and connectedness highlight how both phenomena can be relevant for Bosnian American diaspora. Below, he described desires to have more empathy and community understanding:"

Oh yeah, I say for me it'd be like history, religion, being Bosnian, you know, family, and what I want out of a family, what I want for my future, like the importance of education, the importance of history. I think history is important because, you know, a lot of the things that happened in Bosnia, in the former Yugoslavia, are like I would say, are really due to lack of education, due to lack of like empathy or community understanding. Um, and so, it's like a lot of the values that are important to me, um, are all things, like you know, I want to do the opposite of. Like what resulted in the conflict, or like what the conflict like resulted in, like tattered families, or like you know, diaspora...like that's whatever...like the bad things happen, in the lead up, in the aftermath [of the Bosnian War], like I would do the opposite of.

Each participant also discussed the importance of the cultural factor of music. For example, Sadina interestingly reflected on how her taste in Bosnian music has resulted in experiences of both cultural connectedness and disconnectedness. Her passage below describing how she feels connected by listening to Bosnian music and how disconnected she feels from her Bosnian community when they shame others for liking certain music demonstrates, again, how Bosnian American diaspora can experience both phenomena:

I think with our music, too, I like growing up, I never really listened to that much *narodna* [folk] music like, of course, like *Halid*, *Dino Merlin*, and stuff you know, whatever. But in terms of what my parents listened to when they were growing up like it was always like *zabavna* [pop] music, like that...that was it, like *Crvena Jabuka*, like *ovo ono* [this and that], like, though like you know? Like those types of bands, and so then, like meeting other people and they're like "Oh, have you heard this song?" I can't even think of a particular one, but it'll be something like you know crazy or it'll be like I don't even know like *Meraklije* or something and I'm like "I have never listened to this in life

before until you showed me” *laughs* like kind of thing, and so, I have no idea if that is just like a regional thing, I don't know but, like other friends that aren't even from that much like Northern Bosnia, they're like “oh, like no, I just listen to that” or like “I don't know that song” or whatever and I’m like, “oh okay that's good to know,” so I listen to both now, I think, both are great, but like that's one thing I noticed too I’m like...I’m like, “am I supposed to know this song?” *laughs* Then I was like “Oh, are you like trying to say like that type of music is better? Or like that if I don't know that song or the artist or something like that doesn't make me Bosnian?” Or, you know, stuff like that which, which is so silly, but that's one thing that I also noticed so... I think it depends, and yeah, it just...I have no idea why that's the thing, but it has like been a thing, and now I don't even like...it doesn't really bother me that much, I’m just kind of like you know, I know what I like to listen to, and I can listen to this kind of music too, but that doesn't necessarily like mean anything like, we can be from the same country, and still like different kinds of music, you know? So, but that was definitely at first, I was like “have I, you know, just been neglecting like listening to certain songs or certain things?” I was just kind of like confused...so, yeah.

Overall, theme three (i.e., Culture becomes either a risk or protective factor for/against experiences of cultural disconnectedness that varies depending on context for Bosnian American diaspora) encapsulated a variety of complex experiences noted in participants’ textual descriptions of connecting to their cultures, context influencing their cultural identities, cultural resiliency, preserving your cultural identity, and cultural norms, stigma, and factors. The structural descriptions were varied across the codes in this theme, with participants describing feelings of hope, gratefulness, balance and peace, strength, confusion, stress, and worry, apathy and resiliency, embarrassment, pride, shame, discomfort, and resentment. A variety of behaviors were reported due to these feelings related to either experiences of cultural connectedness or disconnectedness were reported, such as code-switching, using humor as a coping skill, respecting your elders, passing traditions down, and listening to certain types of Bosnian music. The overall essence of this theme demonstrated in participants’ passages, where they described how they can experience both cultural disconnectedness and connectedness within the same

areas and due to the same feelings, mirroring the experiences noted in theme two, suggesting agreement across codes once again.

Theme 4: Bosnian American diaspora engage in various strategies to seek support due to experiences of cultural disconnectedness.

Theme four emerged from the codes: family, friends, social media, creativity, bonding with other minorities, traveling, and avoidance of support. Within this theme, participants described the various ways in which they sought support to deal/cope with experiences of cultural disconnectedness. The first two codes within this theme, family and friends, were mentioned frequently as a form of support for participants. Lajla explained below why her family and friends are an important source of support for her when experiencing cultural disconnectedness:

Um, I think like with my parents, like brother, and stuff like that, they're very like open like to conversations and stuff like that, and have always...it's always...there's always like a conversation...like able like, I'm able to have with them if I ever like need something, and like same with like my friends, and just like being accepting towards the way I am, like I feel like I've never like feel judged in a sense, and it's always just a very like open, like "adult conversation" that I can have that's like impacted me in a good way.

She continued by describing how this support from her family and friends positively impacts her, leaving her experiencing higher levels of connectedness and feeling uplifted, relieved, and loved and cared for:

It feels like really good and just like honestly, super like, opening...like open and like uplifting, and like kind of a relief in a way, that I can just go, like, even if I feel like disconnected in some ways, and, like, some people make me feel that way, like, I can just go home to, like, a great support system and, like, a loving family and loving friends that are caring.

Lajla also described how she feels understood by her parents, who also experienced cultural disconnectedness, resulting in Lajla feeling more connected to them through this shared experience:

I feel like when those Bosnians, like, talk about me or something, and I feel disconnected, like my parents kind of can relate in a way, because, like they have friends, but they know people in the same way that talk, and like will do the same things that these like younger people do because, like they get it from their parents...and even though I feel like disconnected with that, like, I can...they do as well, and like it's easier to talk to them about it.

Medina explained how her friends, particularly her friends from other minoritized groups (i.e., code: friends and bonding with other minorities), were a large source of support for her when she experienced cultural disconnectedness and feelings of embarrassment as a child because they shared an unspoken bond related to experiences of cultural disconnectedness, which left her feeling understood:

Um, like, I had American friends, but I always felt like they just like...I don't know, they would like leave me out, and like we came from nothing, so my parents bought a house that they fixed up, like it was too small for all of us, but like you always kind of felt embarrassed to bring your friends there, because they lived in these like huge houses, and I feel like I would always try and do something with friends that was like outside of my home, and I feel like anytime I hung out with American friends, and they came over to my house like...it's almost like they weren't impressed, you know, but they didn't really know like what my parents went through to get there...and I think that's why I had such a hard time as a child making American friends, and I would always have friends that were like Latino or African, or I have an Albanian friend, or you know, so I always picked people in different cultures cuz like we understood each other more without even saying it.

Sadina, Meho, and Armin paralleled this experience, and stated that their friends, particularly friends from other minoritized groups (i.e., code: bonding with other minorities), were a source of support when they experienced cultural disconnectedness. The major pattern present within these two codes was that participants' friends from other minoritized groups

shared these experiences of cultural disconnectedness. Meho described how he bonds with immigrants due to their similarities in past struggles and a shared feeling of appreciation for their opportunities in the United States:

You know, other immigrants, of course...and if you talk to some, maybe another immigrant, that comes from a different background, you guys can bond over some of the same things you know, or like this, you guys can bond, like, over the past struggles, I guess, or like use it as a humor or just knowing that like how much you actually appreciate that you can have the opportunity to be here.

Sadina described how she also seeks support from “different” groups of people (i.e., other minoritized groups):

I think, for me, it's a little bit different because I've always had friends from like so many different, like, groups and kinds of people, like, I just love to meet people and to hear more about their story and, like, where they came from, and like, you know, like, a lot of my friends...it's very diverse, like, I have gay friends, I have black friends, you know I have, like all these kinds of people.

Armin also reported a similar experience with seeking support from friends from other minoritized groups, and stated that having this source of support helps him “fully embrace” who he is as a Bosnian American, resulting in feelings of belongingness:

Hanging out with, you know, non-White people, not like just black people, but like you know, people from the Middle East, people from South America. So, I really try to like diversify my group of friends, so it's not all, you know, chugging like Busch Lights and having like bald eagle tattoos, waving an American flag around, it's like that's totally not what America is all about. I think...I think it better helps me embrace my identity, honestly. I feel when I'm around just, you know, White, Caucasian males I'll always feel like the one sticking out, the one who doesn't belong, you know. Even amongst...I've had the greatest group of friends, you know all White people, but I still feel like you'd be the one that sticks out, in contrast to a group of people that are all diverse, you know, everybody embraces each other, everybody's...they want to know where you're from, they want to know how, you know, why, like how you got here, your backstory...so I feel like you just have more room to be yourself, to embrace yourself fully and to openly be yourself.

He continued by describing how he can be “himself” around his “diverse” friend group, underscoring how seeking support from friends with other minoritized identities and shared experiences helps lessen the experiences of cultural disconnectedness:

The diverse friend group that I do have, I mean, I’m just being myself, who I am, you know, I don't have to worry about filtering myself. So, if people are like, “oh like why is he saying that? Oh, what's that mean?” I don’t have to hide that Bosnian-ness of myself, so I can just be who I am and I know they'll be okay with it, you know, like, “all right, yeah, that's who you are,” and then, you know, I can expect the same from them, you know, them to play their music and tell me about their culture, you know, tell me what was going on in their life, you know, what they experienced. I think just having that diverse friend group has helped me, I guess in a way, not have to filter myself.

Other ways in which the participants described that they seek support when experiencing cultural disconnectedness were the codes: traveling, creativity, and social media. When experiencing cultural disconnectedness, Josip described how traveling to Bosnia and Herzegovina helped manage those experiences:

Oh God, um I would say, like anytime like those situations happened like you know I’ve traveled a lot...Like me, my family, my Bosnian family, across the globe and gone to Bosnia. Um, you know, I like would like to like own an apartment or a home there one day I’d like to spend like extended periods of time...I would like to go back like soon as this fucking pandemic’s over and it's like practical to like travel around, so it's like I would say, like since I have visited for the first time again in 2018, like I feel a lot more connected to it, since I physically have been there and like have been able to witness it myself as an adult.

Sadina also reported that traveling to Bosnia and Herzegovina and other Bosnian communities in the United States is an important, effective way for her to manage her experiences of cultural disconnectedness, thus increasing feelings of connectedness to her Bosnian culture and appreciation for traveling back to her home country:

I’ve done other things like going back home, taking trips, hanging out with family, and that in turn, like, makes me feel much more connected to where I’m from I think that's really when I started to understand it and appreciate...appreciate it more, just like going

back home, sometimes even by myself, just to hang out with my family and like go on these little trips. I think that's really when it started to change, just like the whole feeling of you know, being connected to where you're from...so *nods*...But definitely, going back home, through the work that I do, and you know, just always being open to meeting new people wherever I go, while I'm traveling doesn't have to be in the Balkans, like, I recently like took a trip to Seattle, and you know, met a bunch of people who I would have never met had it not been through the work that I do so, I think that's a really cool thing.

Social media was another salient code within theme four. Participants described how social media is a way that they manage their experiences of cultural disconnectedness. This form of support has helped participants feel more connected to their Bosnian cultural backgrounds, but also more connected to their families overseas. Meho reported how not only does social media foster relationships and connectedness with his family overseas, but it also helps his family see that he is still connected to his culture as a Bosnian American:

What also like makes it different is that you know the family or the people you know back home they're also more connected and they're more uh exposed to like your Bosnian American culture here because they see that you know, "Oh hey, you know, he's still...you know, he can still speak with us or he can speak the language, you still listen to our music," or you know, they don't just treat you like you're now their foreigner, you know... It [social media] kind of...you're exposed...or you're in touch more with certain stuff.

Armin reported a similar experience, and described that social media helps manage his experiences of cultural disconnectedness. In the passage below, he describes how social media also helps him stay more connected to his Bosnian cultural background:

I think the disconnectedness... managing it honestly through social media like, being able to connect to relatives from there, and just being...keeping in touch with them, has helped me, you know, not lose that sense of where I...where I came from, so you know, having them, talking to them, it's super normal, so I never feel like I'm drifting away from that Bosnian aspect of myself.

Another important code within this theme is “creativity.” Participants described that they engage in various creative outlets to manage their experiences of cultural disconnectedness. In turn, these behaviors reportedly result in increased feelings of connectedness to their Bosnian cultural backgrounds. Sadina explains below how she taps into her various creative abilities to manage her experiences of cultural disconnectedness:

I think a lot of what I do...just go back to the whole creative element, and you know, finding a way to express your culture, you know, through different, like, creative mediums whether that's, you know, graphic design or, you know, videography, filmmaking, things like that. I think it's...it's a really cool way...because it's like you're still, you know, paying homage, like, to where you're from, but you're also like utilizing these different talents that you have, and I think it's awesome just to see what other people are doing as well. So, like for me, that's a huge thing, just like being creative about it. In college, I would write different articles, just like...you probably may have even read one of them... *laughs*...but it was...it's just like things about you know, being Bosnian, funny things, or like writing about, you know, soccer, and like how that is like such an important, you know, aspect of our culture and things like that. So, definitely channeling it in a creative way.

The final code present in this theme is “avoidance of support.” One participant described avoiding seeking support when experiencing cultural disconnectedness. Despite being the only participant who described engaging in avoidance (i.e., negative case), this appeared to be an important aspect of Emina’s lived experience. Below, Emina describes how her avoidance of support stems from cultural disconnectedness and cultural stigma, and results in increased mental health issues and increased feelings of stress:

Um, I think that's...that's where I fail, is because I tend to just ignore it. I...I'm just like, “Okay, you know, it's not a big deal, next time it'll be better.” Basically, like when I'm in a position where I have to figure out what way I'm going to go, and like I said, I think that's something that is a big mental health problem. And to me, I mean I don't really...I don't really deal with my disconnectedness like that, I pretty much do with everything...I kind of, you know, bottle up and I just kind of collect it...collect it until I just can't take it anymore. Um, and then, you know, you have a...you have a short little meltdown, and then the next day you're fine, that's...that's basically how I've been dealing with it. My

mom usually explains it, as you know, you're...you're basically like a balloon, you can only take so much before you pop. And you know, I think that I'm trying to work on that...I actually...my last day at work was on Friday, because I wanted to take some time off to visit family and just kind of focus more on myself and trying to figure out like what is best for me rather than pleasing everybody else. That's I think the biggest part of the Bosnian culture that's...that's the biggest part of me, where you know I tend to care more about what other people think, and you know, rather than what I think and how I can please everybody else, rather than myself and that's it's just a...it's a big stressor, and it affects my mental health a lot, but I haven't, you know, I haven't found ways of really how to deal with it, so I just tend to kind of not worry about it, I just bottle up, I don't deal with it and then, once I can't take any more, then I just sit down and cry.

When asked to think about other potential ways of managing her experiences of cultural disconnectedness, Emina stated:

I mean, talking about it would be helpful. Um, you know, specifically talking with my mom, for example, and just explaining to her why I feel the way that I feel and, you know, at the end of the day, it's expected that when you bring your kids to another country that they're...they're going to develop a different personality, and they're going to develop different culture...different cultural norms.

Emina's response to this question demonstrated her desires to actively engage in seeking support, particularly through her mother. This negative case is intriguing, and illustrates how in real life, individuals experience a range of experiences (i.e., positive and negative or avoidance and active engagement) within a single phenomenon (i.e., lived experience).

In sum, this major theme also demonstrated agreement across codes, specifically through participants' textural descriptions that described how Bosnian American diaspora navigate and manage their experiences of cultural disconnectedness through various activities, such as connecting with family, friends, other minoritized groups, traveling, social media, and creativity. This theme also revealed a variety of structural descriptions, including participants reporting feeling uplifted, relieved, loved, cared for, understood, grateful, and creative after seeking support to cope with experiences of cultural disconnectedness. In addition to these feelings,

participants also described feeling embarrassed and stressed when engaging in these strategies, with one participant reporting subsequent avoidance behaviors, specifically avoidance of support when exposed to experiences of cultural disconnectedness. Despite this, this theme also revealed how participants desire to seek support from others when experiencing cultural disconnectedness. This theme thus underscores the essence related to the inherent resiliency of Bosnian American diaspora that experience cultural disconnectedness and complexity of behaviors related to seeking support.

Theme 5: Experiences of cultural disconnectedness have become accepted by Bosnian American diaspora.

Theme five explores acceptance of experiences of cultural disconnectedness in the code: disconnectedness as reality. The majority of participants reported that their experiences of cultural disconnectedness have become a “reality” in their lives, with some reporting acceptance of this disconnectedness. Meho, Josip, Medina, and Sadina expressed that their experiences of cultural disconnectedness have become a reality (i.e., “normal”). Meho began by describing how his experiences of cultural disconnectedness are not necessarily “a struggle,” but are more of a reality of his lived experience and that he feels worthy enough now for his culture:

So, um, I don't like really see it like a struggle, because I kinda...I just know the reality of it, so I don't really consider a struggle...I'm struggling between you know, obviously, because, like I said it just the reality that now like, for example, when you go back home, they're going to say, oh you know, “oh, he's American, he's not...he's kind of like a guest in motherland” um, compared to being here, I feel like I mean, at least in this community, you are you still gonna be like, “no, no he's Bosnian,” you know, or but you know down the road it's...It's just part of your, I guess, identity, and I think it's just...it's cool that you know you're enough, I guess, your culture, I guess, more than one culture and stuff like that, and then you have this experience, where it just makes you different, I guess.

Josip also endorsed his disconnectedness as reality. In the passage below, Josip describes how he has “accepted the reality of” experiencing cultural disconnectedness. He appeared to be accepting of experiences of cultural disconnectedness due to his desires of not wanting to fully immerse himself in American culture. His experience underscores how Bosnian American diaspora is, at times, accepting of these experiences because it brings them closer to their native Bosnian culture:

Um, well, it's like we're living here, so it's kind of like we can't just like leave overnight, so just kind of like accepting the reality of the situation, and I don't really like want to like, fully integrate with American culture, so just kind of like a, you know, cost-benefit analysis.

When asked to expand on this experience, Josip stated that acceptance of reality keeps him feeling “grounded:”

You know, I mean, I feel like in some ways we're lucky to be in our situation, to like see how fucked up America is and how it's not the world's greatest country, like I think it like allows you to see like what's wrong around you, which sometimes can be like overwhelmingly negative, like it also keeps you grounded, so you're not like overwhelming like idealistically optimistic, to the point of like you're like blinded to reality.

Medina and Sadina also echoed similar experiences related to accepting experiences of cultural disconnectedness reality. Medina provided an example of accepting that she needs to engage in regular code-switching with her family members, as noted in the theme three above:

I think it's just at this point, in life where like, you know that not everything's going to be perfect or the same. Like I mentioned, my sister-in-law and her English like, you know, there's things that you just kind of have to accept. Like if you're not...if she's not going to work harder to learn better English, I can't make her learn it, you know what I mean? So, it's just like I have to...maybe I'll alter myself and like make sure I'm speaking Bosnian when I'm around her to make her feel more included.

Lastly, Sadina also reflected on how, over time and as she has gotten older, she has learned how to accept her experiences of cultural disconnectedness:

I mean when you're younger, for sure it's [experiences of cultural disconnectedness] more I think prominent, and it [cultural disconnectedness] kind of like affects you more and starts to mess with you, but then, as we get older, it kind of...you just learn to accept it.

Overall, the participants' textual descriptions within this major theme illustrate how Bosnian America diaspora conceptualize experiences of cultural disconnectedness as a reality. Their structural descriptions expanded on how their experiences of cultural disconnectedness as a reality have resulted in feelings of acceptance and feeling "worthy" of their Bosnian culture in addition, they reported that these experiences of disconnectedness that they view as a reality result in them feeling "grounded" and not "overly optimistic." These experiences of cultural disconnectedness have resulted in participants engaging in a variety of behaviors, such as code-switching. Interestingly, the essence of this theme demonstrates how experiences of cultural disconnectedness have come to be accepted by Bosnian American diaspora, with this acceptance serving as protective factor in navigating experiences of cultural disconnectedness.

Theme 6: Family plays a major role for Bosnian American diaspora, causing either experiences of cultural disconnectedness or connectedness.

Theme six emerged from the codes of being a cultural broker, pressure from family, effects from the Bosnian War, and familial connectedness. The first four codes within this major theme focus on ways in which participants experienced cultural disconnectedness within the family setting and with their family members. The final code that emerged from participants' significant statements was familial connectedness, in which participants described the various

ways in which they experienced cultural connectedness within the family setting and with their families.

Numerous participants reported that they were cultural brokers for their families while growing up. The experience related to being a cultural broker was described by participants as challenging, frustrating, and unique. As young children, these participants reported that they had to grow up much faster and take on responsibilities that their parents could not (e.g., translating government documents, attending doctor's appointments with parents, navigating daily situations), given their recent arrival to the United States and lack of competency with the English language. Being a cultural broker for their parents at such a young age thus resulted in experiences of cultural disconnectedness for these participants. Josip reported how unusual and difficult it was for him to be a cultural broker for his parents from such a young age:

Um, it was a weird, um, you know, I feel like Bosnian people, you know, like it was, I think...I don't know, like, maybe it was like with my parents like...I feel like I had to translate for them a lot as a kid...like I think back, I was like "how many legal documents did I like read over as an eight year old?" and like, "did I fuck anything up?" Like I was saying, like, when you're a child of immigrants or refugees or whatever else the situation is like, you're also playing the parent or like at least the adult in a lot of situations, in terms of like translating like legal documents, or helping them fill out paperwork, or just like navigating day to day situations, like at the grocery store or something else. I felt, like, simultaneously like I was a kid but also like a caretaker at the same time.

When asked to expand on what it was like to be an adult/caretaker for him, Josip described how he continues to take on this role of cultural broker with his parents, and the experiences of cultural disconnectedness and feelings of frustration, resentment, and pride that result from this:

Um, it was weird, like, I felt I didn't really like...it didn't really bother me as a kid, it wasn't until like I was an adult...like 18 and I was like still having to do it, I was like, "Jesus, like did you guys not learn anything the last 15 years?" like that got frustrating at times, where it's like I'm just trying to figure out how to be an adult now myself, like why am I still like helping with you all with...with...you all of this stuff? Like, can you

not find anyone else to help you? So, like there was like, you know, a lot of like pride with like being able to like help take care of somebody and help them like navigate with, and also like a lot of like frustration and resentment.

Overall, Josip's experience demonstrates the difficulty that Bosnian American children of immigrants/refugees had with being cultural brokers, resulting in not only experiences of cultural disconnectedness (i.e., increased adult-like responsibilities and feelings of frustration and resentment), but also experiences of cultural connectedness (i.e., feelings of pride related to taking care of your parents).

Armin reflected a similar experience, and described how being a cultural broker for his parents impacted him as a child, which made him grow up a lot faster than his American peers:

I think it [growing up] was a lot different too, because um, having more responsibilities, I would say, at a younger age... Taking parents to doctor's appointments, taking family members to doctor's appointments, you know, trying to translate government documents at a young age, trying to figure stuff out, and you know, just because they didn't know the language, you know, other people outside play with their friends and you're...you're making the phone calls for doctor's appointments and this, translating, there's like, you know. We still had a relatively, you know, good childhood, but it wasn't normal, we had to grow up a lot faster, we had to do a lot more things. Even to this day, we still do a lot of things for our parents, you know, that they aren't capable of doing by themselves.

In the statement above, Armin illustrated how being a cultural broker resulted in experiences of cultural disconnectedness from his American peers who had different, more "normal" childhoods, underscoring how these early experiences of cultural disconnectedness in life impact Bosnian American diaspora in a significant way.

The code "pressure from family" also was another important experience described by participants. The majority of participants described different types of "pressure" that they have received from their families and subsequent experiences of cultural disconnectedness. Josip and Armin described feeling pressured by their families to "figure it [life] out" and to "succeed,"

respectively. Josip discussed the difficulties that he experienced with feeling pressured by his parents to figure out his life by the age of 18 and how this resulted in experiences of cultural disconnectedness, with him feeling too American for Bosnians:

Let me know if this makes sense or not...so, I think a lot of Bosnians like understand that this is like their parents, like the attitude is like “you need to have your life figure it out at the age of 18 and if you don't you're a failure” and like once you pick what you do at 18, so you need to be doing that for the rest of your entire life. Um, so, you know, that's where I feel like too American to be Bosnian...I really like the idea of like not necessarily needing to have everything figured out, you know, the whole life plan for every year and month figured out like when you're in your 20s, like changing careers, like having fun, um, trying different things.

When asked to expand on what it means to have your life figured out, Josip described various Bosnian cultural views and norms related to adulthood:

Just, you know, you pick what you want to do so you do for the rest of your life, and you're supposed to get married in your 20s, and have children in your 20s, your parents become grandparents, you buy a home...

Armin stated that he experiences cultural disconnectedness from others due to the pressure he feels to succeed and make up for his parents' sacrifices related to coming to America:

Like I don't even know if it's the disconnectedness. I think, um, the...this might be like so off topic...is the pressure that we as like the transitional group have like put on us, you know from our family, from everybody else, because we're the ones that, you know, our parents made these enormous sacrifices, and they did, you know, coming to America but it's like if we don't end up quote, unquote “succeeding,” we invalidate everything that they did. So, it's not like we're not just striving to do good for ourselves, we're striving to validate them coming to America and stuff. So, it's...I would say, we have a lot more pressure than the typical person.

Similar to Josip and Armin, Emina also reflected on the different pressure that she receives from her Bosnian parents about her relationship to her American boyfriend:

Um, but it's really hard when, you know, your family is accepting of it [her boyfriend being American], but there's always that portion of like, “well it's a different religion, it's a different culture, if only he was *Mujo* [typical Bosnian name] *laughs* instead of...” That's what's my mom says every single time, like, “he is great and all, but only if only he was Bosnian,” you know. And then, “you wouldn't have to...if you marry him, one day, then you...there's different things, there's, you know, you're gonna have to teach your kid two different cultures, two different languages, two different religions.”

In this statement above, Emina stated that she feels constantly pressured by her mother to consider how easier it would be if she dated a Bosnian instead of an American. Emina continued by describing how this pressure results in experiences of disconnectedness, particularly questioning how she will raise her future kids if she were to marry her American boyfriend:

I think that's where like a lot of the battle [between her identities] starts too. It's like well you know, I need to keep that Bosnian culture, too, because obviously, I need a...I need to bring up my kids that way, and they have to have that in them, you know part of them would be Bosnian, maybe fully, you know, I never know what's...what's...what's going to happen in the future, but it's...it's just it's a struggle between like, “okay I can't be too American, I have to keep that Bosnian culture of me, and that religious part of me just so that I can pass it on.”

The next code within this theme was “effects from the Bosnian War.” Participants described various experiences of cultural disconnectedness due to the impact that the Bosnian War had on their parents and families. Josip explained how his parents' PTSD from the Bosnian War was difficult to understand as a child, resulting in experiences of disconnectedness and feelings of annoyance, only eventually to fully understand this as an adult:

My parents like maybe it's like PTSD that I didn't like recognize that the time... they were like always like worried something wasn't going to happen to me, it's like they were like super strict and like overprotective and I don't know if that like was overcompensation for like, I don't know, like losing a child, like to be afraid of that happening or like as a result, of like, the conflict like something I didn't even realize like when I was an adult...like until I was an adult I should say, like when I was a kid like my parents always freaked out during thunderstorms...Like it was like really loud thunder and I would get so annoyed I was like “Jesus Christ it's just a fucking thunderstorm” like

now like, I understand it more as like it's like an anxiety response, like to the noise...But that took me like 20 years to figure out.

He also described an experience of cultural disconnectedness from his American peers in school. This experience resulted from the Bosnian War as well, as Josip reflected on how some of his family members were killed in war and others scattered all over the globe, resulting in feelings of sadness on Grandparents Day and lack of connection with his peers who had grandparents and other families living nearby:

Um, I was feeling disconnectedness like growing up, it was like really tough like on Grandparents Day, in like elementary school, it's like, "well, all my grandparents are dead," except for my grandma who lives in Bosnia, when she was alive, and it's like, you know, my family is in like Australia, they're in Canada, they're in Germany and Austria, um, you know, with the conflict it was like everyone was separated across the globe and it's like, I felt like, you know, how like Americans like perceive like the traditional family unit, or like family trips were things like that I could not physically experience, and so, that was always like a huge disconnect of like, "okay, like if this is what a family means to you like, what does it mean to me?"

Armin also reflected on the difficulties related to growing up as refugees in the United States. He described how his family's struggles seemed normal to him until he learned that their experience was different from the experiences described by his American peers. This reportedly caused him to experience cultural disconnectedness from his American peers and to feel like an "outlier" (i.e., outsider), underscoring the impact that the effects of the Bosnian War had on these experiences of cultural disconnectedness:

Oh, growing up in America...I would say as a kid, it didn't really feel...I wouldn't say I felt weird, because I didn't know, you know? Growing up, I was, you know, my parent's working late nights, working really not great jobs, but I just thought this was how it was for everybody, you know, I assumed, you know, we're all this and we're all that. I assumed everybody went through like a war, I went...I assumed everybody, you know, have to go to these personal struggles until you become older, you know, you learn about the history of what you...you went through, what your parents went through, what your family went through, and then at that point, you kind of become more cognitive of things,

you're like “Oh, shoot” like this... This you know, is it like everybody else? I’m not like regular kids, in terms of growing up, so the older and more mature you get the more you realize that you do stand out, you are kind of an outlier.

The last code within this theme was “familial connectedness.” Participants reflected on their experiences of cultural connectedness, particularly within the context of family. Lajla described her experiences of cultural connectedness due to her feelings of connectedness with her family members in Bosnia:

I'm like somewhat connected [to her Bosnian culture], like not like completely, just from like how people are in school [i.e., peers at school making fun of her for her Bosnian language abilities], but like, when I go to like Bosnia or something with my grandparents, like I feel like it's very...I feel connected to them and, like the...my family more, into the culture, like that way [more] versus like outside people and, like having friends who are Bosnian who like don't see things like the way I do, or something.

Josip also reported increased experiences of cultural connectedness due to a shift in his values pertaining to family and increased familial connectedness with his family members who live in different countries:

Um, so, I think that now that I’ve met a lot of my family, I understand, like the importance of family a lot more, um and that's something I hold on to, and so you know, like it's really important to me that now I see like my cousins in Canada on a regular basis, um you know, stay in touch with my sister, stay in touch with my aunts, try to be in touch with as many family as possible, just because um, maybe carrying over some aspects of the American element, like, I think a lot of Bosnians are separated, but just don't speak *laughs* or like you know, taking that value and importance of long distance relationships and how to maintain them.

Medina reflected on the influence that her family has on her cultural identity and how familial connectedness to her means marrying a Bosnian man and the importance of sharing the same Bosnian familial values. After marrying her current husband, who is Bosnian, she reported increased experiences of cultural connectedness, while also describing experiences of cultural disconnectedness and feeling “weird” about her brother who married an American woman,

specifically because they do not uphold the value of family in the same way as she believes

Bosnians should:

I feel like familywise, like actually somebody asked me like the week after my wedding. This...my cousin's sister-in-law, asked me why I picked my husband and if I picked him because he's Bosnian. And like I can pretty much wholeheartedly say, yeah. I mean not just cuz he's Bosnian, but like yeah, I wanted to marry somebody that was Bosnian, because I wanted our family to have the same values. And I feel like that's why our families get along, whereas like my brother is married to an American and my parents have never even met her parents, and they've been together for like five years. And I just think that that's weird as fuck, like I don't understand why it's a secret. Like I don't understand why, like they don't hang out. Like what more do you need than like food and drinks and coffee to bring people together? But like, they just don't...like there's definitely a disconnect in that part of my family. Whereas like my cousin is married to a Mexican, and we like...we're connected with them, which is weird, you know what I mean? Like they are a different culture, but we kind of have the same values and then we hang out, it's like we're just one big family, you know? Cuz they get what it's like to like have speak broken English and they surround themselves with their whole family all the time, with food and, you know, good times, rather than, I don't know like, I can't even imagine just me and my husband being married and his family and my family to never hang out.

Armin similarly described how his connectedness to his family has resulted in increased experiences of cultural connectedness, particularly in the context of his cultural identity:

Oh, I think the biggest thing that kind of defines our culture, identity or my cultural identity is...is family, you know, we come from a very family-oriented culture, where you know, going to college and stuff and staying with your parents during college is normal, like that's encouraged...And there's nothing...and we want to do that, we want to continue with our parents, but here it's very flip flopped, it's you know you turn 18, you want to move out, you want to go live on your own, be your own person, which you know there's nothing wrong with that, you know, to each their own, but I wouldn't say it's a very family-centered culture like...like ours is. Even the extended family, you know, you want to know them, when your family members come over, it's expected of you to go down and say hi to everybody, you know, hug everybody and when they leave, you're expected to do the same thing.

Emina also illustrated the importance of familial connectedness and the impact that this has had on her experiences of cultural connectedness and disconnectedness related to feelings of autonomy in both cultures:

So, family has played a big role in me feeling still connected to my...to my Bosnian culture and that's why it's a really big part of me. But it's also been a big reason of why I feel so disconnected, and that's because, you know, I have different...I have...there are cultural norms, you know, Bosnian cultural norms that I just don't agree with and that I would never follow, and there are norms that, you know, I would that...take from American culture that I pulled that they don't agree with, and a lot of it stems from that, you know, independency. I feel like the American culture teaches you to be independent, and not just teach...it kind of forces you to be independent, especially as an immigrant. Whereas, you know the Bosnian culture is all about we're together, we do everything together, you know, what the family says, that's what goes. So yeah, I think that family is...is definitely something that's affected...that's both kept me connected and disconnected.

In sum, theme six explored how Bosnian American diaspora experience both cultural connectedness and disconnectedness within the context of family as evidenced by the agreement across the various codes. Participants' textual descriptions illustrated that their experiences of cultural disconnectedness resulted from being a cultural broker, pressure from family, effects from the Bosnian war and how experiences of cultural connectedness occurred due to familial connectedness. Within the structural descriptions, participants described a variety of feelings resulting from these experiences, including feelings of frustration, uniqueness, resentment, weirdness, pride, pressure, unfamiliarity, sadness, and autonomy, and feeling like an outsider. Overall, the essence of the experiences reflected by participants in this theme illustrate how family is not only a protective factor that connects Bosnian American diaspora to their culture, but also how family can play a role in and influence experience of disconnectedness for this population.

Theme 7: Bosnian American diaspora struggle with feeling either “too Bosnian” or “too American.”

Theme seven emerged from the codes: labeled as Americanized, intergenerational disconnectedness, disconnectedness from Bosnians, disconnectedness from Americans, and generational differences. Within the first code, numerous participants described their experiences with being labeled as Americanized, and subsequent experiences of cultural disconnectedness as a result. Lajla reflected on what it was like for her when her peers called her “Americanized,” resulting in increased experiences of disconnectedness from them and feeling “weird” about the way her peers view what it means to Bosnian:

Um, sometimes like in school like, especially among like other Bosnians, they'll be like girls or guys that are like, “oh you're not like Bosnian enough” and “you're like too Americanized” with like things that like I do, like let's say I don't like go to *dzamija* a lot or stuff like that... like I don't find that like weird and not being like Bosnian enough um, and just like them telling me that and, like...they like...it's weird it doesn't...like I don't really like connect that with being Bosnian or something because, like we obviously like in my house have like our own values and how like we're Bosnian, versus what they believe in.

She continued by describing how she identifies as more “Americanized:”

So, I feel like I'm more like on that [American] side versus being like super, super Bosnian or something like that, and like even a lot of my friends can like say I'm more like “Americanized” and like that they are so surprised how like different I am versus them, like some of the Bosnians in my school...or just like in my area.

When asked to expand on what this experience is like for her, Lajla said that she feels like it has impacted her in a negative way, resulting in her “hiding” a part of herself:

Oh, it puts me more like as an like American, like I know, I say like “oh I'm Bosnian” and stuff like that, but I feel like I'm more Americanized in a way, and that it's like, I won't automatically tell someone “oh like I'm Bosnian or something” not unless they ask, and like I just do more traditional like American things versus Bosnian things, and it's

like impacted it and, probably, in a way that's not like good because I'm like hiding almost in a way that like "oh I'm Bosnian," like blah, blah.

Emina also explained how her family labels her as Americanized and how this results in experiences of disconnectedness from them: "I can totally relate to that [feeling too Bosnian for Americans or too American for Bosnians] because it...I think it starts with my family, because from my family, I hear that I'm too Americanized. And I think a lot of people can relate to that, you know." She continued to elaborate on this experience of disconnectedness from her family, specifically by describing her "change in mindset" after she moved from Bosnia and Herzegovina to the United States and how she was labeled as Americanized by her family because of this:

When, you know, when I was in Bosnia, all I really knew about was family, you know, all of my friends were getting married, all my friends were having kids, you know, and I was in a long relationship, and it was like, "okay, really what's next?" I, you know...I'm still going to school, I started my first year of college there, but it seemed like the end goal, or the end game really was having a family and then, when I moved here, my mindset changed and I realized that I am more than that, like it's not...I'm not just supposed to be a mom or a wife, but I should actually go to school and get a degree, and you know actually build a career for myself and then, once I'm established, then I can have something more like family. And so, you know, that's...and that's where my family started saying, "oh you're too Americanized."

Emina also described how the process of "Americanization" was a positive experience for her and made her feel diverse, despite experiences of disconnectedness from her family:

I guess other than, you know, living in Bosnia, I was...everything was...Everything I did was kind of the Bosnian way, I guess. That's how, you know, the Bosnian culture, whereas in America, I pick up different things. It's not...it's not even an American culture, it's...it's different things from different cultures, because it's such a diverse country. So, you know, seeing how my Asian friends would do something, or my black friends, or really anyone, you know my Latina friends, they were...you know, I picked up different things from their cultures and kind of, you know, had something of my own, so I think that, you know, it's...when they say Americanized, it's really...it just means that you're...you have...you're diversified in a way, you have a little bit of everything. I think

that it allows you to see like how all the different paths, you can take in life, you know. And it encourages you to do that. Whereas, you know back at home in Bosnia, it's...you kind of...it's because it's such a...you know, it's culture-based and you kind of have that one path that everyone takes. Not necessarily, because there's always people that go the other way and you work, you know, I am happy for those people, where they are in Bosnia and they're still focusing on themselves, and their careers, and doing whatever makes them happy, rather than following what their parents want them to do.

However, she also described how this experience has resulted in feelings of worry and guilt, more specifically, feeling worried of and guilty for becoming Americanized. As a result of this, Emina reported fears of fully immersing herself in American culture:

Um, I think it's [her connection to American culture] a little less than my Bosnian culture, and I think it's mainly because I'm worried of actually connecting to it [American culture] fully. You know, you...sometimes you feel like you're...you're kind of...you feel guilty of knowing something else and making something else a part of your life, and that's kind of how I still feel with the American culture, especially when I get pushback from my family and they tell me something like, "you're too Americanized." A lot of...a big part of me won't show that I, you know, that I have some cultural norms that come from the American culture. Um, so yeah, it's...it's a lot less connectivity between me and you know, the American...the American culture than my Bosnian culture.

On the other hand, Medina described experiences of cultural disconnectedness from Bosnians that are more "Americanized" compared to more "traditional" Bosnians:

I feel like with that stuff I'm pretty much like...I'm like very Bosnian and I'm like...I can get...I, I don't...I feel like I appreciate other people that are like that more than the Bosnians that are a little bit more Americanized, if that makes sense, like if I'm with somebody that's a little bit more Americanized and I feel like there's a disconnect.

She continued by explaining how Bosnians that present as more Americanized make her feel uncomfortable by reflecting on their lack of engagement with cultural norms and values, including the Bosnian cultural norm/value of hospitality:

I don't know, like, I would say, I feel kind of uncomfortable I guess, when I'm with people like that, because it's...I don't know, it's like you go home and then they come to your house and you like treat them like they're royalty and then you go to their house and they just like, you know, they don't offer you anything. They don't even offer you water,

like just things like that I don't know, it makes you feel uncomfortable, and it makes like you feel like you're trying too hard.

The next code that comprises this theme is “intergenerational disconnectedness.” Within this code, participants reflected on their experiences of cultural disconnectedness with other Bosnian American diaspora. These experiences ranged across generations of Bosnian American diaspora as well. Meho began by describing how he feels more connected to the first (older) generation of Bosnian American diaspora compared to his peers in the 1.5 generation: “I feel more connected to the Bosnian culture side, but I also feel connected to on you know first gen Bosnian American.” When asked to expand on why he experiences disconnectedness from the 1.5 generation and more connectedness to the first generation, Meho expanded on how he believes that people within his generation are becoming too Americanized:

So, the fact that you kind of would be able to communicate and interact with these people [older Bosnians, elders] and, you know, understand and...they looked at you kind of like an older or more part of them than, for example, like maybe even some of my generation, that was born in '92 because there are some kids that came here...they're my age and they kind of forgot to speak Bosnian, or it's pretty bad or they're more Americanized than, you know, Bosnian so...that's why I said, like it took me back to that whole generation of where I felt, I was more of the first gen...I was connected, more to the first gen than 1.5 generation, you know.

Armin endorsed comparable experiences of cultural disconnectedness between different generations of Bosnian American diaspora, including his parents, and how this has felt difficult for him:

I would say I've definitely felt, you know, that experience of being a little too Bosnian for Americans and then too American for Bosnians. Even the disconnect between the generations, to the disconnect from our parents. Our parents are full-fledged, you know, born and raised in Bosnia, and then moving here, so sometimes there's even a disconnect between us, which is always kind of difficult.

He provided more information about this experience by giving an example about experiences of people being labeled “too American or too Bosnian,” which results in experiences of cultural disconnectedness:

Even within...like within the transitional community, you will see the disconnect there. Where you're like, “oh wow, like that person, he's way too American and this person is really, really Bosnian.” You what I mean? Even within their own, like that community. So, it's even inside itself, there's levels to it, where some people, you know, are more on the American spectrum and more people on the Bosnian spectrum...So okay, I'll give an example for both. Like they said, “oh such and such is SO American,” they go to only like American events, like country concerts, they don't go to Bosnian events, don't really speak the language or interact, you know, with other Bosnian people, they would much rather just hang out with their American friends. Or someone who is super Bosnian, where it's just like, you know, Adidas tracksuit every single day, straight blasting like 1980s Bosnian music, driving like an Audi or a Volkswagen, speaking Bosnian at every single moment they can, even when it's unnecessary. Just like those...just two polar opposites.

Another code within this major theme is “disconnectedness from Bosnians.” Many participants described experiences of cultural disconnectedness from Bosnian American diaspora and Bosnians in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Meho described his experience of cultural disconnectedness by using an example of feeling like an “immigrant” (i.e., feeling like an outsider) both in his host country and the United States, and feeling like a “guest” in his home country, Bosnia and Herzegovina: “You go back home, you're a guest. You feel like a guest...you come here you...you, you know you're an immigrant or...but I feel like our...like our people assimilated more quickly.” He provided more detail about his experiences of disconnectedness, particularly when visiting his home country, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the judgment that he believes Bosnian American diaspora receive from Bosnians in Bosnia:

Yeah, so I noticed like you like you obviously when you go back home you're kind of treated like a guest or, they feel like you're entitled, it's easier for you, or you know...like if we were to just kind of sit down with them to discuss with them what we just

discussed, how hard it was you know, to you know, just be dropped off in a different country, then you kind of have to learn a new language itself, then you know, once they...once they are exposed more they kind of respect more where you're coming from, and you know, just because what you went through because they got...most of them assume...it was like... "oh it's so easy for you guys" and you know, "you guys aren't struggling like here." Well, like that still you know, took a lot of guts for people to just pack their bags and head somewhere else, not knowing what awaits.

Medina also discussed her experiences of cultural disconnectedness with Bosnians when she visits Bosnia and Herzegovina, particularly feeling judged and shamed by them:

I don't know, it's like you fit in sometimes and other times you don't fit in at all, that's pretty much, you know, like some things about you are like okay, but other things they're like, you know, some people will say like how you come from America, and how you have so much money, and, you know, you come here for the summer, and like blah blah blah, like I don't even know...they would just say stuff that's like rude and those are the people who you just kind of like avoided because they think that we have such an amazing life here, but they don't realize that all we do is work...It just kind of feels like they think that you're...that you think you're TOO good for them, even though you don't.

When asked what this experience is like for her, Medina used an example to describe how, at times, she feels used by Bosnians from Bosnia and Herzegovina:

I feel like it's certain people that you're like cool with and you bring them gifts and stuff, and then like there's other people that like *hoce te samo izkoristiti*, [they just want to use you], you know what I mean, like "oh we're going out tonight? Like YOU can pay. You came from America, you can pay.

When asked what this experience of cultural disconnectedness feels like, Medina stated that she felt annoyed, awkward, and uncomfortable:

Mhmmm, I think the first time it happened me I didn't even notice and then, after I realized it was the same people, like you just kind of get annoyed because you're like "okay well I'm not making money either, you know, I worked for this, like to come here." Like I remember when I went to a grocery store with this girl, and I like went to go buy stuff, and I was on like the conveyor belt, you know, and I like put my stuff down and she picked up a bunch of stuff, and just like put it on the conveyor belt with my stuff, and she just like looked at me and I had to pay for everything that she got, like it was just so uncomfortable. She just...she didn't even say anything...you know when you have

those awkward moments where you're like “what is happening?” *laughs* and I think she just thought I’m from America, and I have money, so yeah.

Armin also described having the same experience of cultural disconnectedness as Meho and Medina, specifically feeling judged and insulted by Bosnians when visiting Bosnia and Herzegovina:

Even like for Bosnians back home they...they think it's, you know, coming to America is...money is on trees, people just throw it at you for free, or they love to give you money. And it's like, “no, it's really not like that at all.” They think that you know, you come here, and people want to give you the best jobs, the best paying job where you don't have to do anything, and I’m just like, “I wish it was that easy.” When you think about it, it's way more difficult than on either end, you know parents came here, no money, didn't know the language, you know, they could have, you know, I mean you probably had a lot of family members that moved away or like closer, like Austria or Germany or Slovenia, closer to home. But these guys took a gamble, moved 5000 miles across the world, not knowing the language, you know, so it's the whole idea that everything is handed to you, is like...it's quite insulting.

Armin also reflected on another experience of cultural disconnectedness when visiting Bosnia and Herzegovina, underscoring how participants felt “out of place” or “like a guest” (i.e., feeling like an outsider) when visiting their homes and families in Bosnia and Herzegovina: “Even when you go back home [to Bosnia and Herzegovina], you know, you feel out of place there. You feel too American to be back there. It’s kinda like you are stuck in between two worlds.” When asked to reflect on what this experience of cultural disconnectedness is like for him, Armin described how Bosnian American diaspora will always be viewed as “American” by Bosnians in Bosnia and Herzegovina:

I just feel like when I go back home and you start hanging out with your family and stuff, and everybody says it is as joke, you know, they are all like, “oh, you know, the American’s back in town” or you know, “*Amerikanac dosao*.” Like you know, you hear it is a joke, but you don't really feel like it's a joke, you know, fully, because you don't...you're not...we're not aware with the cultural norms of how it is in Bosnia. We don't know like the slang, we don't know what the minute details of like the lifestyle that

goes on over there, so, to them, you know we pretty much are American, you know? We're born...I can't say we were born, but we were raised in America, you know, went through the American school system, got American, you know, slang, got all this. So, I think once we do go back over there, and you know, even speaking with my cousins they're like, "yeah, you know, you're pretty much American to us, you know, you don't live here or you didn't grow up here, all you have is, you know, you were born here how many years ago, and yet, but you moved, so.

Next, Armin reflected on how this experience of cultural disconnectedness leaves him feeling confused:

Um I wouldn't say it's bothersome, like oh you know, like it "keeps you up at night," but it is kind of like you're stuck in a grey area, because when you're with your American friends like, "Oh, you know, you're very proud to be Bosnian and you're very proud of your heritage, your culture, and everything you do." Then, when you're with your own, you know, Bosnian [people], you know, straight from Bosnia...in Bosnia, friends and relatives, they don't really look at you the same way, so it is kind of like, you know, "which side do I belong on?" Like so it's kinda confusing, but I wouldn't say it like keeps me up at night, where I you know lose sleep over...like "oh my gosh, I'm not this, I'm not that.

The next code within this theme is "disconnectedness from Americans." Each participant described their experiences of cultural disconnectedness from Americans, with different levels of disconnectedness reflected by each person. Meho began by stating that his lack of connectedness with Americans did not have much impact on his life due to living in a large Bosnian American community in the Midwest:

I feel less connected, but it doesn't really make my life I guess, harder or...or you just...I mean what...I just maybe, that's just the way it is right now, I mean like I said, based on my experiences and like, you know, growing up over here in Midwest.

Lajla also reported that she experiences cultural disconnectedness from her American peers and described various cultural differences between her and her friends that ultimately resulting in Lajla feeling left out:

Um, also, sometimes like, my American friends, it's like, hard to explain to them some things, like if I can't like go out, or like, certain like, if I can't eat pork, let's say, since like because of my culture [and Muslim religion] and, like everything...it's hard for them to like understand that and then sometimes you feel left out of that group. Or like when they're talking about like doing things like going to communion or something like that and, like all of these things that we don't have it's like weird to be a part of, so yeah.

She continued by providing another example of cultural disconnectedness from her American peers by describing the stark cultural differences between Bosnian and American families and how this makes her feel “weird” at times when she is spending time with her American peers:

Um, like, with my American friends, I think it's like hard for them to like understand like why we do certain things, like if my parents like...we're like...my parents are more stricter, when it comes to like, “oh, if you're going to go to someone's house,” so I think like ethnically, kind of, like ways and stuff like that, like what we do like “you can't like sleep over” like, “you can't go hang out with like these guys” and stuff like that, like “we're not going to let you out at night at like 11:00pm” versus a lot of my other friends are like “why won't your parents do that?” or like, “Lajla, like, why do you do your own laundry?” or “why do you do that stuff?” and it's just like weird to me not growing up that way, and I'm just like...or like I won't ask my parents for money and a lot of these people like depend on their parents for money, and don't have jobs versus where I do, and I don't think they understand, like the fact that my parents came here...like they don't get the whole refugee part of it and, like my parents really came here with nothing and like built...trying to like build something for themselves, and then they like don't get that.

Similar to Lajla, Medina described experiences of cultural disconnectedness from Americans due to clashing cultural values between her and her American peers:

My friends, I feel like I surround myself with Bosnians, I don't choose American...I don't...I don't want to say choose, I just don't connect with American friends as much as I do Bosnian friends. I mean there's even some Bosnians that I don't connect with, but the ones that like I do, we have a similar personality and similar values...There's just certain things that like we don't connect the same over...And I think it's also like my position in life, like I am 24, and I just got married, and I have a house that I live with my husband in, and...and, you know, next year, year after, whatever, we're gonna have kids. And I feel like my Bosnian friends, like, I don't have to try so hard to, like, connect with them, they just kind of get it...and I feel like it's because they can like maybe relate to my relationship with my parents, even if, like my friends are single. But then, like my American single friends are just like...I don't know, there's like...they just don't want to hang out with you because you're married. Like, they want to be single and do whatever

they want, which okay, but like, I can hang out with my single friends, you know what I mean? And I feel like with Bosnians, I could do that but with Americans I just can't, like they just don't want to. So...

However, unlike Lajla, Medina reported that her lack of connectedness from Americans results in her avoiding friendships with Americans due to the easier, natural connections that she has with her Bosnian peers because they hold similar cultural values.

Armin also reported experiences of cultural disconnectedness from Americans, particularly “feeling out of place” among his American peers and feeling “too Bosnian” for them, while also reflecting on his disconnectedness when visiting Bosnia and Herzegovina, as previously described above:

I feel like once you're around other...other you know, Bosnian Americans, it doesn't...you don't...you don't feel out of place until you start hanging out with someone that's, you know, American and then you know, then you will feel too Bosnian for them, or then even when you go back home, you know you feel out of place there, you feel too American to be back there. It's kinda like you are stuck in between two worlds.

He continued by describing how he believes Americans view Bosnian American diaspora and feeling judged by them, which results in increased cultural disconnectedness for him:

Americans think...Or I wouldn't say all of them, but a lot of them are under the assumption that we [Bosnian American diaspora] were just given everything when we came here, you know, that we were given all this money, and you know, they just wanted us to do so well. And then, you know, they [the American government] were giving us cars or houses, and I was just like, “no, like, this is far from what happened.” Like, I grew up, you know, my dad was a pizza delivery driver for a bit and worked in construction, and my mom works night shift at Target, you know, and we had to live off of food stamps for a while and free, reduced lunches, and people just were like, “oh you guys must have been handed everything.” And that's far from the truth it's such...yeah, so that was another thing, I was like...like that didn't make any sense to me, you know? You work for what you have just as much as everybody else does. I really don't think American, Americans view us as Americans themselves if that makes sense, you know? You think...when you think of...I don't want to, you know stereotype people, but when you think of very stereotypical Americans, you think White, Christian, which we are not, you know. English being the first language, which you know, having so on so forth, you

know...we're not that, that's not who we are. So, if I went to, you know, a random stranger in the middle of the Midwest, RURAL Midwest, you know, and I'm like, "Hey, I'm American, my name is this and this, I'm a practicing, you know, this." They'd be like, "Well are you though? Like were you born here?" You know, that kind of...that...that context so...

Armin was asked to elaborate on how these experiences of cultural disconnectedness from Americans makes him feel proud of his Bosnian identity, increasing his cultural pride and not impacting him negatively:

I think it impacts it [his cultural identity] in a way that it makes me proud of it, you know, my identity and who I am. But then, sometimes, I feel like it probably could make people around you that aren't used to it, like a little uncomfortable, like "Oh, you know, you moved over to America, like why are you still...why are you still so Bosnian? If you loved it so much, why don't you just go back?" You know, those...those type of comments and stuff so. You kind of just like cannot let that faze you, because at the end of day, you're still going to be who you are, regardless...it really doesn't make me mad like other people would, because it's just...it's just ignorance, because people don't know. They think it is, you know, that simple, that you can just get up and leave [your country], you know, and then you'll have the same lifestyle, you have here, which is you know, far from the truth, so it's kinda like wasting air on it, and trying to argue and stuff, you're just like "Okay, whatever just think what you want," because people who are hardheaded like that anyways, you could bring all the facts in the world and it still wouldn't change their mind.

Emina also reported similar experiences of cultural disconnectedness from Americans as Meho, Lajla, Medina, and Armin, primarily highlighting the different "mentalities" that she and her American peers have:

Um, so I think that would be one thing and then you know, on the other, on the other side, like sometimes, with my friends like there's things that I'll do, just things that we follow where they're like "wait, that is not...totally not an American thing to do." Like, you know, that's how they know that I'm not from here or just...just different um I think you would be...how would we call that...It's not just cultural norms, but it's a mentality, I think. There's a difference between our mentalities, so yeah.

The final code within this theme is "generational differences," which sheds light on how Bosnian American diaspora have experiences of cultural disconnectedness due to generational

differences. Within this code, participants described that these generational differences occur between them and their peers, siblings, and other family members. Meho described how he experiences cultural disconnectedness from some of his Bosnian American coworkers. Below, he describes how more connected he feels to the older generation of Bosnian Americans compared to his coworkers due to his advanced Bosnian language abilities and feelings of pride related to this:

I'm more around Bosnians, and I also...in my line of work, where am I around Bosnians, so that affects it [connection to his Bosnian identity] too it's not just, you know, the last four years working with Bosnians and so I guess I'm still you know benefiting from the, like you know brush up on culture and language, where compared to someone like my coworkers if, like the younger ones, you know, I can easily open to these...I can easily talk like an older generational Bosnians, without any struggle, or I can get it [cultural nuances], I can hear what they're saying fully, you know, even kind of like the jokes or...Compared to like the younger...that's why I kind of like lean toward like the first generation, because I can get along with these older people like I...because I understand that more compared to like the younger generation [of Bosnian Americans]. So, I noticed some slightly younger generation [of Bosnian Americans], they're kind of like...there's some stuff that you can obviously clearly notice, where the way they kind of interact with older people like, you know, in Bosnian culture. See, you know, some of the stuff is rude you got to kind of be cautious how you are talking to older people, you know. And you can kind of tell based on their interactions with people once you watch it from the side...How different it is, I guess.

He continued to reflect on this experience of cultural disconnectedness from the younger generations of Bosnian Americans and described how he views himself as someone who is in the “last real Bosnian generation” due to his age, advanced understanding of the Bosnian language, and ability to connect to the older Bosnian generation:

I feel like there's uh there's some friends that I went to school with like, high school here...if we felt like and...we talked about this between each other, we felt like we're like the last like “real Bosnian generation,” like that could...we kind of like, you know, interact with the older generation without any issues you know speak the language, understanding the culture, understanding them, you know we might not get along the same way, to have the same thoughts but, you know, we get along with them easier.

Meho then discussed how despite his experiences of cultural disconnectedness from the younger generation of Bosnian American diaspora, he tries to teach the younger generations that may be disconnected from their Bosnian cultural backgrounds:

Then I have...there's another one [coworker] that is younger, I think 21, and like you can tell that he's kind of disconnected with some of the stuff...it doesn't...like it doesn't click, you know, how it might come off in the Bosnian culture, and he might, when he communicates, it's not that he means one thing, it would just come off [bad], for example, to an older Bosnian that, you know, it might come off different or even you know offensive. But he doesn't...that's not his intention. I would remind him like, "hey," you know, "you kind of don't want to, you know, tell him like that just because you know it might come off as rude" or like "hey, you know, you kind of want to like ease up on that, or like he's older" or you know, because a lot of people would get offended it's, you know, because that guy might find it a kind of rude for him to say that because he's younger. For example, even with like humor there's, you know, certain humor that you don't want to you know, go past some sort of more.....For example, if somebody is older, because even, you know, in our culture, like you, with older people like you know, you have to be more respectful, obviously you're not going to be like how you are with your closer friends or, you know, and it's a certain time, even in Bosnian culture if you're like 30 or 40, you know, somebody is older, there's certain kinds of...there is like levels to this stuff [cultural norms/behaviors] for like how comfortable, you can be with like you know older people or how you interact with them. I'm kind of trying to like get the gap kind of merged, so it's not you know, so that he [his coworker] knows, for his benefit and like, you know, it makes it better for him for communication purposes for him down the road. His intention wasn't [bad].

When asked how teaching the younger generation makes him feel good, Meho stated:

Like I don't mind going out of my way to bridge that gap, you know, um, or like explaining things, or like if you know their [Bosnian] language might be...not be as advanced as mine or in a lot of times, they have asked me how to say certain things, you know, because they don't know, you know, they didn't learn some of the stuff, and I would tell them how to say certain things. I feel that I'm older, I guess, then you are kind of...it makes you realize like you're actually, you know, that you're older than the younger generation, or like that kind of person...I mean you feel better, because that way, you know, it's going to benefit them too because they're gonna, you know, hey...in the next time that he might interact with somebody else he's gonna...he'll be able to interact differently. Yeah, so, it's a "feel good" thing.

Armin also described experiences of cultural disconnectedness due to generational differences between him and Bosnian American diaspora, particularly his younger sister and how he feels “weird” about the differences in her Bosnian language ability compared to his, and feels concerned about various cultural aspects for his future children:

Our generation, us...As like a cumulative, have experienced that feeling like, you know, not being too this or too that, and I don't... and unless you know, you are in that transitional generation, you don't know what it feels like, you know, you don't know what it feels like to be too Bosnian to be American or too American to be Bosnian but, once you, you know, hang out with others like that, you know, you...you kind of realize it and it's kind of weird too...Like my sister she's 16, you know, born and raised in America, and when I think of her, you know, I think she can speak Bosnian, but it's a little broken I'm not gonna lie. You know, I put it in perspective too, like when I have kids one day like, how are they going to identify, you know? Are they going to speak Bosnian? Because I want them to speak Bosnian and I'll speak Bosnian to them. Will they identify, as you know, being Bosnian? Will they want to go visit Bosnia? So, it's a lot of stuff to ponder.

Overall, this major theme illustrated the difficulties that Bosnian American diaspora face with never truly feeling “here or there” (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Their experiences noted in their textual descriptions ranged from being labeled as Americanized by their families, friends, and communities, to experiencing disconnectedness with different generations of Bosnian American diaspora. Within their structural descriptions, they explained how their experiences of cultural disconnectedness resulted in disconnection from other Bosnians (in the U.S. and Bosnia and Herzegovina) and Americans. These various experiences of disconnectedness within each code resulted in feelings of weirdness, discomfort, worry and guilt, annoyance, awkwardness, confusion, concern, pride, and uniqueness/diversity. They also resulted in participants feeling judged and shamed, feeling like they were “trying too hard,” feeling like a guest/outsider/immigrant/out of place/left out, feeling like the “last real Bosnian

generation,” and feeling “good.” These feelings resulted in a variety of behaviors among the participants, such as hiding parts of themselves, having changes in their “mindset” resulting in taking on greater American values, avoiding friendships with Americans due to clashing cultural values, and teaching the younger generation of Bosnian Americans that are experiencing cultural disconnectedness. Overall, the essence of experiences of cultural disconnectedness within this theme thus appear to be complex for each participant in this study despite agreement across codes, with participants reporting a variety of subsequent feelings and behaviors because of these experiences.

Theme 8: Race is a multidimensional factor that causes different types of experiences of cultural disconnectedness for Bosnian American diaspora.

Theme eight emerged from the codes privilege, racism, and experiences of marginalization. Within the “privilege” code, participants described how the pervasiveness of their White privilege, despite being a Muslim immigrant/child of refugees, has resulted in experiences of cultural disconnectedness. Armin described how Bosnian American diaspora do not fit the stereotypical Muslim “look” (i.e., brown skin) due to being White. He then continued by describing how this results in experiences of cultural disconnectedness for him from Americans due to his race and other Bosnian Muslim cultural factors (i.e., Muslim names):

I guess a huge aspect of, you know, cultural disconnectedness is being...I mean we are from Europe, but we're one of the few, you know, if not handful of European nations that are Muslim majority country, so we come off as even like a, you know, people we see...they see us who...we're White people, but then, you know, they hear the word Muslims, and we have names like Armin, you know, *laughs* The names and stuff...and it kind of throws people off for a second because they're like, “whoa that's not....” you know, we typically think...like we stereotype a Muslim person, that's how we think about it, you don't think of a White European.

Medina voiced a similar experience of cultural disconnectedness due to her White privilege and her religious minority identity. She compared her experience to other non-White, Muslim women that wear hijabs and the direct discrimination these women experience not only due to their skin color, but also their Muslim identity:

So, I feel like it just...it's kind of like you pick your battles, you know, like I don't know...like...like anybody that wears a headscarf, anywhere they go, they can run into somebody that hates them because they have a headscarf on...You know, except their cultural identity is a little bit...I mean it's obvious, because it's...you can see it [the hijabs]. They can't see that I'm Bosnian [Muslim]...Because I'm White.

Medina continued to describe how her White skin and non-stereotypical Muslim “look” (i.e., wearing a hijab) results in experiences of privilege and cultural disconnectedness at the same time:

It's true, I mean like it's not like my forehead says “Bosnian,” like anybody that sees me in a grocery store, or anywhere else, like they're going to think that I'm just American, I don't have an accent, you know?

Meho also reported how Bosnian American diaspora have it “easier” due to their White privilege compared to individuals that are Hispanic or Arab:

Also, what I think made it kind of easier for us, which is just the reality of it, we're also White compared to like some people that I know either that are of Hispanic or Arab descent where, you know, they're still no matter how long they live here, you know, they're still going to think they just came here because a lot of people aren't just, I guess, aware here or more cultured, maybe?

He continued by expanding on why he feels Bosnian Americans are “lucky” to be White, particularly due to their White privilege and people's inability of identifying them as Muslim, just as Armin and Medina mentioned:

Like I said, I told a lot of like my friends or even like whoever I discussed it with that was Bosnian...I was always like “yeah, you were kind of lucky that we're actually White,” even though you know a lot of people don't assume you might be Muslim

background. It is just easier, maybe to really assimilate because a lot of people may be here, not everybody obviously...but um, there's some general kind of people just wouldn't assume that you're Muslim or they won't look at you differently, but if you were a person of color or different background, they would kind of have that generalization of something or different opinions of you, even though you're...you might be the same person. That's why I said we're lucky, you know, because a lot of people come [to the United States] and then all with you know different skin color, they're [Americans] going to be like, "oh, hey, you know, this guy is an immigrant," even though he might be second or third generation immigrants, and you know, they're kind of...their family's been here for three generations...but they still might look at them this way, meanwhile, they [Americans] don't know if you know, if you just came here or how long you lived here because you're White, so I said that a lot of times...we have it easier compared to other maybe immigrant groups.

The next code within this theme is "Racism," which consisted of participants highlighting the prevalence of racism within their communities. Josip provided an example of the diasporic community's response to the Black Lives Matter movement and reported feelings of confusion and feeling awkward about this situation:

I just like don't understand...like you would think like a lot of Bosnians would like take what happened to us as a community, and like be more like inclined for like social justice, but like I've seen like a lot of Bosnian people, like just not do anything with like let's just say, like the Black Lives Matter movement, but like also be like extremely condescending towards it. I think racism in like Serbia is particularly bad...like not having like any like even desire to be empathetic or sympathetic to that situation, where it's like I've heard something like Bosnian, Serbians, and other people just be like "well, they should just obey the police" and I'm like, "well, like what if somebody told you that, like during the war, like would you have done that? No." I see that in play a lot, and it's like really awkward because it's like...I'm very like social justice inclined, and you think other Bosnian people would be but like so many of them are not because that's when like that's social conservatism creeps in.

Sadina also alluded to the prevalence of racism of in the Bosnian American diasporic community by providing an example of parents not being welcoming of people from different racial backgrounds. Below she reported feeling like the racism in the community is "messed up:"

A lot of my friends...it's very diverse, like I have gay friends, I have black friends, you know I have, like all these kinds of people, and I think sometimes...luckily, my family

has never been like...if I want to have like...I know people are like “oh my family is so strict, you know, I can't have this person over, I can't have this over” but, like, I know, sometimes in our community like people can be...not so much like with like talking about race and stuff like there's certain things that people, just like or not...I don't know if they're not educated on it, or what it is, I have no idea, but like, you know, my parents would always welcome whoever into our house, like it literally does not matter like how you identify as or where you're from, you know, I just think it's so stupid...And so, I think sometimes, our people can be a little bit judgmental, *laughs* and they don't see past, you know someone...or they're like “oh, I don't want to associate with that person because they're from here,” or you know, “they're this race or ethnicity or something.” I just think that's really messed up, but I have seen that happen, so anyway.

The last code within this theme is “Experiences of Marginalization,” where participants described experiences of cultural disconnectedness from their White, American peers. Armin reported this occurring to him and provided an example of experiences of cultural disconnectedness from his White, American male peers that tell him he can be fully “American” around them and “turn off” the Bosnian aspect of his identity. As a result of this, he reported feelings of estrangement, generally when around White males:

I feel when I'm around just, you know, White, Caucasian males I'll always feel like the one sticking out, the one who doesn't belong, you know. Even amongst...I've had the greatest group of friends, you know all White people, but I still feel like you'd be the one that sticks out, in contrast to a group of people that are all diverse, you know, everybody embraces each other, everybody's...they want to know where you're from, they want to know how, you know, why, like how you got here, your backstory, granted, you know, and like I said, all White people are totally not for that, but I just feel like the majority of them it's...it's kind of like “Hey, you know, you're more American now when you hang out with us, you don't really have to be Bosnian around us,” which is again...you can't just turn it off, it's not...it's not just a switch.

When asked to expand on what he means by “turning it off,” Armin stated:

I don't like to disparage White people, like “all White people are awful” because no... there's no...a lot of them are very receptive to, you know, wanting to get to know you, but I just feel like, you know, sometimes it feels like you have to turn off the immigrant side of yourself, but we can't do that, so...

Despite participants' recognition of their White privilege in the previous codes, they also recognize and experience cultural disconnectedness from their White American peers due to their immigrant backgrounds and minoritized ethnic and religious identities as highlighted above.

Overall, theme eight explored experiences of cultural disconnectedness in the context of race, as noted in the participants' textual descriptions, which included discussions regarding White privilege, racism, and experiences of marginalization. Their structural descriptions expanded on their feelings within each code, with participants reporting feeling lucky due to their White privilege and feeling like their assimilation in the United States was easier compared to non-White Muslims in the United States because of their White privilege. In addition to this, participants reported experiencing feelings of confusion and stated that seeing racism in their Bosnian American communities was "messed up" and "awkward," given Bosnian diaspora's experiences with social injustices and genocide. Others also reported feelings of estrangement from their White, American peers due to experiences of marginalization complex racial components, with participants being asked to "turn off" their Bosnian identities in order to be "fully White." In sum, the essence of this theme includes the complex interplay of race and experiences of cultural disconnectedness among Bosnian American diaspora and a variety of subsequent feelings related to these experiences.

Theme 9: Experiences of cultural disconnectedness within Bosnian American diaspora's communities varies and depends on contextual factors.

The final theme in this study emerged from the codes: school setting, lack of connection to American community, lack of access to the Bosnian community, lack of connection to Bosnians in their communities, and connectedness to the Bosnian community. Within the

“school setting” code, participants described experiences of cultural disconnectedness at school, particularly with feeling different and not feeling accepted in various Bosnian or American groups within their school communities. Sadina reported experiences of cultural disconnectedness in the school setting and described how she felt “different” in elementary school when she had to “Americanize” her name:

Um, growing up here...it was definitely like you felt a little...like you always kind of knew that you were different, but you just didn't really know like 100% like where you fit in, even in let's say elementary school, because those are our first kind of experiences and things like that, and I remember like one of my teachers, she would always have the hardest time like saying my name or writing it out, or you know, whatever, and I almost like defaulted at one point to just giving them like...like a nickname, like almost like Americanizing you know my name, so it'd be easier and then I was just kind of like...which, mind you, I'm in first, second grade like what do I know? Kind of thing. But then, for some reason I was like, “no like why?” and I told my mom about it, and she was like, “No, like make sure to say your name right, like that's messed up,” you know, kind of thing, and I was like, “hey, like sure.”

Sadina continued and stated that these experiences of cultural disconnectedness were also prevalent in the classroom when she would have to explain to the other student's what country she originally came from, which resulted in feelings of confusion and made her feel “weird” among her American classmates:

Um, but...it's so funny like, and also too even in our classroom it was kind of confusing, because I was like “Oh, I know I'm from Bosnia like my parents are from there,” you know. And we would have uhhh you know those maps that pulled down out of the wall and so, I don't remember what activity we were doing, but I remember just like staring at this map as I'm telling someone I'm from Bosnia and I'm like going to go show them and the map still shows you know Yugoslavia, and I was like “huh” and like I was like “wait, does this country not exist, like I'm so confused?” All this stuff...so the map was outdated obviously, that was in the classroom. This is like early 2000s kind of thing, and so, that was definitely really confusing and weird for me.

Emina also reported experiences of cultural disconnectedness in the school setting. Since Emina lived half of her life in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the other half in the United States, she

attended high school in Bosnia and Herzegovina. While in high school, Emina reported feelings of estrangement, specifically feeling like she did not “belong” among her peers:

I was in Bosnia, you know, through high school and even though high school was great and all, I don't have these horror stories that a lot of kids do here, you know, I've never been bullied, I've never had a problem finding friends. I still felt like that...I still felt like I didn't fully belong there, mainly because, you know, people in Bosnia, especially the girls, it's always, “you got to look great,” you know. It was more about how you look rather than how smart you are. That's really something that I struggled with because I was the complete opposite, I grew up with...I grew up with my two cousins here and, basically, I was like a tomboy. I never cared about my...like yeah, I want to look good, but that was never my first priority, my first priority was always getting...getting a degree and just being able to provide for myself.

Similar to Sadina and Emina, Lajla also reported experiences of cultural disconnectedness within the school setting. Below, Lajla also reported feelings of estrangement from her Bosnian peers at school, and specifically described how she has repeatedly attempted to connect with the Bosnian American community in school, but that she still does not feel “accepted” by her peers at school:

Um, like here in school, like I've tried to like be friends with the Bosnians, like the Bosnian population and, like my friend, especially with my friend who goes to school with me like I'm like really connected with her and she's Bosnian, versus like the Bosnians in my school, like I've tried to like reach out to them and like, hang out with them and like, be like, a part of like that community, but it's hard when they're not as accepting of it [Lajla being more Americanized], and so, that's why I do go hang around with like friends who are American and like not Bosnian, just because it's...they accept me more and they won't like talk about me and say things and yeah, gossip.

The next code within this theme is “lack of connection to American community.” This code explored participants’ experiences of cultural disconnectedness from their American communities. Participants voiced their issues with connecting to their American communities; beginning with Josip, who described his current experiences of cultural disconnectedness from his American community and desires for community integration:

Like you want privacy, but then you also want like community integration, where you feel like you know...that's just not a thing in the United States, like it's all about me, me, me. America does not stress the importance of community, whether it's your neighborhood community or your family, like there's a lack of like community engagement...involvement...not really sure what the word I want to use, but it's just very, you know, I would probably say like, Americans don't care who their neighbors are, whether they're going through something good or bad.

Medina also reported experiences of cultural disconnectedness from her American community, with her connection to her American culture and community depending on contextual factors. Below, she uses an example from working at an elementary school and choosing to not participate during the Pledge of Allegiance and feeling like the United States only pushes “American values” on to people:

I feel really connected to well, kind of connected to my American culture, I feel like it just depends, honestly, like it depends on what's going on, it depends like, I don't know, when I worked at the school, and they would do the...*kako se zove onaj* [how do you say the] anthem in the morning? um, the Pledge of Allegiance...yeah, when I worked at the school and they did the Pledge of Allegiance in the morning, I literally never did it. I don't know why, it's not that I'm not proud to be American, but like I also don't feel why...I don't feel like we should be forced do to that, like I just don't...I don't know like why, if...if we have a classroom full of Bosnian kids should we force them to sing the Bosnian anthem? You know? I like America, but like, I just...there's like some things that make me...I'm trying to think of the word. I feel like America is trying to be all about inclusion, and then they just focus on American values. Like you can't do both.

Armin reported experiences of cultural disconnectedness from his American community as well. In his statement below, he describes how he feels less connected to his American community as he grows older and spends less time with his American peers. He appeared to feel content with this decision in his description below:

Um, I would honestly say I feel less connected to my American culture, the older I do get. Granted, I still go to the American school system, listen to American music, watch American movies, but in terms of, you know, hanging out with Americans, or just you know other White people, kind of decreased as I got older, and you know, there's so many people in America, you know, it's the biggest melting pot country in the world, you

know, you meet people from all over, and we get to experience them all over, and it doesn't always fit the status quo of being American, you know.

The next code within this theme explored participants' experiences of cultural disconnectedness due to lack of access to the Bosnian community. Medina illustrated why she was disconnected from her American peers and how this resulted in increased feelings of anger and resentment toward them due to lack of access to the Bosnian community while growing up:

I don't think I was embarrassed [of growing up in a small home compared to her American peers]...I think it would just like piss me off. I kind of got resentful like as I grew up, and I think that also gave me a drive to work harder so that my parents could like have things and we could have things that, like other kids have, that to us is just too much. And to fit in and everything, and like at the end of the day, like when I think back on it, like I was one of my only friends in the group like that worked and like bought her own car, and I bought my own phone, and I had an iPhone, and I had all these things, but it's like, "how do you have these things when you came from nothing?" And it's like "well I work, you know?" I started working when I was 14 so I could have these things without my parents paying for them." I think that resentment like motivated me to get to where I was at that point. I wouldn't have been so resentful if I had more Bosnians around me, but I didn't have anybody that was Bosnian like me growing up so...And that's another reason why I graduated high school early, is because I was just like sick of going to school with those kids. *laughs*

The next code that comprised this theme was "lack of connection to Bosnians in their communities." Within this theme, participants described experiences of cultural disconnectedness, particularly due to a lack of connection to Bosnians in their communities. Lajla endorsed these specific experiences of cultural disconnectedness and reported feelings of estrangement from her Bosnian community, particularly with her feeling like her Bosnian community is a "clique" that she does not belong to:

Like I don't even know...like they're just like all...they all grew up together, if you will, like all of them live in the same part of town, which is like a certain part like away from like where, kind of, I live, and all of them, like all their parents know each other and, since they all technically, basically all of their parents came here from like *Srebrenica* [town in Bosnia and Herzegovina] or like certain [Bosnian] cities, they already like

clicked and knew each other, versus like my family coming here, like they didn't really know a lot of people, and had to like make friends, and so I think that those kids are just like more connected with each other, since they grew up with each other and then, like putting me into the mix or other people that no one's like really heard of, just makes them even like more like, I don't know, cautious about anybody in their group...or like tight...I don't know, like a clique almost.

When asked what this experience of cultural disconnectedness from her Bosnian community was like, Lajla reported feeling bothered by this, specifically feeling “weird” and “bad,” with these feelings lessening as she has gotten older:

Um, like...At first it was like weird, and I like wanted to be friends like with a lot of them, and I like...It made me feel bad and then I'd like come home and be like, “they don't like me” or like “they're talking about me,” but I feel like as I've gotten like older, uh I haven't like...I don't like...I do still kind of care, but like I don't as much because, like I've met like my friends and I know who my friends are, and like speaking to my parents about it, it's like...”you can't do anything, that's just the way that they were raised and they're going to talk if they want to talk,” and like it's just, I kind of like not...not care...not care as much anymore.

Josip also reported experiences of cultural disconnectedness due to a lack of connection to Bosnians in his community. He also described desires to connect with other Bosnian American diaspora that may understand his experiences related to being “too American” and “too Bosnian at the same time” (i.e., experiences of cultural disconnectedness):

I would say I feel more disconnected because I also would like to know, like more Bosnian people my age and it'd be nice if, like I knew some like wherever I'd be living at the time, that there are some there are too, um, that would be nice. I would just like...like to know more [Bosnian Americans], especially like in our age group, like 20s, like Gen Z, Millennial...um, to kind of like cross that bridge, like you know, I think like other Bosnian Americans would probably understand likely how it feels like to be a diaspora and like the gap between like too American but too Bosnian at the same time.

Sadina also reflected on her experiences of cultural disconnectedness within this code.

Below, she describes why she believes many Bosnian Americans “struggle to find a place in the

community” and how she feels that this is “weird” because it is a pattern she has noticed across generations:

A lot of people they struggle to find a place in the community, because it's like if they weren't involved in like, you know, *folklore* or, you know, going to like *mejtef* [Islamic school at the mosque] and stuff like that, then they don't really have that group of people and so, people tend to stick with like their family and like who they're close to, and I think sometimes that can be an issue as well, like people aren't included in certain things because maybe they don't drink, or they don't do this type of thing, and then it's like...it's just a very weird...like things that I've noticed in particular, and it's not just my generation, but just like even my mom's generation too so, yeah.

Sadina provided another example of an experience of cultural disconnectedness while at a Bosnian cultural event (i.e., Bosnian concert) and the difficulties she had connecting with Bosnians in her community, which resulted in her questioning if she should even try to meet new people in her Bosnian community. She reported that this experience was “bizarre” and made her feel “weird:”

But almost like they [Bosnian Americans] don't want to, like you, you couldn't even make friends with them...like okay here's another scenario for you, I guess, that I've seen walking into a Bosnian concert. So, it's like okay everyone kind of gravitates towards their friend group, few people that they know type of thing. So, I remember like one of the first ones I went to, and I've never really gone to these before, I was just kind of like, you know, “eh, I don't know about that, I don't really know anyone, like who am I going to go with?” And so, I went with my best friend, and I was like, “okay, at least I have her, you know, worst case.” I ended up like knowing other people there too, just from my childhood and stuff, but when you walk in, I feel like there's this thing where it's like, yeah, they talk about, “oh yeah, get to know your community, get to know people,” but then sometimes, it's like you're in a room with these people, and they just like don't even want to talk to you, or they don't even want to engage in conversation, or they just sit there and like gossip about you...and I'm not saying this is everyone, it's definitely not, but I think that's another HUGE issue because it's like...I'm the type of person, where I want to walk up and like talk to everyone, saying “hi,” and you know, this and that and like, sometimes, I don't know if people are afraid to make that effort, but I think sometimes it's like, I don't know what it is? Like they just think they're so much better that they can't talk to you or something? Or like, “oh she's...” I have no idea what goes through their mind, but like that's something I've noticed too, it's like people aren't even very open and like willing to make new friends if they had those same Bosnian friends

for like, you know, the past 10, 20, 30 years. It's like, "okay well, why should I even go up and like try to meet other people?" Um but yeah, that's definitely something that I've noticed. And yeah...I don't know, it's very bizarre to me. I'm like "can we all just be friends?" That's one thing that's really weird, but anyway, I don't know if you've had something similar happened.

Emina reported a lack of connection to her Bosnian community as well, and subsequent experiences of cultural disconnectedness. Despite these experiences of cultural disconnectedness, Emina reported not being bothered, and feeling content with this, resulting in increased connectedness with her diverse American peers:

Even though I'm Bosnian, I don't spend a lot of time with the Bosnian community here and that's probably because I've spent so much time in Bosnia that I've kind of just, you know, there's different things that I didn't like and I've learned that...that I just don't go with and then that I don't agree with that I...it kind of forces me to stay away from a lot of our...a lot of our Bosnian people here [in the United States], which is not necessarily a bad thing, even though, others will see it that way, but I just found myself fitting in better with a lot of my American friends or you know, other...other ethnicities and nationalities.

The final code within this theme is "Connectedness to the Bosnian community." Despite participants' reports of lack of connection to Bosnians in their communities, the other half of participants reported connectedness to their Bosnian communities. This code explores what these experiences of connectedness have been like for participants. Medina reported experiencing connectedness with her Bosnian community and stated that she does what she can to support Bosnian American business in her community:

I feel like I'm really connected to the [Bosnian] community and, like me and my husband know a lot of people, and him owning a business is also part of that. And like, we support other Bosnian businesses as well, because we want people to succeed here. We want there to be [Bosnian] grocery stores, and bars, and all those places, restaurants, that we can go to and that we can enjoy with people that are like us.

Despite reporting experiences of cultural disconnectedness from her Bosnian community earlier, Sadina also reported experiencing connectedness with her Bosnian community. Below,

she describes how she has established and maintained that connectedness, which have resulted in her feeling grateful for these experiences:

I think, right now, I definitely feel a lot more connected than I did, you know, 10 years ago, for sure, just through the consistent going back home a lot. I think that [traveling back to Bosnia and Herzegovina] definitely shaped who I am as a person and giving back to the community as well in Bosnia, and not just here, making friends with Balkan people, but also back home. Seeing the situation too, in which people are living in [in Bosnia and Herzegovina], and what they have to deal with on a daily kind of basis, because, you know, we as diaspora, we go home and it's usually for vacation, and it's fun, we go to the beach, we get see old friends, you know that type of thing, but we're not living in the you know, whatever those 62% unemployment rate for youth and, like things of that nature, or getting a degree and not being able to get a job type of thing. So, I think like going back to that, is just...going back home [to Bosnia and Herzegovina], you kind of, start to realize that could have been you in a way, and that makes you appreciate even like 10 times more what you already have, like where you're at now, so yeah.

Lastly, Armin explained his experiences of cultural connectedness among Bosnian American diaspora, particularly due to his attendance to and participation in Bosnian American cultural events:

I mean the biggest thing is, you know, concerts huge...HUGE, massive function everybody shows up everybody looks good. Weddings are way different, you know, Bosnian weddings... Bosnian funerals even, I guess, on the other side of it. I think, just the functions and events, and the way we hold things...even like having a *Teferić* [community festival] every year, you know, having everyone get together from all across the nation.

Overall, theme nine explored varying levels and experiences of cultural connectedness and disconnectedness among Bosnian American diaspora in their Bosnian and American communities, respectively. Textural descriptions provided by participants highlighted that these experiences occur in different places and due to a variety of reasons, such as the school setting, and due to lack of access to the Bosnian community and lack of connection to their American and Bosnian communities. In their structural descriptions within each code, participants reported

numerous types of feelings, including feeling different, weird, bizarre, and bad, not feeling accepted, and feelings of confusion, estrangement, anger, and resentment. Others reported feeling content and grateful because of these experiences of cultural connectedness and disconnectedness. They all reported a variety of behaviors due to these experiences, including choosing to not participate in different activities, desires for community integration, working harder to have certain things that their American peers had (i.e., iPhone), graduating high school due to feelings of resentment toward American peers, questioning if they should even try to connect with their Bosnian communities, and supporting their Bosnian communities in different ways (e.g., supporting Bosnian businesses). In sum, each participant discussed how these experiences of cultural disconnectedness impact their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of/toward their communities and different ways they establish and maintain experiences of cultural connectedness and navigate experiences of cultural disconnectedness within their communities. The agreement across codes within this theme underscores the essence of this theme, particularly the complexity associated with experiences of cultural connectedness and disconnectedness among Bosnian American diaspora.

Participant Reactions to Research

Following the completion of the initial interviews, participants completed an anonymous survey that directly assessed their satisfaction with and reactions to their participation in the study. More specifically, the Reactions to Research Participation Questionnaire – Revised (RRPQ-R); Newman et al., 2001, See the **Measures** Section and **Appendix D** for additional information) was administered, which assesses participant perceptions of the costs and benefits of research participation and their general responses to research procedures (e.g., informed

consent and recruitment). The questions in this measure were designed to be applicable to a variety of human research paradigms and samples, including medical, psychological, and sociological studies (Newman et al., 2001). Assessing reactions to research participation may be helpful to assess when considering the costs and benefits of studies that are perceived and involve individuals who present to the study with a variety of experiences, such as psychology disorders, social problems (e.g., violence, poverty), or illnesses.

Not only is this evidence helpful in studies which are perceived as potentially sensitive, but also because all studies have potential positive and negative effects, decisions about risk are usually made in the absence of evidence, and individuals at risk can be included in any study, regardless of sample type or content (Newman et al., 2001). In addition to the ethical concerns noted above, documenting participant reactions can help assess the quality of research findings. For example, participant negative response (e.g., anger, shame, fear) could encourage dishonesty, faking, response bias, or minimization, all of which could compromise the validity of research efforts (Newman et al., 2001). The need to understand and delineate participants' reactions to research can help promote the scientific integrity of research findings, which was a primary aim of this research study, particularly ensuring and strengthening the trustworthiness (i.e., credibility; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Shenton, 2004) of the current qualitative study.

In this study, every participant ($N = 7$) reported High levels of perceived cost-benefit ratio for participating, adequacy of requirement procedures, and satisfaction with participation (Participation Factor; $M = 19.42$, $SD = .79$). Six participants also reported High levels of personal benefits from participating in this study, while one participant reported Moderate levels with this experience (Personal Benefits Factor; $M = 18$, $SD = 1.53$). More specifically,

participants reported Moderate to High levels of gaining something positive from participating, gaining insight about their own experiences through participation, and finding participation in the study personally meaningful and beneficial.

Regarding emotional reactions, four out of seven participants reported Moderate levels of positive emotional reactions to their participation in the study (Emotional Reactions Factor; $M = 13$, $SD = 3.56$). Two participants reported Mild levels of positive emotional reactions, indicating that they may have experienced more emotional issues and intense emotions/thoughts that they had not expected or wanted, respectively. One participant reported High levels of positive emotional effects related to their participation in the study. Within the Perceived Drawbacks Factor, every single participant ($N = 7$) reported High levels of perceived benefits from participation and sound ethical considerations ($M = 26.57$, $SD = 1.99$). More specifically, every participant stated that they would participate in this study again and that they did not find the questions too personal or participating boring/too time consuming. Lastly, within the Global Evaluation Factor, each participant reported High levels of faith in confidentiality, scientific quality, and the research teams' respect for them ($M = 24.43$, $SD = .79$).

Overall, these findings from the RRPQ-R indicate generally high participant endorsement levels of a general sense of benefit, personal meaningfulness of participation, positive self-esteem, and pride in helping others due to their participation in the study. The variety of emotional reactions reported by participants (i.e., higher levels of distress) relates to the evidence reported in the literature suggesting that aspects of studies that are considered the most upsetting (e.g., remembering the past, recognizing memory gaps, experiencing painful insights, and discussing the trauma) are cited as most beneficial to participants following the interviews

(Carlson et al., 2003). Evidence also suggests that participants who take these types of surveys following the study and report distress during study procedures, do not remain upset at completion (Boscarino et al., 2004; Galea et al., 2005).

Following the interviews, the researcher checked in with participants about their emotional states and general reactions to participation, and their reports all paralleled the reactions noted above, particularly that upsetting aspects of the study were also the most beneficial to them. At the end of the interview, many of the participants reported that they found this experience “therapeutic” and described the interview as a “venting session” and “helpful” despite experiencing strong emotions. Participants also reported increased awareness of their experiences of cultural disconnectedness, while also reporting insight about their resiliency, experiences of connectedness in various areas (e.g., connectedness due to language abilities, familial connectedness, connectedness to the Bosnian community codes), and coping skills (i.e., Theme four: Bosnian American diaspora engage in various strategies to seek support due to experiences of cultural disconnectedness) at the end of the interview.

This type of reflective experience was repeated when the researcher reconnected with the participants via their preferred method of communication (i.e., text, phone, email, Instagram direct message). This second meeting occurred following completion of data collection and analysis in March 2022 (data collection occurred between June 2021-August 2021 and data analysis occurred between September 2021-February 2022) and involved reviewing the results and assessing for any extra needed support. During this meeting, participants continued to verbally reflect increased insight and benefits from participating in the study, while also reporting surprise that other Bosnian American diaspora were reporting similar types of

experiences of disconnectedness and connectedness as they are. Additional forms of support for participants that reported continued or increased experiences of disconnectedness due to variety of reasons (e.g., general experiences of disconnectedness from their Bosnian or American cultural groups, disconnectedness due to COVID-19 pandemic, and increased distress or disconnectedness due to current Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022) were provided as well. See **Discussion** section for further information about this meeting. Overall, these verbal reports of satisfaction with and positive reactions to their participation in the study parallel the findings from the RRPQ-R, further indicating trustworthiness (i.e., credibility) of the current qualitative study.

Discussion

Bosnian American diaspora have endured a variety of traumatic events before and since their arrival to the United States. This includes, but is not limited to, war exposure, fleeing their home countries in search for safety in their new host countries, acculturation in new, unfamiliar cultures, raising children in a new country, socioeconomic hardships, and discrimination by individuals in their host country. Children of Bosnian refugees have also experienced a multitude of overwhelming, and sometimes, traumatic events, including acting as cultural brokers and adults for their parents, navigating new and advanced systems with little to no help from their parents, discrimination, alienation, and estrangement by and from their peers, and balancing their Bosnian and American cultures, values, languages, customs, and more. These experiences of cultural disconnectedness are occurring while Bosnian American diaspora simultaneously attempt to thrive as the first/1.5/second generation of immigrants/refugees in a new country, knowing that their parents sacrificed many things to put them in this position.

These experiences are not only overwhelming and traumatic, but they are also emotional and continuous despite Bosnian American diaspora's 20+ years of living in the United States. Bosnian American diaspora manage and navigate these experiences of cultural disconnectedness in a variety of ways while maintaining their identities as Bosnians in America. This study thus explored experiences of cultural disconnectedness among Bosnian American diaspora and the subsequent impacts of this on their psychological well-being using a phenomenological perspective. This experience has been described as feeling in the margins of two cultures or being caught in between two identities, resulting in never truly feeling "here or there" (Clark, 2007; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). The results of this qualitative study revealed interesting information regarding this phenomenon, or lived experience, among Bosnian American diaspora. These findings demonstrated that the "universal essence" of experiences of cultural disconnectedness among Bosnian American diaspora was comprised of nine major themes, including:

- Theme 1: A variety of negative experiences with identifying as Muslim result in experiences of cultural disconnectedness for Bosnian American diaspora.
- Theme 2: Experiences of cultural disconnectedness reality to language abilities and competencies are complex for Bosnian American diaspora.
- Theme 3: Culture becomes either a risk or protective factor for/against experiences of cultural disconnectedness that varies depending on context for Bosnian American diaspora.
- Theme 4: Bosnian American diaspora engage in various strategies to seek support due to experiences of cultural disconnectedness.

- Theme 5: Experiences of cultural disconnectedness have become accepted by the Bosnian American diaspora.
- Theme 5: Family plays a major role for Bosnian American diaspora, causing either experiences of cultural disconnectedness or connectedness.
- Theme 7: Bosnian American diaspora struggle with feeling either “too Bosnian” or “too American.”
- Theme 8: Race is a multidimensional factor that causes different types of experiences of cultural disconnectedness for Bosnian American diaspora.
- Theme 9: Experiences of cultural disconnectedness within Bosnian American diaspora’s communities varies and depends on contextual factors.

The discussion section will review and provide more information about the field notes and the process of creating the field notes, the findings of the study, including similar findings and new information revealed in the study that will add to the literature, limitations of the study, implications and strengths, and conclusions and future directions, respectively.

Field Notes

Field notes are essential aspects involved in phenomenological qualitative studies that are used to foster self-reflection and note any personal biases that the researcher may hold. In qualitative studies, self-reflection specifically serves as a method for the researcher to ground themselves and understand their positionality throughout the research process, underscoring a methodological shift in the understanding of the research process. This approach also increases the trustworthiness of the research study and aids in the review and reflection of any negative cases that arose throughout the study. Throughout the initial and second (result review)

interviews with each participant, I coded any real-time participant behaviors and comments and my thoughts and reflections using a phenomenological method called bracketing (Creswell & Poth, 2018) in a separate Word document (i.e., journal), which included the field notes and corresponding time stamps from the original recording of the interviews. Bracketing is a process of setting aside or suspending one's personal bias or experience to see the experiences of the participants more clearly (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A common strategy used in bracketing is self-reflection. In the process of self-reflection, the researcher acknowledges and writes down any beliefs or personal experiences related to the phenomena of interest. By writing down previous beliefs or biases, the researcher can set them aside and focus on engaging in the phenomenological research process without preconceived ideas (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

I used these field notes to thus produce meaning to and gain an understanding of participants' experiences of cultural disconnectedness in a non-biased fashion. This process helps researchers write the results in a way that encapsulates the participants' individual and collective experiences, while also allowing for self-reflection by the researcher, resulting in grounding and fully understanding their positionality within the research process. Field notes thus add richness to the data and represent a methodological shift in the understanding of the research process. I began analyzing the field notes while I was in the field because this process fosters self-reflection among researchers in the moment, which is crucial for increasing understanding and meaning making (Burgess, 1991; Webb 1991).

Field Notes: Initial Meetings with Participants

A variety of real-time participant behaviors and comments were coded throughout each of the seven interviews. The initial interviews ranged from 43 minutes to an hour and 37

minutes. The general observations across the seven participants in the initial interviews included participants' use of humor and storytelling. Regarding humor, I noticed that every participant used humor when they were nervous or discussing difficult topics related to experiences of cultural disconnectedness, which is a Bosnian cultural norm. The cultural norm of using humor was also discussed extensively by participants and is noted in the results (theme: Culture becomes either a risk or protective factor for/against experiences of cultural disconnectedness that varies depending on context for Bosnian American diaspora, code: Cultural norms). When this occurred, I engaged in joking with them, which appeared to strengthen our relationships and the trust when sharing personal, difficult information. This resulted in participants' trust increasing with me and engaging in more meaningful, deeper conversations on the topics of cultural connectedness and disconnectedness.

Participants also engaged in storytelling when describing their experiences of cultural connectedness and disconnectedness, which is another important Bosnian cultural factor that is used in processing history (Weine et al., 2006). When this occurred, at first, I felt like I was getting immersed in their stories due to our shared lived experiences, and then I felt like I needed to speed up the interview process for various reasons, including time management and maintaining boundaries. However, while this was occurring and I was having these personal biases related to our interpersonal interactions during the interview, I realized that it was important to make that space for the participants to process their experiences and tell their stories to someone who will listen in a compassionate, non-judgmental way. Many of the participants reported that this processing throughout the interview was helpful for them, because many of them had not shared this information with anyone prior to our interview. When I learned what

this experience was like for them, I felt honored and privileged that they would let me hear their stories, which made it more critical to give them that space to process their lived experiences.

Participants also generally showed strong emotions (e.g., tearfulness) when discussing the difficulties associated with experiences of cultural disconnectedness. Despite this, most of them also reported that the interview experience was therapeutic, particularly for processing their experiences of cultural connectedness and disconnectedness. Again, when this occurred, I thought it was important for them to use this space during our interviews to sit with their emotions when sharing their stories. As some participants became tearful or shared those strong emotions (i.e., sadness, anger, shame, frustration, defensiveness, estrangement, embarrassment, confusion, discomfort, pride, belongingness, hope) related to their experiences, I noticed myself feeling the same emotions. I believe that this occurred for me because I have shared so many of the same lived experiences with every participant. To help participants process these experiences and to validate their experiences, I used active listening skills, reflection, reframing, process comments, and open-ended questions. It was interesting to relate to the participants while also navigating the interview and data collection process from the standpoint of being a researcher. Noting this in the field notes allowed me to reflect on my experiences as a clinician, particularly when I empathize or see myself in certain patients/clients and how those experiences overlap with what I was doing in this study. I believe that these experiences and reactions can be extremely powerful and add to the richness of the data.

Other behavioral observations were noted in the field notes. For example, one participant made and drank Bosnian coffee during the duration of our interview, which is an important Bosnian cultural factor related to sharing stories and fostering connection with others (i.e.,

spending time together; Weine et al., 2006). Every participant also spoke Bosnian at certain points of the interview (i.e., mixing Bosnian with English), particularly when trying to explain certain experiences that would not make sense if they tried explaining them solely in English. Using the Bosnian language allowed them to display a range of emotions and share their experiences with someone who not only understands the language, but also the nuances in the language and these experiences of cultural connectedness and disconnectedness. When I noticed participants do this, I would also mix Bosnian with English to reflect and validate their experiences. Mirroring their behaviors appeared to make participants more comfortable and willing to engage in deeper discussion about their lived experiences.

Field Notes: Emergent Themes during the Initial Meetings

I also had reactions and reflections throughout the interviews when discussing different topic areas (see Table 3 for major themes and codes) that I noted in my field notes. Regarding theme one (A variety of negative experiences with identifying as Muslim result in experiences of cultural disconnectedness for Bosnian American diaspora), I noticed that I grew up like most of the participants (i.e., not growing up religious) and experienced judgment for not regularly attending *dzamija* (i.e., mosque). Almost every participant began by reflecting on experiences of cultural disconnectedness to religion during their interviews, and I noticed that this was one of our largest shared experiences. Theme two (Experiences of cultural disconnectedness related to language abilities and competencies are complex for Bosnian American diaspora) was another primary theme that every participant reflected on throughout the duration of our interviews, particularly experiences of disconnectedness due to lack of competency with the Bosnian language and judgment of language abilities. I saw myself in every participant's story because I

have received the same judgment from family, peers, and the community about my language skills. I also noticed that I felt the feelings of frustration and sadness echoed by many participants about this experience of disconnectedness, and subsequently feeling discouraged while also empowered to learn and improve my Bosnian language skills as much as possible. I noticed that this reflection about language came up in all my field notes, which also helped me see how resilient Bosnian American diaspora is when experiencing cultural disconnectedness.

Within the various codes of theme three (Culture becomes either a risk or protective factor for/against experiences of cultural disconnectedness that varies depending on context for Bosnian American diaspora), I also noticed that I related to each participant's story. Some recurrent reflections that I had in this theme were related to Bosnian cultural norms, particularly the cultural norms of "respecting your elders" and using humor to cope with difficult experiences. They also shared how regularly they engage in code-switching to navigate their experiences of cultural disconnectedness. As participants were sharing their stories, it made me think about how important these cultural norms are to my overall cultural identity and how often I also engage in code-switching. This reflection and hearing the participants' stories, also made me realize how Bosnian American diaspora can concurrently experience both cultural connectedness and disconnectedness. Realizing this while taking field notes helped me identify the negative cases within the data (i.e., codes: connectedness due to language abilities, avoidance of support, familial connectedness, and connectedness to the Bosnian community). Negative cases in qualitative research are recognized as "points of intrigue," because they provide a realistic assessment of the phenomenon under study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Creswell and Poth (2018) described how in real life not all evidence is positive or negative, and that both can occur

at the same time. These negative cases and their impact on the larger body of literature are described in further detail in later parts of the discussion below.

Themes four (Bosnian American diaspora engage in various strategies to seek support due to experiences of cultural disconnectedness) and five (Experiences of cultural disconnectedness have become accepted by Bosnian American diaspora) were two of the most interesting themes that I reflected on in my field notes. One participant reflected on her avoidance of seeking support, which was drastically different from the rest of the sample. When this occurred, I was having strong reactions to her experience and wanted to engage in problem solving with her to provide additional support with dealing with experiences of disconnectedness. In doing so, I attempted to approach this portion of the discussion like I would with a client/patient by using open-ended questioning and reflection techniques to allow her to reflect on this experience and to develop additional strategies to cope with her experiences of cultural disconnectedness. This approach appeared to be helpful as evidenced by the participant's self-report at the end of the interview and her reflection of her desires to seek additional support through her family or a therapist. Qualitative interviews are typically considered semi-structured; however, they are also in-depth and intensive, often involving open-ended questions (DeCarlo, 2018). The primary goal of a qualitative interview is to hear what the participants think is important about a topic and to hear it in their own words, with the qualitative researcher guiding the conversation using open-ended questions to help the participants come up with their own words, phrases, or sentences to respond (DeCarlo, 2018). Ultimately, this approach allows the participant to shape how the interview proceeds and process their reactions to the topic of interest in qualitative studies (DeCarlo, 2018). I thus believe that my approach with this specific

participant who was reflecting on her avoidance of seeking support when experiencing cultural disconnectedness was helpful and rooted in the qualitative interviewing method described, which parallels approaches that may be used in therapeutic settings as well.

The code “Disconnectedness as Reality” within theme four (Bosnian American diaspora engage in various strategies to seek support due to experiences of cultural disconnectedness) was interesting to hear almost every participant reflect about. Participants discussed how they conceptualize their experiences of cultural disconnectedness as a reality, which appears to be a protective factor for them in navigating the experiences of cultural disconnectedness. I noted in my field notes that I was not expecting this theme to emerge because it had not been previously noted in the literature and I had not thought about this in my initial conceptualization of the study. Overall, this theme added interesting, new information to the literature and made me reflect more on the phenomena of interest.

I noted numerous field notes that emerged from each participants’ interviews regarding the final four major themes in this study. Regarding theme six (Family plays a major role for Bosnian American diaspora, causing either experiences of cultural disconnectedness or connectedness), I noticed that I had many similar experiences of disconnectedness and connectedness with my family. One of the most recurrent codes noted by each participant was the experience related to being a cultural broker for parents. Each participant described what it was like for them to be a cultural broker for their families when they were children, particularly with translating government documents, attending doctor’s appointments with parents, and navigating daily situations for their parents as young children. I went through the same experiences of being a cultural broker in my childhood and still often do, which also matched the

participants' current experiences as young adults. Participants also described the pressure that they receive from their families to succeed in America and "figure out" their lives (i.e., having careers and families), which is related to their parents' numerous sacrifices to come to this country and give their children better lives following the Bosnian War. I empathized with each participant that described these experiences of disconnectedness because of this pressure to fulfill parental sacrifices because I have, and still do, feel this same pressure. I believe that many children of immigrants undergo this experience, and this code relates to the research topic that I explored in my master's thesis (i.e., *Ethnic Identity, Perceived Parental Sacrifice, and Psychological Distress among Bosnian-American College-Aged Students*; Osmančević, 2020). It was interesting to see this same topic be discussed in my dissertation research as well.

One of the salient codes in theme seven (Bosnian American diaspora struggle with feeling either "Too Bosnian" or "Too American"), that was different from any of my lived experiences, was the code "Generational differences." In this code, participants discussed how Bosnian American diaspora have experiences of cultural disconnectedness due to generational differences among their peers, siblings, and other family members. While I agree with this code and have seen it play out in my own life, one interesting reflection that I noted in my field notes related to this theme was a disagreement from one of the participants. One participant discussed how he views himself as someone who is in the "last real Bosnian generation" due to his age, advanced understanding of the Bosnian language, and ability to connect to the older Bosnian generation. As a researcher, I viewed this reflection as an important aspect of this participant's lived experience and cultural identity. However, as a cultural being and Bosnian American, I reflected on how I did not necessarily agree with his point of view and could imagine how

offensive this may sound to the younger generations of Bosnian Americans who try so desperately to connect to their Bosnian cultures despite multiple experiences of cultural disconnectedness, including judgment about their status as a Bosnian American that is in the younger, “more Americanized” generation. It was interesting to reflect on my own positionality within this experience for this participant, and I noticed a variety of reactions and biases come up for me throughout this reflection, including feelings of understanding and frustration. This was a helpful reflective experience that allowed me to take a more non-biased approach throughout the interviews with all the participants.

Themes eight (Race is a multidimensional factor that causes different types of experiences of cultural disconnectedness for Bosnian American diaspora) and nine (Experiences of cultural disconnectedness within Bosnian American diaspora’s communities varies and depends on contextual factors) were the final major themes that I reflected on within my field notes. Most participants discussed the pervasiveness of their White privilege, despite their other minoritized identities (i.e., refugee/immigrant status, minority religious identity, etc.). It was interesting to see this theme emerge in the participant interviews because it was previously noted in other research studies among Bosnian American diaspora (Clark 2007; Dorner et al., 2017). Throughout my graduate training, I have spent a lot of time reflecting on my various areas of privilege despite holding other minoritized identities. This privilege is especially prevalent around race for me, and I have noticed how my White privilege has benefitted me in a variety of ways. Throughout the interviews, participants discussed how their White privilege made it easier for them as immigrants/children of refugees and Muslims compared to other individuals who are people of color and hold these same identities. I agree with this and have often thought about the

privilege I have held when reflecting on my family's experience with relocation and assimilation compared to refugees of color. These participant reflections were a good reminder of how privileged we are despite our other areas of struggle related to experiences of disconnectedness.

Theme nine (Experiences of cultural disconnectedness within Bosnian American diaspora's communities varies and depends on contextual factors) was the final major theme that I reflected on within my field notes. Many of the participants discussed their experiences of cultural disconnectedness from Bosnians in their community due to exposure to judgment from the Bosnian community. I empathized with all the participants that reported this experience due to my own exposure to judgment from the community. I recognized how hard it was for many of them, and how discouraging these experiences can be when trying to connect with one's cultural background and community. Despite these reports, participants also discussed their hope for and desires to connect with their communities. These reflections were inspiring and once again, demonstrated to me realize how Bosnian American diaspora can concurrently experience both cultural connectedness and disconnectedness, emphasizing the importance of negative cases (i.e., cases of intrigue) within the data.

Field Notes: Second Meetings with Participants

The final topics that were addressed in my field notes were my second meetings with the participants that comprised of reviewing the results together and providing extra support if needed, and their overall reactions to the research process. During my second meetings with all the participants in March 2022, we discussed their current well-being and if they needed any additional support due to experiences of cultural disconnectedness and current world events (i.e., COVID-19 and Russian invasion of Ukraine that began at the end of February 2022) and overall

reactions to the results. These meetings lasted between 30-60 minutes and were conducted via Zoom. Each participant described their current difficulties with experiences of cultural disconnectedness.

Most participants reported that they were doing generally well with their psychological well-being in relation to experiences of cultural disconnectedness and that they did not need additional support (i.e., mental health resources). Three participants reported still experiencing cultural disconnectedness and struggling with these experiences. These participants asked for additional resources to cope with these experiences. Two participants reported that they would like to be connected to a therapist. The participants and I discussed how to find therapists in their communities and how to determine if a therapist is a good fit for them. We discussed what therapy generally looks like, and how to search for a therapist that fits their needs (i.e., presenting problems, available services, therapist credentials, cost, insurance coverage, and in-person versus telehealth services). Participants reported that these discussions were helpful and that they learned new information they did not previously know. After fielding all their questions, I let the participants know that they could reach back to me via email, phone call, text message, or Instagram/Facebook direct message if they needed additional support with psychotherapy services and community resources.

Lastly, one participant reported that they would like any recommendations from me regarding Balkan or Bosnian literature (i.e., preferably memoirs) to cope with their experiences of cultural disconnectedness. I provided this participant with a reading list of books, and they shared additional books that they are currently reading to cope with their experiences. Additional coping skills reported by participants for dealing with experiences of cultural disconnectedness

during the second meeting included connecting with family, seeking support from friends, reading Bosnian literature, listening to more Bosnian music, watching funny videos related to the experiences of cultural disconnectedness created by Bosnian diaspora on social media, and “going against the culture,” particularly by not speaking with certain family members that judge them, which results in experiences of cultural disconnectedness. Overall, providing information to participants about psychotherapy services, finding a therapist that is a good fit, and Balkan/Bosnian literature recommendations were forms of community outreach that I engaged in and were specific to my participants needs. I was happy to provide the space for participants to share their current feelings and voice their needs. In future studies, I would implement additional community outreach aspects/experiences, such as having an extra meeting with participants that solely devotes time to these questions and needs.

In addition to discussing their current experiences with cultural disconnectedness, I checked in with each participant about how they have been reacting to and dealing with the current world events (i.e., COVID-19 and Russian invasion of Ukraine that began at the end of February 2022). Once we began discussing their reactions to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, participants reported strong reactions to this world event, particularly due the similarities of the Ukrainian invasion and the Bosnian War. Each participant reported on how this current event is “hitting close to home” and causing them varying levels of distress. They reported worries for their families in Bosnia and Herzegovina due to the impact that the Ukrainian invasion is having on other countries in Europe and fears of war breaking out in Ukraine, and potentially Bosnia and Herzegovina again. These worries and fears reportedly resulted in some participants having

strong emotional reactions to news stories and subsequent issues with concentration at work and school.

Others reported feeling like the Ukrainian invasion is “re-traumatizing” for them and their families who were directly exposed to the Bosnian War, particularly due to the high levels of media coverage of this event. They also reported that various social media posts comparing the Ukrainian invasion to the Bosnian War have been difficult for them to view constantly on their social media accounts, making the Ukrainian invasion even more salient in their lives compared to their American peers. This experience reported by participants underscores how social media can result in experiences of connectedness and disconnectedness for diaspora. Social media’s main function is to connect people and can result in a sense of belongingness (Vorderer & Schneider, 2017), yet the use of social media can also result in disconnectedness among diaspora that use it to connect to their native countries, leading to a sense of insecurity (Dhoest, 2016), amplified symptoms of anxiety and depression, and increased loneliness (Ellie Mental Health, 2021). Despite participants’ reports of using social media to seek support for their experiences of cultural disconnectedness in the current study, their reports of how social media usage has impacted them during the Russian invasion of Ukraine due to the parallels between this invasion and the Bosnian War, underscores how social media can lead to not only experiences of connectedness, but disconnectedness as well.

Despite these worries and fears, participants reported engaging in various helpful coping strategies to manage their reactions to the Ukrainian invasion. They reported engaging in reminiscing on experiences that occurred during the Bosnian War with their Bosnian families and friends, which has been found to be a helpful cultural expression of intergenerational trauma

among refugees resettled in the United States (Hudson et al., 2016). Reminiscing on and retelling war stories and memories as coping skill to deal with the current world events has also been previously noted in the literature as an important factor related to cultural identity construction among Bosnian American diaspora (Weine et al., 2006). Other helpful coping skills reported by participants included supporting their Ukrainian peers in the United States and sharing their similar lived experiences with them, setting boundaries with the amount and type of information that they consume by deactivating their social media accounts, and seeking support from friends and family. Each participant denied needing extra support to cope with the Ukrainian invasion or any other current world events. Overall, participants' reactions to the Ukrainian invasion and reported coping strategies underscored their high levels of resiliency originally noted in the first interviews.

After reviewing the participants' current well-being and any additional support needed due to experiences of cultural disconnectedness and current world events (i.e., COVID-19 and Russian invasion of Ukraine that began at the end of February 2022), we reviewed the results and reflected on their reactions to these results. Every participant reported that they found the results "interesting," and stated that the results provided a sense of reassurance for them, particularly in that they are not alone with their experiences of cultural disconnectedness. For example, one participant stated, "It makes me feel better that I'm not the only person." Another participant stated, "It's interesting to see it [experiences of cultural disconnectedness] happens to more people than me." Others stated, "It's reassuring that others are going through it [experiences of cultural disconnectedness] like I am" and "It is validating so see others go through it [experiences of cultural disconnectedness] ...it feels less isolating, less divisive." One

participant also described how participation in the study was helpful for them, “It made me feel better...you helped me, I helped you.” Another participant described how the results were interesting to them: “The study was super interesting...so many people feel the same thing [experiences of cultural disconnectedness] even though we are all so different.”

In addition to describing feelings of reassurance and validation resulting from their participation in the study, participants also reported feelings of pride due to participation in the study and “giving back” to their communities through research participation. Each participant also continued to reflect on their experiences of cultural connectedness and disconnectedness as we reviewed each emergent theme, often repeating the same information that they stated in the original interviews. As the researcher, I felt pride and happiness to share with each participant that they are not alone in their experiences of cultural disconnectedness. These follow-up meetings for support, reflection, and result review were thus an essential aspect of the research process that allowed for participants and me to close the chapter of working together on this study.

Field Notes: General

In addition to the field notes kept from each participant’s initial and second interviews, I kept a separate set of general field notes where I reflected on the overall research experience. The research process, including data collection, data analysis, and result review with participants lasted from June 2021-March 2022. During the data collection phase (June 2021-August 2021), I reflected on how early started noticing patterns in the participants’ interviews, particularly around the fifth interview. At that time, I already had scheduled the two additional interviews and could not tell the participants that we were no longer interviewing people. I did not turn

away the two additional participants due to the Bosnian cultural norms related to going against your word. Had I turned them away, it would have seemed disrespectful and broken the trust they felt with me to say yes to participate in the first place.

During the data analysis (September 2021-January 2022), I reflected on the difficulties associated with the transcribing and coding processes. When I was reviewing the participant's interviews that were originally transcribed by Zoom, I had to review each video and transcript in detail to ensure that Zoom transcribed my participants accurately. Some participants also spoke in Bosnian throughout various parts of the interviews, which required extra attention to detail and revisions in the transcripts. While I was coding the data, which involved additional review of and reading through each transcript, I saw myself more in each participant's experience. Each time I read a transcript more than once, I found new codes from significant statements. Multiple reviews of the transcripts helped me get a better sense of the entire data set, thus developing themes from the significant statements and codes.

In addition to the typical difficulties associated with the coding process, I also realized how emotionally taxing this project was becoming for me, beginning in the coding process, and intensifying near the end of data analysis. After reflecting, I realized that I had not only lived through almost all the topics that the participants discussed, but I also was living through experiences of cultural connectedness and disconnectedness while being tasked with writing about a cultural group's collective experience. This made the coding process and results section write up emotional and difficult for me, which I believe may not be a typical experience for researchers, unless they are working with their own cultural groups. For example, I felt a pressure of representing my community through participants' stories. I did not want to let them

down, and I wanted to translate their lived experiences into a cohesive research study that described the essence of their experiences in an accurate and respectful way. Recognizing that I was simultaneously writing about my own experience through these participants and representing my community, made it difficult to code their experiences in ways that were reflective of their actual stories. These intense emotions also made it difficult to stay with the writing process for long periods of time. This resulted having to do a lot of reflecting on my own and with my research advisor. I learned that, at times, I had to compartmentalize my feelings to complete the coding and result writing up processes. In addition to this, I had to take some time to travel and visit my family. I do not have any access to a Bosnian community in the current city that I am living in, primarily due to a lack of Bosnians living in my area, so visiting my family allowed me to reconnect with my family and community.

The final sections of my field notes were comprised of reflections about writing the results and meeting with participants to review results. This process was occurring during the Russian invasion of Ukraine and impacted me in similar ways that it impacted my participants, as described above. I struggled with focusing on the hard work related to writing a research study while people were suffering in Ukraine. The invasion of Ukraine “hit close to home” for me, just as it did for my participants, because I was exposed to constant media coverage and learned about the parallels between the invasion of Ukraine and the Bosnian War. I felt sad, fearful, and confused, just as my participants described feeling when learning about the Ukrainian invasion and the parallels this had with the Bosnian War. To deal with this, I spent more time reflecting, compartmentalizing when needed, and seeking support from my friends. I also engaged in advocacy work related to raising awareness about what was occurring in Ukraine at my pre-

doctoral clinical psychology internship. I created a presentation about refugee mental health and facilitated a discussion about the Ukrainian invasion to help staff members process their reactions to the event and how it may be impacting their clinical work. I found this to be helpful, and it eventually became easier to re-focus on the study. Overall, the different types of field notes described above were one of the many methods used to ensure trustworthiness of the current study, particularly through noting any personal biases and fostering self-reflection.

Review of Findings

These findings paralleled major themes previously identified in the literature related to cultural connectedness and disconnectedness among Bosnian American diaspora. Regarding cultural connectedness, the current findings of this study resembled previous findings noted in the literature review (see **Cultural Connectedness among Bosnian American Diaspora** section), including obliging family (Weine et al., 2006), keeping tradition (Clark, 2007; Colic-Peisker & Walker, 2003; Weine et al., 2006), race (Clark 2007; Dorner et al., 2017), religion (Clark, 2007; Lucken, 2010; Weine et al., 2006), and community (Bransteter, 2017; Clark, 2007; Colic-Peisker & Walker, 2003; Haines, 1996; Lucken, 2010). In the current study, these findings were labeled as negative cases, which are cases of intrigue to qualitative researcher and display how both positive and negative experiences of certain phenomena can occur simultaneously in real life (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As noted above, these negative cases were comprised in the codes: connectedness due to language abilities, avoidance of support, familial connectedness, and connectedness to the Bosnian community. Below, I will compare these negative cases to previous literature among Bosnian American diaspora and discuss how these negative cases added to and paralleled the larger body of literature of this population.

Review of Findings: Cultural Connectedness and Tradition

In previous findings, Bosnian diasporic youth reported that “obliging family” is one of the most important obligations, and stated that “family should be together,” and “youth should have respect for elders” (Weine et al., 2006). In this study, participants reported similar experiences of cultural connectedness within theme six (Family plays a major role for Bosnian American diaspora, causing either experiences of cultural disconnectedness or connectedness). More specifically, within the Familial Connectedness code, participants described the value that family plays in their lives and how family is part of their cultural identities. The results of this study underscored how family has remained a major value for Bosnian American diaspora and how it has evolved into a protective factor that reportedly increases cultural connectedness and is used to protect against experiences of cultural disconnectedness.

The theme keeping tradition, which was identified in several previous studies (Clark, 2007; Colic-Peisker & Walker, 2003; Weine et al., 2006), was also prevalent in the current study. The core cultural belief of keeping tradition includes language, daily rituals, religious beliefs, and the structure and values of families (Clark, 2007; Colic-Peisker & Walker, 2003; Weine et al., 2006). Within this study (theme three: Culture becomes either a risk or protective factor for/against experiences of cultural disconnectedness that varies depending on context for Bosnian American diaspora, code: Connecting to your culture), participants described different ways in which they connect to their Bosnian culture, including through Bosnian music, books, and television. They also reported feelings of hope, balance, and peace and desires to connect to their cultures due to experiences of disconnectedness, which is different from original studies with this population.

Within theme two (Experiences of cultural disconnectedness related to language abilities and competencies are complex for Bosnian American diaspora), participants also reported connectedness due to their Bosnian language abilities despite experiences of disconnectedness as well. As a result of this connectedness, participants reported feelings of pride and uniqueness. This is similar to the original “keeping traditions” theme mentioned above, where Bosnian diaspora described the importance of speaking the Bosnian language in order to stay connected to their Bosnian culture.

Despite these similarities, the current study unveiled how Bosnian American diaspora currently have different ways that they attempt to connect to their Bosnian culture and how Bosnian language competency can influence experiences of connectedness and disconnectedness depending on various contextual factors and subsequent feelings (e.g., pride, uniqueness) related experiences. These findings also underscore potential developmental differences regarding experiences of cultural connectedness and disconnectedness among Bosnian American diaspora compared to previous studies. Once again, the current study emphasizes the complexity of experiences of cultural connectedness and disconnectedness within various areas for Bosnian Americans, providing additional information that has not previously noted in the literature about this population.

Review of Findings: Cultural Connectedness and Religion

Religion was another major theme previously noted in the literature regarding cultural connectedness among Bosnian American diaspora (Clark, 2007; Lucken, 2010; Weine et al., 2006). More specifically, being involved with the Muslim religion is a critical cultural factor related to cultural identity development among the Bosnian American diaspora (Clark, 2007;

Weine et al., 2006). Bosnian American diaspora have previously described Islam as the “glue for Bosnian identity” and as “questioning and open” (Lucken, 2010). Additionally, past studies have minimally highlighted experiences of cultural disconnectedness due to Islamophobia and xenophobia in the United States (Dorner et al., 2017).

The current study results highlighted how experiences associated with Islam have shifted for Bosnian American diaspora, from experiences of cultural connectedness to experiences of cultural disconnectedness. These experiences of cultural disconnectedness have resulted from varying factors, including judgment from Bosnian community members for not attending mosque or growing up religious and experiences of Islamophobia from Americans. The results of the current study emphasize how Bosnian American diaspora’s experience of religion are intricate and involve greater experiences of cultural disconnectedness over time compared to previous experiences noted in the literature among Bosnian American diaspora. Participants also reported new feelings because of these experiences of cultural disconnectedness not previously noted in the literature, including feelings of shame, unworthiness, shock, confusion, anger, and discomfort. Some participants also described how their behaviors were impacted due to these experiences of cultural disconnectedness, including “hiding” parts of themselves, not wanting to disclose their religious identity to others, and an increased desires to connect with Islam. This change may be due to developmental or generational differences in experiences of connectedness and disconnectedness within religion, which adds new information to the greater body of psychological literature focusing on Bosnian American diaspora.

Review of Findings: Cultural Connectedness and Community

Community was the final major theme that emerged in the previous literature and was related to experiences of cultural connectedness among Bosnian American diaspora (Bransteter, 2017; Clark, 2007; Colic-Peisker & Walker, 2003; Haines, 1996; Lucken, 2010). It was previously found that cultural identity is informed greatly by the community among Bosnian American diaspora, furnishing a sense of belonging and the basis for a positive self-identity (Haines, 1996). Previous literature also highlighted how the Bosnian diasporic community was also heavily supportive of individuals from the community and encouraged participation in traditional cultural or religious events, such as traditional dancing and attending Islamic cultural centers and social gatherings (Bransteter, 2017; Clark, 2007; Lucken, 2010).

In the current study, participants described how their connection to their Bosnian communities has shifted with time and resulted in both experiences of cultural connectedness and disconnectedness compared to results from previous studies. They also provided more information about their experiences of cultural disconnectedness from their American communities, which was not highly expressed in the previous research literature. Experiences of cultural disconnectedness were reported occurring in participants' school communities with their Bosnian and American peers, while others also reported experiences of disconnectedness from their Bosnian communities due to judgment from their Bosnian community and lack of connection to Bosnians in their communities. Others reported experiences of cultural disconnectedness from their Bosnian communities due to lack of access to Bosnian communities in their areas. Participants also reported lack of connection to their American communities, particularly due to having different values from them (i.e., values of family and community,

respecting elders, etc.). Participants reported numerous types of feelings because of these experiences of cultural disconnectedness, including feeling different, weird, bizarre, and bad, not feeling accepted, and feelings of confusion, estrangement, anger, and resentment. Others reported feeling content with these experiences of cultural disconnectedness. They all reported a variety of behaviors due to these experiences of cultural disconnectedness, including choosing to not participate in different activities, desires for community integration, working harder to have certain things that their American peers had (i.e., iPhone), graduating high school due to feelings of resentment toward American peers, and questioning if they should even try to connect with their Bosnian communities.

Despite this shift in the literature from Bosnian American diaspora experiencing high levels of connectedness to their Bosnian communities to greater experiences of cultural disconnectedness within their Bosnian and American communities, participants still reported experiences of connectedness to their Bosnian communities in this study as well. Experiences of cultural connectedness in the current study were described in a variety of ways by participants, including supporting Bosnian American businesses in their communities, making friends with Balkan people around the United States, traveling to and visiting Bosnia and Herzegovina on a regular basis, giving back to their Bosnian communities in the United States and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and attending and participating in cultural events (i.e., Bosnian weddings, funerals, community festivals, and concerts). Feelings described by participants that experienced cultural connectedness within their communities included gratefulness. This study, yet again, has added important information related to experiences of cultural connectedness and disconnectedness among Bosnian American diaspora to the literature that has not been previously considered.

Review of Findings: Cultural Disconnectedness and Americanization

The results of this study also paralleled findings from previous studies regarding experiences of cultural disconnectedness among Bosnian American diaspora. In a previously mentioned study by Clark (2007) that focused on the role of schooling in the cultural identity development of adolescent/young adult female college students from Bosnian Muslim communities who entered the United States as refugees, participants described experiences of disconnectedness due to “Americanizing.” Another previous study by Lucken (2010) mentioned this as well, with parents of Bosnian diasporic youth voicing their concerns with their children becoming “Americanized.”

This experience was also described in detail in the current study, where participants described their struggles with being “too American” for Bosnians or “too Bosnian” for Americans. In the code “Labeled as Americanized” within theme seven, participants in the current study described how being labeled as Americanized by their Bosnian peers, family members, and community resulted in experiences of cultural disconnectedness, including unhelpful behaviors, such as “hiding” the Bosnian parts of themselves, and feelings, such as guilt and fear related to fully immersing themselves in American culture. On the other hand, participants in the current study also described experiences of cultural disconnectedness from Bosnians that are more “Americanized” compared to more “traditional” Bosnians. Additional feelings reported included feelings of weirdness, discomfort, worry, annoyance, awkwardness, confusion, concern, pride, and uniqueness/diversity. They also resulted in participants feeling judged and shamed, feeling like they were “trying too hard,” feeling like a guest/outsider/immigrant/out of place/left out, feeling like the “last real Bosnian generation,” and

feeling “good.” These feelings resulted in a variety of additional behaviors among the participants, such as having changes in their “mindset” resulting in taking on greater American values, avoiding friendships with Americans due to clashing cultural values, and teaching the younger generation of Bosnian Americans that are experiencing cultural disconnectedness. The results of the current study suggest that experiences of disconnectedness due Bosnian American diaspora feeling “too Americanized” have evolved in complexity for this population, particularly because not only is this group still fearing the consequences of becoming Americanized, but they also have experienced more direct side effects from Americanization (i.e., disconnection from the community, “hiding” parts of their Bosnian identities due to shame and fear of judgment).

Review of Findings: Cultural Disconnectedness and Language

Language was another factor that was prevalent in previous studies regarding experiences of cultural disconnectedness among Bosnian American diaspora. Previous studies specifically emphasized how lack of competency with the Bosnian language resulted in experiences of disconnectedness (Clark, 2007). As a result of these experiences, the Bosnian American diasporic youth reported feeling like they also were “losing” their culture due to their struggles with the Bosnian language (Clark, 2007). To manage these issues, many participants described the value of visiting Bosnia and Herzegovina and how the visits inspired them to not want to lose their language or culture anymore. However, other participants also described opposite experiences, such as feeling “oppressed” when visiting Bosnia, which also contributed to experiences of disconnectedness (Clark, 2007).

These experiences of cultural disconnectedness due to issues with Bosnian language competency among Bosnian American diaspora are still present and were reported more than a

decade later by participants in the current study (Theme two: Experiences of cultural disconnectedness related to language abilities and competencies are complex for Bosnian American diaspora). Participants in the current study described how lack of competency with the Bosnian language has resulted in judgment from family, friends, and community members, in addition to being made fun of, resulting in feelings of sadness, shame, defensiveness, anger, and frustration. Other participants elaborated on their frustration and anger related to lack of competency with the Bosnian language and how this results in “cognitive dissonance,” where they feel “too Bosnian” for Americans and “too American” for Bosnians. More specifically, they also reported feeling uneducated and like they cannot fully integrate into either culture. Others described how these experiences of cultural disconnectedness resulted in hiding” parts of themselves and “refusing” to speak the Bosnian language.

Additional emotions described by participants were irritation, resentment, and frustration, which caused participants to question their cultural identity. They also reported feelings of helplessness, embarrassment, and fear which resulted in an increased desire to become more proficient with the Bosnian language and questioning how family members in Bosnia and Herzegovina would respond to their language abilities. These desires reportedly have led participant to engage in a variety of behaviors (e.g., practicing reading and writing, asking questions) to feel more connected to their Bosnian culture. The current study thus expanded on the previous literature by not only describing the fears Bosnian American diaspora experience related to losing their native language, but also by providing the subsequent impacts of this on their psychological well-being and behaviors they used to manage these feelings related to experiences of cultural disconnectedness.

Review of Findings: Cultural Disconnectedness and Community

Community was another major theme in which previous studies and the current study had overlapping results. Participants in previous studies reported being less connected to other Bosnians in school and expressed regrets about the loss of their Bosnian cultural identity (Clark, 2007). Previous studies also reported that Bosnian American diasporic students formed “cliques” in school to reject the acculturating, socializing, and academic influence of schools, and therefore, resist the alternation and reconstruction of their cultural identities through the Americanizing force of schooling (Clark, 2007). Participants in the current study described experiences of cultural disconnectedness at school, particularly with feeling different and not feeling accepted in various Bosnian or American peer groups within their school communities (Theme nine: Experiences of cultural disconnectedness within Bosnian American diaspora’s communities varies and depends on contextual factors).

Like previous studies, participants in the current study described feelings associated with experiences of not “belonging,” not “feeling accepted” by, or feeling “different” from their Bosnian and American peers at school as early as elementary school and through high school. For example, one participant expanded on experiences of cultural disconnectedness from Bosnians in her community and described how she feels like her Bosnian community is a “clique” that she does not belong to, resulting in feelings of estrangement as described above in the ***Review of Findings: Cultural Connectedness and Community*** section, which expanded on how Bosnian American diaspora’s connection to their Bosnian communities has shifted with time and resulted in both experiences of cultural connectedness and disconnectedness compared to results from previous studies. Despite the similarities noted across studies related to a lack of

feelings of acceptance and belongingness, the current study highlighted how participants did not have desires to connect with their Bosnian or American peers after these experiences of disconnectedness, underscoring the differences between Bosnian American diaspora in previous years and currently with experiences of cultural disconnectedness.

Review of Findings: Cultural Disconnectedness and Race

Race in the context of experiences of cultural disconnectedness was also present in previous studies and the current study. Participants across studies discussed their inherent White privilege despite holding other minority identities. In previous studies, Bosnian diasporic youth found that they had the option of “stepping in and out of” Bosnian culture with the ability to “pass” as White American non-immigrants due to their White privilege (Clark, 2007). This allowed them greater options with positioning themselves within their social fields, both with their Bosnian and American peers. However, being able to “pass” as a White American did not allow the Bosnian diasporic youth in this previous study to feel a balanced connection with both cultures. The participants’ Bosnian cultural heritage and identity ultimately resulted in issues with truly fitting in with their American peers, particularly due to being exposed to discriminatory behaviors from their American peers (Clark, 2007). This experience was heightened for participants who felt like “outsiders” within their Bosnian cultural groups as well and resulted in increased experiences of disconnectedness towards both their native culture and new host culture (Clark, 2007). Previous studies also demonstrated Bosnian American diaspora’s awareness of the pervasiveness of their White privilege, particularly due to the racialization of immigrants within the U.S. (Dorner et al., 2017). As a result of this awareness, they were aware of the degree to which their adjustment was easier than that of other refugee and immigrant peers

because of their race (Clark, 2007). This was also highlighted by many participants in the current study (i.e., racialization of immigrants in the U.S. and easier adjustments compared to refugees and immigrants of color).

In the current study, participants specifically described how the pervasiveness of their White privilege has resulted in experiences of cultural disconnectedness, particularly disconnectedness from other Muslims and immigrants/refugees that are people of color (Theme eight: Race is a multidimensional factor that causes different types of experiences of cultural disconnectedness for Bosnian American diaspora). They described the struggles associated with being Muslim in the United States, while also having the privilege of passing “under the radar” due to being White or not outwardly appearing as Muslim (i.e., wearing a hijab). They continued by describing how their Muslim names typically give them away to people and that this often results in experiences of cultural disconnectedness, including experiences from Islamophobia from Americans (noted in theme two: Experiences of cultural disconnectedness related to language abilities and competencies are complex for Bosnian American diaspora). However, participants’ response to and feelings related to these experiences of Islamophobia and discrimination in the current study parallel previously reported reactions from Bosnian diaspora (Komolova et al., 2018), particularly not dwelling on hurt feelings related to these comments and alluding to perpetrators’ ignorance and lack of familiarity with Bosnian culture and the Muslim religion. Participants in the current study also reported feeling lucky due to their White privilege and feeling like their assimilation in the United States was easier compared to non-White Muslims in the United States because of their White privilege. These reactions highlighted in previous studies and the current study thus underscore how Bosnian American diaspora maintain

their psychological well-being when exposed to experiences of cultural disconnectedness, including Islamophobia and discrimination, with those experiences also evoking cultural pride and self-affirmation.

In addition to this, the participants in the current study expanded on the prevalence of racism within the Bosnian American diasporic community and how this results in experiences of disconnectedness from their families and communities, which was not previously highlighted in any of the literature. As a result of these experiences, participants reported experiencing feelings of confusion and stated that seeing racism in their Bosnian American communities was “messed up” and “awkward,” given Bosnian diaspora’s experiences with social injustices and genocide. The current study also expanded on another topic within theme eight (Race is a multidimensional factor that causes different types of experiences of cultural disconnectedness for Bosnian American diaspora) that was briefly noted in the literature mentioned above (Clark, 2007), including experiences of marginalization among Bosnian American diaspora from their White American peers, which results in experiences of cultural disconnectedness. Participants described how their White American peers have told them that they can be “fully American” around them and “turn off” the Bosnian or immigrant sides of themselves because they are White passing Muslim immigrants/children of refugees, resulting in feelings of estrangement from these peers. Overall, theme eight (Race is a multidimensional factor that causes different types of experiences of cultural disconnectedness for Bosnian American diaspora) within the current study expanded on the complexities associated with being a White, Muslim immigrant in the United States and how this can often result in varying experiences of cultural disconnectedness among Bosnian American diaspora.

Review of Findings: Cultural Disconnectedness and Seeking Support

Seeking support for experiences of cultural disconnectedness has been present in previous studies and the current study as well. In a previous study by Bransteter (2017) that explored war and post-war experiences, including the health and well-being of Bosnian refugees through focusing on the meaning-making of their experiences via personal narratives, participants reported that community social activities offered support, connection, and belonging for them. These community social activities included attending religious services, concerts, and other social gatherings. However, participants also reported differences in benefits from activities that were supposed to foster connectedness to the community regarding managing war and post-war experiences, including the consequences of war and challenges of adjustment (Bransteter, 2017). Some participants reported that belonging and participating within the Bosnian community was a way of coping with these issues, while others expressed that their increased levels of connectedness to the community caused distress and reminded them of the negative experiences that they survived (Bransteter, 2017). Other studies have highlighted various ways in which Bosnian diaspora manage the feelings associated with experiences of disconnectedness, including spending more time engaging in Bosnian traditions and customs (e.g., *Sevdah*, folklore dancing, etc.); increasing the Bosnian language competency, similar to what participants described in Clark (2007); visiting the homeland; identifying only as Bosnian or refusing any labels that are linked with nationality, similar to management strategies mentioned in Clark (2007); and engaging in other traditional activities, including going to Bosnian bars and cafes, soccer games, and concerts; spending time engaging in the traditional social gatherings called “*sijelos*” on the weekends.

In the current study, participants explained various ways in which they seek support when exposed to experiences of cultural disconnectedness, which significantly varied from previous studies (theme four: Bosnian American diaspora engage in various strategies to seek support due to experiences of cultural disconnectedness). Seeking support for participants in the current study varied from using family, friends, social media, bonding with other minorities, creative outlets (i.e., videography, filmmaking, art), and traveling to manage the feelings associated with experiences of disconnectedness. These behaviors resulted in participants feeling uplifted, relieved, loved, cared for, understood, grateful, and creative when engaging in coping strategies to seek support due to experiences of cultural disconnectedness. Participants also described feeling embarrassed and stressed when engaging in these strategies, with one participant reporting subsequent avoidance behaviors, specifically avoidance of support when exposed to experiences of cultural disconnectedness. Despite this, they also stated that they desire to engage in more support seeking activities, such as connecting with family for support.

Within theme nine (Experiences of cultural disconnectedness within Bosnian American diaspora's communities varies and depends on contextual factors), participants also reported experiences of connectedness with their Bosnian communities and described how attending Bosnian American cultural events (i.e., concerts, weddings, funerals, community festivals) and supporting Bosnian American businesses fostered experiences of cultural connectedness, which parallels previous findings in the literature as well. While reporting experiences of cultural connectedness due to engaging in these activities and behaviors, participants also reported experiences of cultural disconnectedness with their Bosnian communities due to exposure to judgment, struggles to "fit in and find a place" within their Bosnian communities, and lack of

access to Bosnians in their respective communities. Overall, the findings in both themes of the current study underscore the complexity associated with experiences of cultural connectedness and disconnectedness among Bosnian American diaspora in the contexts of seeking support and community, which adds to the larger body of literature.

Review of Findings: Cultural Identity and Resilience

Cultural identity development and formation among Bosnian American diaspora was another factor that was explored in previous studies (Lucken, 2010). It was previously noted that difficulties with balancing both Bosnian and American cultures was due to the contextual nature of participants' national identities (e.g., feeling that pre-war Bosnia was different than post-war Bosnia), resulting in experiences of disconnectedness (Lucken, 2010). Lucken (2010) also discussed the complexity of outcomes among Bosnian diasporic youth that "straddle two cultures," and described the process of cultural identity development as "malleable and fluid." Bosnian diasporic youth in this study responded to this balancing act of two cultures either by staying closely tied to their home culture, by embracing the new culture entirely, or in part, which allowed for a multiplicity of self-identifications to unfold (Lucken, 2010).

The current study also took a closer look at cultural identity and described various ways in which Bosnian American diaspora currently connect to their Bosnian culture (i.e., Bosnian books, music, and television), while also emphasizing how Bosnian American diaspora currently believe that they can hold two identities (i.e., Bosnian and American identities) at once despite experiences of cultural disconnectedness. Participants in the current study also described how their cultural identities are informed by various contextual factors that often result in code-switching to manage experiences of cultural disconnectedness. The preservation of their cultural

identities was also explored in this study. It was found that Bosnian American diaspora preserve their cultural identities despite experiences of cultural disconnectedness (i.e., possessing documentation, such as Bosnian passports, engaging in cultural traditions, respecting cultural norms, reflecting on parental sacrifices to come to the United States following war exposure, speaking their native language, eating traditional foods, and attending Bosnian cultural events). The current study thus demonstrated how Bosnian American diaspora currently preserve and connect to their Bosnian cultural backgrounds and how this is highly influenced by their experiences of cultural disconnectedness.

Resiliency is another factor that has been mentioned multiple times in the current study and appears to be an important factor for Bosnian American diaspora in managing and navigating experiences of cultural disconnectedness and their Bosnian cultural identities. Resilience is the process and outcome of successfully adapting to difficult or challenging life experiences, especially through mental, emotional, and behavioral flexibility and adjustment to external and internal demands (American Psychological Association, 2022). Resilience has also been defined as the ability to rebound from adverse situations or traumatic circumstances, strengthened and more resourceful (Walsh, 2006). A variety of factors contribute to how well people adapt to adversities, such as the ways in which individuals view and engage with the world, the availability and quality of social resources, and specific coping strategies (American Psychological Association, 2022). Skills related to greater resilience thus can be cultivated and practiced in a variety of ways.

Resiliency among refugees has been noted and described in a variety of studies (Craig et al., 2008; Lucken, 2010; Montgomery, 2010; Poljarevic, 2017). Despite the horrifying events

that refugees are exposed to, they still show the ability to cope successfully with stressors, handle setbacks, persevere, adapt, and maintain equilibrium (Craig et al., 2008). Even though refugee groups must learn how to live with ongoing fears and uncertainties, they also successfully adapt to difficult and challenging experiences after trauma by integrating themselves into new cultures (Craig et al., 2008). Resilience in refugee families is comprised of a variety of factors, including spirituality and religion, family, family cohesion, family communication, family flexibility, stable family relationships, stable environments, social support, community, a sense of belonging and identity, and individual factors (i.e., internal locus of control, effective coping skills, positive self-talk and thinking, taking positive actions toward problem solving, self-determination, optimism, inner strength, hope about the future; Craig et al., 2008). Resilience is thus culturally shaped, and it depends on individual, relational, community, cultural, and contextual factors (Montgomery, 2010).

The word resilience is not primarily used in the Bosnian language and is directly translated as “the ability of an object to return back into its shape or the resistance/elasticity of something” (Poljarevic, 2017). The closest translation of resilience in the Bosnian language is emotional resilience (“*emocionalna otpornost*”). In a study by Poljarevic (2017) that focused on resilience of Bosnian families resettled in the United States using a Grounded Theory qualitative approach, the author translated Walsh’s (2006) definition of resilience into Bosnian to explain the concept of resilience to participants in their study: “*sposobnost oporavljenja od negativnih situacija ili traumatskih okolnosti, ojačani i više snalažljivi.*” In this study, the researcher found that the central resilience theme among Bosnians was family resilience. Seven major themes were identified as central to resilience among Bosnian families, including loss, resettlement,

acculturation, family roles and dynamics, family's support systems, religion/faith in God, and family's outlook on life. Five propositions about resilience among Bosnian families was thus proposed in this study, including (1) the more the family is able to adjust to the new culture while maintaining their own ethnic culture, the more resilient they will be; (2) as family members become more flexible in their roles, they will be better able to meet the needs of other family members, and the family as a whole, will become more resilient; (3) families who reach out to their new support systems (i.e., new friends and new community) will be more successful at adjusting to their new environment, and therefore, more resilient; (4) trauma and loss can change a family's outlook on life, and a family's faith in God can help them maintain a positive outlook on life, and therefore foster their resilience; (5) family loss will result in increased family cohesiveness, and therefore, increased family resilience (Poljarevic, 2017). Overall, this study underscores the complexities related to resilience among Bosnian American diaspora and displays the important role that family plays in this resilience.

Lucken (2010) also described the difficulties associated with defining what it means to be Bosnian among Bosnian American diaspora in an ethnographic study that focused on Bosnian identity maintenance in a post-migration setting within the eastern United States. In addition to exploring identity, as described in further detail in the literature review, Lucken (2010) also focused on resiliency among Bosnian American diaspora. High levels of industriousness and resiliency among the Bosnian American diaspora were reported following migration to the United States, with participants in the study expanding on how this was related to their willingness to work two or three jobs to excel in the United States, to ensure that their families are comfortable, and to build a life in America. This study also underscored the importance of

family to Bosnian American diaspora in the context of resiliency, suggesting again that family is among one of the most important values and cultural factors for Bosnian American diaspora.

In the current study, participants specifically discussed their cultural resiliency, as noted predominately in themes three and four (Theme three: Culture becomes either a risk or protective factor for/against experiences of cultural disconnectedness that varies depending on context for Bosnian American diaspora; Code: Cultural resiliency; Theme four: Bosnian American diaspora engage in various strategies to seek support due to experiences of cultural disconnectedness). Within theme three, participants reported increased levels of resiliency and feeling “stronger” because of their multiple experiences of cultural disconnectedness. Others also reported that their cultural resiliency resulted in a variety of behaviors that were related to maintaining and preserving their cultural identity as Bosnians. Feelings related to these behaviors that were reported included fears “losing” their Bosnian identities, “pride” related to their abilities of maintaining their Bosnian cultural backgrounds, and desires to not have their American culture to be the forefront of their cultural identity due to feelings of embarrassment related to being American. Additional behaviors noted in theme four were related to seeking support due to experiences of cultural disconnectedness, and included seeking support through family, friends, social media, creative outlets, bonding with other minorities, and traveling. Additional themes in this study that underscored resiliency among Bosnian American diaspora were noted in themes two (code: Connectedness due to language abilities), six (code: Familial connectedness), and nine (code: Connectedness to the Bosnian community). Each of these codes were negative cases that were described in detail in the respective discussion sections above.

The various behaviors noted above thus underscore the inherent resiliency within this cultural group and was reported as important by participants after the interviews. More specifically, they described increased insight about their resiliency, experiences of connectedness in various areas (e.g., connectedness due to language abilities, familial connectedness, connectedness to the Bosnian community codes), and coping skills at the end of the interview. This study thus appears to build on previous resiliency data noted in the literature among Bosnian American diaspora, specifically related to the role that family plays in resilience for this population. However, this study also adds new information about resiliency among Bosnian American diaspora to the greater body of literature, specifically the new factors (i.e., add here) that increase and maintain resiliency among Bosnian American diaspora when exposed to experiences of cultural disconnectedness. Overall, this information emphasizes how their psychological well-being has been maintained or has improved regardless of exposure to cultural disconnectedness.

Review of Findings: Summary

In sum, experiences of cultural disconnectedness among Bosnian American diaspora have been documented in numerous studies over the last two decades (Bransteter, 2017; Clark, 2007; Dorner, 2017; Gibson, 2002; Komolova et al., 2018; Lucken, 2010; Mayadas & Segal, 2000; Osmančević, 2020; Sadikovic, 2017; Snyder et al., 2005). Each study described the experiences associated with the paradoxical activity of embodying two cultures simultaneously and the benefits and challenges associated with moving between and balancing the Bosnian and American cultures. However, each of these studies have only briefly highlighted the occurrence of experiences of cultural disconnectedness among the Bosnian American diaspora, and no

known study has taken an extensive look at this experience. The current study elaborated on how experiences of cultural connectedness and disconnectedness are still present among Bosnian American diaspora, while also demonstrating how generations of Bosnian American diaspora are connected by these common threads of experiences. The current study also provided specific details about these experiences, particularly information about the shift in ways Bosnian American diaspora relates to and understands experiences of cultural connectedness and disconnectedness over the last two decades across numerous important themes and the subsequent impacts of this on their psychological well-being, emotional states, and behaviors.

Limitations

Several potential limitations are present in the current study, including relying on interviews to collect data. Through the interview process, findings are co-constructed between participants and researchers, and thus dependent on the participants' ability to communicate their lived experiences and the researchers' ability to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of an "universal essence." This process involves following systematic procedures that move from narrow units of analysis (e.g., significant statements), on to broader units (e.g., meaning units), and on to detailed descriptions that summarize the two elements of phenomenological studies, including "what" the individuals have experienced and "how" they have experienced it. This approach also assumes that the researcher concludes the phenomenological research with a descriptive passage that discusses the "essence" of the experience for individuals, which is the culminating aspect of the study and includes the "what" and "how" of experiences. Potential researcher biases can impact this process and influence the

ways in which data is understood and translated into the description of the “essence” of the participants’ lived experiences related to the phenomena of study.

To reduce the potential for researcher biases impacting the research process, I engaged in a variety of methods related to trustworthiness, including bracketing (i.e., researcher field notes) throughout the entire research process for self-reflection, multiple meetings and member checks with participants to verify the accuracy of the data, review the results, and provide additional support and resources if needed, using additional measures post-interview involving an anonymous online survey that assessed satisfaction with and reactions to their participation in the study, and recurrent biweekly meetings with my research advisor and research lab for peer review and reflection on a regular basis throughout the research process to discuss any biases that may have arose. Notably, all seven participants responded to the member-checking process and participated in the second meeting involving result review and reflecting on additional support needed. I had difficulty getting into contact with one participant, which raised worries about removing them from the data; however, they eventually responded and agreed to continue with participation. Additional steps thus could have been taken in the current study to ensure lack of confusion with post-interview participation and member checks, including a detailed description in the consent form about continued communication with participants post-interview for member checks and result review, and highlighting again that participation is voluntary and that they may conclude at any moment.

Sampling bias also presents a potential limitation inherent to the current study. Participants were recruited via snowball sampling through major social media platforms, specifically Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com>) and Instagram (<https://www.instagram.com>).

This data recruitment method using social media and technology naturally excluded portions of the Bosnian American diasporic population between the ages of 18-30 that do not have Facebook or Instagram or access to technology like smartphones or computers, which were required for participation in the study. However, based on my familiarity with the population and the issues faced by Bosnian American diaspora, and my previous experience with social media recruitment methods with the Bosnian American diaspora population in a previous study involving a large sample size ($N = 566$; Osmančević, 2020), it is believed that this sample is representative of the larger population of interest. Generalizability of the results is also limited due to convenience sampling using snowballing methods. It is also important to note that participant's willingness to participate may have been driven by favorable attitudes toward research participation to help the community or the researcher, who also identifies as Bosnian American; thus, findings from the current study may be skewed positively and may have failed to capture a full range of experiences from other Bosnian American diaspora, causing a ceiling effect. Despite this, it is believed that this willingness to "help out" despite not being paid for participation is connected back to the strong Bosnian cultural values of community and cultural pride (Colic-Peisker & Walker, 2003; Gibson, 2002), underscoring the value that this cultural group places on giving back to the greater community through research participation, which was one of the reflections made by several participants as noted in the **Field Notes** section above.

A final shortcoming of the current study is the lack of depth regarding participants' views on certain topics related to experiences of cultural disconnectedness, such as the cultural stigma surrounding mental illness and seeking mental health services among Bosnian American diaspora. While the cultural stigma related to mental illness and mental health were mentioned

by some participants and documented in the results (theme three: Culture becomes either a risk or protective factor for/against experiences of cultural disconnectedness that varies depending on context for Bosnian American diaspora, code: Cultural stigma), these participants provided feedback to the researcher stating that they wish there was more specific questions exploring this stigma in the interview. After discussing this finding with all the participants in the second interviews involving review of the results, each participant reflected on how the stigma associated with mental illness and seeking mental health services is prevalent in their lives and related to experiences of cultural disconnectedness in a variety of ways. Thus, future studies focusing on experiences of cultural disconnectedness among Bosnian American diaspora or other cultural groups would benefit from reviewing different topics related to cultural stigma to increase the depth and quality of the data and participant experience.

Implications and Strengths

Despite these limitations, this study has contributed to the literature by providing new, in-depth information about the Bosnian American diasporic population in the United States. This study used qualitative methods to conduct the first known study focusing specifically on experiences of cultural disconnectedness among Bosnian American diaspora. Using qualitative methods with marginalized or minority groups, such as diaspora, has been found useful, particularly for changing or influencing the lives of participants, the institutions in which they live and work, or even the researchers' lives (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As these issues are studied and exposed, researchers provide a voice for participants from marginalized groups, in addition to raising their consciousness and improving their lives (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This research study thus provided a voice for Bosnian American diaspora to describe their experiences of

cultural disconnectedness and the subsequent impacts this had on their psychological well-being. This study also uncovered to participants that other Bosnian American diaspora are also going through the same experiences of cultural disconnectedness and that they are not alone, as evidenced by their reflections during our follow-up Zoom meetings described above.

In addition to impacting the participants' lives, this study also impacted my own life as the researcher and a Bosnian American. It has been found that phenomenological projects and their methods often have transformative effects on the researcher (van Manen, 1990). The research itself is a form of deep learning, leading to a transformation of consciousness, heightened perceptiveness, and increased thoughtfulness (van Manen, 1990). I agree with van Manen's statement regarding the transformative effects of phenomenological research because this research study allowed me to learn more about myself as a cultural being and my lived experiences of cultural connectedness and disconnectedness as a Bosnian American. I became more perceptive about the impact that cultural disconnectedness can have on individuals and the subsequent impacts of this on their psychological well-being. I engaged in a lot of self-examination and self-reflection throughout this process as well, which allowed me to not only address my biases in the research, but also learn from my experiences that many other people in my community share. Noticing the shared experiences that I held with my participants was eye-opening and reassuring for me as much as it was for my participants. This research also helped me engage in deep learning about the different ways that I can give back to my Bosnian American community. I learned that I could engage in community-based intervention in a variety of ways, including by giving participants a platform to share and process their lived experiences, while also providing support for their concerns using my knowledge from my field of expertise

(i.e., psychology) and other resources (e.g., mental health services), and sharing the essence of their lived experiences with the greater scientific community in hopes of informing future research studies with other diaspora or cultural groups.

This study also displayed the power of using social media and technology in research, with participants coming from a variety of geographic locations in the United States (Midwest, East, South, and Pacific Northwest regions) and connecting with them virtually using the Zoom Video Communications application. Social media allowed me to reach out to a greater amount of the Bosnian American population than would be possible using other data collection methods, such as Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). In addition, the use of social media for recruitment methods and Zoom for data collection allowed for increased direct reach to the population of interest, which may have been more difficult with other recruitment methods, especially given the barriers associated with in-person meetings due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lastly, it is important to note that participants were not paid money to participate in the study, yet all of them were willing to partake in an extensive qualitative study that required greater amounts of time and effort than a quantitative study would. It is believed that this that this willingness to “help out” without any compensation is connected back to the strong Bosnian cultural values of community and cultural pride (Colic-Peisker & Walker, 2003; Gibson, 2002), underscoring the value that Bosnian American diaspora place on giving back to the greater community, which was one of the reflections made by several participants as noted in the *Field Notes* section above.

Conclusion and Future Directions

The results of this phenomenological study described the “essence” of Bosnian American diaspora’s lived experiences with experiences of cultural disconnectedness and the subsequent impacts this has had on their psychological well-being. Experiences of cultural disconnectedness have been previously described in the literature as feeling in the margins of two cultures or being caught in between two identities, resulting in never truly feeling “here or there” (Clark, 2007; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). The findings of this qualitative study revealed interesting information regarding the “essence” of experiences of cultural disconnectedness among Bosnian American diaspora, and was comprised of nine major themes:

- Theme 1: A variety of negative experiences with identifying as Muslim result in experiences of cultural disconnectedness for Bosnian American diaspora.
- Theme 2: Experiences of cultural disconnectedness reality to language abilities and competencies are complex for Bosnian American diaspora.
- Theme 3: Culture becomes either a risk or protective factor for/against experiences of cultural disconnectedness that varies depending on context for Bosnian American diaspora.
- Theme 4: Bosnian American diaspora engage in various strategies to seek support due to experiences of cultural disconnectedness.
- Theme 5: Experiences of cultural disconnectedness have become accepted by the Bosnian American diaspora.
- Theme 5: Family plays a major role for Bosnian American diaspora, causing either experiences of cultural disconnectedness or connectedness.

- Theme 7: Bosnian American diaspora struggle with feeling either “too Bosnian” or “too American.”
- Theme 8: Race is a multidimensional factor that causes different types of experiences of cultural disconnectedness for Bosnian American diaspora.
- Theme 9: Experiences of cultural disconnectedness within Bosnian American diaspora’s communities varies and depends on contextual factors.

Regarding psychological well-being, the current study uncovered a wide range of emotions related to experiences of cultural disconnectedness and connectedness among Bosnian American diaspora, such as sadness, shame, anger, frustration, confusion, estrangement, defensiveness, avoidance, pride, contentedness, uniqueness, gratefulness, and acceptance. This study also expanded on the behaviors Bosnian American diaspora engage in because of their experiences of cultural disconnectedness and connectedness, such as hiding their Bosnian culture, desires for increased cultural connectedness and preserving their cultural identities. The findings of the current study paralleled findings from previous studies that underscored how the balancing of two cultures can thus look different for everyone and can have varying consequences (Berry & Sam, 1997; see also Bhui et al., 2005; Berry & Sabatier, 2010; Brewer, 1991; Kim et al., 2006; Nakash et al., 2012; Pfafferott & Brown, 2006; Pham & Harris, 2001; Snyder & Fromkin, 1980).

The current study was influenced by the exploratory qualitative findings of the researcher’s master’s thesis that explored ethnic identity, perceived parental sacrifice, and psychological distress among Bosnian American college-aged students (Osmančević, 2020) and by other previous research studies with Bosnian diaspora that particularly noted experiences of

cultural disconnectedness (Bransteter, 2017; Clark, 2007; Dorner, 2017; Gibson, 2002; Komolova et al., 2018; Lucken, 2010; Mayadas & Segal, 2000; Osmančević, 2020; Sadikovic, 2017; Snyder et al., 2005). Previous studies with Bosnian American diaspora only briefly highlighted the occurrence of experiences of cultural disconnectedness among this population, and no known study has taken an extensive look at this experience. The findings of this study elaborated on how experiences of cultural connectedness and disconnectedness are still present among Bosnian American diaspora, while also demonstrating how different generations of Bosnian American diaspora (individuals between the ages of 18-30) are connected through these experiences.

In addition to this, the findings demonstrated how Bosnian American diaspora's experiences of cultural disconnectedness have shifted over the last two and half decades when compared to previous research studies. More specifically, this study expanded on the ways Bosnian American diaspora relate to and understand experiences of cultural connectedness and disconnectedness across various important themes and subsequent impacts of this on their psychological well-being. These qualitative results also displayed other important research topics that the Bosnian American diasporic community is interested in (e.g., cultural stigma regarding mental illness and mental health), warranting future research with this cultural group. This study thus filled a gap in the literature and provided a voice for Bosnian American diaspora to describe their lived experiences in a setting that was supportive and non-judgmental, which also positively influenced the lives of participants and the researcher. It is recommended that future research continue down this path of community and individual empowerment and participation in hopes

of continuing to add to the psychological literature among Bosnian American diaspora and other cultural groups as well.

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Appendix A

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH DAKOTA Institutional Review Board Informed Consent Statement

- Title of Project: Experiences of Cultural Disconnectedness among Bosnian American Diaspora: A Phenomenological Perspective.
- Principle Investigator: Elizabeth Boyd, Ph.D., South Dakota Union Building Room 105A, Vermillion, SD 57069
- Other Investigators: Azra Osmančević, M.A., South Dakota Union Building Room 116, Vermillion, SD 57069 (605) 658-3710

Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of this research study is to increase the understanding about experiences of cultural disconnectedness among Bosnian American diaspora.

Procedures to be followed:

See comment below.

Risks:

- The risks associated with participating in this research are not beyond those experienced in everyday life.
- You may be reminded of potentially traumatic or emotionally sensitive experiences related to your experiences of cultural disconnectedness.

Benefits

You may not benefit personally from participating in this research project however:

- You might learn more about yourself by participating in this study.
- You might have a better understanding of how experiences of disconnectedness may impact your life.
- You might realize that others have had similar experiences as you have.
- This information could help other cultural groups (e.g., other diaspora groups) understand their experiences as well.

Duration:

It will take about 1 to 1.5 hours to complete the interview.

Statement of Confidentiality:

After you agree to participate, the researcher will contact you to set a Zoom meeting for an interview and will provide you with the necessary information to connect to Zoom. First, we will review the consent form together and then the researcher will ask you to create a pseudonym

prior to beginning the interview to disguise your identity. A pseudonym is a fake name that the participant creates in research studies to ensure anonymity. As a result, the information gained throughout the interview will not be personally identifying. If this research is published, no information that would identify you will be included since your name is in no way linked to your responses. Following completion of the interview, you will be provided a link to an anonymous online survey to assess for your satisfaction with and reactions to your participation in the study. Your interview will be transcribed and sent back to you in order for you to verify and check your responses for accuracy (i.e., verifying that the information is what you intended to say). The Zoom meeting will be recorded and saved to the Zoom Recording Cloud for transcription purposes. Following the completion of the transcription of the interview, the recorded meeting will be permanently deleted from the Zoom Recording Cloud. All interview responses will be treated confidentially and stored on a secure flash drive within password-protected documents and folders. After data analysis is completed, the researcher will schedule a feedback/follow-up Zoom meeting with you, which will involve the researcher sharing the findings with you and verbalizing support should you need assistance with trauma triggers or issues, including experiences of disconnectedness from your Bosnian American community.

Right to Ask Questions:

The researchers conducting this study are Azra Osmančević, M.A., and Elizabeth Boyd, Ph.D. If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about the research please contact Azra Osmančević at (605) 658-3710 or Elizabeth Boyd at (605) 658-3710 during the day.

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you may contact The University of South Dakota- Office of Human Subjects Protection at (605) 677-6184. You may also call this number with problems, complaints, or concerns about the research. Please call this number if you cannot reach the researchers, or you wish to talk with someone who is an informed individual who is independent of the research team.

Compensation:

You will not receive compensation for your participation. You may withdraw from the study at any time.

Voluntary Participation:

You do not have to participate in this research. You can stop your participation at any time. You may refuse to participate or choose to discontinue participation at any time without any negative consequences. The researcher will consistently ask you throughout the interview if you are comfortable with continuing with the interview.

You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

Alternative:

There are no alternatives to participating in the research.

For this study you must be 18 years of age older to consent to participate in this research study. Participation in the interview implies that you have read the information in this form and consent to participate in the research.

Please keep this form for your records or future reference.

Appendix B

IRB APPROVED MESSAGE

I will be sending this message via social media (i.e., direct message, private message) regarding the need for participants in this study:

Hello,

I am conducting a research study survey that focuses on experiences of cultural disconnectedness among the Bosnian American diaspora and would appreciate your participation. Cultural disconnectedness may look like feeling caught “in between two identities,” resulting in never truly feeling “here or there.” Some people have also described it as feeling “too Bosnian for Americans and too American for Bosnians.” If you have experienced any of these feelings or something similar, are between the ages of 18-30, live in the United States, and identify as Bosnian American, we would appreciate learning more about your lived experiences through a short interview.

To participate, please respond to this message or contact me at:
azra.osmancevic@coyotes.usd.edu

Your time and participation are appreciated!

Thank you,
Azra Osmančević
azra.osmancevic@coyotes.usd.edu
(605) 658-3710

Appendix C

Interview Questions

Sociodemographic Questions:

- How old are you? What year were you born?
- What is your biological sex (i.e., gender)?
- What is your gender identity?
- What religious group do you identify with?
- Where were you born?
- What year did your family come to the United States?
- How old were you when your parents left Bosnia?
- Were your parent's refugees from the Bosnian War?
- Did your parents live in a refugee camp following the Bosnian War?
- How long have you lived in the United States?

Check-in Question: I'll just be checking in with you throughout the interview to make sure you are still comfortable with continuing. Do you feel comfortable continuing with the interview?

Research Questions:

- What have you experienced in terms of cultural disconnectedness within your Bosnian American community? Cultural disconnectedness may look like feeling caught “in between two identities,” resulting in never truly feeling “here or there.” Some people have also described it as feeling “too Bosnian for Americans and too American for Bosnians.”

- How have you experienced cultural disconnectedness within your community, specifically what contexts or situations have influenced or affected your experiences of cultural disconnectedness?

Check-in Question: Do you still feel comfortable with continuing?

Open-ended questions:

- When someone asks you, how do you identify yourself, culturally?
- Please describe what it was like growing up in America.
- How connected do you feel to your Bosnian culture?
 - How do you think this impacts your cultural identity?
- **Check-in Question:** Are you still doing okay with continuing with the interview?
- How connected do you feel to your American culture?
 - How do you think this impacts your cultural identity?
- What factors play a role in your cultural identity?
- In what ways were your experiences or feelings of cultural connectedness/disconnectedness a family or community experience?
- What do you do to manage your feelings or experiences of disconnectedness in either your Bosnian or American cultural groups?

Appendix D

Reactions to Research Participation Questionnaire – Revised

(Newman, Willard, Sinclair, and Kaloupek, 2001)

This questionnaire asks for your opinions about what it was like for you to participate in this study. Your responses will be used to help us understand more about what it is like to be a research participant.

1. From the list below, please rank the top three reasons why you decided to participate (1= most important 2= second most important 3= third most important).

- I was curious
- I don't know
- Felt I had to
- To help others
- To help myself
- Thought it might improve my access to healthcare
- For the money
- I didn't want to say no
- Other (Please explain below)

The following questions deal with your reactions to participating in this study. Please circle the number that best describes your response.

1. I gained something positive from participating.
 - 1 = Strongly disagree (No)
 - 2 = Disagree
 - 3 = Neutral (Maybe)
 - 4 = Agree
 - 5 = Strongly agree (Yes)
2. Knowing what I know now, I would participate in this study if given the opportunity.
 - 1 = Strongly disagree (No)
 - 2 = Disagree
 - 3 = Neutral (Maybe)
 - 4 = Agree
 - 5 = Strongly agree (Yes)

3. The research raised emotional issues for me that I had not expected.
 - 1 = Strongly disagree (No)
 - 2 = Disagree
 - 3 = Neutral (Maybe)
 - 4 = Agree
 - 5 = Strongly agree (Yes)

4. I gained insight about my experiences through research participation.
 - 1 = Strongly disagree (No)
 - 2 = Disagree
 - 3 = Neutral (Maybe)
 - 4 = Agree
 - 5 = Strongly agree (Yes)

5. The research made me think about things I didn't want to think about.
 - 1 = Strongly disagree (No)
 - 2 = Disagree
 - 3 = Neutral (Maybe)
 - 4 = Agree
 - 5 = Strongly agree (Yes)

6. I found the questions too personal.
 - 1 = Strongly disagree (No)
 - 2 = Disagree
 - 3 = Neutral (Maybe)
 - 4 = Agree
 - 5 = Strongly agree (Yes)

7. I found participating in this study personally meaningful.
 - 1 = Strongly disagree (No)
 - 2 = Disagree
 - 3 = Neutral (Maybe)
 - 4 = Agree
 - 5 = Strongly agree (Yes)

8. I believe this study's results will be useful to others.
 - 1 = Strongly disagree (No)
 - 2 = Disagree
 - 3 = Neutral (Maybe)
 - 4 = Agree
 - 5 = Strongly agree (Yes)

9. I trust that my replies will be kept private.
- 1 = Strongly disagree (No)
 - 2 = Disagree
 - 3 = Neutral (Maybe)
 - 4 = Agree
 - 5 = Strongly agree (Yes)
10. I experienced intense emotions during the research session and/or parts of the study.
- 1 = Strongly disagree (No)
 - 2 = Disagree
 - 3 = Neutral (Maybe)
 - 4 = Agree
 - 5 = Strongly agree (Yes)
11. I think this research is for a good cause.
- 1 = Strongly disagree (No)
 - 2 = Disagree
 - 3 = Neutral (Maybe)
 - 4 = Agree
 - 5 = Strongly agree (Yes)
12. I was treated with respect and dignity.
- 1 = Strongly disagree (No)
 - 2 = Disagree
 - 3 = Neutral (Maybe)
 - 4 = Agree
 - 5 = Strongly agree (Yes)
13. I found participating beneficial to me.
- 1 = Strongly disagree (No)
 - 2 = Disagree
 - 3 = Neutral (Maybe)
 - 4 = Agree
 - 5 = Strongly agree (Yes)
14. I was glad to be asked to participate.
- 1 = Strongly disagree (No)
 - 2 = Disagree
 - 3 = Neutral (Maybe)
 - 4 = Agree
 - 5 = Strongly agree (Yes)

15. I like the idea that I contributed to science.
1 = Strongly disagree (No)
2 = Disagree
3 = Neutral (Maybe)
4 = Agree
5 = Strongly agree (Yes)
16. I was emotional during the research session.
1 = Strongly disagree (No)
2 = Disagree
3 = Neutral (Maybe)
4 = Agree
5 = Strongly agree (Yes)
17. I felt I could stop participating at any time.
1 = Strongly disagree (No)
2 = Disagree
3 = Neutral (Maybe)
4 = Agree
5 = Strongly agree (Yes)
18. I found participating boring.
1 = Strongly disagree (No)
2 = Disagree
3 = Neutral (Maybe)
4 = Agree
5 = Strongly agree (Yes)
19. The study procedures took too long.
1 = Strongly disagree (No)
2 = Disagree
3 = Neutral (Maybe)
4 = Agree
5 = Strongly agree (Yes)
20. Participating in this study was inconvenient for me.
1 = Strongly disagree (No)
2 = Disagree
3 = Neutral (Maybe)
4 = Agree
5 = Strongly agree (Yes)

21. Participation was a choice I freely made.

1 = Strongly disagree (No)

2 = Disagree

3 = Neutral (Maybe)

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly agree (Yes)

22. Had I known in advance what participating would be like I still would have agreed to participate.

1 = Strongly disagree (No)

2 = Disagree

3 = Neutral (Maybe)

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly agree (Yes)

23. I understood the consent form.

1 = Strongly disagree (No)

2 = Disagree

3 = Neutral (Maybe)

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly agree (Yes)