FROM FIGHTING TO FREEDOM

Stories from Serbian Balkan War Refugees

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Shannon Research Press

The cover depicts the Mostar Bridge, an icon of Bosnia and Hercegovina. The bridge, which overlooks the River Neretva, was built in 1566 during the Ottoman Empire when the region was under Turkish rule. Mostar, meaning “bridge keeper,” was destroyed on the morning of November 9, 1993, by Croatian forces during the Bosnian conflict. After the war, the bridge was rebuilt, and was reopened in 2004.

The Mostar Bridge was, and still is, a symbolic meeting point of east and west; a site for reconciliation. Given this rich symbolism, the Mostar Bridge is a fitting image that epitomises the ideas developed throughout this study. It represents the intersection of two cultures – in this case, the Serbian and Australian cultures. Only through such dialogue can understanding be achieved.

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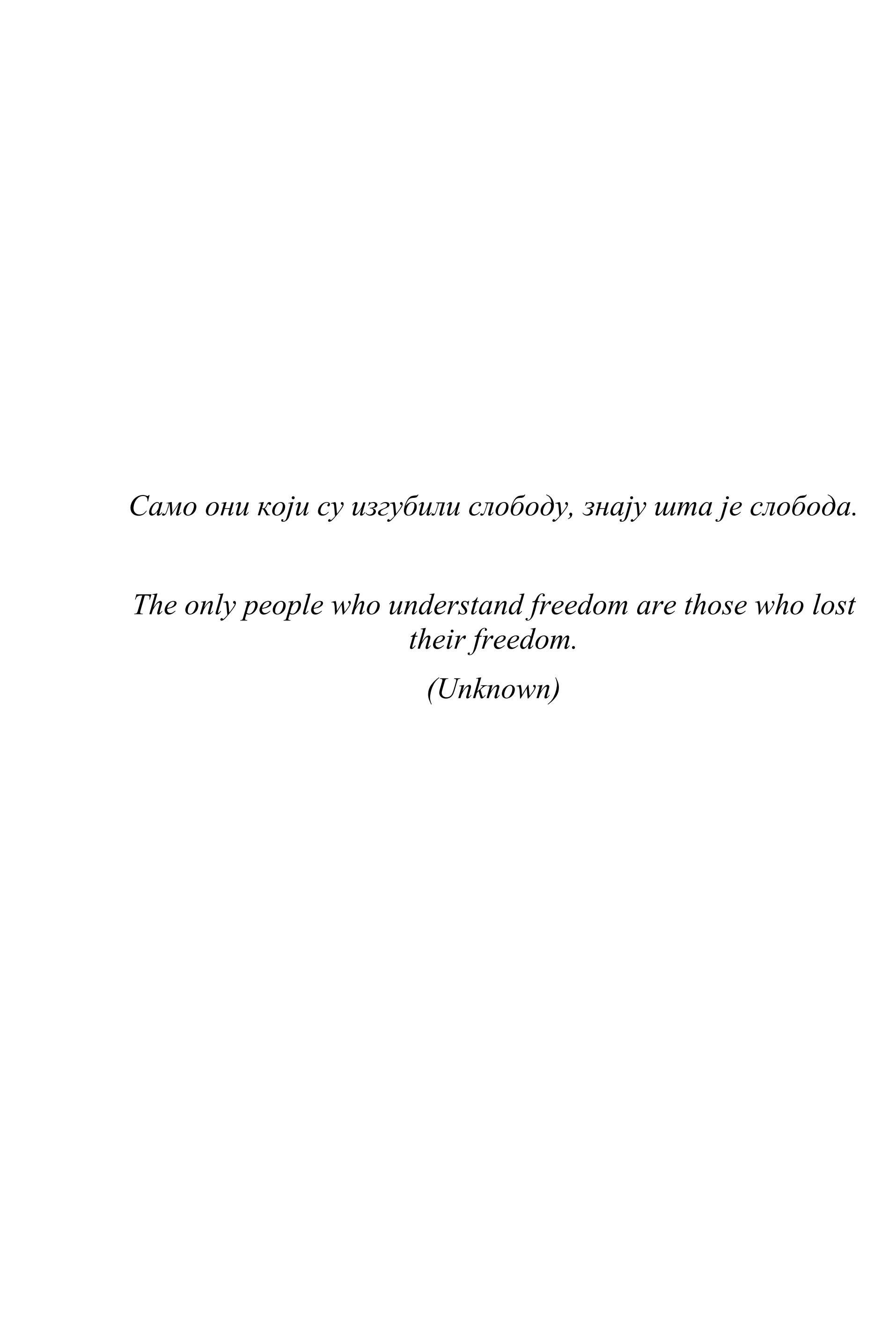

Само они који су изгубили слободу, знају шта је слобода.

The only people who understand freedom are those who lost their freedom.

(Unknown)

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Preface

In the last ten years, the world has seen an increase in the global population of refugees as a consequence of war, famine, and human rights violations. This figure is predicted to further increase as a consequence of global warming. As a result, , there is a need to develop a holistic understanding of the refugee experience and challenges of migration in order to better meet the needs of future refugee populations.

The 1990s saw the dissolution of former Yugoslavia following the decline of Communism. Ethnic cleansing campaigns resulted in the displacement of many of the region's citizens. There is limited published research which specifically examines Serbian experiences of trauma and transformation as a result of the civil unrest. The lack of research attention that this population has received was likely influenced by the international mass media reporting of the events during this time, which portrayed the Serbs as the sole transgressors of the ethnically-driven conflicts.

This qualitative study involved ten Serbian participants who migrated to Australia as a result of the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s. Through multiple semi-structured interviews with participants, eight stories were produced, where three participants co-constructed their stories. Six of these stories have been selected for presentation in this book.

In analysing the interview data, eight key themes were identified. These were: changing conceptions of ethnicity; the role played by wider social networks; the importance of family throughout participants' lives; the impact of war experiences; the experiences and impact of health difficulties; the role of grief and loss; the importance of age in shaping participants' experiences and responses to trauma; and the importance of lifelong learning. In considering these themes, three adaptation patterns – active integration, passive integration, and segregation – were developed and are specific to the participants in the study.

This study contributes to the growing bank of literature which examines refugee populations and the challenges they face before and after migration. This study also provides a reference point for future research which may further evaluate the Serbian experience and that of refugee populations in general.

Acknowledgments

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I would like to thank all those people who made this study possible. In particular, I would like to express my gratitude to:

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- Gordana Kolundzija for her assistance in translating the information for participants.
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Finally, I would like to thank the participants of this study for sharing their inspirational stories, and offering diverse and valuable insights into their experiences of transformation.

I would like to dedicate this book to the participants of this study.

May your courage inspire others to begin sharing their stories.

Желим да посветим ову тезу свим учесницима.

Надам се да Ваша храброст ће омогучити другима да изјаве своје личне приче.

Svetlana M. King
Flinders University, Adelaide, South Australia

Authors' Note

This book was published for the purpose of acknowledging and giving voice to Serbian people who experienced trauma during the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s and consequently migrated to South Australia. These stories have largely gone untold and, therefore, unrecognised. This is likely because the mass media coverage of the conflicts portrayed the Serbs as the sole transgressors. Such portrayals denied the suffering endured by the Serbs. As one participant stated: "That was what killed us the most – when you see the injustice ... I never believed there were people like that who could tell such lies."

Those who were involved in the development of this book acknowledge that in war, no one remains innocent. In the words of one participant: "I would say that everybody is to blame [for the Balkan conflicts]." Our intention for this book is in part, to disseminate the stories of a small number of Serbian people who lived in former Yugoslavia during its dissolution and, in the process, challenge the stereotyped image of the Serb.

It is intended that this book will appeal to multiple audiences – for those with an interest in conducting research with groups who have been affected by war, and for those who have obtained a copy of this book solely for the purpose of developing a greater understanding of Serbian perspectives. Our recommendations to you, the reader, are as follows. If you are a researcher, you will find a complete literature review in Chapter 2, and an in-depth discussion of the research design in Chapter 3. If you are among the readers who wish to better understand the Serbian position through the six stories presented in this book, we suggest that you read Chapter 1, the first section of Chapter 2 which provides an outline of Balkan history, and Chapter 4. If, by the end of reading Chapter 4, you are keen to understand the issues that emerged during interviews with participants, you may wish to read Chapter 5. The final chapter consolidates the ideas developed throughout this book.

Finally, we would like to thank you, the reader, for taking the time to read this book. We hope that you are able to gain new insights into a largely under-represented group of people.

1

Introduction

> There is nothing straight-forward about the Serbian story. It is an extremely complex web of history, culture, religion and tradition ... of conflicts, and nationalism ... of a very proud people. (Branka King, research assistant)

This study aimed to develop an insight into the experiences of Serbian people who moved to South Australia from the Federated Republic of Yugoslavia as a result of the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s. The processes of personal and social transformation at both the individual and the family level formed the focal points of this research. This study invited participants to describe their lives before, during, and after, the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s in order to develop an understanding of their adaptation and transformation. The research was conducted within a qualitative paradigm, utilising case study methodology. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews with ten participants who identify as Serbian. Participants engaged in up to three interviews on up to three separate occasions. Interviews were audio recorded and partially transcribed. Data analysis was an ongoing process, commencing at the conclusion of each interview. Analysis occurred in terms of participants' experiences, and involved: (i) the temporal sequencing of events and the social contexts in which they occurred; (ii) the 'turning points' as identified by participants; and (iii) reference to the typical themes and phases as identified in the existing literature.

In this chapter, an overview of the study is provided. We describe the geographical and historical context of the Balkans, and provide details of the Serbian community in South Australia. This chapter also provides details of Svetlana King, the principal researcher's personal

context. A brief overview of previous findings is then explored, emphasising the significance of this study. The key questions addressed in this study are outlined, followed by a description of the theoretical framework that provided the foundation for the study.

Geographical and Historical Context

The Federated Republic of Yugoslavia, as it is now called, is located in Eastern Europe and, prior to its fragmentation, shared borders with Albania, Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Austria, and Italy. For the purpose of simplicity, the Federated Republic of Yugoslavia will be subsequently referred to as 'former Yugoslavia'.

When former Yugoslavia was a united entity, it consisted of Slovenia, Macedonia, Croatia, Bosnia and Hercegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, and Vojvodina and Kosovo, the two Serbian provinces (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: "The Balkans" – Map of former Yugoslavia (Jones, 2004)

Over the past 600 years, the Eastern European region once referred to as Yugoslavia (meaning 'South Slavs'), has undergone extensive

division, largely resulting from periods of civil unrest. It is, therefore, not surprising that there is virtually no history of unity within the region (Auty, 1965).

Ethnic identification, the salient trigger of six centuries of conflict, is a persistent wedge that has driven apart the people of former Yugoslavia, resulting in the death and disruption to hundreds of thousands of lives. Ethnicity is, therefore, the interwoven thread creating the rich, complex tapestry of Balkan history. The recurring significance of ethnicity as a motive for war suggests that the conflicts of the 1990s should not be dealt with in isolation (Bell-Fialkoff, 1993; Čolić-Peisker, 2003). The Balkan conflicts of the 1990s are deeply rooted in the preceding events. The impact of these wars will continue to bear on the present and the future. Acknowledgement of these historical events is crucial to understanding the conflicts of the 1990s. The following chapter examines the history of the Balkans in more detail.

South Australian Context

Serbian people have moved to Australia, for various reasons, since the late nineteenth century (Atkinson & Ciccarello, 2004). The first significant wave of Serbs arrived in South Australia following World War II, from 1949 to 1954, and the second significant influx occurred during the 1990s as people fled from ethnic conflict (Atkinson & Ciccarello, 2004).

The Serbian community in South Australia is relatively small, with 8150 people identifying with a Serbian ancestry (ABS, 2006). This number, however, is debatable due to the complexity associated with the definition of Serbian ethnicity. For example, an individual could be born in Croatia, but identify as Serbian. Asserting a Serbian identity, therefore, does not necessarily relate to an individual’s geographical birthplace. Members of the Serbian community have also indicated that this figure is conservative, suggesting that a population of 10 000 Serbs in South Australia, inclusive of rural centres, is more accurate.

In terms of religion, the majority of Serbs are Orthodox. In South Australia, there are three Serbian Orthodox communities – the parishes of Saint Sava’s at Hindmarsh and Woodville Park, and the Nativity of the Most Holy Theotokos monastery in Inglewood. An additional community, based within the non-religiously affiliated Serbian and Montenegrin Centre of South Australia in Regency Park, also provides opportunities for fellowship for all former Yugoslavs, regardless of their ethnicity or religious beliefs.

While these communities exist, a significant number of Serbs may also choose not to associate with the Serbian community. This could be influenced by a number of factors. For example: a fear of not being accepted due to a complex ethnic background (for example, having a Croatian father and a Serbian mother); possessing contemporary political values; growing up during the Communist era where religious practice was forbidden; or a desire to fully integrate into the 'Australian' culture.

Personal Context

Svetlana King's maternal grandparents were of Eastern European descent. Her grandfather, Jovan Skorupanović, was from Kragujevac, in Šumadija, a region of Serbia. Svetlana's grandmother, Irena (nee Harčenko) was born in Poltava, in the Ukraine (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Map indicating the birthplaces of Jovan and Irena Skorupanović (Federal Aviation Administration, 2007a, b)

At the age of 14, during World War II, Irena was taken from her family by German soldiers. She met Jovan during her incarceration in a German prisoner of war camp. They married and moved to Australia in order to create a better life for their family.

Svetlana, her mother and sister were born in Australia, and christened in the Serbian Orthodox faith. Svetlana's father was born in Australia, and has an Anglo-Saxon background. As young children, Svetlana and her sister attended the Hindmarsh Serbian School where their mother taught the Serbian language, and the girls were also involved in Serbian folk dancing. Svetlana's father was also involved in the Serbian community, as the director of a children's music ensemble.

In 2005, after some time away from the community, Svetlana became involved in choral and musical activities. Through this involvement, she developed an interest in the passion and resilience of the Serbian people, whose history is fraught with tragedy and upheaval. The complexity of her role as the principal researcher in this study is discussed in Chapter 3.

Brief Overview of Previous Findings

Over the past decade, the world has seen an increase in the number of refugees and displaced persons (Khawaja, White, Schweitzer, & Greenslade, 2008). In 2007, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reported a worldwide refugee population of 32.9 million. Given this significant population, and the mixed, and sometimes hostile reception of these people by countries such as Australia, it is hardly surprising that displaced populations have become a focus for research. Such research is multidisciplinary, involving the consideration of multiple, complex factors (Kovacev & Shute, 2004).

Trauma

Trauma can be defined as "... an event or process which overwhelms the individual, family, or community, and the ability to cope in mind, body, soul, and spirit" (Atkinson, 2002, p. xi). While responses to traumatic events can vary, it is important to note that such reactions are a natural human consequence of trauma (Atkinson, 2002).

Those who have encountered trauma can experience multiple losses including loss of social networks, employment and education opportunities, and material possessions (Jensen & Shaw, 1993; Kinzie, 2007). Loss has a pivotal role in creating stress and exacerbating trauma. These losses disrupt continuity which crucially influences an

individual's ability to adapt following an adverse life event (Omer & Alon, 1984). Similarly, adaptation is influenced by an individual's ability and willingness to engage in new learning (for example, employment and education opportunities) which is influenced by age and life stage.

According to Figley (1986), the impact of trauma can create lasting effects. The notion that trauma generates sustained effects emphasises the need for a holistic approach to capture the "totality" of the refugee experience (Porter, 2007, p. 428), which this study has endeavoured to achieve.

Despite the need for a holistic approach in examining refugees' traumatic experiences, a number of studies have examined the mental health and wellbeing of refugees from a psychological perspective (for example, Carlson & Rosser-Hogan, 1991; Lopes Cardozo, Kaiser, Gotway, & Agani, 2003). In addition to mental health problems, chronic medical conditions may impact upon the experiences of refugees and displaced populations.

This study invited participants to discuss: their personal and material resources, including the evolution of their relationships with others over time; and the health challenges they encountered. This study has, therefore, involved the investigation of multiple factors which have influenced participants' adaptation following the conflicts of the 1990s.

The silence of the Serbs

The Balkan conflicts of the 1990s involved horrific, traumatic events which have attracted global attention. The trauma suffered by the people of former Yugoslavia more than justifies the extensive research attention that this population has received (Franz, 2003; Kelly, 2003; Mollica et al., 1999; Segal & Mayadas, 2005; Thulesius & Hakansson, 1999; Weine, Becker, McGlashan, Vojvoda et al., 1995; Weine et al., 1998; Živčić, 1993). Amidst these findings, however, there is a critical absence of published studies that have explored the narratives of Serbian people who experienced trauma and resettlement as a result of the conflicts of the 1990s. Given the complexity of the issues surrounding this civil war, it is important to consider the experiences of the Serbian people who became displaced during the Balkan conflicts. This study attempts to address this gap in the literature by giving the Serbian people a voice.

Significance

Australian society has become increasingly multicultural in recent years, due, in part, to the global migration of refugee populations. The experiences of these people are complex and varied, both prior to, and following migration. Those who work with such populations, regardless of their role (for example, medical professionals, educators), require an understanding of these experiences in order to better meet the needs of these people.

As described in the Brief Overview of Previous Findings, Serbian experiences of the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s are notably absent from the research in this field. This study has broken this silence, initiating dialogue in order to facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of the position of the Serbs in relation to the Balkan conflicts. This research possesses the power to serve multiple audiences, among which include governmental bodies, educators, and the general public. While heightening the awareness of transformative experiences of the Serbian people affected by the unrest of the 1990s, this study inadvertently, yet significantly, lends itself to future studies of this population. This study also contributes to the growing research examining refugee experiences.

Given the infancy of research into Serbian transformative experiences following the conflicts of the 1990s, this research can be considered a 'pilot study'. While assisting in the discovery and creation of new understandings of Serbian transformative experiences, this study also develops a number of key foci for further research as described in Chapter 6.

Key Questions

This study aimed to develop insights into the experiences of ten Serbian people who moved to South Australia from their homeland as a result of the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s. The processes of personal and social transformation at both the individual and family level formed the focal points of this study.

The study addressed the following three key questions:

1. What was life like for study participants prior to the outbreak of war in the area in which they were living?
2. What experiences led to the study participants' decision to leave their homeland and move to Australia and, more specifically, South Australia?

3. What experiences have shaped the personal and social adjustment and transformation of study participants since arriving in Australia?

Theoretical Framework

In order to address the three key questions, the study employed a social constructivist approach, and drew upon Elder and Johnson's (2003) life course principles. The theoretical framework is explained in Chapter 3.

In Summary

This chapter has provided an overview of the study, including a discussion of the geographical and historical context of the Balkans, and the South Australian Serbian community. The position of the principal researcher in this study was introduced through a discussion of her own cultural background. A brief review of previous findings was then provided, emphasising the significance of this study. The key questions addressed in this study were outlined, followed by a brief description of the theoretical framework implemented in this study. In the following chapter, we examine the previous findings pertaining to Balkan history and the refugee journey in greater depth.

2

Background to the Study

> Only one thing in the world seems greater to me than justice: If not the truth itself, then the struggle for truth. (Albert Camus)

We begin this chapter with a description of the historical context of the Balkans prior to, and during the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s. The role of the mass media in maintaining and reinforcing a stereotypical image of the Serbs as the sole transgressors of the conflicts is then discussed. General global refugee migration trends are examined, followed by a discussion of the Serbian population in Australia and, more specifically, South Australia. The issues concerning refugees in general, including a definition of trauma and a discussion of its effects is then considered before concluding with a discussion of the challenges and influences of adaptation following migration.

The History of the Balkans

The events in the Balkans during the 1990s cannot be fully understood without giving due consideration to preceding historical events (Bell-Fialkoff, 1993; Čolić-Peisker, 2003). In this section, we provide this historical background, creating a context for the events in former Yugoslavia during the 1990s.

The Eastern European region of former Yugoslavia is religiously diverse. Western Christianity, eastern Orthodoxy and Islam are the three main religions which are practised. Croats and Slovenes are predominantly Catholic; Serbs, Montenegrins, and Macedonians are typically Orthodox; and Bošnjaks and Albanian Kosovars are mainly Muslim. Religious identification is an integral and defining feature of

ethnicity for people from the Balkans. Given the interconnectedness of religion and ethnic identity, it is crucial to understand these distinctions in order to appreciate the salience of ethnic identification as a trigger for conflict.

In 1389, the Ottoman Turks defeated Christian forces at the Battle of Kosovo Polje (Field of Blackbirds) which saw Serbia and the smaller Slavic states of Bulgaria, Bosnia, and Hercegovina become part of the Turkish Empire. This reign resulted in the region's religious conversion to Islam – a legacy of the Ottoman rule (Hoffman, 1963) – and, for more than 400 years, Christianity was suppressed (Cushman, 2004). Following the decline of the Ottoman empire, a religious form of nationalism emerged during the nineteenth century, separating the region "... by creed rather than by tongue" (Hoffman, 1963, p. 54). That is, religion became a divisive element of identity.

World War I began in Eastern Europe in 1914 as a local conflict between Serbia and Austria-Hungary. This war was triggered by the assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand by the Serbian nationalist, Gavrilo Princip. This civil unrest was, again, triggered by nationalism. This nationalism prevailed during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

In December 1918, following World War I and the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, former Yugoslavia became established as the first south Slav state. At this time, King Petar I governed the region, renaming it the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. The aim of this was to create unity amongst people with previously separate cultures, histories, and geographies (Auty, 1965). In January 1929, Petar's son Aleksandr assumed dictatorial control and abolished these administrative units, renaming the region "Yugoslavia." Many were opposed to this dictatorship and in 1934, while visiting France, King Aleksandr was assassinated by a Croatian terrorist group, leaving the region in political and military turmoil until the Second World War.

During World War II, former Yugoslavia was engaged in its own internal conflict involving three violent nationalist movements: the two opposing Serbian nationalist groups: the Communist Partisans led by Josip Broz (Tito); and the Četniks, led by Draža Mihailović; and the Croatian fascist group known as the Ustaše, led by Ante Pavelić. During this time, the Serbs were persecuted and experienced genocide at the hands of Croatian fascists, and "the collective memory of this genocide has remained alive in the present" (Cushman, 2004, p. 11).

After engaging in conflict with the Četniks and the Ustaše, the Communist Partisans became victorious at the war's end. Towards the end of 1945, former Yugoslavia became a republic, and was renamed the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia. By 1946, former Yugoslavia had become a one-party socialist state led by Marshal Tito.

During his reign as president, Tito apportioned power evenly using "centralised control" and "repressive tactics" (Centre for Balkan Development, 1996). He led with an "iron fist" ("Tito's Ghosts," 2008), drawing upon the ideas of Stalin (Malcolm, 1998). The people of former Yugoslavia were, again, forced to suppress their religious and ethnic identities, this time, in accordance with Communist regulations.

In 1963, Tito established a new constitution, and the region was again renamed. Former Yugoslavia then became referred to as the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In 1974, amendments were made to this constitution, and Vojvodina and Kosovo were declared autonomous provinces of Serbia.

Tito's death in 1980 was promptly followed by national, political and economic decline, signalling the collapse of the Communist era, which then gave rise to ethnic nationalism. Slobodan Milošević, a Serbian Communist and nationalist, was elected president of Serbia, promising the Serbs that he would "restore their place in history" (Centre for Balkan Development, 1999).

Milošević planned to create a 'Greater Serbia' involving the unification of all areas where Serbs resided, thereby creating 'Serbian-only' territories. In an effort to realise this, in March 1989, Milošević revoked the autonomy of Vojvodina and Kosovo. In addition, non-Serbian ethnic groups were removed from Serbian majority areas by a series of 'ethnic cleansing' campaigns, which triggered nationalist reprisals by other ethnic groups. Ethnic cleansing refers to the elimination and expulsion of undesired ethnic groups (Bell-Fialkoff, 1993) by consciously replacing a multicultural with a monocultural society (Treanor, 2006). Ethnic cleansing is characterised by military attacks on civilians, systematic degradation, persecution, forcible displacement, torture, execution, rape, murder, and loss of human rights (Bell-Fialkoff, 1993; Meron, 1993; Orend, 1999).

It is important to note here, that the "... local Serbs were not, as a rule, eager to be part of ethnic cleansing" campaigns (Burg & Shoup, 1999, p. 174). Furthermore, those individuals who strongly opposed the Milošević regime received very little attention, "which has simply reinforced the misconception that the Serbian population

wholeheartedly supported Milosevic," and contributes to the myth that the Serbs are collectively guilty (Clark, 2008, p. 678). This idea is critical to understanding Serbian perspectives.

By 1990, enormous strain and ethnic tension between the republics was evident (Kapor-Stanulovic, 2002) and by 1991, the Yugoslav federation commenced its disintegration as the republics began to declare independence (Centre for Balkan Development, 1999). In 1991, Slovenia and Croatia were the first to declare independence. The secession of these republics, as with Bosnia and Hercegovina, was only achieved after a period of conflict.

The ethnically diverse republic of Bosnia and Hercegovina declared independence in 1992, and this was followed by a 43 month battle. The republic was, and is, home to Bosnian Muslims (Bošnjaks), Orthodox Serbs, and Croatian Catholics. Prior to 1992, Serbs lived beside Bošnjaks and Croats as neighbours as they did throughout former Yugoslavia prior to the 1990s. There was, therefore, no 'Serbian-specific' territory. As a result, extensive civil conflict caused a great deal of death and destruction in these areas of the republic (Centre for Balkan Development, 1996). In April 1994, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) intervened in the Bosnian war by cutting off supplies and conducting air strikes in targeted Serbian areas. This intervention further created feelings of mistrust, fear, and even hatred of the 'West', particularly as Milošević's campaign involved suggestions that everything coming from the West constituted a conspiracy against the Serbs (Volčič, 2005). December 1995 signalled the end of the war with the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement.

Following the Bosnian war, conflict ensued in Kosovo, where NATO again intervened. After months of retaliation by the Serbs, and failed peace talks, NATO began 78 days of continuous bombing of targeted Serbian military and paramilitary locations, until an agreement was reached in 1999 between NATO and Serbia.

The Balkan conflicts of the 1990s can be characterised by the deliberate and systematic targeting and destruction of historical, religious, and cultural landmarks, and ethnic cleansing by all ethnic groups (Riedlmayer, 2007). The death and destruction caused by these conflicts is significant, with 250,000 people dead or unaccounted for, and more than 2.5 million made refugees (Silber & Little, 1997 as cited in Riedlmayer, 2007).

Former Yugoslavia has and, to a certain extent, remains the site of civil unrest for all its inhabitants. No generation has been left unaffected by

the tragedies that have occurred throughout Balkan history. As Zlata Filipović, a young girl living in Sarajevo during the 1990s stated,

> ... almost all of the young former Yugoslavians know what a bomb sounds like, what a cellar is and what the absence of water, electricity or home feel like ... these children and young people had nothing to do with the situation they found themselves in. (as cited in Gruwell, 1999, p. xv)

There is no denying that atrocities were committed by all parties involved during the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s (Clark, 2008; Cushman, 2004; Meron, 1993). As Kylie Cardell (2006, p. 599) stated, “in war, *everyone* has a story to tell” (emphasis not in original). In the literature, few studies have examined stories of Serbian experiences of war. This study, therefore, makes an important contribution to refugee research by examining stories of adaptation from the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s from the perspective of ten Serbian people.

A Conspiracy of Silence: The Role of the Mass Media

The Serbs were largely portrayed in the international mass media as the major transgressors of the conflicts during the 1990s (Clark, 2008). According to Handke (n.d. as cited in Clark, 2008, p. 670), international magazines created the image of the Serbs as “the evildoers,” and represented ‘the Muslims’ as “the good ones” “in order to bring the war to their customers.” The legitimacy of refugee claims in such instances are shattered, paving the way for one ‘winner’ and one ‘loser’ to arise at the conclusion of the war (King, 2004, p. 202).

Negative portrayals of the Serbs in the international media have contributed to the collective guilt of the Serbian nation (Clark, 2008), and the general ‘othering’ of the Serbs, who are largely perceived as criminals (Clark, 2008). This can influence the development of the collective memory (Poole, 2008). The ‘media war’ starkly contrasted the war ‘on the ground’ as experienced and noted by Van de Port (1999), who was visiting Novi Sad during the 1990s while investigating otherness.

A recent study (Leudar, Hayes, Nekvapil, & Turner Baker, 2008) examined representations of immigrants in British media, and reported that the images were largely negative and hostile, and typically utilised a dehumanising discourse through the use of metaphorical language. The authors suggested that these expressions of hostility are not individual, but “socially shared” (Leudar et al., 2008, p. 189). The authors of this study also suggested that negative representations of

refugee and asylum seeker groups in the media can compound challenges faced in the host country (Leudar et al., 2008). King (2004) similarly noted that the stereotypical images presented in the media can increase racist violence, victimising refugees in the host community. The authors of a study which examined the prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among newly resettled Bošnjak refugees also suggested that the sympathetic representation of this migrant group is likely to have contributed to their wellbeing (Weine, Becker, McGlashan, Laub et al., 1995). These findings raise the question of the effects of the portrayal of negative images upon the Serbs.

International mass media is "a portal through which only certain stories are allowed to pass" (Cardell, 2006, p. 599). Similarly, it can be a means of conveying "an 'official story' which ignores crucial aspects of reality, distorts others, and even falsifies or invents ... others" (Martin-Baro, 1989, p. 10). The stereotypes these selected stories create are described by Cushman (2004) who noted that scholars of anthropology began offering interpretations of the events of the 1990s which clearly favoured a particular 'side'. This selective interpretation of the events in the Balkans during the 1990s was also illustrated in the reported findings of a study which involved the clinical assessment of twenty recently resettled Bošnjak refugees (Weine, Becker, McGlashan, Laub et al., 1995). In the study's description of the historical and political context, the authors utilise very emotive language, for example, "... as a result of the Serbian nationalists' campaign to destroy Bosnian civilisation" (Weine, Becker, McGlashan, Laub et al., 1995, p. 539). This reinforces the notion that the Serbs were seen as the major transgressors of the civil unrest in former Yugoslavia during the 1990s.

Some authors have studied Serbian experiences of trauma during the 1990s, but have examined them together with Croatian and Bošnjak refugees (for example, Čolić-Peisker, 2003; Favaro, Maiorani, Colombo, & Santonastaso, 1999; Marković & Manderson, 2000; Mollica et al., 1999). The Serbian population has, therefore, not been considered in isolation. Čolić-Peisker (2003, p. 11) noted in her study of identity, community and labour market integration of Bosnian refugees (i.e., Bosnian Serbs, Croats and Muslims) who migrated to Australia, that Serbian participants appeared "uncomfortable" with their identity in the context of the representation of Serbs as aggressors of the Bosnian war.

Understanding social, cultural, historical and political contexts are crucial when working with refugee groups (Chi-Ying Chung, Bemak, & Wong, 2000; Kinzie, 2007; Segal & Mayadas, 2005). As Jones (2004) noted, war experiences are likely to take on different meanings for families who are on opposing sides of the conflict. While Bošnjaks, Croats, and Serbs all share the same geographical location of former Yugoslavia, their individual cultures and histories – and experiences of the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s – differ. This study is, therefore, important in focusing on Serbian experiences of trauma and transformation following the events in the Balkans during the 1990s.

Now that the historical and political contexts have been outlined, the research relating to refugees and their migration will be explored. In the following section, statistics are provided in order to establish a more specific context regarding the population of Serbs in Australia and, more specifically, in South Australia.

Global Refugee Migration

Over the past decade, the world has seen an increase in the number of refugees and displaced persons (Khawaja et al., 2008). In 2007, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reported a worldwide refugee population of 32.9 million. Given the significant size of this population, and the reception of these people by countries such as Australia, it is hardly surprising that displaced populations have become a focus for research. Despite increasing figures, refugee movements are "nothing new ... they are as old as human history" (Castles, 2003, p. 17).

The 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees define a refugee as: "Any person who, owing to a well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his/her nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself/herself of the protection of that country" (Refugee Council of Australia, 2006). Commonly cited causes for the acquisition of refugee status include situations of famine, human rights violations, and war (Adams, Gardiner, & Assefi, 2004; Castles, 2003).

Refugees and migrants can have very different experiences of emigration. For example, where a refugee faces sudden upheaval, and experiences a compulsion to leave their country, a migrant makes a conscious decision, and plans their migration to a new country (Kelly, 2003; Women's Health Statewide and The Migrant Health Service,

2005). Furthermore, the refugee journey is characteristically traumatic, and typically involves displacement, and multiple losses of resources (Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues, 2006).

Australia is considered a significant recipient country for refugee populations (Silove, Austin, & Steel, 2007), receiving over 700 000 refugees and those in need of humanitarian aid since World War II (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2006). Since 1991, the majority of refugees entering Australia have come from the Balkans, the Middle East, Afghanistan, and more recently, Africa (Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, 2005).

Serbs have been migrating to Australia, for various reasons, since the late nineteenth century (Atkinson & Ciccarello, 2004). The first significant wave of Serbian people arrived in South Australia between 1949 and 1954, following the Second World War (Atkinson & Ciccarello, 2004). The second, more recent wave of Serbian migration to South Australia occurred during the 1990s, as a means of escaping the civil conflicts in the Balkans (Atkinson & Ciccarello, 2004).

Trauma: Experiences and Effects

In war, and during times of ethnic cleansing, research indicates that many people experience trauma. ‘Trauma’ is derived from the Greek word meaning ‘wound’, and refers to the shattering experiences of extreme terror, shock or fright, for which an individual is not prepared (Gilmore, 2001). Judy Atkinson (2002, p. xi) defines trauma as “... an event or process which overwhelms the individual, family, or community, and the ability to cope in mind, body, soul, and spirit.” While Atkinson (2002, p. xi) suggested that trauma can affect the “individual, family, *or* community” (no emphasis in original), trauma inevitably affects an individual’s relationships and social networks (Jensen & Shaw, 1993). Trauma can, therefore, be said to exist within the histories of individuals and groups (Gilmore, 2001).

Figley (1986) equated the impact of trauma to the ripple effect of a wave in a pond, where waves radiate from the initial contact point, creating lasting effects. The notion that initial experiences of trauma can continue to leave lasting impressions is well documented (Kinzie, 2007; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). While Figley’s analogy describes the effects that occur within the individual, it also has an impact on relationships and social networks. The notion that trauma is shared is also reflected by Carlson and Rosser-Hogan (1991, p. 1550), who stated that responses to trauma are “global, not specific.” It is also

important to note here that reacting to trauma is a natural and normal human consequence following an adverse life event (Atkinson, 2002; Figley, 1986).

Experiences of trauma

The Balkan conflicts of the 1990s involved atrocities such as the Fall of Srebrenica during the 1992 Bosnian war, where thousands of male Bošnjaks were executed. Such events have attracted global attention. The scale of the trauma experienced by the people of former Yugoslavia more than justifies the extensive research attention that this population has received (Franz, 2003; Kelly, 2003; Mollica et al., 1999; Segal & Mayadas, 2005; Thulesius & Hakansson, 1999; Weine, Becker, McGlashan, Vojvoda et al., 1995; Weine et al., 1998; Živčić, 1993).

As described earlier, ethnic cleansing campaigns were used as a means of expelling and eliminating certain ethnic groups from neighbourhoods within former Yugoslavia in an attempt to create areas of 'pure' ethnic groups. Such campaigns were characterised by persecution, mass and systematic rape, murder, forcible displacement, harassment, execution, and the destruction of cultural, historical and religious landmarks (Bell-Fialkoff, 1993; Meron, 1993; Orend, 1999). Torture as a tool of ethnic cleansing can be defined as the systematic degradation and purposeful humiliation, punishment, repression or coercion through physical and psychological pain. Torture is used to destroy people's physical, social, spiritual and emotional wellbeing and capacity to resist the aggressor (Ramsay, Gorst-Unsworth & Turner, 1993 as cited in Johnson & Thompson, 2008; Women's Health Statewide and The Migrant Health Service, 2005).

One study investigated the trauma experienced by a group of Bošnjaks during the 1990s conflicts in the Balkans (Weine, Becker, McGlashan, Laub et al., 1995). The authors reported that their participants experienced family separation, imprisonment, detention, violence, the destruction of personal property, deprivation of food and water, and betrayal by those in their social networks (Weine, Becker, McGlashan, Laub et al., 1995). It is likely that all of those people who were living in the former Yugoslavia during the 1990s suffered as a result of the political unrest and civil war. The traumatic experiences of the Serbs, which have been documented in this study, are, therefore, important in understanding their trajectories as refugees.

Multiple losses: The life of a refugee

When individuals become displaced, their entire social world is overturned (Jensen & Shaw, 1993; Jones, 2004). When individuals become refugees, they are faced with new stressors as they struggle to rebuild their lives in exile (Snyder, May, Zulcic, & Gabbard, 2005). As a result, there are multiple complex and interrelated factors which influence the refugee experience (Burgoyne & Hull, 2007; Castles, 2003; Jensen & Shaw, 1993; Kovacev & Shute, 2004). Displacement results in a loss of familiar spaces (Clayton, 2009). Life loses its repetitious patterning that once provided "a form of ontological security, which seemingly fixe[d] and reinforce[d] the assumed fabric of existence" (Clayton, 2009, p. 484). This typically requires new learning which can take the form of acquiring language skills and undertaking new employment, and self, family and community identity transformations (Snyder et al., 2005).

It has been well established that the trauma of displacement can result in multiple losses of key resources, which is almost always a common component of the refugee and trauma experience (Figley, 1986; Stevan E Hobfoll et al., 2009; Women's Health Statewide and The Migrant Health Service, 2005). According to Atkinson (2002), a loss of purpose, often associated with grief, can generate further challenges. Common multiple losses for refugees include a loss of: social networks; identity in relation to culture; self-respect; material possessions such as the family home; an individual's homeland; continuity; employment and financial status; family, through death or separation; religious faith; and being able to care for, and protect, family members (Atkinson, 2002; Castles, 2003; Čolić-Peisker, 2003; Favaro et al., 1999; Figley, 1986; Kinzie, 2007; Snyder et al., 2005; Women's Health Statewide and The Migrant Health Service, 2005).

Hobfoll (1989) described loss in terms of the social and personal meaning acquired through exposure to trauma. He proposed that "... people strive to, protect, and build resources" that they value (1989, p. 516). Whether personal or material in nature, multiple losses of resources can shatter lives where many of the certainties and previous assumptions lose their relevance, requiring individuals to begin a life rebuilding process. This study invited participants to discuss their personal and material resources, including the evolution of their relationships with significant others over time.

The continuity principle, developed by Omer and Alon (1984), states that through all stages of disaster, treatment and management should

aim to preserve and restore functional, historical, and interpersonal continuities at the individual, family, community and organisational levels. Furthermore, the construction of transformation and adaptation over time is shaped by context and social interactions, which are features of social constructivism (Palincsar, 1998). Those who have experienced trauma are likely to have encountered significant, multiple losses, resulting in the disruption of continuity. These losses, referred to earlier as personal and material resources, may include the disruption of the dynamics of social and cultural capital which require restructuring, and the loss of social networks such as relationships within the family and the wider community (Atkinson, 2002; Castles, 2003; Kinzie, 2007). It is important to note here that some losses are not easily replaced. The preservation of continuity is, therefore, not always possible. In addition, refugees may also perceive a loss in traditional familial roles, which can bear significantly on the family unit (Heymann, 2006), resulting in a loss of self-respect and community standing (Kinzie, 2007). Such losses were explored with participants through an examination of their social networks prior to, during, and following the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s.

Loss was seen as a common theme which traversed the boundaries of gender and age in Khawaja and Meuter's (2008) study which examined the acculturative stresses of Sudanese refugees following their migration to Australia. While the notion of loss was consistent among the participants, the nature of these losses, however, differed across both age and gender. For example, the authors noted that male Sudanese refugees suffered losses through unemployment and felt disempowered as a result of their altered social roles (Khawaja & Meuter, 2008). For elderly participants, the separation of family members was a key loss, while female participants reported a loss of social support and reputation (Khawaja & Meuter, 2008). This finding suggests that the impact trauma has on an individual is critically influenced by their age and gender (which, in some cases, includes traditional familial and social roles).

Grief, a dominant effect associated with bereavement, is a naturally occurring response to the external event of the losses suffered as a result of trauma (Figley, 1986). When these losses are multiple and irreplaceable, individuals can experience continued grieving, and mourning for that which they no longer have (Snyder et al., 2005).

Loss: The impact

Multiple losses, brought about by personal and collective suffering, can result in feelings of disempowerment, and decreased self-efficacy and human agency (Ajdukovic & Biruski, 2008). Such feelings can have negative implications for physical and mental health and wellbeing (Pilgrim, Rogers, & Bentall, 2009). It is not surprising, therefore, that loss has been associated with poor mental health outcomes (Kinzie, 2007; Murray, Davidson, & Schweitzer, 2008; Pilgrim et al., 2009; Snyder et al., 2005).

Numerous authors have studied the impact of trauma on the mental health and wellbeing of refugee populations, with diverse findings (Favaro et al., 1999; Lopes Cardozo et al., 2003; Renner & Salem, 2009). Research examining the prevalence and diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in traumatised groups, for example, has generated contrasting results. PTSD occurs when an individual experiences a life threatening event which is then processed and registered as a current sense of threat (Johnson & Thompson, 2008).

In their study of 50 randomly selected Cambodian refugees who had resettled in North Carolina, for example, Carlson and Rosser-Hogan (1991) reported significantly high symptoms of PTSD, anxiety, dissociation, and depression amongst those who had resided in the host country for a number of years. The authors proposed that extended experiences of trauma may have accounted for the high number of psychiatric symptoms observed in the non-patient group which supports the observation that trauma can have long-lasting consequences.

Lopes Cardozo and colleagues (2003) compared the prevalence of mental health problems associated with trauma, feelings of hatred and revenge, and level of social functioning in Kosovar Albanians in 1991, with a follow-up survey completed in 2000. The authors noted improvements in terms of social functioning, a decrease in reported feelings of hatred and revenge, and an increased prevalence of PTSD. Although this population remained in Kosovo (as opposed to relocating) in the wake of the conflict, this finding is consistent with the notion that the effects of trauma can be long-lasting.

In contrast to the findings reported by Carlson and Rosser-Hogan (1991) and Lopes Cardozo and colleagues (2003), Mollica and colleagues (2001) noted that 26 per cent of their Bosnian refugee participants (inclusive of Bosnian Muslims, Bosnian Croats, Croats, Serbs, and Gypsies) were diagnosed with PTSD in 1996. Three years

later, in 1999, available participants were re-interviewed and the prevalence of PTSD had decreased only slightly to 23 per cent (Mollica et al., 2001).

There is controversy surrounding the application of PTSD to non-Western refugee populations given that such groups represent diverse backgrounds and experiences which may not be comparable (Johnson & Thompson, 2008). This suggests the need to consider contextual factors such as the nature of stressors, and the broader historical context of the refugee's homeland when establishing the criteria for PTSD (Jensen & Shaw, 1993; Johnson & Thompson, 2008). Furthermore, Atkinson (2002) suggested that the concept of PTSD fails to recognise the ongoing chronic and cumulative nature of stressors affecting those who have been traumatised.

In addition to mental health problems, chronic medical conditions can be influential in the experiences of refugees and displaced populations. For example, Kinzie (2007) reported that 43 per cent of refugee participants experienced hypertension, and diabetes affected between 12 and 18 per cent. Given the complex interplay between the associated medical and mental health issues, the treatment of traumatised refugees is inherently difficult; the physical symptoms experienced by refugees require treatment, but an emphasis must also be placed on emotional healing (Kinzie, 2007). This suggestion further acknowledges the need for a more holistic perspective in understanding the refugee experience.

In contrast to studies which have examined the negative effects of trauma, research has been conducted which explores associated protective factors. For example, Živčić (1993) found that parents' mental health acted as a protective factor for the mental health of their children, following experiences of trauma during the 1991 Croatian conflict. This finding is echoed by a number of authors (for example, Gore & Eckenrode, 1996; Klingman & Cohen, 2004; Luthar, 1999). Similarly, a recent study examined the role of parental support on the mental health and wellbeing of children from the Gaza Strip, and it was found that social support influenced children's resilience (Thabet, Ibraheem, Shivram, Winter, & Vostanis, 2009). Such studies significantly contribute to the field of refugee research, given that resilience following adverse life events is possibly more common than initially thought (Bonanno, 2004).

It has also been well established that family is crucial to an individual member's adaptation to trauma (Atkinson, 2002; Figley, 1986), provided that other family members are also coping (Jones, 2004;

Murray et al., 2008; Pilgrim et al., 2009; Thabet et al., 2009). Figley (1986) demonstrated the importance of family in adaptation by further suggesting that family members and the family unit can suffer more from the trauma than the victim.

Adaptation: The Challenges of Change

People who become refugees or migrants are required to make many changes to their lives. "Migration is an existential shift which affects every part of human life" (Castles, 2003, p. 22). This involves learning to adapt. Across the human lifespan, learning is a requirement for survival in a constantly evolving environment (Adams, 2007; Vorhaus, 2002). For refugees, the degree to which they embrace the changes associated with migration critically influences their ability to adapt (Khawaja & Meuter, 2008). Recent literature has begun to focus on the issues associated with migration and resettlement (Murray et al., 2008). Burgoyne and Hull (2007), for example, reported that following migration, Sudanese refugees were faced with learning English, new education and employment opportunities, transformations in the family, learning to manage their finances, and meeting government and system requirements.

Adaptation involves modifying behaviours and beliefs in order to cope with trauma and life's unfolding challenges (Atkinson, 2002). When an individual's coping strategies are ineffective in supporting adaptation to the host country, they are reported to experience acculturative stress, which impacts on their psychological, somatic, and social functioning (Khawaja & Meuter, 2008). Acculturative stress can be influenced by differences in values between the individual's culture and that of the host country (Berry & Kim, 1988 as cited in Khawaja & Meuter, 2008). Similarly, an individual's willingness to embrace migration-associated changes can also influence acculturative stress (Berry & Kim, 1988 as cited in Khawaja & Meuter, 2008).

The desire to belong is a fundamental human need (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Belonging is inextricably linked with the construction of identity, as it is developed through positioning in relation to others, and by space negotiation; it is constructed physically, socially, politically and metaphorically (Clayton, 2009). Following migration, these familiar contexts are lost, resulting in the redefinition of identity, and the need to rebuild a sense of community following its disintegration (Castles, 2003).

Perceived racism and intolerance can significantly impede adaptation (Snyder et al., 2005) by creating anguish and a sense of isolation (Women's Health Statewide and The Migrant Health Service, 2005). In terms of this study, perceived intolerance is a very likely factor in contributing to participants' feelings of social isolation, which may negatively impact upon their adaptation to life in Australia.

In her study which compared the migration experience of working class and professional non-refugee Croatian migrants to Australia, Čolić-Peisker (2002) cited a language barrier as an impediment to feelings of belonging in the Australian milieu. A language barrier was also seen to limit participants' employment opportunities and their ability to establish new social networks (Čolić-Peisker, 2002). Similarly, Snyder and colleagues (2005) reported that a language barrier can also impede refugees' ability to access social support and educational opportunities. These findings are consistent with the notion that a language barrier can significantly impede an individual's adjustment in the host country (Khawaja et al., 2008).

Čolić-Peisker (2002) noted that there are differences between adults and children in terms of language acquisition. While adults are unable to naturally acquire language like children, they are reliant on formal classes which require the allotment of time and effort (Čolić-Peisker, 2002).

After migrating to the host country, therefore, refugees can continue to experience multiple losses, where these losses play a pivotal role in the creation of stress and the exacerbation of trauma symptoms (Women's Health Statewide and The Migrant Health Service, 2005). As previously discussed, multiple losses which cannot be adequately replaced can result in continued grieving. The stressors associated with loss can also contribute to the development of mental health difficulties which, in turn, have the potential to impede adaptation (Kinzie, 2007; Murray et al., 2008; Renner & Salem, 2009).

Resettlement can involve special challenges when the individual's culture is very different from that of the adopted country. This was found by Khawaja and Meuter (2008) who interviewed Sudanese refugees following their migration to Australia. The authors noted that the differences in cultural expectations and values resulted in the transformation of social and familial roles, and individual identities. These identity revolutions can challenge traditional family and cultural norms as individuals struggle to adapt to the host country environment

(Marković & Manderson, 2000; Murray et al., 2008; Snyder et al., 2005).

Following resettlement in the host country, new stressors can remind refugees of their original traumas, triggering the re-emergence of traumatic symptoms such as PTSD, depression, sadness, fear, and anxiety (Kinzie, 2007). The recurrence of these symptoms is, therefore, shaped by the previous traumatic encounter, and can manifest in the behaviours and beliefs of refugees following resettlement in the host country (Atkinson, 2002). The notion that trauma creates ongoing difficulties and challenges emphasises the need for a holistic approach in order to capture the "totality" of the refugee experience (Porter, 2007, p. 428).

As previously discussed, the research suggests that a supportive family network is crucial in adapting to trauma (Atkinson, 2002; Figley, 1986; Jones, 2004; Murray et al., 2008; Pilgrim et al., 2009; Thabet et al., 2009). Similarly, an individual's community, religious affiliations, and employment can also provide sources of social support which can assist an individual in adapting to an adverse life event (Burgoyne & Hull, 2007; Johnson & Thompson, 2008). Regardless of where it is sought, social support is thought to be a good predictor of mental health and wellbeing (Chi-Ying Chung et al., 2000; Johnson & Thompson, 2008; Pilgrim et al., 2009; Thabet et al., 2009).

In Kelly's (2003) work with Bosnian refugees who migrated to Britain, it was reported that community associations can prevent isolation, reinforce a sense of belonging, can empower individuals, provide practical support for its members foster the community's culture, and assist in the process of adaptation to life in the host country. While Čolić-Peisker (2002) noted similar strengths inherent in the involvement of Croatian participants in ethnic community life, participants suggested that there was linguistic and cultural distance between the Western Australian Croatian community, and that in former Yugoslavia. She also reported that sole affiliation within an individual's ethnic community can result in social isolation and a lack of belonging to the wider Australian community. In a similar vein, Clayton (2009) suggested that belonging is determined by one's ability to adapt to the culture of the host country. The author also noted that past experiences and level of engagement with the host country critically determine how successful adaptation will be. For example, the ability to adapt and function in an individual's homeland may predict good adjustment in the new environment (Segal & Mayadas, 2005).

Towards a Holistic Approach

A number of studies have adopted a thematic approach in analysing refugee experiences of trauma and adaptation. As a result, multiple recurring themes have been identified, embedded within refugee narratives of adaptation following experiences of trauma (for example, Khawaja & Meuter, 2008; Khawaja et al., 2008; Marković & Manderson, 2000).

In their study of 52 women who migrated to south-east Queensland from former Yugoslavia, Marković and Manderson (2000) identified three adjustment strategies following resettlement. Firstly, loss orientation was defined as a focus on the disadvantages of life in the host country as exhibited by the maintenance of ethnic boundaries, and difficulties with English proficiency. This is consistent with Čolić-Peisker's (2002, p. 156) view that the 1960s non-refugee Croatian migrants arriving in Australia were living within an "ethnic bubble" due to the language barrier. Secondly, the ambivalence adjustment strategy was characterised by the authors as a determination to achieve a standard of living similar to that in Croatia prior to the conflict, with an effort to become proficient in English. The third and final adjustment strategy was identified as a future orientation, defined by the assessment of the benefits of the participants' post-migratory position.

The study conducted by Khawaja and colleagues (2008) identified four themes embedded within the narratives of Sudanese refugees who had resettled in Brisbane, Queensland. The experience of trauma, loss, meeting basic needs, and the impact on life activities were seen as important markers in these narratives. Through semi-structured interviewing, the authors identified four coping strategies used by this group. Relying on religious beliefs and social support networks, focusing on future aspirations, and cognitive reframing were seen to aid in the process of transformation and adaptation. Factors impeding resettlement following migration included financial difficulties, social isolation, the effect of perceived racism, and a lack of environmental mastery (for example, knowledge of the language, familiarisation with cultural values and practices, and the ability to access available resources). The authors identified the need for future studies of this kind which adopt a more holistic perspective by examining refugee experiences both prior to and following migration. This position is reflected by Porter (2007), who suggested that a complete understanding of refugee adaptation requires a comprehensive examination of contributing biological, psychological, and social

factors. Conducting such research not only creates a greater understanding of the traumatic experiences endured by displaced populations, but has the potential for broader ramifications in contributing to the development of interventions that foster resilience, wellbeing, and a sense of community. This study makes a small, but significant, contribution to research in this area.

In Summary

In this chapter, we began by providing an overview of the historical and political context of the Balkans preceding the conflicts of the 1990s. The findings concerning international mass media portrayals of migrant and refugee groups and, more specifically, the coverage of the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s, were then reviewed. In examining this research, it has been established that the Serbs were portrayed as the sole transgressors of the civil unrest (Clark, 2008). We then presented a review of recent findings which are specific to the displaced populations of Balkan people who migrated as a means of escaping ethnic conflict during the 1990s. From this review, we noted a critical absence of Serbian stories of trauma and transformation. This study contributes to the field of refugee research by providing the stories of ten Serbian people who experienced trauma and displacement during the 1990s, and subsequently migrated to Australia.

After providing the background for this study, we reviewed the previous findings related to more general recent global migration trends, focusing on the waves of Serbian migration to Australia. We then discussed recent research related to trauma, experiences of trauma, and its effects. The multiple losses associated with being a refugee and the impact of these losses were described with reference to significant research in the field. Findings which examined the challenges of adaptation following trauma were then reviewed before concluding with an emphasis on the need for a holistic approach to research pertaining to the refugee experience.

3

Research Design

> ... the Serbs will continue to be pursued and court marshalled ... I only have faith that God's judgement will be the ultimate judgement and, maybe, He has already started. Those who are sitting in judgement are blind and don't see. God will judge the righteous. Patience will save us, only that ... (Dejana Janković, participant)

This study developed insights into the experiences of Serbian people who moved to South Australia from former Yugoslavia as a result of the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s. The processes of personal and social transformation at both the individual and family levels formed the focal points of this research. The three key questions addressed by this study were orientated around three phases: prior to, during, and after the conflicts. In order to address these questions, this study utilised a qualitative design. A case study methodology was adopted, and data were collected through multiple semi-structured interviews.

Ten participants were recruited from the Serbian community according to the selection criteria for participation, which are described later in this chapter. Participants engaged in up to three interviews, where each interview was, on average, two hours duration. Interviews were conducted at a mutually agreeable location (that is, at participants' homes, or the researcher's home) and were audio recorded, with the permission of the participants. Interviews were then partially transcribed, resulting in the creation of interview summaries which formed the point of discussion during the second and third interviews.

In this chapter, we provide an in-depth description of the research design including the paradigmatic, methodological, and theoretical frameworks, the semi-structured interviewing method, and the criteria

used for participant selection. The parameters set for the study, and the limitations of this research are then described. And finally, we identify a number of ethical considerations.

Paradigmatic Framework

This study sought to "... uncover meanings and perceptions ... of the [participants], viewing these understandings against the backdrop of [their] overall worldview or 'culture'" (Crotty, 1998, p. 7) by inviting them to share their own interpretations and attach their own meanings to their experiences. Given this central focus on participants' experiences and accounts, participants' stories involved extensive use of direct quotations.

This study acknowledges the existence of multiple realities where understandings of reality differ within and among individuals (Burgess-Limerick & Burgess-Limerick, 1998; Hitchcock & Hughs, 1989). This notion of meaning as an evolving, individual process was exemplified through the use of multiple interviews where participants were given time to consider the meanings that they place on the significant events and experiences that have occurred during their lives.

Of critical importance to the construction and reconstruction of meaning is context (Flyvberg, 2001; Hitchcock & Hughs, 1989). Context is a crucial element of both social constructivist theory (Palincsar, 1998) and the life course principles (Elder & Johnson, 2003) which comprised the theoretical framework of this study. The theoretical framework will be discussed later in this chapter.

Qualitative research acknowledges that reality is complex and can be viewed from a variety of perspectives. Such complexity was reflected in this study through a consideration of the issues that affect the 'whole person', rather than applying a set of predetermined themes as identified in the literature, with which to tell participants' stories.

This study acknowledged the important role of the researcher in the research process (Hitchcock & Hughs, 1989), which is consistent with the central tenets of a qualitative paradigm. The lead researcher's active membership in the Hindmarsh Serbian Orthodox Church community and her association with the general Adelaide Serbian community placed her in a unique position in relation to this study. Svetlana was essentially an 'insider' with an established relationship with the Serbian community prior to the commencement of the study (Fisher et al., 2002). However, given that: she was born in Australia; she does not have a strong command of the Serbian language; and has not

experienced trauma resulting from ethnic conflict, she was not considered a complete 'insider'. For example, while Svetlana has a basic understanding of the norms and expectations of the Serbian culture, this study has drawn her attention to many elements of the culture of which she was unaware. It is, therefore, fitting to refer to her role in the community as that of an 'outside-insider'.

In addition to acknowledging the researcher's role in the research process, qualitative research recognises the researcher/participant relationship where both parties engage in active collaboration, resulting in the construction of shared meaning (Burgess-Limerick & Burgess-Limerick, 1998; Creswell, 2008; Hitchcock & Hughs, 1989). The development of trust and good rapport with participants (Scott, 1996) is, therefore, critical. This study weighed heavily upon this assumption, given the personal and often traumatic nature of participants' stories. The development of trust and rapport with participants was made easier given that the first author had pre-established relationships with nine of the ten participants.

The philosophical assumptions underpinning a qualitative paradigm create implications for the chosen methodological framework in any research. We now turn to a discussion of the features of case study methodology.

Methodological Framework

A multiple case study (Stake, 2003, 2005) methodology was considered most appropriate for this study, given its holistic, meaningful and contextual approach to the complex phenomenon of adaptation and transformation, and the comparatively complex and contextual nature of participants' experiences (Hamel, 1993; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1978, 2003, 2005; Yin, 2003). This holistic approach, capable of accessing and serving multiple audiences (Adelman, Jenkins, & Kemmis, 1976; Cohen & Manion, 1989; Stake, 1978), was reflected in the study's examination of a range of issues influencing participants' experiences of transformation. While case study's multifaceted nature is reflected in its ability to operate within both quantitative and qualitative paradigms (Adelman et al., 1976; Merriam, 1998), this study adopted a qualitative position.

Stake (2003, p. 135) stated that "the case is a 'bounded system' ... the case has working parts; it is purposive ... It is an integrated system ... Its behaviour is patterned." The 'bounded system' (Stake, 2003, 2005) (that is, the case) can, therefore, be understood as a unit with

boundaries (Merriam, 1998), and is a central feature of case study methodology. In this study, boundaries were constructed by defining criteria for participant recruitment. These criteria are outlined in the 'Participants' section of this chapter.

Case study typically involves triangulation as an approach to clarifying meanings and identifying multiple realities (Stake, 2005). Although triangulation most commonly occurs through the use of multiple methods of data collection, this study involved triangulation *within* the method of data collection. Participants in the current study engaged in up to three, and no less than two, separate semi-structured interviews. This provided opportunities to seek clarification, and allowed participants time to recall their experiences, ultimately validating, and enhancing the credibility, of the data. The data were further strengthened by the use of interview summaries, which provided the source of discussion during subsequent interviews. These summaries contributed to the development of effective communication with participants and assisted in establishing good rapport, bringing about shared decision-making and ownership of the narrative construction of participants' stories (Sieber, 1992).

Generalisation is a typical feature of case study. This study suitably lent itself to three principle forms of generalisation (Adelman et al., 1976), where: generalisations were made within the cases that were explored; the findings of this study were compared to those of other studies that examined populations who experienced similar circumstances; and, in the future, hypotheses can be developed and tested on the wider South Australian Serbian population of those who migrated as a result of the conflicts of the 1990s using, for example, a survey or questionnaire design.

Given the use of multiple cases in this study, a case study protocol was developed in order to improve the reliability of the overall conclusions generated (Yin, 2003), and to ensure consistency of the issues that were discussed with each participant (Arksey & Knight, 1999). In addition, an evidence chain (audit trail) was also established in order to enable the conclusions to be traced back to the raw data, and vice versa.

We now turn to examine the method of data collection used in this study. That is, multiple semi-structured interviewing.

Data Collection

In this study, interviews were seen as guided conversations (Kvale, 1996) that provide access to past events, and other situations, where the

researcher was not present (Burgess, 1984). Interviewing was, therefore, considered the most appropriate method of data collection for conducting this research. This study yielded detailed, descriptive data – a characteristic of the interviewing method (Burgess, 1984; Patton, 1990). The primary assumption of this data collection method is that "... the only person who understands the social reality in which they live is the person themself [sic]" (Burns, 1997, p. 331). The flexibility of semi-structured interviewing enabled participants to utilise their own frames of reference to describe their experiences, which ultimately enhanced the credibility of the data (Burns, 1997).

Each interview concluded with debriefing in order to provide participants with the opportunity to reflect upon their experience of participation, and to clarify any concerns they may have had regarding their participation (Arksey & Knight, 1999). Following debriefs with participants, the principal researcher and the research assistant engaged in an informal debrief regarding the interview. Debriefing was seen as a valuable tool for all involved, and constituted a positive conclusion to the interview process.

An interview guide was established and utilised, providing the direction and focus for interviews, including the sequence of topics to be discussed (Burns, 1997; Kvale, 1996). Additional prompts were also required during interviews which took the form of additional questions which probed, clarified, introduced, directed, and specified (Kvale, 1996; May, 2001). A timeline of major relevant historical events was also developed for use as a prompt, but this was not required during any of the interviews. The interview guide posed mainly open questions which created latitude for responses (May, 2001), and was prepared from five pilot interviews which were conducted prior to the official data collection phase. Pilot interviews are useful in testing aspects of the study (Burns, 1997). Other authors similarly advise the use of pilot interviews prior to the official commencement of data collection (Judd, Smith, & Kidder, 1991; McCracken, 1988). In this study, pilot interviews aided not only in preparing the formal interview schedule, but also enabled us to develop an understanding of the issues that would likely emerge in participants' stories. The five pilot case studies in this research became principal case studies.

With participants' permission, interviews were audio recorded on a digital recorder. This allowed the lead author to engage naturally in the conversation, and was also used during data analysis for reference. The data has been stored digitally for future research involving this population.

Interviews were only partially transcribed for practical reasons. There are nearly thirty hours of recorded interviews and many of these had to be translated from Serbian. The purpose of the interviews was to understand the key themes and challenges in participants' life stories (Arksey & Knight, 1999). The partial transcription of data was seen as beneficial in reducing the time required to complete this process (Arksey & Knight, 1999; Patton, 1990).

Participants

Ten participants were recruited from the metropolitan Serbian community using snowball sampling. This sampling method was employed because of the opportunities to access participants created through the principal researcher's involvement with the Serbian community (Becker 1970 cited in Burgess, 1984). Participants were recruited on the basis of a set of criteria as described in Table 1.

Table 1: Criteria for participant selection

Participants were recruited on the basis of the following criteria:
• Identifies as Serbian. • Currently resides in the metropolitan area of Adelaide. • Was either born in, or spent the majority of their lives living in former Yugoslavia. • Was living in former Yugoslavia at the time of the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s. • Subsequently migrated as a refugee to Australia, and more specifically South Australia, as a result of the conflicts in former Yugoslavia.

Memory

Given that the events and experiences related to the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s occurred more than 10 years ago, participants' memories are likely to have undergone reframing. It is possible that participants may have forgotten the details of particular experiences during this period. Memory is continually subject to reinterpretation and the process of forgetting.

Sparkes and Smith (2008, p. 681) noted that memories are neither truth nor fact, but "... are a partial weaving together of events, persons and feelings that are not necessarily connected to one another within the life as it was actually lived at a particular moment in time." Autobiographical memory is socially and culturally constructed over time (Eakin, 1999) and is, therefore, dynamic (Fivush, 2008). As a result, memory "... lives in the moment, in a constantly evolving

dialectic between our self and other in the telling and retelling of who we are through what we remember" (Fivush, 2008, pp. 55-56).

The use of multiple interviews, on separate occasions, provided participants with opportunities for reflection on their lives during the 1990s, enabling them to interconnect and organise information about themselves (Sparkes & Smith, 2008). Over the course of the interviews, participants were able to 'self-validate' their memories to ensure their accounts were justly represented. This collaborative approach to participants' summaries ultimately enhanced the quality and credibility of the data.

Ethical Considerations

Ethics approval was obtained from the Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee at Flinders University prior to the official commencement of data collection. As a requirement of the ethics committee, participants were provided with a participant information letter and a letter of introduction in English and Serbian in order to ensure informed written consent was obtained.

The potential benefits of participation in studies involving discussions of traumatic experiences have been documented (Dyregrov, Dyregrov, & Raundalen, 2000; Newman & Kaloupek, 2004). Such benefits include: being able to share such experiences in a safe context with someone outside of the family unit; feeling positive about making a contribution to the 'gap' in current knowledge; and being able to reflect upon experiences, even if they are painful, as it provides opportunities to clarify past memories and provide new insights (Dyregrov et al., 2000; Griffin, Resick, Waldrop, & Mechanic, 2003; Newman & Kaloupek, 2004). Conversely, revealing traumatic experiences can also be emotionally overwhelming (Arksey & Knight, 1999), hence the implementation of debriefing (previously discussed), in addition to the provision of a list of available professional services should participants have wished to further explore issues that arose.

Some participants were very cautious about providing their personal information and were anxious as to who might have access to it. This is likely explained by the highly volatile political environment that has characterised former Yugoslavia since the post-World War II Communist era. Confidentiality was, therefore, an extremely important ethical consideration in this study, and assurances of confidentiality had to be continually made throughout the study.

In order to conceal participants' identities and to maintain a degree of authenticity, each participant selected a Serbian pseudonym by which they were to be referred. The self-selection of a pseudonym encouraged participants to adopt a form of 'ownership' over their information. In addition, certain characteristics that would reveal the identity of the participants were also altered, in consultation with the participants. For example, Stefan did not want his country of birth recorded, as he believed that it would have identified him. For the same reason, Stefan and Jelena did not want their region of residence named. Through a discussion of issues such as these, the maintenance of confidentiality was reinforced.

As expected, all participants were fluent in Serbian, their native language. It was also expected that several of the participants would have a limited command of the English language. In order to overcome this language barrier, a bilingual research assistant was present during interviews. Where necessary (that is, in most cases), the research assistant was able to interpret. The research assistant's work as a member of the Magill Training Centre Review Board (for offending youth), a Justice of the Peace, a Visiting Inspector for the metropolitan prison institutions, and a member of the Passenger Transport Board Standards Committee are all roles demanding discretion and the maintenance of confidentiality. In addition, the research assistant holds a Diploma of Professional Counselling, majoring in grief and loss. The research assistant is also a member of the South Australian Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs Commission and, in this role, interacts with recently arrived migrants from around the world. As previously mentioned, the research assistant has been a valued and respected member of the Hindmarsh Serbian Orthodox community throughout her life. This wealth of experience and expertise proved advantageous throughout the study. As expected, the presence of a trusted interpreter in whom participants have confidence proved highly beneficial throughout the interview process. This is consistent with the findings reported by Dyregrov and colleagues (2000).

Given the language barrier in most cases, this study involved conversions of power between the participants and the researcher throughout the study. During the data collection phase, participants determined what information they disclosed. Throughout the research process, however, participants were consulted regarding the use of direct quotations, and the inclusion of place names. This study acknowledges that researchers are ultimately human beings with their own subjectivities and preconceived ideas. Researchers, therefore,

require vigilance to ensure accurate representation of the data by avoiding exaggeration or oversimplification (Merriam, 1998). Efforts were made to achieve this in this study through open collaboration with participants and clarification of interpretations to ensure that their ‘data’ were ‘accurate’ from this perspective.

In instances where the ideas and values of participants conflicted with the lead researcher’s, she was careful to avoid imposing her own subjectivities onto them. She also engaged participants in dialogue in order to clarify their alternative perspectives, meanings and interpretations.

Theoretical Framework: The Life Course Principles

Elder and Johnson (2003) have outlined five life course principles to guide research in studies such as this. Their principles have been used in designing the interview questions, and underpin the conceptualisation of this research. These are: the principle of linked lives; human agency; lifelong development and ageing; historical time and place; and the principle of timing.

Principle of linked lives

Associated with the principle of linked lives is the notion that lives are lived interdependently. That is, people’s lives are shaped by their interactions with others. These networks are influenced by socio-historical circumstances.

The need to belong is a fundamental aspect of the human condition (Clayton, 2009) and is achieved through the close relationships that we form. Relationships, like belonging, are a necessary aspect of our lives. They define us as human beings, and play a pivotal role in shaping our identity. The close relationships we form, therefore, coalesce to form a complex social network where each individual shapes and is shaped by the other members of this microcosm. This concept is illustrated in Figure 3 where the interlinked central circles represent the individuals involved in a social network, and the outermost circle is representative of the social network. A disruption to one member of the social network will affect all other members (as depicted through the interlinked circles). This disruption, therefore, results in a disruption to the entire social network.

Following an adverse life event, the individual who is directly involved will attempt to adapt and make sense of this experience (Atkinson, 2002). This response is mediated through the individual’s social

network. Experiences of adversity not only affect the individual, but also have repercussions for their significant others. Similarly, an individual's coping behaviour is inherently influenced by that of their significant others. Coping and adaptation are, therefore, not individual processes, but are interwoven and embedded in the lives of others. Similarly, the wellbeing of an individual is dependent on the wellbeing of significant others. This is in accordance with systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986).

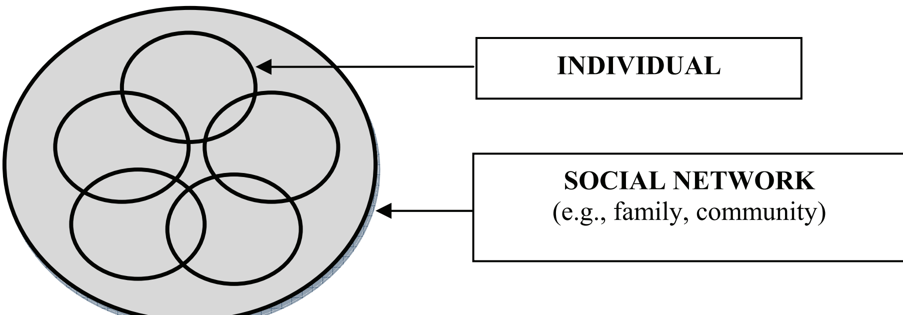


Figure 3: Diagram representing the principle of linked lives

The ways in which people live their lives, form relationships, perceive challenges, and adapt to adversity are not universal. Rather, they are shaped by the social and cultural contexts in which the individual is situated (Ajdukovic & Biruski, 2008). Culture, for example, prescribes what is considered 'normal' and, therefore, abnormal, and what constitutes a problem, and acceptable ways of dealing with these problems. This is not to say, however, that individual variation does not occur. Individual context, therefore, also plays a crucial role in adapting to adverse life events.

Principle of human agency

According to the principle of human agency, individuals play an active role in constructing their own lives. This is demonstrated through the choices and actions they take, within the opportunities and constraints of social and historical circumstances.

Individuals are the important decision-makers and architects of their own lives, and they do this through selective association and situation selection. That is, individuals select: the relationships they engage in; the groups to which they belong; the activities in which they participate; education and employment directions; and lifestyle. The choices a person makes in constructing their own life course will also

be shaped by the cultural, social and historical contexts in which the individual is located. This concept is illustrated in Figure 4.

When an individual experiences an adverse life event, their subsequent experiences of coping and adapting are dependent on their response to the adversity. Adaptation to trauma, therefore, involves expressions of human agency and autonomy (Ajdukovic & Biruski, 2008) where individuals selectively apply coping strategies. Again, these strategies, while individual, shape and are shaped by our membership of social networks such as family which, in turn, are influenced by broader social, cultural and historical circumstances (Johnson & Thompson, 2008).

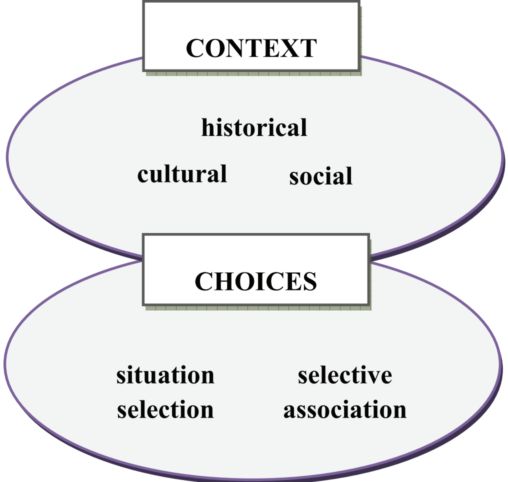


Figure 4: Diagram representing the principle of human agency

Feelings of powerlessness and despondency, and a perceived lack of control over an individual's life can result in social disengagement and isolation which can, in turn, have negative implications for personal motivation, and mental health and wellbeing (Atkinson, 2002; Pilgrim et al., 2009). This detachment from the wider community can lead to feelings of alienation, distrust, and self-imposed exile. This defeatist position can hinder an individual's likelihood to take on new initiatives in order to regain control of their own lives. This principle is in accordance with Bandura's (1982, 1997) self-efficacy theory.

Principle of lifelong development and ageing

Adaptation involves making new choices and forging new initiatives. In order to successfully adapt to adverse life events, individuals must be willing to engage with and embrace the new learning that accompanies this process (Adams, 2007). The extent to which an

individual embraces these opportunities to learn will, therefore, influence the success of the adaptation process.

Anyone who is adapting after an adverse life event faces new choices and initiatives, regardless of age. This illustrates that learning is a lifelong process (Adams, 2007). New learning following migration can take the form of: learning a new language; undertaking further education, or seeking a new career. Opportunities to undertake this new learning, however, are critically influenced by age.

Principle of historical time and place

An individual's life course is shaped by, and embedded in, the historical times and places that are experienced throughout an individual's lifetime. That is, an individual's life is shaped by the wider social networks such as neighbourhoods, communities, and countries, in which they live. These social networks will influence the nature of the relationships the individual forms, and with whom relationships are established (Burgess-Limerick & Burgess-Limerick, 1998). The historical time and place in which people live will also shape the life experiences and opportunities that are available to them. Antecedents and situationally based consequences play a key role in shaping human behaviour. This is in accordance with behaviourist theory (Alberto & Troutman, 2003).

Principle of timing

The consequences of transitions, behaviour patterns and events vary depending on their timing within a person's life. This demonstrates the critical influence of age and stage in the family life cycle on individuals' choices and opportunities in the aftermath of adverse life events.

Adaptation is also influenced by pre-existing circumstances which can contribute to shaping an individual's future following exposure to an adverse life event (Kinzie, 2007). This notion is consistent with the concept of social constructivism, where the events that unfold throughout a person's life will contribute to the overall evolution of the individual's life (Palincsar, 1998). The timing of exposure to stressors is, therefore, important. When individuals are presented with multiple challenges simultaneously, coping can become more difficult.

Analysing the Interview Data

In this study, data analysis was an ongoing process, and began at the conclusion of each interview. This analysis assisted in shaping subsequent interviews, and informed the overall analysis which continued throughout the study period. It also allowed for clarification and further exploration of the issues that arose. This continuity of analysis assisted in capturing the complexity of the participants' narratives.

In total, eighteen interviews were conducted with participants, yielding nearly thirty hours of audio recorded interview data (excluding pilot interviews which were not audio recorded). The first stage in the analysis of this rich data involved the construction of eight stories, where three participants co-constructed their stories with their respective spouses. Six of these stories are presented in Chapter 4.

Interviews were analysed in terms of participants' experiences, and the reported experiences of their significant others, with a focus on the individual 'turning points', as identified by the participants. Analysis also involved the temporal sequencing of events, and the social contexts in which these events occurred. Common themes and phases of trauma and transformation, as identified in the previous research, were also utilised as an accompaniment to the analysis of participants' narratives (see Chapter 5). Note that the data analysis goes beyond that which is presented in each of the stories. In conducting an extensive analysis of all interview data obtained, rich, contextualised conclusions were developed.

Parameters

For the purposes of this study, interviews were conducted with ten participants, resulting in the construction of eight stories. The decision to interview ten people was made on the basis that each participant's story is unique, involving the description of situations that are both complex and contextual. In order to explore this complexity in sufficient depth, only a small number of participants were used. The conclusions that were formed, therefore, are both rich and contextualised. Time constraints were also a contributing factor in making this decision.

Limitations

This study is limited in the sense that only a small, narrow sample of participants was interviewed. This study only involves Serbs who

associated with the South Australian Serbian community. A comparison between Serbs from other parts of the Australian community could form the basis of a future study.

The situations and circumstances experienced by the participants can also be seen as a limitation in this study. Serbian people who were incarcerated during the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s were not represented in the sample, but their stories emerged in the reported experiences of participants' significant others. While such participants were sought, those who were invited to participate refused, citing that recalling the events would be far too traumatic. It is possible that in years to come, these people may wish to begin sharing their stories.

As previously discussed, participants were recalling experiences that occurred more than ten years ago. Given the social and cultural construction of memory over time (Eakin, 1999; Fivush, 2008), participants' memories have likely undergone extensive reframing during this time. The reliability of the data was, therefore, largely dependent on participants' memories (Eakin, 1999).

As stated earlier, for participants who spoke mainly in Serbian, interpreting was required. This may have disrupted the flow of participants' stories, and possibly influenced the data collected. Conversely, participants who predominantly spoke in English, their second language, may have been less able to express themselves than if they had used their native language.

Despite these limitations, in this study a diverse group of Serbian people were interviewed. These people encountered complex situations both during the conflicts, and following their migration to South Australia.

In Summary

In this chapter, we described the overall research design that was used in this study, including a discussion of the paradigmatic and methodological frameworks. The rationale for using multiple semi-structured interviews was explained, along with a description of this method of data collection. We outlined the criteria for participant recruitment, including the method of sampling that was used, and illustrated the ethical considerations that arose in this research. The theoretical framework that was used to inform this study, and the method of analysing the interview data were explained, concluding with a discussion of the parameters and limitations of the study.

4

The Untold Stories

> Discovery consists of seeing what everybody has seen and thinking what nobody has thought. (Albert Szent-Gyorgyi, 1962)

In this chapter, we describe the general journey taken by the participants involved in this study. Six of the stories, selected for this publication, are then presented, and follow the chronology of events as they occurred in former Yugoslavia at the time of its dissolution during the 1990s.

The General Journey of Participants

Figure 5 provides a diagrammatic representation of the general journey of participants.

Prior to the ethnic conflicts of the 1990s, all participants claimed to have led pleasant lives, coexisting with their interethnic neighbours and friends. At this time, former Yugoslavia was under Communist rule which stifled all forms of ethnic affiliation.

During the early 1990s, extremists promoted ethnic nationalism as a solution to the economic and political decline that resulted after President Tito's death in 1980. Prior to the official outbreak of civil war, participants became acutely aware of ethnic tension as it came to disrupt their lives. The region's nationalist rhetoric threatened the strong socio-political networks that characterised Communist former Yugoslavia. The outbreak of civil war resulted in the shattering of participants' relationships. Good friends and neighbours ceased to interact, and participants expressed disbelief at the developing turmoil.

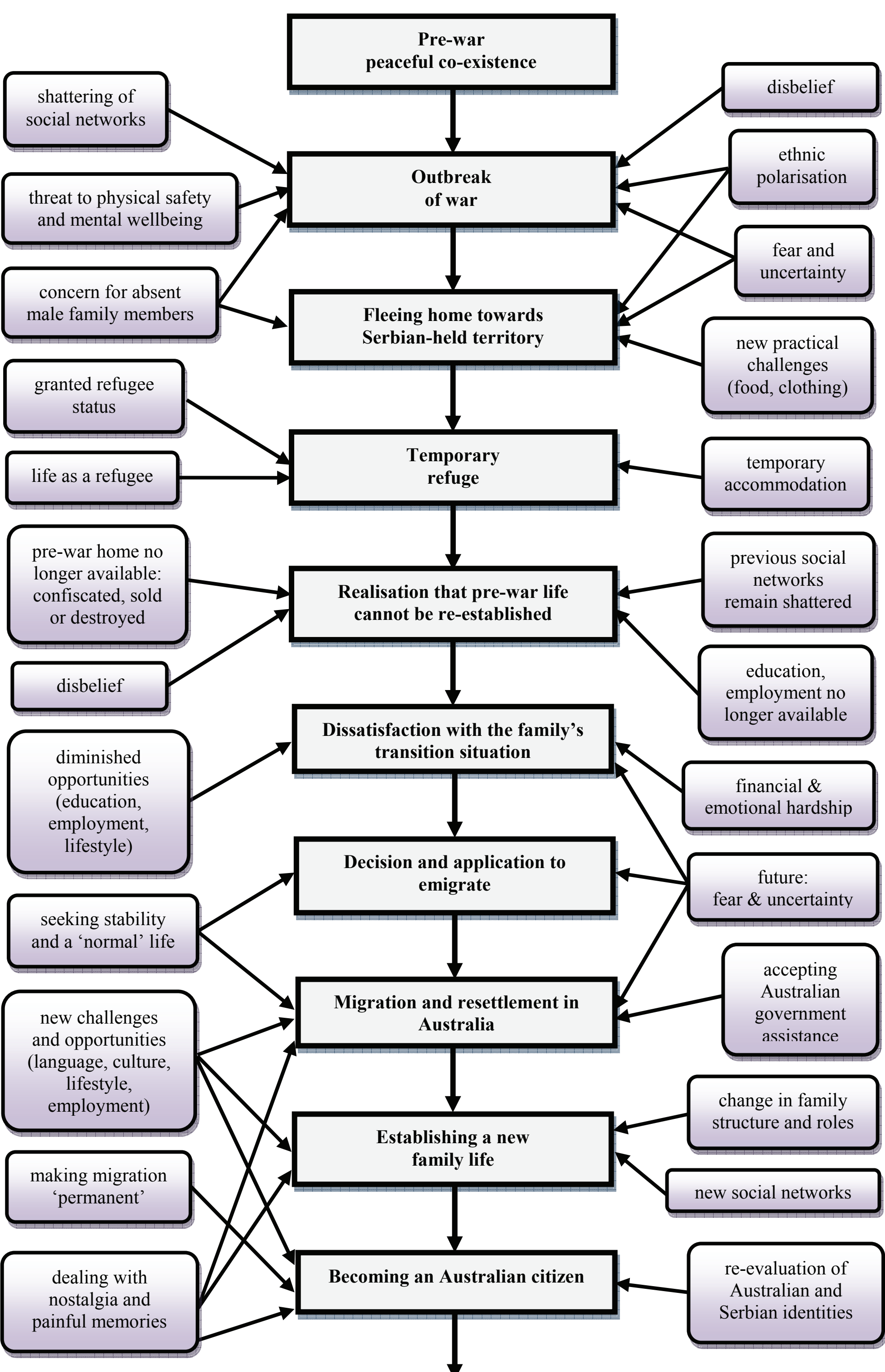


Figure 5: Diagram representing the general journey of participants

During this time, participants encountered situations such as direct shelling, bombardments and sniper attacks that posed a very real threat to their physical safety, and that of their family members. In addition, other circumstances such as the absence of male family members due to their incarceration or participation in the war effort, and the fear of what the future would hold, had the potential to jeopardise the mental health and wellbeing of participants.

At various points, all participants fled from their homes. This decision was informed by limited accurate information, and was influenced by the concern for the physical and mental health and wellbeing of participants and their family members. In travelling towards Serbian-held territory, participants faced new practical challenges such as finding food and arranging accommodation. These practical needs were partially provided by makeshift refugee camps and relatives (where participants were fortunate to have family residing in these areas). All participants believed that the refuge they had sought would be temporary and, after a short period of civil conflict, they would be able to return to their homes and resume their lives – but this was not to be.

After being granted refugee status, participants had to learn to adapt to life as refugees within their own country, and the associated challenges. The stress of displacement began to take a toll on the mental health and wellbeing of participants and their families.

After realising that the conflicts would not be short-lived as they had predicted, participants became aware that they were unable to return to their pre-war lives. Their homes had been confiscated, destroyed or sold. Their social networks remained shattered, and their previous education and employment arrangements were no longer available.

After living in these transitional arrangements for a period of time, participants became dissatisfied with their situation. Diminished education, employment and lifestyle opportunities resulted in participants experiencing emotional and financial hardship. After considering the alternatives, participants made the decision to emigrate, citing the need for stability, a ‘normal life’, and the desire to create a better future for their children, as common reasons for making this decision.

After obtaining approval from the Australian Embassy, participants migrated to Australia as refugees. Following their arrival, participants received assistance from the Australian government in order to begin establishing a new life. Resettlement resulted in new challenges such as cultural, language and lifestyle differences. Participants also

experienced changes to their social roles and family structures. Many participants were experiencing grief and dealing with painful memories from their experiences of the war. In establishing a new life in Australia, participants established new social networks. Participants were also presented with new employment and education opportunities.

Two years after migrating to Australia as refugees, participants became Australian citizens, thereby making their migration more permanent. Today, participants are still learning to adapt to life in Australia. Many are still experiencing unresolved grief and loss. Participants are also engaged in a constant re-evaluation of their identities as Serbs and Australians.

A note on the presentation of the stories

Before proceeding, it is important to understand the 'format' in which the stories are presented.

In order to maintain anonymity, each participant is referred to by a pseudonym (first name and surname). These names are fictitious, and any name which corresponds to an actual person is merely coincidental. The pronunciation of participants' pseudonyms is included at the beginning of the each story.

In former Yugoslavia, both prior to the conflicts of the 1990s and today, each resident is required to carry a 'lična karta,' a personal identity card. Although the format of this card continues to evolve over time, during the 1990s, the card contained the following information: date and place of birth; father's first name; blood type; and residential address. In addition, each individual is given three numbers: an identification number comprising thirteen digits, the first seven of which correspond to the date of birth; a six-digit registration number with a validation period and expiration date; and an eight-digit number located at the bottom of the identity card preceded with two letters that correspond to the republic in which the individual resides. For the purpose of authenticity, a 'lična karta' was created for each participant.

Each story includes a map of the relevant region, and photographs of the area. It is intended that these visual images will assist the reader to locate the stories within their geographical contexts.

Finally, these stories are merely a snapshot of participants' lives. That is, these stories are summaries of the interviews that were conducted with participants.

In order to situate participants' stories within a broader historical context, Table 2 provides a timeline of the major historical events in the Balkans. Participants involved in the first two stories were affected by the Croatian war which began in 1991. The participants involved in the other four stories were affected by the 1992 Bosnian conflict.

Table 2: Timeline of significant historical events in former Yugoslavia

Year	Event
1389	Battle of Kosovo Defeat of Christian forces by the Ottoman Turks
1918	Region named the 'Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes'
1929	Region renamed 'Jugoslavija' by King Aleksandr
1941-1945	World War II and the Yugoslavian civil wars Četniks (led by Draža Mihailović) vs. Communist Partisans (led by Josip Broz Tito)
1963	Yugoslavia renamed the 'Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia'
1974	Kosovo and Vojvodina made autonomous provinces of Serbia
1980	Death of President Tito
1989	Autonomy of Kosovo and Vojvodina revoked by Slobodan Milošević
1991	June: Slovenian 'Ten Day' war for independence Croatian war for independence
1992	Bosnian war for independence
1993	UN International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia (ICTY) established. November 9: Destruction of the Mostar Bridge by the Croatian army
1994	April: Intervention by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)
1995	Dayton Peace Agreement and the official end of the Bosnian conflict
1996	Kosovo war
1999	March 24: 78 day bombing of Serbian military and paramilitary targets by NATO. End of the Kosovo war
2000	Slobodan Milošević arrested after falling from power
2002	February: Trial of Slobodan Milošević begins in The Hague (ICTY)
2006	March 11: Death of Slobodan Milošević Montenegro declaration of independence from Serbia
2008	Kosovo declaration of independence Radovan Karadžić arrested, Ratko Mladić remains at large

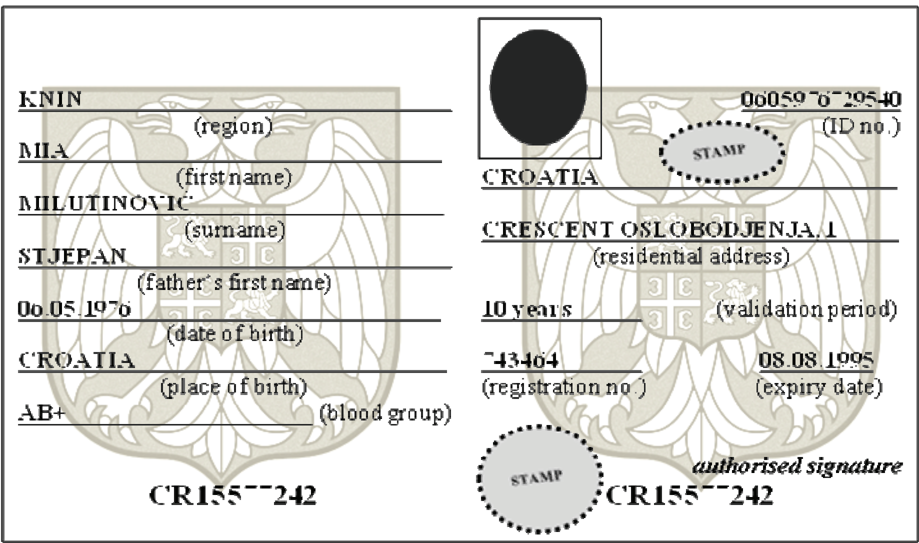
The First Story: Mia Milutinović

(Mee-ya Mi-loo-tee-no-vich)

> I remember when I was ... in the seventh grade ... just before the war started ... We started [talking] ... in the class ... between ourselves ... [about] Serbians and Croatians ... I didn't know what I [was] ... [because] we never talked about it [at home].

Following this classroom discussion, Mia returned home and questioned her mother about her ethnicity. It was then that she learned that her mother is Serbian, and her father is Croatian. Because of this, she identifies as both Serbian and Croatian, but acknowledged that she feels more Serbian than Croatian.

Mia was born in the small southern Croatian town of Knin in 1976 (see Figures 6, 7 and 8). She reported that prior to 1991, the town's population was 60 per cent Serbian, and 40 per cent Croatian. Mia had "great" relationships with her Serbian and Croatian neighbours. At the beginning of the Croatian conflict, however, the government ordered the Croatians in Knin to leave the town and occupy other areas which were dominated by Croatians. In turn, the houses in Knin were to become occupied by Serbian people from other areas of former Yugoslavia where the Serbs were a minority. This "exchange" resulted in a change in Mia's social networks. While her new neighbours were Serbs, Mia reported that because of their different experiences and geographical disparity, they possessed "different understandings" and perceptions of the situation in the Balkans.



KNIN
(region)
MIA
(first name)
MILUTINOVIC
(surname)
STJEPAN
(father's first name)
06.05.1976
(date of birth)
CROATIA
(place of birth)
AB+ (blood group)
CR15577242

0605976729540
(ID no.)
STAMP
CROATIA
CRESCENT OSLOBODJENJA.1
(residential address)
10 years (validation period)
743464
(registration no.)
08.08.1995
(expiry date)
authorised signature
STAMP
CR15577242

Figure 6: Personal identity card of Mia Milutinović

Figure 7: Map of Croatia illustrating the location of Knin (Virtual Sources, 2006)

Figure 8: Aerial photograph of Knin (Korlević, 2005)

As the population of Croats in Knin dwindled, Mia's father became a member of the minority. During this time, he experienced hardship because of his Croatian ethnicity. On several occasions, he experienced confrontations with Serbian people who were living in the town.

During these encounters, he was threatened and it was suggested that he leave the town.

The war continued for five years. During this time, Mia reported that the surrounding areas were under constant attack.

On August 4, 1995, between 4 and 5am, Croats began to bomb the town of Knin. There were no warning sirens, and home telephone lines were cut. Mia's family remained on the first level of their two storey home for most of the day. In the afternoon, Mia's family relocated to her boyfriend's family's house, as they had an underground cement bunker. During this time, Mia, then 19, observed a large convoy of people travelling down a single road.

Later on that afternoon, Mia and her younger brother became "nervous." They could hear the bombing, they could hear people talking, and they could see the Croats approaching from the hills near Knin. "On the radio, they said [that the] Croats [were going to] be in Knin early in the morning ... they were just getting closer and closer ... So, [it was] either stay there and wait ... or just go." Mia reported that her father wanted to remain in Knin and "hide in the bushes" until the army had gone. Mia had to convince her father that remaining in the region would mean a certain death.

> My dad [said] ... '[We'll] stay here. We're just [going to] hide somewhere and if they come ... and if I see a knife, if I see ... a gun or something, we're just [going to] hide in the bushes.' I said, 'You're not [going to] hide ... [They're] not [going to] ask you if you [are a] Croat or not. [They're] [going to] kill you.'

Eventually, Mia was able to convince her father to travel in the cavalcade with the other 400,000 people. The two families then fled Knin together, travelling by car and tractor, arriving in the Bosnian city of Banja Luka, where they remained for five days. During this time, the families slept at the army barracks with hundreds of others. Rather than sleep there, however, Mia preferred to sleep out on the open soccer field.

> At the time, I was just ... happy to be alive. I didn't think about my house or anything ... I was just ... happy to leave and not to get killed.

After five days in Banja Luka, Mia's boyfriend's parents left for Novi Sad to stay with their other son. Mia's family and her boyfriend, however, moved to Pančevo (see Figure 9), Serbia, where they stayed in the old Yugoslav National Army barracks which had been converted into a refugee camp. While in Pančevo, Mia's parents worked in the hills, requiring them to walk the hour journey each day. Mia was also

employed at the time, working as a babysitter for a family that lived nearby. She reported that this was a difficult time, particularly as twenty people were sharing the same living quarters.

Five months after their arrival in Pančevo, Mia and her boyfriend decided to move to Novi Sad (see Figures 9 and 10), where they hoped to secure better employment. It was at this time that Mia and her boyfriend were married. During this time, they established new social networks, and re-established old friendships with those who had lived alongside them in Knin.

Figure 9: Map illustrating the location of Novi Sad and Pančevo (Federal Aviation Administration, 2007a)

In the meantime, Mia's parents and brother had moved to Belgrade and were living in an apartment owned by the basketball team her brother played for. After living in Novi Sad for a year, Mia and her husband moved to Belgrade where they lived with Mia's family.

At this time, the family made the decision to migrate to Australia. Again, Mia's father was opposed to the move. He wanted to return to Knin. Mia was, however, able to convince her father that migration was a good idea. Mia stated that she is "really connected to [her] family" and acknowledged that if her parents and brother had not migrated to

Australia, she “would just stay [in Australia] for maybe [a] few years and then go back [to former Yugoslavia].”

Figure 10: Photograph of Novi Sad, Serbia

The family’s application to migrate to Australia was approved in 1998. In September of that year, Mia’s parents and brother arrived on Australian soil.

As Mia and her husband were preparing to leave former Yugoslavia for Australia, they became aware of the seriousness of the threats of NATO bombing in Serbia. The couple were forced to hasten their departure in order to avoid being stranded, as NATO bombing would result in the cancellation of all arrivals and departures. Mia and her husband were fortunate to escape Serbia four months before the bombing began, and arrived in Australia in November 1998.

Mia reported that, initially, she was excited about migrating, and had always believed that Australia was a “mystic[al] country.” She became

disappointed when she discovered the small size of Adelaide as she passed the city centre on her way to Salisbury from the airport. Mia reported that Belgrade is “very different” to Adelaide and stated that “here, it’s quiet.”

In adapting to life in Australia, Mia utilised “all [of the] opportunit[ies]” available to her to complete further study. Since her arrival in Australia, Mia has completed a two year Advanced Diploma in Tourism at TAFE, and has completed a year of Spanish. In addition to study, Mia has also worked in Australia as a cleaner, a travel consultant, and a room attendant at the Stamford Grand. In contrast, Mia’s husband only completed half of the complimentary English course offered to new migrants. He is, however, currently self-employed.

While Mia feels blessed to be surrounded by family in Australia, she reported feeling extremely homesick. Mia stated that the physical distance that separates her from her best friend, and from the country itself, has made it difficult to adapt to life in Australia.

> I can’t imagine my life living ... somewhere ... so far away from [my family].

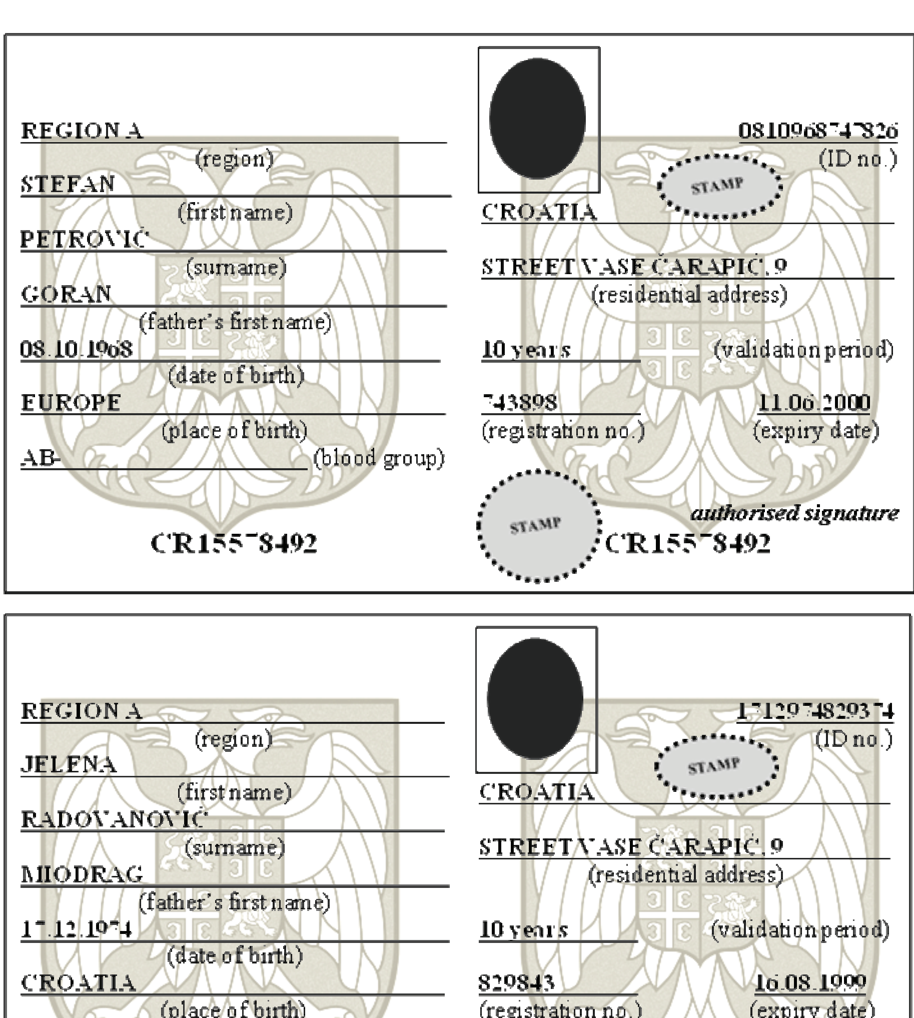
Mia reported that her greatest achievement since arriving in Australia is raising a family. “It’s all I talk about, just ... having a family, keeping the family together ... and raising the kids, and just having the opportunity to give them everything they need.”

The Second Story: Stefan Petrović and Jelena Radovanović

(Ste-farn Pe-tro-vich and Ye-le-na Rar-do-var-no-vich)

Jelena was barely 17 years old when the war began in Croatia (see Figure 11). It was September 2, 1991, and the beginning of a new school year. Jelena was sitting with her Croatian girlfriend, preparing to leave for school when she heard a thump. Assuming it was the meter reader coming to collect his payment, she ventured outside to find the source of the noise. But there was no meter reader. Jelena’s parents were running towards her. The war had begun.

One night, Jelena reported that a number of buses assisted in evacuating the Croats from Region A (see Figure 12). The Serbs “didn’t know [what was] happening and then, in the morning, no Croats [were] left in that part ... just their ... army stayed,” as the army barracks were located in the city. Most of the Croatian civilians travelled to nearby villages, taking livestock and pets with them.



REGION A
(region)
STEFAN
(first name)
PETROVIĆ
(surname)
GORAN
(father's first name)
08.10.1968
(date of birth)
EUROPE
(place of birth)
AB- (blood group)
CR15578492

0810968747826
(ID no.)
STAMP
CROATIA
STREET VASE ČARAPIĆ 9
(residential address)
10 years (validation period)
743898 11.06.2000
(registration no.) (expiry date)
STAMP
authorised signature
CR15578492

REGION A
(region)
JELENA
(first name)
RADOVANOVIĆ
(surname)
MIODRAG
(father's first name)
17.12.1974
(date of birth)
CROATIA
(place of birth)
B- (blood group)
CR15577432

1712974829374
(ID no.)
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CROATIA
STREET VASE ČARAPIĆ 9
(residential address)
10 years (validation period)
829843 16.08.1999
(registration no.) (expiry date)
STAMP
authorised signature
CR15577432

Figure 11: Personal identity cards of Stefan Petrović and Jelena Radovanović

Jelena stated that "overnight, people just completely changed." Friends and neighbours stopped talking to each other. The Yugoslav flag was replaced with the Croatian flag which pictures a chessboard crest. This display of patriotism resulted in the evacuation of many Serbs from the area, particularly those in high positions. "Every night, [the Croats] would just go and destroy one of [the Serbian] houses."

Figure 12: Map of Croatia illustrating the location of Region A (Virtual Sources, 2006)

During 1991, Jelena, along with the other Serbs who remained in the region, were told to move into the basements of their houses. A special army contingent was coming. Being young, Jelena enquired about this army and was told, “They are cut-throats from Zagreb who are tonight coming to massacre you.” She only wished she had remained silent.

And then the bombing began.

The attacks became so frequent that people were no longer safe above ground. People sought shelter in cement bunkers beneath their houses.

One day, as the firing began, all the families were moving towards the cement bunkers. Jelena ran into the yard. Her neighbour ran the opposite way. He said, “Come on, hurry up, hurry up!” Jelena insisted that she would enter through the backyard. He then joined her, and ran ahead and “that’s when a grenade fell,” decapitating him. The man fell to the ground, his brain oozing from what remained of his skull. Jelena was only half a metre behind him.

In shock, Jelena proceeded towards the cement bunker to inform the others about the tragedy she had witnessed, and “no one believed [her].” They emerged from the bunker to examine the man’s remains, and “took his body and wrapped him up.” There was no one to bury the

man. His remains, left in the European summer heat, were disturbed by cats that "climbed all over his body. And the flies came."

In 1991, amidst the hardship and terror of war, Jelena developed a relationship with Stefan. He was 23 years of age and had just completed his national service at the naval base in Pula and Šibenik, Croatia where he worked as a motor mechanic. Stefan completed his service with Croats, Serbs, and Bošnjaks. Before long, Stefan and Jelena began living together.

One night, as the Croats were raiding Serbian homes, a woman who was walking in the street dared to ask the Croatian soldiers what they were doing. "They took her and tied her to a fence, poured petrol over her and set her on fire." And those in the area "just watched." "Can you imagine when someone's burning alive, the screams of anguish and pain?"

For nearly three years, Region A was left without electricity, without water, and without food. People were left with nothing. Stefan reported, however, that they soon became accustomed to this way of life.

Throughout the five year Croatian conflict, Stefan worked as a soldier, guarding the border of the Serbian territory in Croatia. He would work on this line and return to Jelena every seven days to shower and sleep.

On August 4, 1995, the first day of 'Operation Storm',[1] Stefan and Jelena were woken at 5am to the sound of gunfire. Region A had come under attack. "There was gunfire everywhere ... it was non-stop ... like fireworks." Stefan travelled to the army base, a transformed house, to assist with the Serbian war effort. Jelena wondered if – and when – she would ever see Stefan again.

On the same day, at 9pm, Jelena fled Region A, joining a cavalcade (overseen by Serbian police) of between 150,000 and 200,000 people, travelling towards Serbia. As she walked, Jelena passed many recent burial sites alongside the road – the result of recent attacks made on the convoy of displaced people, and those who were simply unable to complete the journey.

Six days after Jelena left the Croatian region, she was reunited with Stefan whose army unit had disbanded. The couple then completed the journey to Serbia together. It took twelve days.

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[1] 'Operation Storm' ('Operacija Oluja'), refers to the large-scale military offensive carried out by Croatian armed forces in association with the Bosnian army to regain parts of Croatia which were previously occupied by Serbs. The operation began before daybreak on August 4, 1995, and ended four days later with a Croatian victory.

After arriving in Serbia, Jelena, who was pregnant at the time, began experiencing false labour pains. Stefan took her to the maternity hospital in Belgrade where she was informed she would give birth to a stillborn baby. Jelena "refused to stay in hospital." Fortunately, the labour pains ceased.

The couple remained in Belgrade at the sports centre which had been transformed into a refugee camp. Here, they slept on the floor with hundreds of others. They only remained here a short time, before they moved to a more permanent refugee camp, a converted hotel.

In November 1995, Jelena gave birth to a baby girl. She had nothing for her child, and relied on the Red Cross for assistance. In addition, the conditions in the refugee camp were very poor. There was no work available for refugees, and when there was work, people received minimal pay. In addition, the food consisted solely of vegetables. Jelena stated that "even pigs eat better than that." The couple then made the decision to leave the former Yugoslavia. There was nothing left for them there.

They applied to migrate to Stefan's European country of birth. They were rejected. They applied to migrate to Canada. They were again rejected. They lodged paperwork to migrate to the United States of America and were rejected. Finally, they applied to enter Australia. After five years of living in the Serbian refugee camp, the couple's application was accepted, and they arrived in Adelaide on August 11, 2000 with their four year old daughter.

Initially, Jelena found the Australian lifestyle "horrible, terrifying." English confused her. She could not believe that she had to lock the doors in her house. The driving was on the wrong side of the road, and she had to press the button to get a walk light to allow her to cross the road.

Since 2000, Stefan and Jelena have established a new life for their family. Jelena speaks fluent English. The family currently reside in their own home. Their 13 year old daughter attends a private school. And, first and foremost, they are proud to identify themselves as Serbian Orthodox.

> It will always remain one wound, but it will slowly go. It will go; it won't be as it was in the beginning. It will grow dimmer, dimmer ... and dimmer into the past, but we will never forget.

The Third Story: Beretka Stepanović

(Bair-et-ka Ste-par-no-vich)

Beretka was born in 1958 outside a small village near the town of Kupres (see Figures 13 and 14). Kupres is located in the region of Malovan in central Bosnia and Hercegovina (see Figure 15). Beretka's family was relatively wealthy, owning two properties: 23 hectares in Novo Selo; and 27 hectares of mountainous grazing pasture in a different area. Beretka's family – his parents, younger brother, two younger sisters, grandparents, and four aunts – would move between these two properties.

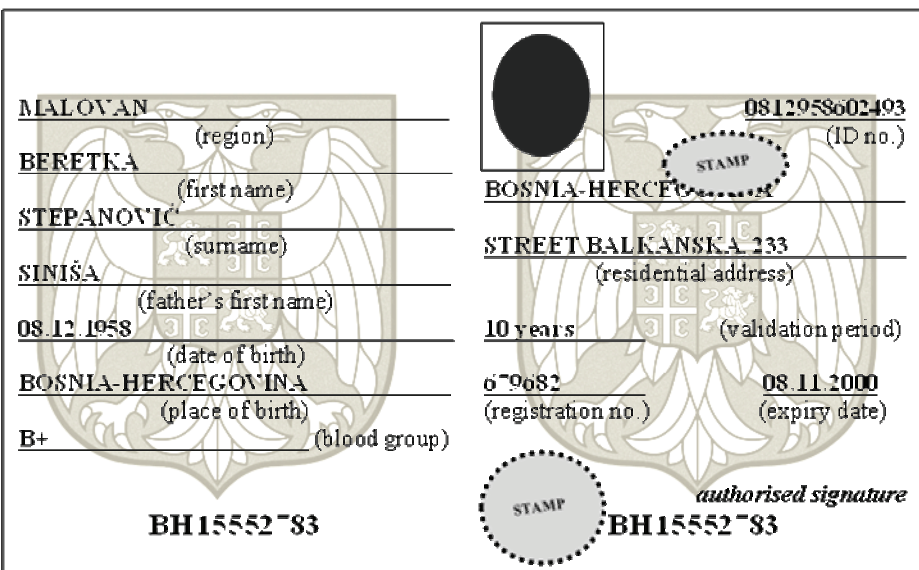

MALOVAN (region)
BERETKA (first name)
STEPANOVIĆ (surname)
SINIŠA (father's first name)
08.12.1958 (date of birth)
BOSNIA-HERCEGOVINA (place of birth)
B+ (blood group)
BH15552783
0812958602493 (ID no.)
STAMP
BOSNIA-HERCEG...
STREET BALKANSKA 233 (residential address)
10 years (validation period)
679682 (registration no.)
08.11.2000 (expiry date)
STAMP
authorised signature
BH15552783

Figure 13: Personal identity card of Beretka Stepanović

After completing his compulsory schooling, Beretka attended technical high school. Given the 40 kilometre distance from his home, Beretka boarded with some family acquaintances. Following this, Beretka moved to Banja Luka where he studied economics. Despite being able to return to his family, "the village life just did not interest [him]."

Following the completion of his study, Beretka became employed in a Bosnian city in the area of planning and analysis. At the conclusion of the day's work, which he found incredibly boring, Beretka would return home to rest before meeting up with his friends. "There were fantastic friendships, not like it is here [in Australia], [where] someone will come to your house once every two weeks ... we had great company." In his spare time, Beretka also enjoyed mountain climbing and, as a result, was very fit.

Figure 14: Map of Bosnia and Hercegovina illustrating the location of Kupres (U.S. Department of State, 2009)

During 1991, Beretka began to notice the breakdown of the political situation in the region through television reports that detailed arguments between Slobodan Milošević and Franjo Tuđman. After receiving information from his Muslim friend that trouble was looming in Bosnia, Beretka submitted an application to migrate to Australia.

Figure 15: Photograph of Malovan (Malovan na Internetu, 2008)

After being notified in November 1991 that his application had been rejected, Beretka quit his accountancy job at the agricultural office in the town of Kupres. He then moved to Linz, Austria, where he began working in a large linen factory. The environmental conditions were not favourable, however, and within 20 days, Beretka's chronic sciatica problems had flared.

On December 20, 1991, after his stay in Linz, Beretka boarded a bus and returned to Bosnia. Rather than returning via Hungary, a much safer route, he travelled through Croatia. Beretka stated that he was "so stupid and so brave." He reported that an agreement had recently been reached in Croatia, and the region was once again peaceful. The situation in Bosnia, however, was a different story. Beretka was surprised to find that "everybody was armed," and there were many checkpoints throughout the republic. After safely arriving home, Beretka "sighed with relief;" he had not been questioned about his whereabouts, nor had his passport been requested.

Beretka was 33 years old when the war began in Bosnia. He remained in his home town of Kupres throughout the entire conflict.

During the three year civil war, Beretka volunteered as a soldier and scout in an effort to assist the Serbs in retaining Kupres. He led troops through the mountains, worked as a soldier on the frontlines, supervised communications, monitored roadways, guarded the forest, and, towards the end of the Bosnian war, worked in the catering corps. He stated that he was "keen ... to try and protect others from harm and to save people in the town from harm."

> At the beginning of the war, I was prepared to die. I was prepared ... If I lost my life, I would have been successful on this earth ...

Beretka went into war with the words of a song entitled 'Smrt' (meaning death), composed by a Bosnian Muslim:

> The earth is planted with seeds of death, but death is not the end, because death does not exist. There is no end to death. Death is only a legacy, a path illuminated with stars.

Replacing the words of death with thoughts of life and living, Beretka stated that he used this as a way of coping with his work during the war.

In his movements through the nearby towns, Beretka reported that there was a great deal of mistrust and suspicion. If you were not known to the people, you were more likely to be taken by police for questioning. You, therefore, needed to establish your identity, and the purpose of your visit. Despite this, Beretka reported feeling a degree of freedom to

roam the country, but clarified this by stating that it was an artificial type of freedom.

During the war, Beretka had access to soldiers' newspapers (and other local newspapers), in addition to listening to the radio programs that were transmitted from Banja Luka (in Bosnia), and from Serbia. The numerous atrocities which occurred during the Bosnian war were documented, with photographs, in the Serbian newspapers. Beretka "thank[s] God [that he] didn't see them. For [his] health and mental wellbeing, it's not good to see these massacred people." He also reported that "you couldn't believe a lot of the information. It was a media war." Beretka reported that, during the war, he wrote stories of fallen soldiers, and satirical pieces for the local newspaper as a means of coping. He is surprised that he "didn't lose [his] head. [He] was young, stupid. [He] wrote about some of the negative things that took place between [the soldiers] that [he] condemned ..." Beretka reported that his articles created conflict with others, and he received threats to his life. Despite the political act of writing for the local newspaper, Beretka did not consider himself a political activist during this time, stating that this was because he was not a member of the Serbian Democratic Party. He does, however, consider himself a "democrat."

Following the conclusion of the war, towards the end of March 1995, Beretka was employed in a department that managed records of all those who had been killed during the war. He was also involved in the distribution of government funds for refugees. Beretka reported that he found the position "foreign" to him, and believed that he was out of his depth. He also stated that the environment was unfriendly. He resided in a hotel with refugees and officials. The food was poor, and he reported becoming homesick for Kupres. These feelings resulted in Beretka developing depression.

> And this starts the worst period of my life ...

In August 1995, people were being evacuated from Novo Selo, his family's village home, near Kupres. Beretka's parents, grandfather and aunt, along with other civilians, left Novo Selo at nightfall, heading towards Banja Luka. His sister had already arrived in Banja Luka at this time. The family was only able to take a few items with them, including four cows. They had to leave their wood stove behind in order to accommodate Beretka's grandfather and aunt in the car.

After the family was reunited in Banja Luka, they faced the challenge of accommodating their livestock. The family then travelled beyond Banja Luka where they found an empty house in which to live – an

allowance made to refugees by the authorities. In order to have money to live, the family sold three of the four cows, but for a very small price.

The family now found themselves isolated. They needed to settle near neighbours. Without the social support network of their fellow villagers, it was difficult. Beretka stated: “We’re tied to our people; we’re tied to our community.” During this time, Beretka’s grandfather was virtually an invalid. His mother slept in a cold, damp room, and she developed pneumonia. The family had to pay a great deal of money to transport her to access medical services.

In October 1995, Beretka was able to find employment working with refugees in Banja Luka. He found the workload difficult, and the monthly pay was only enough to have one meal per day. Beretka requested an assistant and this was approved, lightening his load, but again, he fell into depression.

> I was in a desperate, hopeless situation. Difficult job, bad health, depression, meagre income ... No home, no family [of my own] ...

At the end of March 1996, Beretka went to stay with his brother and sister-in-law in Montenegro (see Figure 16). By this stage, Beretka’s health was so poor that his mother had to accompany him. Upon his arrival, Beretka felt a sense of desperation. During his stay, Beretka was fortunate to establish a friendship with a woman who was a psychiatrist. She provided Beretka with support and encouragement. He also sought advice from a deacon.

Figure 16: Photograph of the Montenegrin landscape taken from the inland ‘Ostrog’ Monastery

During his stay in Montenegro, Beretka did not get on well with his Bošnjak sister-in-law, and he believes that his depression negatively affected their relationship. Beretka acknowledged that he became difficult to live with as he would become aggressive at times due to his mental illness, combined with his indulgence in alcohol. While in Montenegro, Beretka reported that he contemplated suicide.

Beretka remained in Montenegro for eleven months. Due to his increasingly worsening mental health, Beretka's brother had him institutionalised for one month at the end of December 1996. After this time, he returned to Novo Selo to be reunited with his parents, who had returned to their village property in May 1996.

Upon returning to Novo Selo, Beretka applied to migrate to Australia with his parents, lodging his paperwork in February 1997. His application was again rejected. Beretka then remained in Novo Selo, where he began working at the local council until 1999.

During this time, Beretka rekindled his relationship with a girl whom he had met in the early 1980s. They were married on July 28, 1998 in Banja Luka. Beretka reported that after his wife questioned where they would live, he replied, "Novo Selo, or Australia." The couple decided to apply to migrate to Australia, and prepared their refugee papers.

After learning of their successful application, Beretka faced the difficult task of farewelling his parents. He reported that this was very difficult. Beretka was the oldest child in the family, and felt a strong sense of responsibility to care for his parents. Nevertheless, his parents were very supportive of his decision to leave former Yugoslavia.

Beretka, his wife and their nine month old daughter arrived in Australia in February 2000. At the time of their migration, Beretka's wife was pregnant with their second child, but the couple were unaware of this at the time. The family stayed with relatives in Woolongong, during which time Beretka undertook English classes before completing a semester of TAFE where he studied English.

Two years after their migration, Beretka's nephew moved to Adelaide after finding new employment. Beretka and his family then also decided to move to South Australia. He now has four children: three girls and a boy.

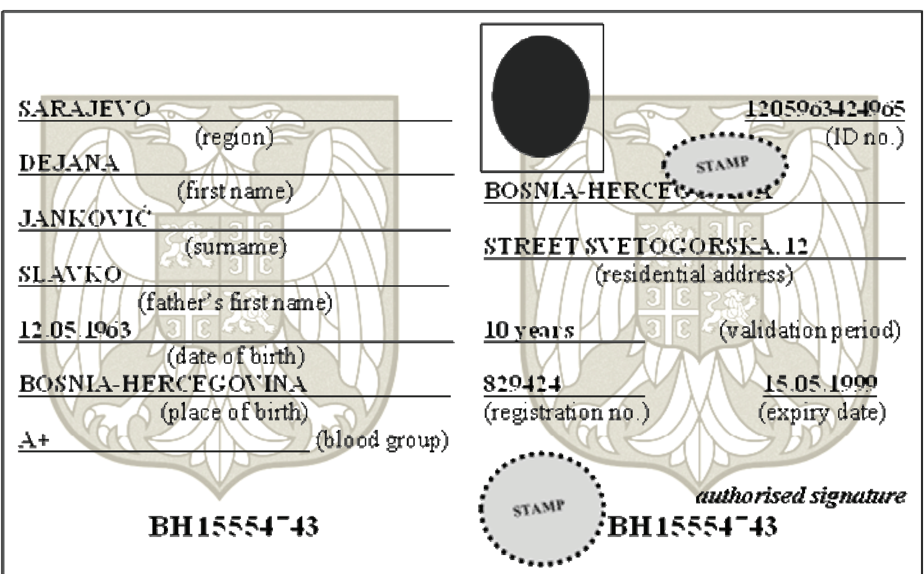
Beretka stated that he feels "100 per cent" Serbian, but acknowledges that he has "become a little Australianised, but not a lot." He reported that he feels isolated living in Australia because of the distance from his family, and the expense in visiting his homeland. Beretka stated that

"[he] did not know what nostalgia was until [he] migrated to Australia." He reported that he often has regrets about his decision to migrate, and has considered returning to Bosnia to live with his family. When voicing these possibilities with his parents and friends in former Yugoslavia, Beretka stated that they convince him that Australia is the best place for his family.

The Fourth Story: Dejana Janković

(Day-un-na Yun-ko-vich)

Dejana was born in 1963, in Sarajevo, the capital city of Bosnia and Hercegovina (see Figures 17, 18 and 19). She lived with her parents, two brothers, and two sisters near the city centre. Like her siblings, Dejana was required to assist the family to plant fruit and vegetables. Each family member had their own chores, and no one was able to leave the house until these were completed.



SARAJEVO
(region)
DEJANA
(first name)
JANKOVIĆ
(surname)
SLAVKO
(father's first name)
12.05.1963
(date of birth)
BOSNIA-HERCEGOVINA
(place of birth)
A+ (blood group)
BH15554743

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BH15554743

Figure 17: Personal identity card of Dejana Janković

After completing eight years of compulsory schooling, Dejana completed a further four years of study. Although it was difficult to find employment at the time, Dejana found work in a forestry factory where she worked for nearly six months. She disliked the job, however, because it was "man's work." Then, at the age of 18, Dejana decided to undertake a seamstress apprenticeship.

Figure 18: Map of Bosnia and Hercegovina illustrating the location of Sarajevo (U.S. Department of State, 2009)

Figure 19: Photograph of Sarajevo (MarvaoGuide, 2008)

In 1984, Sarajevo hosted the Winter Olympics. Dejana recalls this time with fondness. The city came to life as the streets became filled with tourists from all over the world. These people were unaware that the

site of their merriment and frivolity would soon become a bloody battlefield...

In October 1990, Dejana and her husband of three years purchased a new car and land, and began building their own home. Dejana had also recently given birth to the couple's first child. By May 1991, construction was complete, and the family was able to move in to their new home, next door to a Bošnjak family with seven children. Dejana assisted the family by cooking, and also provided them with a loan to enable them to build a home. Dejana stated that she could never have imagined that there would be any disruption to their "good life," but "then everything fell down like a house of cards."

Dejana stated that she believed the Bošnjaks had begun making preparations for months prior to the onset of the Bosnian war. Just prior to the start of the Bosnian conflict, Dejana, then 28, was working in a textile factory owned by a Bošnjak. She reported that the firm director had ordered his workers to sew army uniforms, stating that they were "for reserves." Not long after, she left her job at the factory. Dejana reported that later, many of the male and female Serbs who had worked at the factory were hung by Bošnjaks, who displayed their bodies in the centre of Sarajevo. Dejana stated that she was certain that she would have been among the dead had she remained at the factory. She was, after all, the neighbour of a prominent Serbian leader. While she had no relationship with this man, Dejana suggested that the Bošnjaks "always tried to link people ... so they could be treated with suspicion and eliminated if necessary." During this time, Dejana also stated that she saw a Serbian television report depicting Bošnjak soldiers throwing Serbian boys and female babies to the lions in the Sarajevo zoo. She stated that "no one was ever punished for that." This footage later disappeared, as did the perpetrators.

In May 1991, Dejana's husband, then 27, was arrested by Bošnjak soldiers and imprisoned in 'Silos Tarčin.' Dejana believed they would kill him, and would then return to kill her and her 16 month old daughter. She stated that her husband was incarcerated because he was Serbian, and "needed to be kept under control ... They feared he would ... attack them [the Bošnjaks] ... and they were looking for a workforce in these prisons ... [to do] all the work the Muslims didn't want to do. To check for landmines, they would make the Serbs walk through the area." Dejana stated that by 1992, the Bošnjak soldiers had taken all the male Serbs from her area and incarcerated them. The houses, including hers, were then razed to the ground.

During his time in prison, Dejana's husband was tortured:

> Oh, tortured! The human mind cannot comprehend what was done to him, what man can do to man. If you were to sit and think about what you could do to a human being, I have a feeling that you would not be able to conjure up what they did to him.

Prior to his incarceration, he weighed 105 kilograms. Upon his release, four years later, he weighed just 55 kilograms.

Dejana remained in war-torn Sarajevo to be near her husband. During this time, she attempted to smuggle food and clothing to him by begging her next door neighbours to assist her. These were the same neighbours that she had assisted. Dejana reported that these neighbours claimed they did not know her. Fortunately, she was able to assist her husband with basic needs through the Red Cross.

During the first twelve months, Dejana and her daughter resided in the Bošnjak area of Sarajevo. Here, they were placed under house arrest, sharing a small space with five other families. She reported that, in an effort to intimidate the Serbs, chicken heads were left on the front steps of the houses and, written in chicken blood, in Arabic and in Serbian, were the words: "This is what will happen to your heads."

During the Bosnian conflict, Dejana experienced what is was like to look down the barrel of a gun – not once, but twice. Dejana reported that the first time this occurred was during the capture of the Serbs who were taken to prison. The second experience occurred during one of the raids of the Serbian homes. Dejana was holding her baby in her arms as a drunken Bošnjak soldier fired a round of bullets around her head, singeing her hair. Dejana had gone to school with this soldier.

Twelve months after their arrest, Dejana and her daughter were involved in a voluntary prisoner exchange, and moved to the Serbian area of Sarajevo. Dejana volunteered for this because she was becoming destitute, and was no longer receiving food. She feared that they would either be starved or shot. Dejana and her daughter remained in this region of Sarajevo until the war's end.

Prisoner exchanges became more frequent towards the end of the war, and Dejana's husband was released a few days before the peace talks began, in September 1995. Dejana received information of her husband's release through a team of Serbian people who were responsible for the prisoner exchange program. Upon his release, after four years of imprisonment, Dejana, her husband, and their daughter stayed in a Belgrade refugee camp. Dejana's husband was then taken to a rehabilitation centre in Zlatibor, where he remained for nearly a year.

Dejana and her daughter also lived there during this time. It was near Zlatibor, in Užice, in June 1996, that Dejana gave birth to a son.

While in rehabilitation, the Red Cross prepared documentation which provided evidence of Dejana's husband's incarceration, and assisted the family with their application to emigrate. The couple were given the choice of migrating to Canada, the United States of America, or Australia. They chose Australia because of its rich diversity of cultures, its freedom, and its peace. South Australia was then recommended as a place for resettlement because it was suggested that Dejana's husband would benefit from a quiet lifestyle, and the "pensioner's city" of Adelaide, as it was referred to, was considered an appropriate place. Dejana reported that the option of remaining in Bosnia never crossed their minds because it possessed "all the worst memories, and [she] never [wants] to experience that again ... There's no going back."

On September 6, 1996, Dejana's family arrived on Australian soil. Dejana stated that September 6 was "one of the most difficult days" of her life. "We felt like we had been dropped from Mars ... The whole trip was a circus."

Because Dejana had left her family in former Yugoslavia, and she was left traumatised from her experiences, she initially found life extremely difficult in Adelaide due to the isolation she endured. Dejana did not venture far from the family home, except to attend church. Twelve months later, however, when her sister migrated to Australia, Dejana began to find it much easier to cope.

Dejana believes that there is an incredible injustice against the Serbs which Australians do not fully understand. She stated that the world news was disseminated from Croatia and, as a result, "no one knew what was really happening" in former Yugoslavia. Dejana stated that the media were reporting the "opposite" of what was occurring. She cited stories which reported on Serbs raping Bošnjaks when, in actual fact, Bošnjaks were raping the Serbs. Dejana also cited a television report where a Bošnjak woman, admitted to a German hospital, was speaking to the media about her pregnancy following her rape by a Serb. After giving birth, the child was found to be "black." It was then revealed that the woman was having an affair with an African American UN peacekeeper. Dejana stated that such stories ceased after this report. These and other stories have contributed to the abhorrence that Dejana feels towards Bošnjak women. She stated that she feels no sympathy for them because of the injustices that the Serbs have

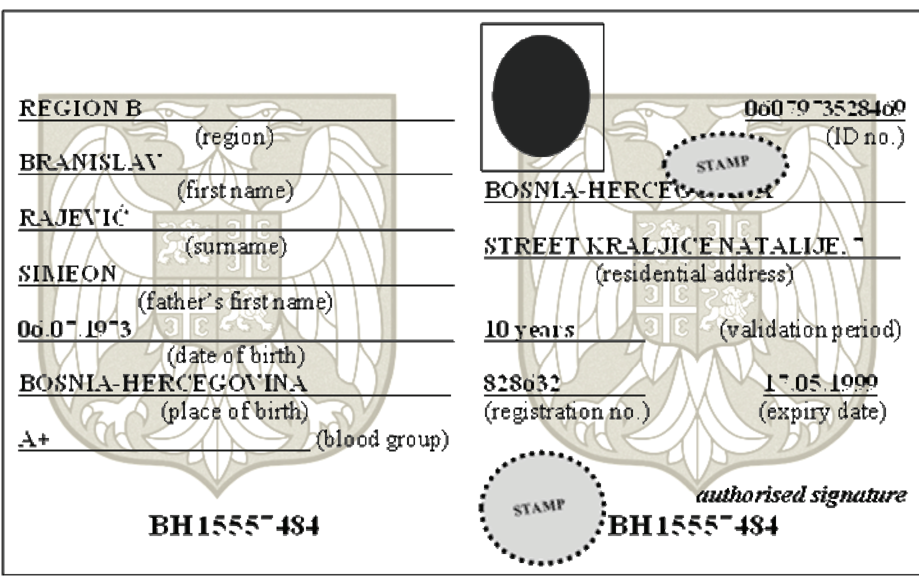
suffered as a result of their “lies.” “I never believed there were people like that who could tell such lies.”

> Always be prepared that tomorrow, you may not have that which you have today. We had nothing after the war, we have now re-established ourselves. A lot of people have forgotten who they are and what they are.

The Fifth Story: Branislav Rajević

(Bra-nee-slav Ri-ye-vich)

Branislav lived with his parents and younger sister in a central city of Bosnia, near Zenica, in an eight storey apartment building which they shared with Croats, Bošnjaks, and Serbs (see Figures 20 and 21). He reported that his family got along well with their neighbours. Region B (see Figure 22) had a population of 30,000 people, and was considered Croatian and Bošnjak territory due to the significantly greater presence of these ethnic groups relative to the Serbian population.



REGION B
(region)
BRANISLAV
(first name)
RAJEVIĆ
(surname)
SIMEON
(father’s first name)
06.07.1973
(date of birth)
BOSNIA-HERCEGOVINA
(place of birth)
A+ (blood group)

BH15557484

0607973528469
(ID no.)
STAMP
BOSNIA-HERCEG...
STREET KRALJICE NATALIJE 7
(residential address)
10 years (validation period)
828632
(registration no.)
17.05.1999
(expiry date)
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Figure 20: Personal identity card of Branislav Rajević

At the beginning of 1992, Branislav stated that he and his family believed that “something was changing,” as indicated in the daily news reports depicting “people get[ting] killed ... [and] refugees.” The family had access to Croatian, Bošnjak and Serbian telecasts, and watched all three stations in order to gain a clearer understanding of what was happening. Branislav reported that the Croatian and Bošnjak reports portrayed Serbs as the sole transgressors. While Branislav

acknowledged that the Serbs were better armed than the other two sides, he “didn’t like” the negative Serbian image being portrayed.

Figure 21: Map of Bosnia and Hercegovina illustrating the location of Zenica (U.S. Department of State, 2009)

Figure 22: Photograph of Region B (Virtual Tourist, 2009)

Branislav stated that at this time, local armies were being organised in Region B. Despite this army presence, he continued to trust that everything would be okay. Branislav, then 19, acknowledged that he was “a little bit blinded from that Yugoslavia” and didn’t believe that

his friends would "take the guns and point at [him]." Branislav went on to report that people became very distrusting; "no one [trusted] ... anyone ... at that time," and Branislav's relationship with his neighbours became strained, "you live with them ... ten years ... Now, how can you trust them? They don't trust you. It's now very sensitive and critical."

Branislav stated that the 1992 Bošnjak attack on a Serbian wedding in Sarajevo was "basically the point for the war in Bosnia." He stated that the organisation of armies became more evident following this attack.

Branislav's family faced the difficult decision about whether to flee their home, like many others, or to remain in Region B:

> It's not easy ... you don't know what to do ... where to be, or what's going to happen ... you don't know what to do ... Should you leave your home, go somewhere else? You don't know. [There are] so many questions ... it's very hard.

Such decisions were made more difficult due to a lack of accurate information during the conflict. Despite telephone and word-of-mouth communication, Branislav stated that he felt isolated; he "[was] ... split ... between [his] home and the Serbian community." In addition, Branislav reported that his city was left without electricity for thirteen months. He stated, however, that his family were fortunate that their apartment building had chimneys, enabling people to cook with wood stoves. These stoves also provided warmth during the winter.

Branislav stated that one night at the end of April, the Croats from nearby areas began to attack the Serbs in Region B in an effort to gain the territory. After this attack, Branislav's family went to stay in the Serbian area of the city for a couple of nights, during which time there was gunfire. Branislav's family then proceeded to hide in a cellar under one of the local houses with other families. He described this time as "very scary, very hard, very difficult." The next morning, the gunfire ceased, and Branislav believed that "life would continue as normal."

Before long, Branislav reported that Region B was surrounded; it "was like a war zone." The government assured the Serbs that they would be safe if they remained in the town, which Branislav and his family did.

> [We] didn't have [many] choices now ... Even if you go out like [a] refugee from there, you don't know where [to] go, and what's going to happen.

Branislav's family returned to their apartment and, on the night of their return, when the majority of Serbs had fled the city, the Croats attempted to gain control of the area by attacking the Serbian-held area.

> They burnt houses, [stole property] ... cars, all value that you have, they took over. Some people were killed, elderly people ... some of them were injured.

Branislav reported that the Serbian Orthodox Church was also completely destroyed by the Croats as retaliation for a grenade which destroyed the Catholic Church. Fortunately, as Branislav and his family lived in the city, they “were safe at that time.”

At the beginning of May 1992, Branislav’s father was taken by Croatian police for questioning in relation to his membership of the Serbian Democratic Party. The police raided the family’s apartment searching for the gun Branislav’s father had been supplied with. The police found no incriminating evidence because Branislav’s father had left the gun at another location,. Nevertheless, Branislav’s father remained in custody for two days, after which time Branislav believed that his father would be released. Branislav’s father was, however, found guilty of gun possession – despite police being unable to locate the weapon. Eight days later, Branislav’s father was taken to a prison camp in another town and the family lost contact with him.

At this time, Branislav stated that he and his family were among 500 people who remained in Region B. According to Branislav, those that remained included Serbs, those in mixed marriages, and the elderly.

Branislav reported that in 1992, bombing became a daily occurrence, and lasted for a couple of months. It then, however, became less frequent, occurring every couple of days, and then only weekly.

> Saturday morning, when you sleep a lot, for example, 5 o’clock in the morning ... grenades ... would wake you up and [you had to] run into the ... shelters ... and then you [would] spend sometimes all day and night in the shelters ... because of the bombs. And you couldn’t move around the city. You [developed an] instinct ... you got the idea ... which side [the] grenades are falling [from] and you are just trying to hide ... and after, it’s okay, but it was very, very dangerous ... Some people survive[d] ... being exposed very close to the grenades and bombs, and some people are very far from [them] and they get [hit with a] small piece of the [shrapnel] and they were killed.

Branislav reported that his belief in God assisted him to cope and “gave [him] strength” during this time. He stated that he was fearful at the beginning of the war, “but after, you get some ... encouragement to live ... [you] forget about all the other things. You have to survive.”

During the war, Branislav took part in voluntary community work to “support the city.” He stated that it “was a good thing to keep on moving ... to be involved in something, to do something.” This work

involved rebuilding sites which had been destroyed by warfare. He also reported working as a grave digger to bury the dead. Branislav stated that "no one else would go and bury the Serbs." He also dug the graves of Croats and Bošnjaks:

> [It] doesn't really matter who they are. They are all humans. They all deserve a proper burial.

Branislav did report that when digging graves for Croats and Bošnjaks, he was fearful that the grieving relatives would take revenge. Fortunately, however, as a grave digger, he would leave the cemetery before the funeral service began.

While Branislav was able to debrief with fellow grave diggers, he never became accustomed to this work. From his experiences of grave digging, Branislav stated that:

> You think about life ... very seriously, [and] about death seriously as well. You start to ... think ... [about what] life [is] about and ... maybe tomorrow I will be [the] one ... they are going to dig the grave [for] ...

At the end of 1992, Branislav's family received a letter from the Red Cross, which stated that Branislav's father was alive and in prison. Branislav reported that this news gave him "more strength." By the end of October, Branislav's father was released from a Croatian prison in Mostar, Bosnia, and was transferred to a Montenegrin refugee camp.

Branislav reported that in 1994, the war began to "slow down." His family then began receiving more support. Through United Nations peacekeepers and local interpreters, Branislav received letters and money from relatives who had migrated to Australia.

In 1995, Branislav's sister, then 16, participated in a prisoner exchange and was taken to Serbian territory. Here, she joined other relatives who had also become refugees. Branislav and his mother were fearful for her safety, but were able to communicate with relatives and friends regarding her whereabouts. Branislav's sister and father were then reunited in Novi Sad and together they travelled to Montenegro, planning their migration to Australia. At the end of 1995, Branislav's father and sister received refugee visas and, on December 13, 1995, they arrived on Australian soil.

In March 1996, following the end of the Bosnian war, Branislav and his mother travelled to Serbia as refugees. As they were able to stay with relatives in Belgrade, Branislav and his mother were not required to stay in a refugee camp.

In May 1996, the pair applied to come to Australia, but were rejected. Branislav stated that because they were refugees, “there [was] no ... easy way to [return], and there [was] no way to go forward.” After reapplying, however, a ‘joining family refugee’ visa was granted in November.

In January 1997, Branislav and his mother arrived in Australia.

> It was very, very emotional [to meet up with my dad and sister] ... [for] nearly five years I [hadn’t] seen my dad ... And my sister, I [hadn’t] seen her ... [for] nearly [a] year and a half.

Following their arrival in Australia, Branislav’s mother suffered from a nervous breakdown; his father had also suffered from his experiences of incarceration during the war. After their migration, Branislav reported that his father was “not strong as he used to be” and could not cope with his wife’s condition. In 1998, Branislav’s parents separated and both Branislav and his sister went to live with their mother to care for her. Despite these challenges, Branislav stated that family “means a lot.”

Since his arrival, Branislav has completed the complimentary English course offered to new migrants. He then went on to complete an advanced English course, before studying information technology, at TAFE. Branislav is currently employed as an IT support technician working on a help desk. His sister also completed further education and is currently completing a Doctor of Philosophy in social sciences.

> After everything that has happened, people still have to be separated according to [whether they are] good [or] bad ... Politicians on all sides were ... involved, and they must take responsibility for what happened during the war.

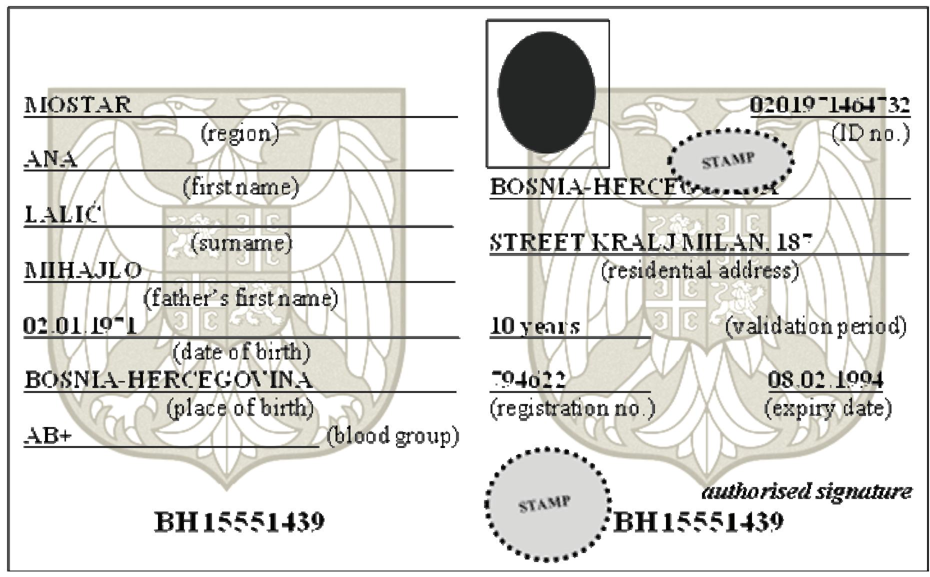
The Sixth Story: Ana Lalić

(Un-na Lar-lich)

Ana was born in 1970 in Hodbina, near Mostar in Bosnia and Hercegovina (see Figure 23, 24 and 25). Ana lived with her parents, paternal grandmother, and older brother and sister. As the youngest member of the family, Ana stated that she “always had the most benefits” and “would be given everything [she] wanted.” She “was the favoured child.”

Prior to the war, Ana got along very well with her Serbian, Croatian and Bošnjak neighbours. All the neighbours knew each others’ ethnic identities and respected their religious festivals. Ana reported that her

family would attend the local church on Orthodox feast days, and observed the fasting periods with her grandmother.


MOSTAR
(region)
ANA
(first name)
LALIĆ
(surname)
MIHAJLO
(father's first name)
02.01.1971
(date of birth)
BOSNIA-HERCEGOVINA
(place of birth)
AB+ (blood group)
BH15551439

0201971464732
(ID no.)
STAMP
BOSNIA-HERCE
STREET KRALJ MILAN, 187
(residential address)
10 years (validation period)
794622
(registration no.)
08.02.1994
(expiry date)
STAMP
authorised signature
BH15551439

Figure 23: Personal identity card of Ana Lalić

Figure 24: Map of Bosnia and Hercegovina illustrating the location of Hodbina (U.S. Department of State, 2009)

Figure 25: Photograph of Hodbina (TrekEarth, 2009)

Ana reported that she had Serbian, Croatian, and Bošnjak school friends. Their ethnic and religious differences were not considered important at this time:

> We were all mixed ... We didn't look to see who was who, just whether they were good ...

During her schooling, before the ethnic divisions began, Ana and her friends "always used to joke about who would win [the war] and [they] used to say the Serbs, and the Croats used to say the Croats. It was all in jest." Ana stated: "I never ... imagine[d] that there could be war or something like that."

After completing her compulsory education in Hodbina, Ana went to Mostar where she studied to become a traffic technician. In her third year of this specialisation, her study was disrupted when her mother died as a result of a heart complication. Ana was 17 years old at the time. From 1988, Ana stated that she took charge of caring for the family. Consequently, Ana was unable to complete her study.

During September 1991, Ana reported that Montenegrin peacekeepers began arriving in Mostar. She stated that, until April:

> We still went about our lives ... We used to go out, even when things started to get heated ... We went to separate cafes, for Croats, Muslims and Serbs.

Ana stated that between 1991 and 1992, "aeroplanes started flying overhead, then things started happening in Dubrovnik. Then we ... realised that the war had started."

> In April, the war really broke out in Mostar, the Croats and Muslims joined forces and the Serbs were separate ... From our village, the Croats got up and left, the Muslims stayed and then our people [the Serbs] were left guarding the Muslims ...

In the meantime, on May 6, 1992, Ana, her sister-in-law, and her five month old niece, made the decision to flee from Bosnia.

> Grenades were starting to drop. We were being bombed and there were already casualties ...

Ana, then 21, "didn't know where to go." Ana's sister-in-law, however, suggested that they travel to Serbia where her sister lived. They decided that "it would be better to go there than ... not know where [they were] going or who [they were] going to, especially as [they] had the little baby."

Ana reported that there was a great deal of confusion regarding their evacuation. Civilians were being flown out of the region using army aircraft.

> That morning, we didn't know whether or not ... that day there would be an aeroplane that would come and evacuate us.

By the time Ana, her sister-in-law and her niece arrived at the airport, "the plane was not able to fly over Bosnia." The trio then had to remain at the airport, they could not return home due to the snipers that had surrounded the area. While they waited at the airport, Ana saw "heavily wounded" casualties. The wounded were being airlifted out of the region, and the trio had to go with them in the helicopter.

Ana, her sister-in-law and the baby eventually boarded the aircraft. Due to the danger associated with flying over Bosnia, the group flew down over Montenegro before arriving in Serbia. It took two hours to complete the journey.

The trio left Ana's father and brother behind. While her brother was employed by the army as a painter and, therefore, remained in the army barracks, Ana's father had sold the family home, and moved to the Serbian area of Hercegovina.

Ana reported that everything that remained in her Bosnian home town was destroyed. Houses were torched, including her own family home, and those that remained in the region were slaughtered (see Figure 26). Ana stated that this was established and confirmed by the discovery of human remains.

(photograph taken by Ana's husband)

Figure 26: The remains of Ana's home in Hodbina

After arriving in Belgrade, the trio caught a bus to Novi Sad, and eventually arrived at their destination, a small Serbian village, on May 8.

> When we went to report ourselves as displaced persons, they asked me for my name ... I told them, and then they asked me what I was, and I said, 'Well, Serbian, what do you think? Why would I come here to report as a displaced person if I wasn't Serbian?' And they said, 'It's okay, you can freely speak, you can tell us if you're Croatian.' They thought I was Croatian.

It was here, in this village, that Ana met Zoran (*Zor-un*). Given that Ana had only travelled to Serbia as a result of the war, Zoran stated that "if it wasn't for war, [they] probably never would [have met]. We always said thanks to Milošević and Izetbegović ... if they didn't start the war, we wouldn't be together."

After establishing their relationship, Zoran moved to central Serbia to play semi-professional soccer. At this time, Ana also moved, to nearby

Novi Sad, where she lived with a distant relative. Here, she worked in a boutique.

In 1993, Zoran was asked to migrate to Australia to play soccer. He stated that the world record inflation in Serbia was a factor in his decision to relocate. Zoran was born in Australia, and was sent, with his brother, to Serbia when he was six months old to be cared for by his grandparents. Consequently, he only required an Australian passport to finalise his migration. Zoran arrived in Sydney during September 1993.

Upon his arrival, Zoran prepared an application for Ana to join him in Australia as his fiancée. Two years later, on November 16, 1995, the couple were reunited.

After arriving in Sydney, Ana began working with Zoran in a factory. Twelve months after their reunion, Zoran and Ana married. The following year, in January 1998, the couple moved to South Australia. Their decision was made because of their desire for a quieter lifestyle in a smaller city for their family.

Since arriving in South Australia, Zoran and Ana have become members of the Serbian Orthodox Church community. For Zoran, who was brought up as a Yugoslav Communist, belonging to the Serbian Orthodox community has provided him with an avenue in which to learn about the religion associated with his Serbian identity. The couple's three young daughters are also involved in auxilliary groups in the community.

In Summary

In this chapter, we began by providing a general description of the journey from trauma to transformation as experienced by participants. Following this, six of the stories were presented in a 'chronological' manner. In the next chapter, we discuss the findings of our in-depth analysis of the interview data.

5

Analysis and Discussion of the Interviews

> Everything that I've said is the truth, and I'm not afraid of the truth. (Dejana Janković, participant)

We begin this chapter by providing a summary of the identified commonalities and differences between participants. These similarities and differences are presented in the form of a series of tables, and examine: pre-war; war; migration; and post-migration stages.

As first stated in Chapter 3, analysis of the interview data was an ongoing process that commenced at the end of each interview. The data were analysed in terms of participants' reported experiences. In this chapter, we provide an analysis and discussion of the interview data obtained, going beyond the data presented in the six stories. This analysis is organised into a series of eight themes which emerged from the interviews with all ten participants.

The eight themes that were identified in the interview data are: changing conceptions of ethnic identity in terms of ancestry, geographical location, language, historical time and place, and religion; the role played by social networks before and during the conflicts, and following migration; the continued importance of family throughout participants' lives; the impact of war experiences; experiences and effects of health difficulties; the role of grief and loss; the importance of age and its influences on adaptation; and the importance of lifelong learning.

Following a discussion of the eight themes, we describe three adaptation patterns – active integration, passive integration, and segregation – which were developed from the interview data and analysis. Active integration was associated with participants who embraced opportunities to undertake new learning in the form of education and employment, and were actively involved in the Adelaide Serbian community. Passive integration involved participants taking fewer initiatives and opportunities to integrate than active integrators. Passive integrators were involved in unskilled employment, and were typically the primary financial providers for their families. Like passive integrators, segregators did not pursue language classes, or adopt opportunities for further education and lived primarily within an 'ethnic bubble.' These participants are not involved in paid employment, but choose to undertake voluntary work in the Serbian community.

Participant Commonalities and Differences

In examining the stories, a number of commonalities and differences emerged. These characteristics are presented below as a series of tables.

Table 3 demonstrates the commonalities and differences in participants' social demographics prior to the war in terms of: year and place of birth; number of siblings; family property ownership; and educational and employment status. Note that this table includes the seven participants whose stories appear in this book.

As can be seen, all participants, with the exception of Stefan, were born in former Yugoslavia. All participants had siblings, and had family properties in addition to their normal residences, with the exception of Ana, whose family resided on a village property in Bosnia and Hercegovina.

Prior to the war, all participants were engaged in some form of education or employment with the exception of Branislav, who was awaiting news of his year of compulsory national service.

Table 4 provides a summary of the participants' residence, age, and marital status at the beginning of the conflicts. Two of the participants were involved in relationships, while the other five were single at the beginning of the civil war. In terms of the six stories presented in this publication, participants' ages ranged between 17 and 33 at the onset of civil war in their respective regions. The true age range of all ten participants who were interviewed, however, ranged from 12 to 61 at the time of the civil unrest.

Table 3: Pre-war social demographics of the seven participants whose stories appear in this book

Participant*	Place and Year of Birth	Siblings	Family Property Ownership (Additional to Place of Residence)	Education Level Attained or Employment Before the War
Mia	Croatia, 1976	1 brother	Village property and holiday house, Croatia	Administration clerk
Stefan	European Country, 1968	1 brother 1 half-sister 1 half-brother	Two village properties, Croatia	Assisted with three family businesses
Jelena	Croatia, 1974	1 half-brother	Two village properties, BiH**	Completing agricultural technician training
Beretka	BiH, 1958	1 brother 2 sisters	Village property, BiH	Statistician
Dejana	BiH, 1963	2 brothers 2 sisters	Village property, BiH	Seamstress in a textile factory
Branislav	BiH, 1973	1 sister	Village property and building a house, BiH	Unemployed mechanical engineer (awaiting news of compulsory national service)
Ana	BiH, 1970	1 brother 1 sister	No additional property	Completing traffic technician specialisation

*Denotes pseudonyms (used throughout)
** BiH = Bosnia and Hercegovina

Table 4: Social demographics of participants at the beginning of the conflicts

Participant	Republic of Residence and Year Affected by War	Age at the Beginning of the War	Marital Status at the Beginning of the War
Mia	Croatia, 1991	18	In a relationship
Stefan	Croatia, 1991	23	Single
Jelena	Croatia, 1991	17	Single
Beretka	BiH, 1992	33	Single
Dejana	BiH, 1992	28	Married
Branislav	BiH, 1992	19	Single
Ana	BiH, 1992	21	Single

Table 5 provides a summary of information regarding participants' migration, including: number of years spent in former Yugoslavia from the beginning of the conflicts until migration; the number of attempts made to emigrate; the year of migration to Australia; visa status at the time of migration; significant others who completed the journey with participants; and age at the time of migration.

Table 5: Participant migration information

Participant	Number of Years Between Beginning of War & Migration	Attempts Made to Emigrate	Year of Migration to Australia	Visa Status at Migration	Others Accompanying Participants at Migration	Age at Migration
Mia	7	1	1998	Refugee	Husband	22
Stefan	9	3	2000	Refugee	Wife Child	32
Jelena	9	3	2000	Refugee	Husband Child	26
Beretka	8	3	2000	Refugee	Wife Child	42
Dejana	4	1	1996	Refugee	Husband 2 children	33
Branislav	5	1	1997	Refugee	Mother	24
Ana	3	1	1995	Refugee	Migrated alone	25

It can be seen from this table that the length of time from the beginning of the conflicts to the time of migration varied from three to nine years. While most participants were successful in migrating on their first attempt, three participants made three attempts. The year participants migrated to Australia also varied, from 1995 to 2000. All participants, with the exception of Ana, migrated with family members. Participants' ages at the time of migration varied from 22 to 42. Considering all ten participants who were involved in this study, however, the age at the time of migration varied from 14 to 65.

Finally, Table 6 provides a summary of participants' post-migration demographics, including: the number of years since migration to Australia; levels of English language proficiency; current age; family composition; and employment status.

While three of the participants whose stories appear in this publication made use of the complimentary English course offered to new migrants, only two of these participants (the youngest ones) were

proficient in the English language. Over the course of participants' lives, their family structure had undergone transformation, typically involving marriage. Some participants also had children. Of the seven participants, three were involved in paid employment at the time of the interviews.

Table 6: Participant post-migration information

Participant	Number of Years in Aust. (as at 2009)	Complimentary English Course Completed	Fluent English Speaker	Age (as at 2009)	Family Composition (as at 2009)	Employment Status (as at 2009)
Mia	11	Yes	Yes	33	Married with 3 children	Home duties
Stefan	9	No	No	41	Lives with wife, daughter and father-in-law	Truck driver
Jelena	9	No	Yes	35	Lives with husband, daughter, and father	Home duties
Beretka	9	Yes	No	51	Married with 4 children	Pensioner
Dejana	13	No	No	46	Married with 2 children	Self-employed
Branislav	12	Yes	Yes	36	Lives with mother and sister	IT technician
Ana	14	No	No	39	Married with 3 children	Home duties

We now describe the eight themes arising from the interview data. These themes were mentioned at the beginning of this chapter.

Changing Conceptions of Ethnic Identity

Participants' ethnic identification is extremely important and complex as demonstrated through the diversity of responses regarding questions pertaining to ethnicity. This complexity is due to multiple influences which have shaped, and continue to shape, participants' ethnic identities. These influences, namely, ancestry, geographical location,

language, historical time and place, religion, and migration, are represented in Figure 27. We now examine each of these influences in turn.

Figure 27: Diagram representing the major influences on Serbian ethnic identity

Ethnic identity as ancestral

All participants cited the ethnicity of their parents as a determinant of their own ethnic identity. Dejana stated that “all [her] ancestors were Serbs,” and she always knew that she was Serbian. Similarly, Stefan and Jelena reported that they were always aware of their Serbian identity.

Mia was not conscious of her ethnic identity until ethnic tension triggered discussions amongst her friends prior to the outbreak of war. She appealed to her parents in order to understand and determine her ethnicity. During this conversation, Mia discovered that her mother was Serbian and her father was Croatian. She identifies as both a Serb and a Croat, thereby acknowledging her heritage, but stated that she considers herself more Serbian than Croatian.

Ethnic identity in relation to geographical location

All of the participants were born in former Yugoslavia, with the exception of one participant, who was born in another European country. Despite the fact that all participants were born outside of today’s republic of Serbia, they all maintain a Serbian identity, suggesting that, for these people, ethnic identification is not related to

geographical birthplace. The concept of geographical birthplace as a factor of ethnic identity, however, was explored with participants. Those who were born in Croatia (with the exception of Mia) were particularly adamant that they would never consider themselves Croatian, and some appeared to find the concept illogical and absurd.

For participants who were born in the republic of Bosnia and Hercegovina, ethnicity in relation to birthplace is more complicated. As this region of former Yugoslavia was, and is, home to Bošnjaks, Serbs, and Croats, identifying as 'Bosnian' does not adequately define participants from this area. Branislav stated that he refers to himself as a 'Serb from Bosnia.' Beretka, Dejana and Ana identify as Serbs, not based on their birthplace, but on their parents' ethnicity (that is, their ancestry).

Ethnic identity in relation to language

Prior to 1990, Serbo-Croatian was the official language of former Yugoslavia. There are two main differences between Serbian and Croatian. Firstly, while Croatian uses a Latin alphabet, the Serbian language uses two alphabets – Latin and Cyrillic. Secondly, the two languages can be distinguished by their dialect. Language is, therefore, a marker of ethnicity.

Since the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s, 'Bosnian' has become a recognised language used by Bošnjaks. While the language is very similar to Serbian and Croatian, the dialect distinguishes the three languages. Dejana is very opposed to this recognition, given the small number of changes to include Turkish words. She suggested that this is yet another injustice against the Serbs. Other participants also alluded to the difficulty they had in coming to terms with this newly recognised language.

Ethnic identity and the influence of historical time and place

All participants lived in former Yugoslavia during the 40 year period of Communist rule. During this time, all forms of ethnic aspiration were suppressed, and the people of former Yugoslavia were simply referred to as 'Yugoslavs'. Ana's husband, Zoran, who grew up in Serbia, stated that "[he] was a true Yugoslav ... [He] grew up in ... Communism ... and that's how [his caregivers] taught [him]." Similarly, Beretka considered himself a 'Yugoslav' prior to the conflicts, when he became the first member of his family to become a Communist. He stated: "I relinquished my Serbian identity and became a Yugoslav." Beretka "completely lost the feelings of belonging to [his] nationality and

religion ... [he] felt like a Yugoslav ... and an atheist." He later discovered that the Communist Party no longer appealed to him, eventually withdrawing his membership in 1990 as ethnic nationalism began to take hold.

All participants reported that ethnic (and religious) difference was not a point of contention prior to the 1990s, and that people of different ethnicities lived together in harmony. In some cases, participants were not even aware of the ethnic identities of their friends and colleagues.

At the onset of civil war in the 1990s, nationalist leaders persuaded and, at times, coerced the people of former Yugoslavia to adopt strong ethnic identities. The people of former Yugoslavia then began to reconstruct and redefine their ethnic identities in relation to their ethnic counterparts, resulting in ethnic polarisation.

Ethnic identity in relation to religion

Former Yugoslavia was, and is, a religiously diverse region, where western Christianity, eastern Orthodoxy, and Islam are practised. Faith is a defining feature of ethnic identification for Balkan people, where: Croats and Slovenes are predominantly Catholic; Serbs, Montenegrins and Macedonians are typically Orthodox; and Bošnjaks and Albanian Kosovars are mainly Muslim. Identifying as an Orthodox Christian is, therefore, a strong indicator of Serbian ethnicity.

As previously mentioned, participants' religious identities and their ability to practise their religion were suppressed by the Communist government prior to the civil conflicts. These sanctions affected participants to varying degrees.

Branislav's family is very religious and, during the Communist era, actively maintained their religious identity and were good friends with the local priest and monastics. Despite the removal of religious prohibitions at this time, Branislav reported a social stigma associated with religious worship.

While a number of participants reported attending their local Orthodox Churches on major feast days, a few participants did not cite formal Orthodox religious practise as part of their pre-war lives. The absence of a religious identity in Mia's story could be due to her family's mixed ethnicity. Stefan predominantly spent time with Croats, and would attend the Catholic Church with his friends to celebrate Christmas. He rarely celebrated Orthodox Christmas.

Ethnic identity following migration

Participants' current ethnic identities have been shaped, in part, by what has happened since the Communist era. This is consistent with the notion that people construct multiple identities that they emphasise in different contexts. Like their Serbian identity, participants' Australian identities are complex, as demonstrated through the diversity of responses associated with these questions.

Co-existing ethnic identities: Serbian and Australian

Four participants identify as Serbs with Australian citizenship. Their Australian identity, therefore, refers only to the documentation of their citizenship. Interestingly, these participants were born in the republic of Bosnia and Hercegovina. Given that there were (and still are) Serbs, Croats, and Bošnjaks living in Bosnia and Hercegovina, identifying as a 'Bosnian' does not adequately identify the ethnic group to which an individual belongs. For the four participants who were born in this republic, the complexity of their Bosnian/Serbian identity may have contributed to the way they identify as Australians.

Two participants described their ethnicity in 'either/or' terms and, in both cases, their Australian identities were seen as secondary to their Serbian identities. Interestingly, these two participants were the youngest (14 and 22 years of age at the time of migration). In contrast, for the two oldest participants (aged 50 and 65 at the time of migration), their Serbian identity was secondary to their identities as Australians. The predominance of their Australian identity is likely out of respect for Australia in having provided their family with opportunities that they may otherwise not have had.

Three participants define their ethnicity in terms of the proportion of the Serbian and Australian identity that constitutes their overall ethnic identity. Stefan, and Zoran, who was born in Australia but spent the first 23 years of his life in Serbia, stated that they considered themselves half Serbian, and half Australian. Jelena stated that "[she] feel[s] 70 per cent Serbian, only 30 per cent Australian."

Evolution of the public image of the Serb

All participants were of the opinion that the Serbs were grossly misrepresented in the media throughout the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s. When asked to comment on the current public image of the Serbs, however, participants' responses were diverse.

A number of participants believed that the public image of Serbs had improved since the 1990s. Three participants, however, reported that

they thought the public image of the Serbs had deteriorated since the Balkan conflicts. It is possible that this perception may be a result of their individual and family's experiences in Australia, where their Serbian ethnicity was negatively judged.

Ana stated, "When you say you're Serbian, they give you one of those looks. They ask you, 'Where are you from?' and you say, 'From Serbia'. They stand back and give you one of those looks [of disgust and disdain] ... You can see the reaction of their faces." Stefan's previous employer also judged the Serbian identity by questioning the atrocities committed by Slobodan Milošević. This angered Stefan, causing him to question why his employer had not considered the actions of other nationalist leaders during the 1990s. Stefan and Jelena's daughter also experienced discrimination when she was told that "her skin is too dark ... that she is not pure." Stefan put this down to "children joking," and did not react to this.

Dejana stated that there have been no public images of the Serbs as having suffered from the conflicts of the 1990s. Zoran became despondent with the one-sided reporting of the 1999 Kosovo conflict, and wrote letters to the media voicing his opinion. In response, he received letters of apology from the journalists who covered these events. Zoran concluded by suggesting that the only way "to get the public opinion on your side," and to improve the Serbian image, is to pay for stories to be published.

Evolution of the religious identity

Following their migration, all participants joined the Adelaide Serbian Orthodox community. Participants' individual Serbian identities are, therefore, likely to have been crucially shaped by the context of the collective Serbian culture. The notion that individual identity is shaped by the culture of an ethnic community is consistent with that described by Čolić-Peiser (2003).

The majority of participants reported regular church attendance as being integral to their religious (and, therefore, ethnic) identity. Similarly, church worship became a feature (albeit an occasional practice) of Mia's and Ana's ethnic identities. A number of possible explanations have emerged for the seemingly increased importance of religion. Firstly, participants may be exercising their right to freely practise religion where it had been previously suppressed – a legacy of the Communist era. For Zoran, who was brought up as a Yugoslav Communist, being affiliated with the church community creates opportunities to learn about Orthodoxy. Secondly, participants'

experiences of trauma during the 1990s may have reinforced, or enhanced, their religious belief (for example, Dejana and Branislav) (for more details see 'The Impact of War Experiences'). Thirdly, the church community is an avenue through which new relationships can be established with other Serbs – with people who speak the same language. We discuss this idea further in the following section concerning the role played by wider social networks.

In 2008, Mia and her children were christened in the Orthodox faith, suggesting that a religious identity had become an important element of Mia's ethnic identity. There are a number of possible explanations for this decision to become a member of the Orthodox Church. Firstly, this decision may have been made on the basis that Orthodoxy is a marker for Serbian ethnicity. Secondly, because of her 'mixed' Serbo-Croatian identity, becoming Orthodox may have created a stronger sense of belonging to the Serbian Orthodox community, thereby enabling her to associate more freely with other Serbs in the community. Thirdly, Mia may have desired that her family belong to a common faith. Having said this, Mia stated that she continues to celebrate Catholic and Orthodox Christmas and Easter with her family.

Ethnic identification: The next generation

All participants who were parents reported that their children's ethnic identity is shaped by both the Australian and Serbian cultures, where their Serbian identity is secondary to their identity as Australians. All of these children, to varying extents, speak Serbian with their parents. These children are, therefore, likely to retain the language as an element of their Serbian identity.

Mia, Stefan and Jelena, and Dejana stated that their children are more Australian than they are Serbian. Similarly, Ana and Zoran are teaching their children that they are Australian with a Serbian background. Beretka believes that his children have both an Australian and a Serbian identity because of their ability to speak both English and Serbian. He is, however, fearful that his family's future generations will lose their Serbian identity.

The Role Played by Social Networks

Prior to the war

As previously discussed, all participants reported that they had good relationships with their neighbours, where ethnic disparity was not seen as cause for division prior to the outbreak of war. The relationships

between participants and their neighbours could be characterised as reciprocal, providing each other with practical and emotional support, and friendship. For example, Dejana lived next door to a Bošnjak family of nine, with whom she had a close relationship. Beretka, who lived in rural Bosnia, reported that relationships amongst village dwellers were of even greater importance than for those in urban areas, as the relationships amongst villagers prevented the development of feelings of social isolation.

The outbreak of war

The civil unrest in former Yugoslavia in the early 1990s was characterised by ethnic polarisation. This ethnic division was promoted by agitators and government officials. It filtered down to local communities and neighbourhoods disrupting interactions between people belonging to different ethnic groups. This 'ripple effect' impacted upon every level of social network. Ethnic discord and the subsequent shattering of social networks were reflected in each participant's story. In this study, participants reported that the conversion from ethnic tension to civil war appeared to occur 'overnight.' They were in disbelief, and unable to comprehend how their social networks had crumbled around them.

For all participants, social networks were altered as a practical consequence of social displacement; all participants were forced to flee their homes, becoming refugees. This resulted in the formation of new social connections which provided practical and emotional support.

Amidst the establishment of new social networks, Branislav became distrusting of others. While seeking refuge in a cement bunker during the bombing, Branislav's mistrust of others who were sharing the bunker prevented him from sleeping. "In war ... you can see real people's faces ... someone that you trusted a lot and that you thought was your friend, it was shown as opposite." Beretka and Dejana also reported that their experiences of the war caused them to lose trust and faith in people. This distrust is likely to have been fuelled by gossip, described by all participants as the main form of communication during the civil conflicts.

Post-migration social networks

Following migration, all participants became involved in the Adelaide Serbian Orthodox Church community, to varying degrees, demonstrating a fundamental need for social connection and a sense of belonging (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). This belonging is demonstrated

in participants' reported involvement in church auxiliary groups such as the Kolo Srpski Sestara (Circle of the Serbian Sisters), folk dancing, Serbian language school, and the church choir which involve varying degrees of commitment. Regardless of the extent of their involvement, all participants demonstrated a desire to maintain their individual identity within the context of the collective Serbian culture. In addition to shaping identity, the community also provides an avenue for the exchange of information, and social support, which is consistent with the findings of Čolić-Peisker (2003).

There are alternative explanations for participants actively involving themselves in the Serbian community, while others did not. Firstly, family and employment commitments influence the amount of time participants are able to devote to community involvement. Secondly, involvement in the Serbian community can prove difficult for those whose families include 'mixed marriages' (that is, between Serbs and Croats, or Serbs and Bošnjaks). This is an issue particularly if members of the community voice their negative, fixed views about non-Serbian ethnic groups. Such confrontations can obviously make individuals uncomfortable, reducing their desire to be associated with the community. For those involved in mixed marriages, associating with the Serbian community can also create conflict within the family. Thirdly, others may simply not want to become engaged in the internal politics that inevitably operates within any community organisation. Two participants reported incidents of internal conflict which has led to their withdrawal from certain factions within the community. Despite this, these participants reported active involvement in community life.

From the responses to questions pertaining to current social networks beyond the family, no participants cited an extensive group of close friends. All participants, independent of age, typically cited three to four families with whom they were close, and these social networks typically consisted solely of Serbian families. Two questions emerge from this finding. Firstly, what factors have influenced participants in establishing relationships *within* the Adelaide Serbian community? Secondly, what factors have influenced participants' establishment of relationships within the broader Australian community (or, rather, lack thereof)?

Alternate explanations exist for the perceived reluctance to form extensive, close relationships with members of the Adelaide Serbian community. The experiences of betrayal and shattered social networks during the war may have instilled in them, a distrust and suspicion of others. This mistrust of others may have been exacerbated by the

misinformation distributed during the conflicts, and could have shaped their focus on the immediate family and resulted in a distancing of themselves from others who were deemed unreliable. Participants' needs for friendship and practical and social support were generally met by their immediate families, thereby removing the need for relationships with others. 'Mixed' ethnicity may also have served as a barrier to establishing close relationships with members of the Serbian community. As previously discussed, those involved in relationships with others of different ethnicities can be negatively received by members of the community, thereby impeding their perceived trustworthiness and likely value as friends.

Another possible explanation shaping selective association with other Serbs may be their perceived commonality in terms of historical time and place (that is, forming associations with those from the same area in former Yugoslavia, and those who share similar experiences). Branislav stated that "you are much closer to ... people ... [who] share the same experience ... Some people, they haven't experienced what you have ... they really don't understand you ..." Stefan reported that he chooses to associate with other former Yugoslavs, particularly those who migrated during the 1990s. While Stefan's associations may be based on commonality of experience, he reported that he never discusses his experiences of the Croatian conflict with his close friends. Having endured the 'unspeakable' possibly represents a commonality of experience that may be an underlying point of contact. Furthermore, Branislav reported difficulties in forming relationships with other members of the Serbian community (that is, those who migrated to Australia prior to the 1990s, or those who were born in Australia). This suggests that, while these people share a common Serbian identity, disparate geographical contexts of time and place can create cultural distance and can be obstacles to a shared sense of similarity. Perceived similarity has long been recognised as an important factor in shaping friendship (Rose, 2002).

One participant cited a limited command of the English language as an impediment to establishing relationships with English speaking Australians. This is perhaps the major factor impeding the development of relationships with members of the wider Australian community. For the participants whose English skills are limited, a common language is also likely to shape their selective association in terms of the relationships they form, and the communities to which they belong. That is, selective association with those in the Adelaide Serbian community may also be influenced by commonality of language.

The Importance of Family

All participants in this study indicated that family is of critical importance to them, citing the immediate family unit as the major source of support and companionship. Family, for these participants, has remained a significant and crucial element of their lives, despite structural transformation over time. From the reported experiences of family relationships, it is evident that, despite the various challenges participants reported, family remains a major source of friendship, support, and life structure.

Pre-migration

Participants' pre-war lives were largely orientated around family. For example, many participants reported that, as children, they would be expected to assist in tending their families' village properties. Participants also reported spending time with their families on holiday.

Prior to, and during the outbreak of war, participants reported a determination to keep their families together. Prior to the war, Ana's mother died. At 17, Ana ceased her education in order to care for the family. Similarly, during the Bosnian conflict, Dejana's husband was incarcerated, and Dejana chose to remain in Sarajevo to be near him.

Post-migration

Beretka and Dejana found it very difficult to leave former Yugoslavia because of the family they were forced to leave behind. For Dejana, migration was made more difficult as her parents were unsupportive of her decision. In contrast, Mia and Jelena's parents also migrated to Australia and they reported that being geographically close to their families has greatly assisted them in adapting to life in Australia.

Stefan and Jelena cited the maintenance of their immediate family structure following migration as a key achievement, particularly as many couples had separated since migrating. When asked to consider the causes of marital separation among couples who migrated to Australia as a result of the Balkan conflicts, Jelena suggested a breakdown of traditional familial roles. That is, the couples she knew of who had separated following their migration experienced difficulty in adapting to Australian concepts of family, roles, expectations, and authority structures. This is consistent with findings that refugees can encounter conflicting models of family after migration, which can be a cause for marital separation (Snyder et al., 2005; Women's Health Statewide and The Migrant Health Service, 2005). This finding is also

consistent with the notion that following migration, individuals' identities and social roles undergo transformation (Murray et al., 2008).

In addition to conflicting models of family, other causes of marital separation can be considered. Jelena's own parents separated following their migration to Australia. They had wanted to divorce years earlier, but the outbreak of war prevented this from becoming finalised. Marital conflict prior to the 1990s is a possible cause for separation in some instances. Branislav's parents also separated after migrating to Australia. Branislav cited his parents' mental health difficulties, likely secondary to wartime experiences, as the cause of their separation.

All participants (including those who do not have children) reported a desire to build a better life for their children. This was a commonly cited factor in influencing the decision to emigrate. For Mia and Ana, their children are their most important achievement since arriving in Australia. For Mia, family is "all [she] talk[s] about." Beretka is also very proud of his children, particularly as they all speak Serbian. For him, "family is everything." Similarly, for Dejana, her family is the "most important thing [she has]." Her main priority is to ensure that her children are cared for, and to see that "they make something of themselves."

Family structure

By informally observing the interactions between participants and their families, it is clear that Serbian families are highly patriarchal. For example, in observing simple exchanges between spouses concerning food preparation and housework, females appear to follow the directions of their male partners. In applying this notion of the patriarchal Serbian family to the process of migration and adaptation, it is possible that female family members may not have been active in the associated decision-making. Similarly, their level of involvement in wider social networks was seen to be influenced by family structure. Household duties are typically performed by women, and women are the primary care providers for their children. Consequently, their time to commit to the wider community may be limited. Female partners are also typically financially dependent on their male partners.

The Impact of War Experiences

At the beginning of the unrest in Bosnia, Dejana feared for her future. Prior to the outbreak of war, she made the decision to leave her job at the Bošnjak textile factory. Dejana made this decision to avoid being becoming a targeted individual for Bošnjak extremists.

During the war, Branislav was unable to access accurate and reliable information and, as a result, found it very difficult to make decisions regarding the future. The impact of this misinformation was exacerbated when communication between Branislav's town and the wider Serbian community was disrupted. Branislav then became even more fearful about the future. His family was unable to decide whether to remain in the town, or flee as refugees. Both alternatives involved possible advantages, but also created uncertainties, and possessed risks.

To varying degrees, all participants endured bombardments during the civil conflicts of the 1990s. For Ana, the threat to her physical safety caused by direct shelling resulted in her decision to flee her Bosnian home. For Dejana, the experience of bombing during the 1992 Bosnian war continues to have an effect on her. Each time Dejana hears thunder, she is reminded of the sound of grenades being fired. When she hears thunder, she experiences severe stomach cramps, and refuses to leave her home.

As Zoran (Ana's husband) was returning to Serbia after completing his compulsory year of national service, the bus he was on was stopped by Croatian paramilitary agents. He was ordered off the bus and beaten. Upon discovering that he was born in Australia, the commanding officer let him go, as they had similar backgrounds. "Being born in Australia saved [his] life." From this threatening situation, Zoran saw this as the "final sign that [he] should be here [in Australia]." From this experience, therefore, Zoran made the decision to migrate to Australia.

As refugees, Stefan and Jelena faced practical challenges that impeded the level of care they could show to their young child. Stefan sought employment in order to financially support the family. An additional practical challenge facing the couple was access to nutritional food. The food that was provided at the refugee camp lacked nutritional value and, as Jelena reported, "Even pigs eat better than that." This is consistent with the idea that in times of crisis, the task of caring for the family becomes extremely difficult, and is influenced by practical challenges that arise (Heymann, 2006). The couple's experiences as refugees prompted their decision to migrate, in order to provide the family with a better future.

During the Bosnian conflict, Branislav was involved in voluntary community work to assist in re-establishing his home town. Part of his work involved digging graves for dead civilians and soldiers. From these experiences, Branislav began to think more seriously about life and death. Similarly, Jelena's experiences have caused her to view life

differently, and she acknowledges that she has become desensitised towards certain things. Jelena also stated that she approaches issues differently to others. What others may find a source of stress, Jelena considers “minor issues that are not worth worrying about.”

During interviews, Dejana described the fears she had about migrating. “The thing I was most scared of is that we would be dropped in the desert, and I was scared of the Aborigines.” At school, Dejana had learnt about the European invasion of Australia. “We know how we feel when our land has been taken away from us, by the Muslims ... and we thought that the Aboriginals would feel exactly the same. That’s what we feared most.”

The Experiences and Impact of Health Difficulties

Participants reported a number of different health difficulties during the Balkan conflicts. These challenges, involving both physical and mental health issues, continue to be problematic for some participants.

As mentioned earlier, Jelena was heavily pregnant when she fled her Croatian home, travelling in a cavalcade. After arriving in Belgrade, she experienced false labour pains and was taken to the maternity hospital. Here, she was informed that she would give birth to a stillborn child. After refusing to believe this, Jelena left the hospital at which point her labour pains had ceased. She later had her baby while living in the refugee camp.

Prior to fleeing his Bosnian home to seek refuge, Beretka was employed in a department that managed records of those who had been killed during the war; a job for which he did not believe he was properly qualified. At this time, he was residing in a hotel with refugees and officials. Beretka reported that the environment was not conducive to his wellbeing, and he developed clinical depression which required treatment. In the meantime, Beretka and his family fled their home, finding an empty house near Banja Luka. During their stay, Beretka’s mother contracted pneumonia and his grandfather was frail. These family health worries, coupled with his difficult job and minimal income took a further toll on his mental health. After moving to Montenegro to stay with his brother and sister-in-law, he began indulging in alcohol which interacted with his antidepressant medication, resulting in marked aggressive behaviour and his eventual hospitalisation. After arriving in Australia, Beretka was diagnosed with bipolar disorder which today is effectively managed with antidepressants. Beretka’s experiences provide evidence for the notion

that refugees can encounter a series of prolonged traumas and experience multiple losses (Kinzie, 2007). Unfortunately for Beretka, these multiple challenges took their toll on his mental health and wellbeing, and impacted on his ability to cope with new situations and his ability to adapt following migration. The timing of these stressors is also likely to have significantly contributed to Beretka's mental health difficulties.

Prior to the start of the Bosnian war, Branislav's parents both encountered mental health difficulties arising from the financial pressures associated with building a new home. During the conflict, Branislav's father was incarcerated by Croats after documentation about his Serbian Democratic Party membership was discovered. During the period of his incarceration, Branislav's father was most likely tortured. Branislav's mother suffered a nervous breakdown resulting from her experiences during the war. She was resistant to the idea of emigrating, and subsequently found it difficult to adapt to life in Australia in light of continued mental health challenges. After the family was reunited in Australia in 1997, Branislav's parents were unable to re-establish their relationship and, in 1998, as a result of multiple stressors, the couple separated.

Dejana reported that she has "come out unscathed mentally, but [her husband] has been totally psychologically shaken." Dejana's husband continues to suffer as a result of the torture he endured throughout his four-year incarceration during the Bosnian conflict. He takes a number of different medications "just to function" normally each day. Dejana's husband also has nightmares each night which result in broken sleep; he awakens, shaking and screaming. This supports evidence that the psychological wounds of war continue to bear on an individual's life for years after the initial trauma (Lopes Cardozo et al., 2003). The impact of these post-traumatic symptoms understandably takes its toll on the family as described by Dejana and her daughter, and is consistent with the notion that traumatised individuals and poor mental health of one family member can have repercussions for other members, and the overall family unit. Furthermore, Dejana reported that her son experienced early developmental delay in learning to speak. In addition, the boy mirrored his father's symptoms of broken sleep. This supports the notion that war-related trauma may have a multigenerational dimension (Lopes Cardozo et al., 2003). Dejana's husband has also sustained physical injuries from his incarceration. His hearing is impaired as a result of the beatings he received.

Despite the effect that Dejana's husband's poor mental health had on the family, Dejana's resilience appears to have been a positive influence on all members of the family, particularly her children. This is consistent with previous findings (Jensen & Shaw, 1993; Jones, 2004; Murray et al., 2008). The contrast between Dejana's coping skills and those of her husband highlight the sheer complexity of interdependent relationships that can exist within a family.

The Role of Grief and Loss

Regardless of age, all participants reported multiple losses of social and material resources. Experiences of displacement, shattered networks, and the destruction of personal property, for example, can result in mourning (Figley, 1986). When these losses are seen to be irreplaceable, individuals can experience continued grieving. Based upon participants' reports of ongoing grief, it is evident that participants cope differently with the losses associated with their pre-war lives, and experiences of the Balkan conflicts. Such feelings provide insights into participants' approaches to migration and adaptation.

Branislav reported feelings of excitement when he initially arrived in Australia, but soon began to feel nostalgic. He acknowledged the difficulty in dealing with the future in light of the past. Initially, Stefan and Jelena also grieved for their losses, but "not anymore."

Some participants (for example, Stefan) acknowledged a desire to look towards the future, and "forget" the past. Neither Stefan nor Jelena share their experiences of the war with anyone, including their daughter, who does not know how her grandfather (Stefan's father) died. Jelena believes that Stefan is not ready to share this story with their daughter, and thinks that she is still too young to understand. Similarly, Dejana is reluctant to discuss her wartime experiences with her children, and feels uncomfortable when others discuss the war in front of her husband and children. When Dejana's daughter asks about this, Dejana simply says: "That was then and this is now, and we just need to move on."

Beretka stated that "[he] never knew what nostalgia was until [he] migrated to Australia." When asked about the difficulty of letting go of painful memories, Beretka stated that "life is difficult, not only during wartime." Beretka finds the preservation of Serbian language, culture and religion "very difficult here." This has prompted him to consider returning with his family to live in Bosnia in an attempt to regain that

which he lost as a result of the Bosnian war, but acknowledges that the region is "very politically, economically and socially unstable." When he becomes grief-stricken, Beretka contacts his friends and family in former Yugoslavia who assure him that his family leads a much better life in Australia. Mia also reported ongoing grief, both for the loss of her close social networks, and for the country itself. She appeared to be very unsettled in Australia and, like Beretka, has contemplated returning to former Yugoslavia to live. In contrast, Dejana would never consider returning to live in Bosnia because of the trauma she experienced there, stating that "[she] would rather go and beg on the street than go back there [to Bosnia]."

The Importance of Age and Life Stage

The effect that an adverse event will have on an individual is critically determined by their age and, by extension, their world view. This was demonstrated in this study, where the age of all ten participants ranged from 14 to 65 at the time of migration. Age is also pivotal in determining an individual's willingness (and ability) to undertake new learning in the form of education and employment. Age also influences the types of education and employment opportunities made available to an individual. Refer to Table 5 for a summary of the seven participants whose stories appear in this book, and their respective ages at the time of migration.

According to Čolić-Peisker (2002), age is a factor that influences an individual's ability to learn a new language. The three oldest participants in this study were aged 65, 50, and 42 at the time of migration. These participants reported difficulty in learning English, and currently possess only basic skills. In contrast, the three youngest participants, aged 14, 22, and 24 at the time of migration, respectively, reported fewer difficulties in grasping an initially foreign language and, consequently, are more fluent in the English language. This illustrates, however, that people are presented with different opportunities at different ages.

The three youngest participants reported a willingness to undertake further education in Australia. While Beretka, aged 42 at the time of emigration, demonstrated a willingness to undertake further study, he acknowledged that his age (and his poor mental health) contributed to the difficulties he encountered.

The three youngest participants were able to find paid employment easily and, in all three cases, their employment was directly related to

the further study they completed. In contrast, the three oldest participants have not been involved in paid employment. One of these participants had reached pension age by the time he migrated to Australia. For the other two participants, their lack of involvement in paid employment is most likely influenced by their limited command of the English language which is, again, influenced by their age.

The older a person is at the time of migration, the more they stand to lose. That is, older participants had more established financial, material, educational and employment assets than younger participants prior to the war. The age of participants is also likely to have influenced their perceptions about migration. Older participants reported feeling fearful about moving to a new country, and were sceptical about how they would contribute to Australian society, and how they would learn the language given their ages. In contrast, however, the three youngest participants were focused on the future, reporting feelings of excitement about migrating, and considered their available opportunities.

The Importance of Lifelong Learning

An individual's perceived personal efficacy will influence their decisions and behaviour and willingness to undertake new learning (Bandura, 1977). Following an adverse life event, an individual's self-efficacy expectations will determine whether they employ coping strategies, how much effort will be expended, and how long these strategies are sustained (Bandura, 1977). In terms of the learning associated with adaptation, individuals displayed a tendency to avoid and fear situations which are perceived to exceed their strategies of coping. In addition, the opportunities made available to undertake new learning were influenced by participants' ages.

All participants, regardless of age, have been faced with learning to adapt, reinforcing the concept that learning is a lifelong process (Adams, 2007). The success of the adaptation process is, no doubt, dependent on the level of engagement with new learning, as discussed below.

Adapting to the Australian community

Learning English

Learning the dominant language of the host country is a key challenge of resettlement for immigrants who wish to fully integrate (Burgoyne & Hull, 2007). Only four participants are able to speak English fluently

(that is, are able to conduct a conversation). Five participants chose to complete the complimentary English course offered to new migrants. Of these five participants, only Branislav and Mia, 24 and 22 years of age at migration, respectively, are able to speak conversational English. The other three participants who completed the English course were 65, 50 and 42 years of age, respectively. Dejana, Ana, Stefan and Jelena chose not to use this service. For Dejana and Ana, the decision not to learn English in this way was influenced by their familial roles and commitments. For Stefan, the desire to seek employment outweighed the desire to learn English. Despite Jelena's decision not to use this service, she is a very competent English speaker, most likely due to the influence of her teenage daughter, who speaks English at home – a point of contention for Stefan. The youngest participant, who was 14 years old at the time of migration, learnt English at the Adelaide Secondary School of English.

Participants who are able to speak English have heavy accents, which is a cultural symbol indicating otherness (Čolić-Peisker, 2002). This can have implications for future employment opportunities and the development of close relationships with Australians (Čolić-Peisker, 2002).

While individual differences can affect language acquisition (for example, having a 'flair' for languages), age is also an important factor (Čolić-Peisker, 2002). That is, children are able to naturally acquire language skills through their schooling; adults, however, must allocate special time and effort to language acquisition (Čolić-Peisker, 2002). In addition, poor mental health can also be a barrier to learning English, as acknowledged by Beretka. Individuals experiencing poor mental health may be reluctant to put themselves into potentially stressful situations, such as learning English, which could exacerbate these difficulties, particularly if supportive others are absent.

For the six participants for whom there is a language barrier, they could be considered to occupy an "ethnic bubble" (Čolić-Peisker, 2002, p. 156). Given the provision of facilities such as local Serbian businesses, and Serbian-speaking social workers, lawyers, doctors and priests, these participants (and other non-English speaking Serbian migrants) are essentially able to live in "ethnic isolation" which is consistent with the findings of Čolić-Peisker (2002, p. 156). Consistent with the findings of Khawaja and colleagues (2008), this isolation from the wider Australian community, resulting from the language barrier, is likely to have influenced participants' adaptation following migration.

Undertaking further education

Four participants have completed further education since arriving in Australia. Mia completed an advanced diploma in tourism, and has studied Spanish. The youngest participant completed secondary school, and went on to complete tertiary education. Since his migration to Australia, Beretka has completed a Certificate III in English and a Certificate II in Community Health Food Service, but reported difficulties in pursuing further study as previously discussed. Branislav completed general and advanced English courses in addition to the complimentary English course, and has completed an information technology course at TAFE. For the three youngest participants, the further education they undertook has assisted them in finding paid skilled employment in their respective fields of study.

The decision not to pursue further education for the remaining six participants is likely to have been shaped by multiple factors. For younger female participants, family commitments, such as caring for children, may have limited their availability to undertake courses. For Stefan, the desire to find employment and to begin financially supporting his family outweighed any aspiration he may have had for further study. Age and extensive previous study, particularly for older participants, may have impeded their desire and willingness to study further. Possessing only a basic command of the English language is also likely to impede the decision to undertake further education, as suggested by Čolić-Peisker (2002).

Undertaking employment

New learning can also take the form of seeking out a new career. Following their migration to Australia, none of the participants continued to work in the same field in which they were employed prior to the war. There are a number of suggestions for this. Firstly, qualifications obtained in former Yugoslavia may not be recognised in Australia, requiring further study which, as previously discussed, can be impeded by a number of factors. Secondly, participants may have found the work prior to the war unsatisfying, thereby, prompting their decision to actively seek out new career paths.

At the time of the interviews, three participants were involved in paid employment. Stefan is a truck driver, Dejana is self-employed, and Branislav works as a computer technician. Mia, Jelena, and Ana are stay-at-home mothers, and the husbands of these women provide their families' main source of income. Of these three families, only Jelena's family received financial assistance from the government to

supplement her husband's income. The three oldest participants also reported that they received financial assistance from the government.

Although they were not involved in paid employment, the three oldest participants reported involvement in voluntary work within the Serbian community. In addition, Dejana works in the Serbian community in a voluntary capacity. For Dejana, being able to work both in her business and in the Serbian community has positively assisted her to cope with the trauma she experienced during the Bosnian war. Branislav also reported that working helped him to cope with his situation throughout the Bosnian war.

Adapting to the Adelaide Serbian community

In addition to learning to adapt to the Australian community, participants also had to learn to adapt to the South Australian Serbian community. As previously discussed, Branislav reported difficulties in establishing social networks within the community due to the disparity in terms of geographical and historical contexts. The culture of the Adelaide Serbian community differs to that of the Serbian culture in former Yugoslavia during the 1990s. Participants had to learn to adapt to this community in addition to the Australian community. The Adelaide Serbian community also became transformed by the new wave of Serbian refugees that migrated during the 1990s. This microcosm of cultural change is consistent with the broader multicultural processes described by Berry (2001), where attitudinal and behavioural change is a mutual process between those entering the dominant society, and those receiving new immigrants.

Patterns of Adaptation

From this analysis of the interview data, it is evident that there are a number of factors that influenced participants' adaptation following the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s. Figure 28 illustrates the factors which have shaped participants' adaptation. As can be seen, these factors operate in complex and interconnected ways.

Participants' reported experiences of the civil unrest in former Yugoslavia, and the challenges resulting from these encounters, have profoundly influenced their ability to adapt and, more generally, their life course. The extent to which participants' ethnic identification involved both a Serbian and an Australian identity provides an indication of the extent to which they have adapted to life in Australia. The level of support provided by family members and close social networks has shaped participants' process of adaptation. Age is a

critical factor which has impacted upon participants' ability to undertake new learning which has contributed to their overall adaptation process.

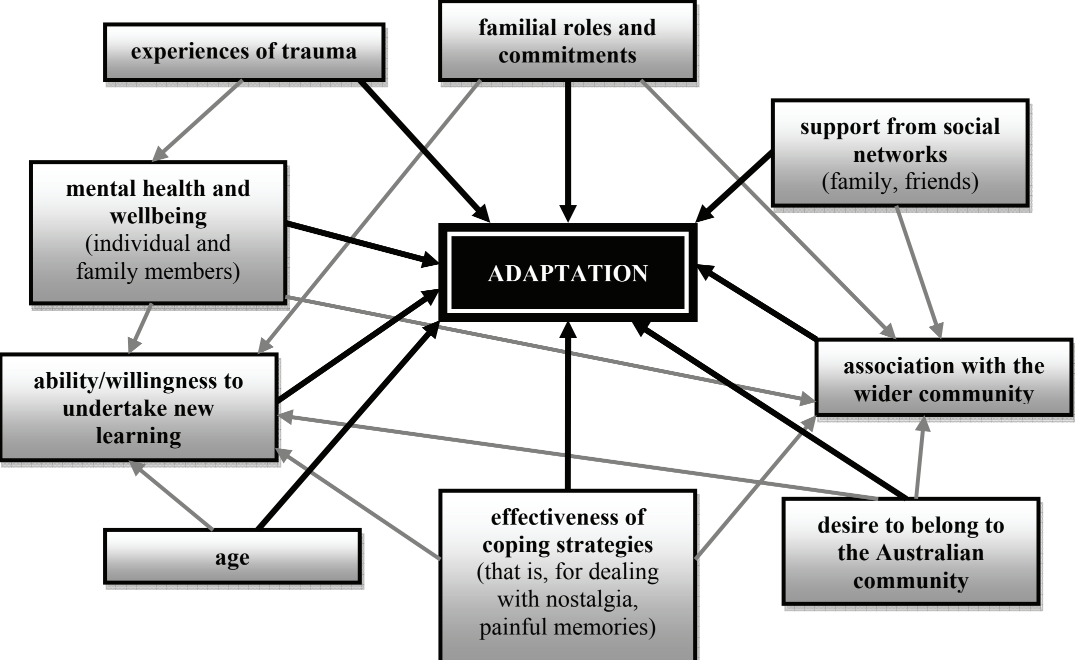


Figure 28: Factors influencing adaptation

From the analysis of the interview data, we identified three patterns of adaptation. It is important to stress that these adaptation patterns are specific to the ten participants who were involved in this study. They cannot be applied, therefore, to the general population of Serbs who migrated to Australia as a result of the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s. Furthermore, while these patterns have been established, all participants displayed a degree of individual variation. These patterns, therefore, arose from general features, where each pattern was not necessarily followed directly by each participant. That is, some participants possessed certain characteristics which were seen to transcend these three patterns.

Each adaptation pattern is described in terms of: the level of initiation; level of dependency on family members; degree of social segregation; level of involvement in social organisations outside of the family; and the degree to which employment and education opportunities were taken up. In considering these three adaptation trajectories, it is important to acknowledge that the factors which characterise each adaptation pattern operate in complex ways. For example, older age can

exacerbate mental health issues which, in turn, can impede an individual's ability to cope with new challenges. These factors, therefore, do not always operate in isolation; individual factors can affect other factors in complex and interwoven ways.

Active integration

Participants who appeared to follow this adaptation pattern embraced migration-related changes and engaged in opportunities to learn English. Those who actively integrated into the Australian community displayed optimism about the future, and actively engaged in education and employment opportunities made available to them. Active integrators completed further education which enabled them to become involved in skilled employment. Active integrators were typically relied upon by family members who adopted a segregation pattern of adaptation. Participants who followed this integration pattern also displayed active involvement in the Serbian community.

Those seen to follow this adaptation pattern were typically younger, male participants experiencing good mental health and wellbeing (for example, Branislav). Mia, however, was also seen to follow this pattern of adaptation. These participants were resilient, possessing supportive social networks, and this was coupled with the implementation of effective coping strategies. It is possible that the educational values of the participants' parents influenced their willingness to undertake new education and employment opportunities, and positively contributed to the participants' overall adaptation. For example, one participant was encouraged by his parents to undertake tertiary studies after migrating to Australia.

Passive integration

Passive integrators generally did not pursue English language classes, resulting in a language barrier. This barrier likely contributed to their social segregation and occupation within an 'ethnic bubble' (for example, Dejana). Further education was not pursued and was most likely the result of a limited command of the English language. Participants who followed this adaptation pattern were involved in unskilled employment where English proficiency is not a requirement (for example, Stefan). These participants were typically the primary financial providers for their families. Due to the language barrier, however, passive integrators were relatively dependent upon English-speaking family members. Passive integrators, like active integrators, also reported involvement in the Serbian community.

Participants who followed this adaptation pattern were typically older, and experienced mental health issues resulting from experiences of trauma during the conflicts (for example, Beretka). Passive integration typically involved male participants who experienced difficulty coping with multiple resettlement challenges.

Segregation

Participants whose adaptation followed a segregation pattern usually did not pursue English language classes, resulting in a language barrier. Further education was, therefore, not pursued. Participants who followed this adaptation pattern did not undertake paid employment following migration, instead undertaking voluntary work in the Serbian community (for example, the two oldest participants). These participants, therefore, demonstrated involvement in Serbian community auxiliary groups. Segregators were characterised by financial dependence on the government, with or without financial dependence on immediate family members, and were reliant on English-speaking family members when language difficulties arose.

Segregators included older participants with mental health issues arising from war-related experiences of trauma. These participants typically struggled to cope with multiple resettlement challenges. Female primary caregivers, however, also occupied this pattern of adaptation (for example, Jelena, and Ana).

It is interesting to note that members of the same family were seen to adopt different patterns of adaptation, as established from participants' reported experiences of their family members. This suggests that these patterns interact in a complementary manner, where active integrators assist passive integrators and segregators in their families.

Establishing Connections: The Role of the Theoretical Framework in Informing the Data

This study adopted a social constructivist approach, and the research questions (and interview schedule questions) were informed by the life course principles developed by Elder and Johnson (2003). Although these principles, together with social constructivist theory, favour the development of social explanations as a way of understanding adaptation and transformation, it did not prevent the gathering of biomedical and psychological data. Similarly, the theoretical framework used in this study did not preclude the incorporation of these data in the development of social explanations.

While participants' primarily described their lives in social and cultural terms, social construction was not the sole feature of their narratives. Participants also made reference to physical and mental health challenges. This suggests that a biopsychosocial model of adaptation and transformation can be more suitably applied to the interview data, as opposed to a purely social framework.

From the data analysis, numerous examples can be used to illustrate the crucial importance and fundamental role of the life course principles in participants' lives. For example, participants did not consider themselves independent agents, but rather saw their lives as being inextricably entwined in the lives of members of their families, and members of their wider social networks. Participants made decisions with others in mind, and demonstrated a deep concern for the wellbeing of their significant others. This interdependence and commitment to the family was revealed, for example, through the reported decision making associated with becoming a refugee, and those relating to migration. Similarly, coping strategies were seen to operate on a social rather than an individual level. Coping was seen to be crucially shaped and influenced by participants' significant others. Participants, therefore, exercised personal agency in shaping their lives, doing so within the constraints and opportunities of social, cultural, and historical contexts. Participants' active decision making has, thus, contributed to their adaptation and integration into the Australian community.

Chronological age and life stage were also critical determinants in shaping participants' reported experiences. The repercussions and implications of becoming a refugee differed substantially between adults and adolescents. For example, adult participants experienced multiple losses of resources which they had accumulated and developed over many years. These losses proved difficult, if not impossible to replace in both the short and long term. In contrast, children enjoyed different educational opportunities, and adolescents possessed fewer family responsibilities in comparison to their parents. The differences in resources, therefore, created different losses, and equally diverse effects resulting from these losses. Following migration, age and life stage continued to impact upon participants' experiences. Adolescents and young adults, for example, possessed different socialisation, education and employment opportunities to those of their parents. The timing of events in participants' lives, therefore, profoundly influenced their experiences of adaptation and transformation in this study.

From these selected examples, there is considerable evidence which supports the relevance and importance of the life course principles (Elder & Johnson, 2003) in developing an understanding and appreciation of the issues associated with the challenges of civil conflict, displacement, migration, and resettlement. These principles have, therefore, proved useful in examining the processes of adaptation and transformation.

In Summary

In this chapter, we provided an analysis and discussion of the participants' reported experiences. Emerging from the data were eight themes that were found to be consistent and fundamentally important in the narratives of participants, namely: changing conceptions of ethnicity; the role played by wider social networks; the importance of family; the impact of war experiences; the experiences and impact of health difficulties; the role of grief and loss; the importance of age and life stage; and the importance of lifelong learning. The analysis was organised around these themes. Following this, we described three patterns of adaptation – active integration, passive integration, and segregation – which were developed from participants' narratives. We then concluded with a discussion of the importance and centrality of Elder and Johnson's (2003) life course principles in the lives of participants.

6

Conclusions

> People don't appreciate simple things, like ... peace, freedom ... life. (Branislav Rajević, participant)

In this final chapter, we provide a summary of the major research findings in relation to the three research questions. We reflect on the personal understandings gained by the principal researcher, Svetlana King, and the research assistant, Branka King, throughout the study. The findings of this study, and the personal understandings gained are then compared and contrasted with previous research. We then discuss the study's strengths and limitations, concluding with possible directions for further research.

Summary of the Major Research Findings

In this study, we invited participants to provide insights into their experiences, as Serbs, of the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s in the context of their lives before and during the conflicts, and following their migration to Australia. Specifically, the three major research questions addressed by this study were: (1) What was life like for study participants prior to the outbreak of war? (2) What experiences led to the study participants' decisions to leave their homeland and move to Australia? (3) What experiences have shaped the personal and social adjustment and transformation of study participants since arriving in Australia?

Prior to the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s, former Yugoslavia was under Communist rule which suppressed all forms of ethnic affiliation.

Before the breakup of former Yugoslavia, participants reported that ethnic difference was not a point of contention. Consequently, participants generally led unremarkable lives, peacefully co-existing with their interethnic neighbours and friends.

Following the death of President Tito in 1980, former Yugoslavia underwent ideological conversion from Communism to ethnic nationalism. Nationalist rhetoric, the cause of ethnic cleansing, and civil war, resulted in ethnic polarisation, which shattered participants' strong pre-war social networks. From the perspectives of the participants, ethnic division was also demonstrated on a larger scale through direct shelling, bombardments and sniper attacks, and the incarceration of Serbs, particularly men, who were then subjected to torture. These experiences threatened participants' physical safety (and that of their families), and possessed the potential to jeopardise the mental health and wellbeing of participants and their families. Consequently, participants' families made the decision to flee from their homes, seeking refuge in Serbian-held territory. The practical and emotional challenges of life as a refugee, coupled with the stress of displacement and the realisation that returning to pre-war life was not possible, resulted in participants' decision to emigrate. This family decision was typically made in the context of fear and misinformation and, for some participants, in the face of mental health challenges.

Upon arriving in Australia as refugees, participants were faced with new challenges such as learning a new language, establishing new social networks, and adapting to the Australian lifestyle. Participants were also presented with new education and employment opportunities which were crucially influenced by their ages, which ranged from 14 to 65 at the time of migration. In the context of the new learning associated with adaptation, participants were also dealing with feelings of nostalgia and the memories of their pre-war lives and wartime experiences. After obtaining Australian citizenship, participants began (and continue) to re-evaluate their Australian/Serbian identity. These experiences have shaped, and indeed, continue to shape, the personal and social transformation of participants.

In analysing the interview data, eight important themes were explored, namely: the importance of ethnic identity; the role played by wider social networks; the importance of family; the impact of war experiences; the experiences and impact of health difficulties; the role of grief and loss; the critical importance of age and life stage; and the importance of lifelong learning. Each of these themes was described in turn, and the complexity of each theme was discussed.

Based upon data analysis, three adaptation patterns were developed which are specific to the participants in this study. That is, these patterns cannot be applied to the general population of Serbs who migrated to Australia as a result of the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s without further exploration. In considering these three adaptation patterns, it is also important to acknowledge that the factors which characterise each pattern operate in complex ways, and do not necessarily operate in isolation. Rather, they can affect other factors in interwoven ways.

The Principal Researcher and the Research Assistant: Personal Reflections

At the conclusion of each interview, Svetlana and Branka reflected upon the knowledge that they gained from each participant in contributing to the overall understanding of this study. Described below are their insights and personal reflections.

It was evident that all participants were pleased to be invited to share their personal stories, particularly as they had never been asked about this previously. For many of the participants, Svetlana and Branka noted initial apprehension at the beginning of the first interview. They found that over the course of the first interview, and throughout the entire data collection phase, participants began to feel more relaxed, and looked forward to follow-up interviews. For some participants, there was a strong commitment to the task, evident through a strong desire to complete follow-up interviews.

When approaching individuals regarding their participation in the study, a number of participants suggested that their stories were of no apparent interest, given the absence of torture and imprisonment from their narratives. These participants typically provided the names of other Serbs in the community whom they perceived to possess stories of greater complexity involving experiences of trauma and torture. Participants, therefore, perceived experiences of torture as the ‘ultimate’ story. These participants also commonly stated that there were other Serbs who experienced far greater atrocities, thereby downplaying their own experiences of ethnic cleansing.

Many participants suggested that their participation was solely doing the lead researcher a ‘favour’. Beretka states that he wished to assist her with her research because he believed that she donated a significant amount of time to the Serbian community. Similarly, some participants cited no perceived personal gains in sharing their story. Branislav,

however, found it beneficial to share his story with someone outside of his immediate family. He stated that his family does not wish to share their experiences of the war because it is difficult to relive painful memories. They have a desire to 'move on' with their lives. Similarly, Mia stated that "it feels good to talk to someone about [her experiences], because [she has] never had anyone who is interested in ... what [she] has gone through." Other participants also stated that they felt "good" about sharing their stories, and expressed relief and surprise at having these feelings. Similarly, participants also acknowledged the therapeutic benefits associated with disclosing their stories. It has been well established that trauma testimony can be cathartic and contribute to healing (Dyregrov et al., 2000; Filipović, 2006; Kinzie, 2007; "Survivor Narrative," 2005).

Both the first author and the research assistant noted that participants were concerned that the disclosure of personal information could impact upon their relationships with them following their participation. Similarly, they also observed a reluctance of some participants to discuss the full extent of their experiences. This is likely due to a number of factors. Firstly, this reluctance could be a means of preventing an unwanted emotional response. For example, Branislav acknowledged that he deliberately kept certain elements of his story to himself. Secondly, for some participants, their immediate families remained unaware of the full extent of their experiences during the Balkan conflicts. Divulging such information could, therefore, have negative implications for their family relationships. In years to come, it is possible that, when participants become more settled, they may be more willing to share further elements of their stories. Similarly, participants may be willing to divulge more information about their experiences when the Serbian image improves. Thirdly, participants provided 'sanitised' versions of their stories, indicating that they were concerned that the principal researcher and the research assistant would become overwhelmed if they heard too many details of the tragedies.

Many participants exhibited nervous behaviour during interviews, including fiddling with items on the table, a lack of eye contact, and speaking quickly. During one interview, the participants consumed half a bottle of alcohol, and smoked two packets of cigarettes. The former was interpreted as a means of coping with the emotional nature of their story, while the chain smoking was perceived as nervous behaviour. The principal researcher and the research assistant also noted that participants' stories varied in terms of the level of description they provided. That is, some participants described their pre-war lives in

minute detail, whereas other participants provided very minimal, non-specific information, requiring a number of prompts.

For some participants who spoke predominantly in Serbian, it was difficult for the research assistant to stop them speaking to enable her to interpret. Participants appeared to find this mildly frustrating. The need to use an interpreter made this process quite difficult, tedious, and time consuming.

In providing their testimonies, all participants referred to previous events which had influenced the situation in former Yugoslavia (for example, World War I and II, and the collapse of the USSR). In most cases, these events occurred before the participants were born. The inclusion of such historical information is open to alternative interpretations. Firstly, historical references can provide a context and 'set the scene' for the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s. This is consistent with the notion that the events of the 1990s in former Yugoslavia cannot be understood without consideration of the region's history. Secondly, the fact that all participants made some form of historical reference suggests that they situate their lives within a broader historical sequence. This may also be associated with a perceived need to justify the Serbian position during the 1990s. Thirdly, historical references may have been a means of preparation for participants to deal with the emotional nature of their stories. Participants also commonly referred to the 'people' of their region before communicating their own individual stories. Again, a number of explanations are possible. As with the incorporation of historical references, mentioning the collective can create a context, and can provide an avenue to deal with the emotional nature of participants' individual stories. Reference to the community also conveys the notion that participants' stories exist within a context-specific group, emphasising commonality. Despite this communal context, Branislav emphasised that his story offers only one perspective.

The role of the mass media also featured strongly in participants' narratives. For many participants, the media significantly contributed to the Serbian image portrayed during the war. In discussing the role played by the media during the Balkan conflicts, participants typically became very animated and passionate about the damage the negative portrayals of Serbs have had on the current collective image of the Serbs.

When asked to elaborate on traumatic experiences, such as encounters with threatening situations, the death of a family member, and the

constant relocation as a refugee, participants sometimes avoided further discussion of these obviously sensitive issues. Avoidance of these issues could be a desire to prevent becoming emotionally overwhelmed, or a means of maintaining distance between participants, the research assistant, and the principal researcher. This could also be explained by a reluctance of participants to fully describe their experiences. It is possible that in years to come, participants may have a desire to tell their stories in greater detail, when they become more settled, and when the international image of the Serbs improves.

In terms of the interview schedule used in this study, the lead researcher and the research assistant continually evaluated the appropriateness of certain questions. They were sensitive to behaving in a culturally appropriate manner and were able to reflect on and assess the interview questions in terms of their appropriateness from a cultural perspective.

In terms of asking the question ‘What does family mean to you?’, the research assistant believed that the direct translation of this question would not possess the same meaning. In this particular instance, she was able to appeal to an accredited interpreter for a more culturally appropriate means of posing this question. Similarly, during the data collection phase, the Serbian word for ‘regret’ was misunderstood, but this question was re-worded to convey its intended meaning.

Participants also found questions pertaining to decision-making (that is, the decision to flee and to migrate) difficult to answer. They were either unwilling, or unable to describe how such decisions were made. This observation was made more evident during interviews where two participants were present. In addition, some participants found these questions unusual and peculiar. From these observations, it could be suggested that the patriarchal family structure of participants may influence how decisions are made within the family, where the process of decision-making is gender-specific and associated with traditional male and female roles. For example, female-dominated decisions may be orientated towards the upkeep of the household, while male decisions may be associated with more major decisions (for example, the decision to flee the family home). Research into decision-making within the Serbian culture could illuminate the cultural features which operate in this process. Considering these cultural issues could contribute to the construction of culturally appropriate questions for future research.

The Bigger Picture: Linking the Study to the Research

During the 1990s in the Balkans, countless atrocities were committed by all parties involved in the war (Clark, 2008; Cushman, 2004; Meron, 1993). As a result of acts of ethnic cleansing and political upheaval, the people of former Yugoslavia comprised a significant proportion of the overall global refugee population during the 1990s (Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, 2005). While the international mass media portrayed the Serbs as the sole transgressors of the conflict (Clark, 2008), this study has demonstrated that they, too, suffered as a result of ethnic polarisation.

The general journey of participants in this study reflects the refugee journey as described in recent research findings. That is, all participants reported experiences of trauma associated with displacement and shattered lives and social networks which affected individuals, families, and communities. This is consistent with previous research findings (Atkinson, 2002; Carlson & Rosser-Hogan, 1991; Jensen & Shaw, 1993). Participants' reported experiences of war are consistent with those described by Weine and colleagues (1995) in their study which investigated the trauma experienced by a group of Bošnjaks during the 1990s conflicts. That is, participants in this study also reported family separation, imprisonment, violence, the destruction of personal property, and betrayal of their social networks as experiences of war trauma. Through their experiences of war, participants demonstrated that the effects of this initial trauma are multiple, and have left a lasting impression. This finding is consistent with other reported research (Kinzie, 2007; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004).

Participants also reported the loss of multiple resources, which is consistent with previous research findings (Figley, 1986; Stevan E Hobfoll et al., 2009; Kinzie, 2007). These reported losses, while crucially influenced by age and life stage (Khawaja & Meuter, 2008), included a loss of: social networks; material possessions such as the family home; continuity brought about by a loss of employment and, therefore, financial status; ability to care for, and protect, family members; and a transformation of identity in relation to culture. These losses are consistent with those commonly cited in recent research findings (Atkinson, 2002; Castles, 2003; Čolić-Peisker, 2003; Favaro et al., 1999; Figley, 1986; Kinzie, 2007; Omer & Alon, 1984; Snyder et al., 2005).

The grief associated with multiple losses of resources (Figley, 1986) was demonstrated in this study, and was seen to impact upon participants' processes of adaptation following migration. Some participants also demonstrated continued grieving for irreplaceable losses. This is consistent with the findings of Snyder and colleagues (2005).

Some participants in the study also displayed difficulty in coping with multiple challenges, which adversely affected their mental health and wellbeing. This is consistent with the finding that multiple losses can result in feelings of disempowerment and decreased self-efficacy which, in turn, can negatively affect mental health (Ajdukovic & Biruski, 2008; Pilgrim et al., 2009).

In analysing the interview data, the concept of ethnic identification became an extremely important element of participants' stories. While the principal researcher was aware of the importance of Serbian ethnicity, she did not envisage that it would be so complex and dynamic. If further research were to examine the population of Serbian people, research related to ethnic identification would be useful in understanding the construction of ethnicity.

Following resettlement, participants reported multiple challenges, including continued grieving for multiple losses. In some cases, the stress of adapting to the Australian community, the mourning of losses, and mental health issues, constituted barriers to adaptation. These findings are consistent with those described in the research findings (Kinzie, 2007; Murray et al., 2008; Renner & Salem, 2009). Resettlement also involved the transformation of participants' social and familial roles which, in turn, shaped their individual identity. Participants reported incidents where a loss of traditional cultural values resulted in a breakdown in family relationships. This is consistent with the findings of Khawaja and Meuter (2008) who examined the issues influencing the adaptation of their Sudanese refugee participants.

Existing literature has demonstrated the importance of a supportive family network in adapting to trauma (Atkinson, 2002; Figley, 1986; Jones, 2004; Murray et al., 2008; Pilgrim et al., 2009; Thabet et al., 2009). In this study, participants commonly cited the family network as assisting them to cope with the trauma they experienced during the 1990s. The notion that a supportive family network is crucial in recovering from adversity is consistent with Atkinson's (2002) research which examined the transgenerational effects of trauma on Australian

Indigenous people. Similarly, Figley (1986) noted the critical role of the family before, during, and after, a traumatic experience. This study has demonstrated that participants' coping strategies were generated through the interplay between their own coping skills and those of their significant others.

Education and employment opportunities were also seen to predict successful adaptation to the Australian milieu following migration. Again, this is consistent with previously reported research findings (Burgoyne & Hull, 2007; Johnson & Thompson, 2008).

The role of religion in coping with challenges and hardship was not a prominent feature of participants' narratives. This unexpected finding is in direct contrast to the study conducted by Khawaja, White, Schweitzer, and Greenslade (2008), where Sudanese refugees reported relying on religious beliefs as an important means of coping. The impact of historical and geographical time and place (for example, the legacy of the Communist era), however, is likely to have crucially influenced participants' reliance on religion.

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

As previously discussed, this study was limited in the sense that participants were selected by convenience sampling. That is, all ten participants were affiliated with the Serbian community in Adelaide. The study, therefore, did not involve Serbs who were not involved with the South Australian Serbian community.

The study was also limited in terms of the situations and circumstances experienced by participants. That is, the population of Serbian people who were incarcerated during the conflicts of the 1990s are not represented among the participants (although two participants had family members who were imprisoned during the 1990s). While such participants were sought, those who were invited to participate declined, citing that recalling the events of their incarceration would be far too traumatic.

Despite the small number of participants, the interviewees shared a diverse range of experiences. Each story conveyed individual complexity, and each participant made an invaluable contribution to the overall study. The rich interview data which were yielded assisted in developing an equally rich analysis of the eight themes.

In terms of the questions pertaining to discrimination, it is possible that participants may have understood this in terms of the 'broad picture'. That is, participants may have understood discrimination in terms of

institutional discrimination in the workplace, for example, rather than perceiving the concept as occurring in interpersonal interactions. While the concept of discrimination occurring between individuals was raised with participants, nine of the ten participants maintained that they had not experienced discrimination. It is still, however, likely that participants may not have fully understood the question in its translated form. In terms of the concept of discrimination, further research could determine the extent to which members of the Australian community demonstrate a disdain for Serbian migrants and, therefore, the impact that mass media reporting has had in creating a stereotypical image of the Serbian people.

With an elapsed time of over ten years, the reliability of the data was largely dependent on participants' ability to recall their experiences and events of the 1990s. The memory of participants was, therefore, a limitation of the study. The act of remembering goes beyond reminiscing to include fact sharing, and an evaluation and interpretation of events and, therefore, evolves over time (Fivush, 2008). Memory is, therefore, both dynamic and complex, and is influenced by social, historical and cultural contexts (Eakin, 1999; Fivush, 2008; Poole, 2008; Sheringham, 2005; Sparkes & Smith, 2008). Memory is also selective, and is influenced by the audience (Sheringham, 2005).

Gilmore (2001) provided a physiological explanation for the inaccuracy of traumatic memories, stating that the hippocampus, the seat of memory, shrinks in response to trauma, which can result in memory failure. As a result, narratives of trauma may possess a "muddled quality" (Seaton, 2008, p. 298), revealing inconsistencies. This was evident during interviews with participants, where the chronological order of events required clarification at follow-up interviews. The use of multiple interviews, therefore, provided participants with time to reflect upon and recall their experiences. Re-interviewing participants also enabled the clarification of any concerns, ensuring that events and experiences were accurately recorded. In informally observing the unfolding of memories during interviews, all participants had vivid memories of experiences and events and typically only had difficulty recalling specific dates on which particular events occurred.

This study was limited in that only the individuals who directly experienced trauma during the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s were interviewed. That is, there were no corroborative interviews with other family members, except in the instances where two participants were interviewed together. Further study could incorporate multiple

informants (for example, schools, service providers, and other family members), in order to obtain multiple perspectives of the 'same' events.

Svetlana's role as an 'insider/outsider' possessed both strengths and limitations in the study. While the combined knowledge of the Serbian culture and community of Svetlana and Branka informed the research by enabling interview questions to be assessed for their cultural appropriateness, this study revealed their superficial understandings of cultural issues which are specific to the Serbs who migrated as a result of the conflicts of the 1990s. Svetlana's cultural knowledge and background was, however, a strength in that she was perceived by participants as sympathetic to them as Serbs, and not a complete outsider. This study has contributed to the development of her own understanding and knowledge of the Serbian culture.

Participants were reluctant to speak about certain issues regarding their experience of adaptation (for example, the death and separation of family members). Similarly, participants did not display a willingness to collaborate in the examination of their narratives of adaptation from trauma beyond a superficial level. It is possible that this may be a result of a lack of trust regarding confidentiality issues, for example. There may have been fears regarding members of the Serbian community discovering inconsistencies in their stories, resulting in a change in relationships with others. For participants who may consider returning to former Yugoslavia to live, they may be fearful that the authorities in Eastern Europe will discover this personal information, and use it to hinder their return.

Directions for Future Research

As this research was essentially a pilot study, a number of opportunities are available for further research. The suggestions provided, therefore, involve a range of participant groups and issues.

This study demonstrated the complexity of the relationships that exist within the Serbian community. Participants in the study reported disparate historical and geographical contexts with other members of the community as a result of different migration experiences. The complexity of intraethnic relationships among migrants living in a multiethnic society, the impact of new arrivals with new experiences, and the consequences of selective association, could, therefore, form the basis of a future qualitative study. Such research could contribute to developing an understanding of the influence of ethnic communities on adaptation.

It was noted that Serbian people who survived incarceration and torture during the 1990s are reluctant to share their painful experiences. This creates a significant gap in understanding the collective experience of the Serbs during the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s. In years to come, however, it is possible that this particular group of Serbian survivors of trauma and torture may wish to begin sharing their stories, thereby filling this void in information regarding this refugee group. This, therefore, represents a possible direction for future research. Such research could address similar questions to those used in this study, and would require a rigorous approach. Researchers would likely require training in order to exercise appropriate sensitivity in working with victims of torture and other atrocities. Input from professional counsellors, social workers, and psychologists, for example, would be necessary to prevent any adverse psychological outcomes for participants.

In analysing the interview data in the study, one participant noted that her son was mirroring the behaviour of his traumatised father. This finding supports the suggestion that trauma can have implications for future generations (Lopes Cardozo et al., 2003). The multigenerational effects of trauma could, therefore, provide another possible direction for future research. This could entail interviews with the family members of those who have experienced war trauma. Such research would be invaluable in developing an understanding of the effects that trauma can have on family members, and the overall family unit.

As noted in this study, a number of factors influence a person's ability to learn a new language. A possible direction for further research could include an evaluation of the effectiveness of new migrant service provider programs such as the Australian government's complimentary English course. Similarly, such research could contribute to the development of a series of strategies to assist migrants who are elderly, and those with mental health challenges, for example, to learn English. Such research could make a significant contribution to the enhancement of service provider programs and, by extension, positively assist migrants in adapting to host countries.

In a similar vein, evaluation research could be undertaken to examine how effective schools are in meeting the needs of refugees and new migrants after their arrival in Australia. New arrivals programs could constitute a locus for investigation where individuals involved in the program could act as informants. This research could, thus, guide appropriate strategies to facilitate the positive adaptation of new migrants to the host country.

As previously discussed, the study was limited in the sense that all participants were affiliated with the Serbian community in Adelaide. A comparative study could, therefore, be conducted between Serbs who are active within, and those who do not associate, with the Serbian community to determine if there are differences in the adaptation trajectories between the two groups. This research could, therefore, contribute to the development of a more holistic understanding of the factors which have influenced the adaptation of Serbian people who migrated to Australia as a result of the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s.

Similarly, a comparative study could be conducted which examines alternative migration waves within the Serbian community – namely, those who migrated as a result of World War II in former Yugoslavia, and those who migrated as a result of the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s. The services available to new migrants, and the reception of new migrants to Australia, have undergone extensive evolution in recent decades. Such a study could track these changes and provide insights into the current functioning of, and relationships within, the Serbian community in Adelaide.

These suggestions represent only a few of the possibilities that exist for future research which may build upon the information obtained through this study. In the following section, we examine the practical implications arising from this study.

Practical Implications Arising from the Study

A number of practical implications emerge from the study's findings. These implications have the potential to contribute to the development of a rich bank of literature concerning displaced populations.

From Svetlana's own unique position in the study, she has gained a deeper understanding of the cultural factors which operate within the Serbian community. A cultural awareness resource could, therefore, be developed and could incorporate previous understandings of the Serbian culture, in addition to the new knowledge gained from the participants in this study. This resource would also incorporate critical political and historical contexts. The implications of this resource could be far-reaching, informing local government multicultural policies, and making the Serbian culture more accessible to non-Eastern European researchers and service providers alike.

Given the increasing global refugee population, it is imperative that we develop an understanding of effective ways to meet the social, emotional and practical needs of these people. And, as revealed in the

research findings, refugees may continue to encounter challenges following migration. The needs of refugees post-migration, therefore, also require consideration in the development of effective strategies.

The findings of this study have contributed to the body of research examining the experiences of populations who have been displaced as a result of political conflict and, subsequently, resettled in another country. The study has demonstrated that the factors and issues affecting such populations are multiple and complex, disrupting every element of an individual's life – physiologically, psychologically, emotionally, and socially. Furthermore, attention must be focused upon the practical needs of such populations. This study could, therefore, assist in the development of a series of strategies to better meet the needs of refugees both prior to, and following their migration. These guidelines could be informed by the intervention practices used by the Israeli government, as described by Abel and Friedman (2009). Such interventions are approached multisystemically, and include preparing individuals for stressful and traumatic experiences both prior to, and after the event (Abel & Friedman, 2009). Such an approach acknowledges the complexity and multilayered nature of responses to trauma (Abel & Friedman, 2009). Similarly, from a theoretical perspective, the intervention principles described by Hobfoll and colleagues (2007) and Klingman and Cohen (2004) would also be useful in informing the development of this resource.

From this study's findings, a theoretical model for understanding adaptation could be developed. This model would be holistic, incorporating all the challenges which face refugee and displaced populations. That is, the model would include the challenges of adaptation which are biomedical, social, historical, political, cultural, psychiatric, and psychological in nature.

Due to the predicted increase in the number of refugees worldwide, further research into the experiences of refugee populations is certainly warranted. Scientists have predicted that in the years ahead, global warming will reduce the amount of habitable land throughout the world, resulting in major relocation and displacement of various population groups. This expected rise in the global refugee population is likely to trigger an increase in war and conflict, as countries battle for resources, creating a vicious circle which will ultimately result in greater refugee numbers.

Concluding Statement

This study has given a voice to a small number of Serbian refugees who migrated to Australia following the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s. It has provided a context in which to understand their circumstances, experiences, challenges, and lives in general. The study has assisted in filling the void in the existing research literature regarding this particular group of people. As a result, the aims of the study have been achieved.

Assisting refugees and migrants to resettle in a new country is inherently complex, and requires consideration of individuals' cultural, historical and situational contexts. Further research regarding the needs of specific refugee and immigrant groups is required in order to assist their adaptation following resettlement in Australia. Given the large global population of displaced people, with this number predicted to soar as a consequence of climate change, such research warrants a high priority.

It is hoped that this study has provided sufficiently rich and detailed accounts of the unfolding lives of the participants, which thereby promotes an enhanced understanding of their experiences of civil war during the 1990s. It is also expected that, through their involvement in this study, participants have developed a degree of social validation, a sense of empowerment, and closure.

> The Serbs now have a voice. They are no longer silent – and they are no longer silenced. Their stories will now begin to be heard. But this is only the beginning…

We now leave the reader with the words of a participant, Mia Milutinović, who wrote this letter with a view to reading it at her citizenship ceremony. Sadly, due to time constraints, she was unable to fulfil this wish.

Yugoslavia is my country. Sadly, I had to leave it because of political reasons. I migrated to Australia in November 1998. Hoping to begin [a] new life in new conditions.

Migration is always a traumatic experience even when it is to a country that has solicited people to come and has accepted them, as Australia has done.

It is [a] traumatic experience because the migrants leave not only their country, their city, their friends and traditions, but also they leave behind part of themselves.

They are never again sure where on earth they belong!!!

Personal[l]y, I was confronted with difference in customs, beliefs, behaviours, rules, norms, expectations and language, but I liked Australia at once.

It has so many interesting and unique things in the world of animals, flora and geology as well as polite and friendly people who welcomed me to 'Aussie Culture', the place to learn the 'fair dinkum' truth about life 'downunder'.

Two countries, two cultures! How to belong to both? How to love both? Standing between brings both pain and joy.

Even though I'm homesick for my family and country, I am glad I could utilize the opportunity of coming to Australia. [I'm] [a] capable person[.] [M]y life seems easier for my now.

I hope I will be having a new, happy homeland forever.

Thank you Australia!!!

Love you all!!!

"Mia Milutinovic"
September 20, 2001

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The death of President Tito in 1980 signalled the collapse of the Communist regime in former Yugoslavia. Ethnic nationalism was seen as a solution to the political and economic turmoil associated with the decline of Communism in the 1980s. This new era resulted in the dissolution of former Yugoslavia and is characterised by war and the ensuing loss of life, loss of identity, and loss of homeland.

From Fighting to Freedom, outlines a research study which investigated the experiences of seven Serbian people who were displaced during the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s and migrated as refugees to Australia in search of stability and a better life. This is their story.

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