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Voicing Silence

A Political Psychological Analysis of the
Aftermath of the Bosnian War Rapes

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Dedication

This doctoral dissertation could not have been completed without the courage and commitment of Bosnian women and men who want to make their experiences, stories, and perceptions heard. They are the ones who have done – and continue to do – the hardest work. By making their experiences heard they recount painful and traumatic events for the purpose of generating new knowledge and insights into a dark chapter in recent European history. It is therefore with considerable discomfort that I have had to conceal my informants' names, organizational affiliations, and identities: they all deserve to be named and thanked in full. A common 'thank you' to you all does not do justice to what you have done for me. And yet that is all I can give, here. My work is dedicated to you.

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Oslo, June 2006

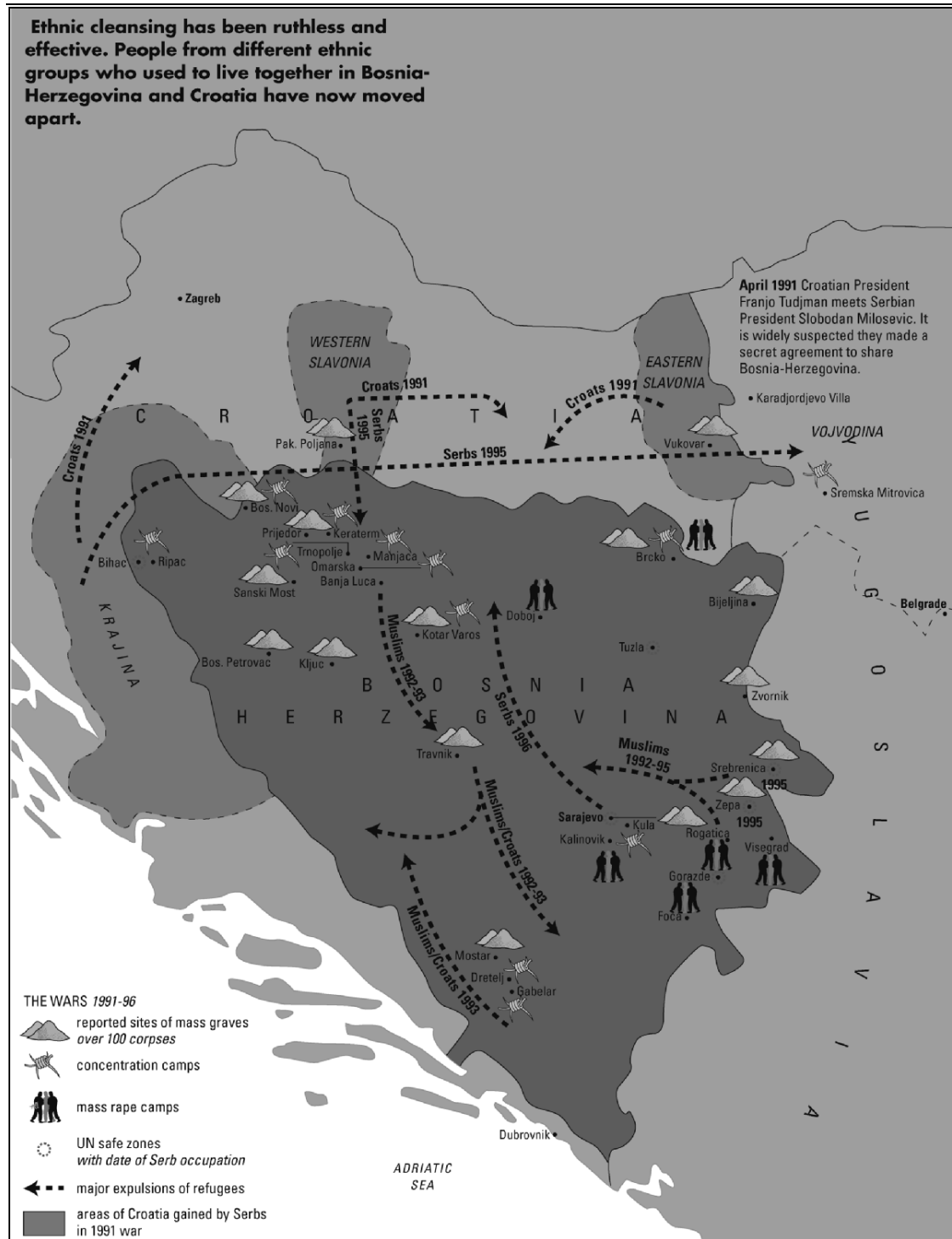
Map I:

Bosnia and Herzegovina after the Dayton Peace Agreement signed by the warring parties in Paris on 14 December 1995



Map II:

Ethnic Cleansing I:



Courtesy of: Dan Smith (1997), *The State of War and Peace Atlas*, 3rd edn. © Myriad Editions Limited, London: Penguin Group

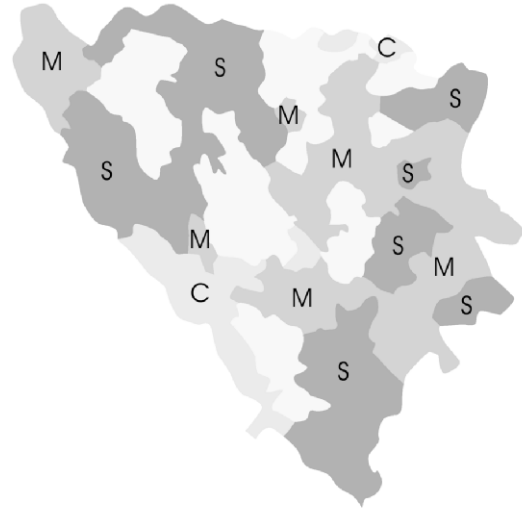
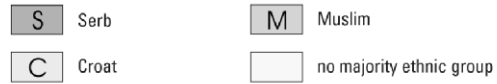
Ethnic Cleansing II:

Serb forces backed by the Yugoslav Federal Army took Krajina and parts of Slavonia from Croatia in the summer and autumn of 1991. In the first four months of war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, April to August 1992, local Serbs made major territorial gains, with the aid of arms supplied by Serb officers in the Yugoslav Federal Army. In 1993, Cyrus Vance for the UN and David Owen for the European Union brokered a peace agreement to divide Bosnia. Condemned in the USA for sanctioning 'ethnic cleansing', the agreement was rejected by the Bosnian Serbs for allowing them only 43 percent of Bosnia when they had taken as much as 70 percent by force.

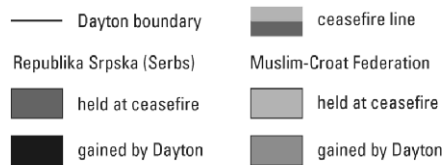
In mid 1995, Croatia's offensives regained most of the territory lost to Serbs in 1991, with an army trained and equipped by the USA. In the autumn, backed by NATO air strikes, Bosnian offensives took back a third of the land taken by the Bosnian Serbs, Republika Srpska. Against this background, US diplomats negotiated the Dayton Agreement in November 1995 to divide Bosnia-Herzegovina. Though formally part of a single state, the Serb area is largely autonomous. Republika Srpska consists of 49 percent of the territory. The Muslim-Croat Federation holds 51 percent.

LIVING TOGETHER IN BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA pre 1991

More than 50% of population was:

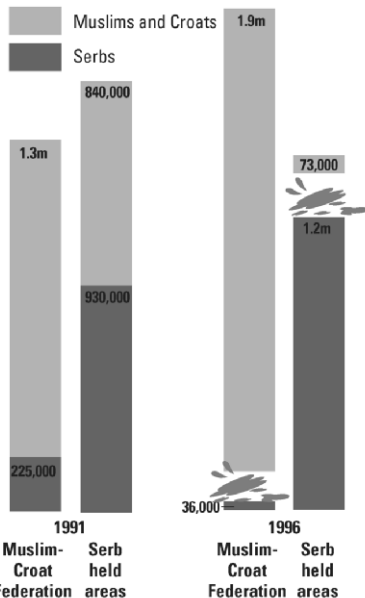


THE DAYTON BOUNDARY COMPARED WITH THE CEASEFIRE LINE 1995



MOVING APART

Croats, Muslims and Serbs in Bosnia 1991 (pre war) and January 1996



Courtesy of: Dan Smith (1997), *The State of War and Peace Atlas*, 3rd edn. © Myriad Editions Limited, London: Penguin Group

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Introduction: Rape and War*

Sexual violence in war is as old as war itself. History has shown us that the female body is an extension of the battlefield, where victories and defeats can be manifest in different modes of sexual gratification by the male soldier. Enloe (2000, p.108) writes that „rape evokes the nightmarishness of war, but it becomes just an indistinguishable part of a poisonous wartime stew called “lootpillagelandrape”. Any attempt to untangle the „lootpillagelandrape nexus in order to make the impact of rape more clear and visible is a political endeavor, warns Enloe, and she continues by saying that such efforts are both difficult and complex. The analyses presented in this doctoral dissertation are attempts at such difficult and complex undertakings.

In her seminal work on *Men, Women and Rape*, Brownmiller ([1975] 1991) writes that rape has accompanied wars of religion and revolution, and it has been a weapon of terror and revenge, as well as a way to relieve boredom (*sic*). *Unquestionably* there shall be some raping, says Brownmiller in the Introduction to her outline of rape in war, quoting General George S. Patton (Brownmiller, [1975] 1991, p. 31). Her analysis shows that the function of rape in war is multifaceted. The power of rape, however, is more unanswered, in that war creates opportunities for rape to be carried out with impunity for the majority of its perpetrators. The power of the perpetrators lies not only in the fact that the likelihood of conviction for these crimes is lower in times of war than in times of peace, but also in the fact that the perpetrators victims tend to remain silent about the ordeals they have suffered. Sexual taboos, feelings of shame and guilt, and fear of being ostracized by the local community and immediate family members contribute to keeping the victims of rape in both war and peace silent. The fact that women who have experienced rape will most likely admit having suffered these crimes only long after the events took place has made it difficult to study the impact rape has on the sufferers and their surroundings other than from a historical vantage point. The Korean women euphemistically referred to as „comfort women provide a case in point. These women, who were kidnapped during the Pacific War to provide sexual favors to Japanese soldiers (in order to keep them from raping and thereby giving the Japanese forces a bad reputation), told the world about what they had endured almost a

generation after it happened. Many had not dared return to their families because of shame and lived their lives in isolation and loneliness.

It was during the civil and ethnic wars that ravaged Europe, Africa, and Asia during the 1990s that sexual violence became recognized as a weapon of war by the international public. The genocide in Rwanda in 1994 (Human Rights Watch, 1996), the ethnic cleansing in Kosovo preceding the NATO intervention in 1999 (Human Rights Watch, 2000), and the ongoing conflict in Kashmir (Asia Watch, 1993) have all contributed to this trauma. It is, however, the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereafter: Bosnia) from 1992 to 1995 that stands as the most important historical event in bringing about a new understanding of the political significance of rape in war.

In the most lethal conflict on European soil since World War II, it became clear from the early months of the war that rape against women of opposing ethnic groups constituted an integral part of the war strategy. What made the Bosnian situation unique from previous wars was the fact that the rapes made headlines in the national and international press even as they were taking place. It became clear that rape was used as a tool in a systematic political campaign of ethnic cleansing and could no longer simply be regarded as „collateral damage“ or something that happens in the heat of battle. Rape and sexual violence took on a political significance of their own, and had to be dealt with on a political level both domestically and internationally. The establishment of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague in the Netherlands in 1993 marked an important step in the international recognition that rape and sexual violence during the Bosnian War constituted grave breaches and other violations of international humanitarian law. In her account of the supranational criminal prosecution of sexual violence, de Brouwer (2005, p.16) writes that:

The massive scale of the rapes of women thus proved to be one of the impetuses for setting up an international criminal tribunal that was able to try persons on the basis of individual criminal responsibility. For the first time in history, rape was explicitly recognized to have taken place in an armed conflict and, as such, given explicit standing in the ICTY Statute under Article 5(g) as a crime against humanity.

What was it about the Bosnian war that created this conceptual shift in our understanding of rape in war? Was it the fact that the war took place in the heart of

Europe? That the victims and perpetrators were educated, white, wore Western clothes, and had (pop)-cultural references similar to others in the Western world? Or, was the use of rape during the Bosnian War particularly egregious compared to other conflicts? Perhaps these acts of violence were simply reported more than had been the case in previous conflicts because there were more women journalists, policymakers, and others who asked questions that had not been asked before? We will never get clear answers to these questions, but it is clear that the Bosnian conflict created a new momentum for talking about, analyzing, and helping the sufferers of wartime rape. The work carried out for this doctoral dissertation has profited from that momentum and has aimed to look at the aftermath of wartime sexual violence from an immediate postwar perspective. In this context, „immediate“ is understood as the first ten years following the Dayton Peace Accords (DPA), which brought peace to Bosnia in December 1995. The fact that it has been at all possible to carry out this study shows how unique the Bosnian war-rape situation has been. While it is clear that the pain of individual victims cannot, and should not, be compared, it is also clear that the opportunities for receiving help, and for being heard, are greater for the Bosnian war-rape sufferers than for those in any other previous armed conflict that we know.

Political Psychology

The newfound opportunity for learning about sexual violence in war has resulted in an emerging psychological trauma literature, which has paid particular attention to the Bosnian war rapes. These studies have focused on measuring and providing frequency descriptions of various forms of trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among Bosnian women (Basoglu et al., 2005; Dahl, Mutapcic & Schei, 1998; Folnegovic-Smalc, 1994; Momartin et al., 2004; Kozaric-Kovacic et al., 2004; Popovic & Bravo-Mehmedbasic, 2000; Schnurr & Lunney, 2004) and the use of psychosocial help and therapy methods (Dahl & Schei, 1996; Dybdahl, 2001; Agger et al., 1999;¹ Arcel, 1995, 1998; Kostantinovic-Vilic, 2000). What unites these different psychological publications is that they are all narrowly focused on the individual and individual coping mechanisms. This psychological literature

¹ Agger has also written about sexual torture in other armed conflicts; see Agger (1989); Agger & Bruus Jensen (1993).

communicates to an audience of therapists from the psychological and medical field and is both important and impressive.

In this project, however, my aim has been to communicate to a different kind of scholar, namely to researchers in the field of peace and conflict studies. In this field, which is dominated by scholars from political science, my aim has been to bring an understanding of individual experiences in a sociopolitical setting, and thereby to make those individual experiences relevant for political analysis. Such an approach places this doctoral study within the broader field of political psychology. What unites various forms of research under the banner of political psychology is a topical interest in the interrelationships between psychological and political processes.

Over the past decade, political psychology has gained increasing momentum within both psychology and political science. A number of book publications in recent years (e.g. Ascher & Hirschfelder-Ascher, 2005; Hermann, 2004; Jost & Sidanius, 2004; Kuklinski, 2002; Lavik & Sveaas, 2005; McDermott, 2004; Monroe, 2002; Roazen, 2003; Sears et al., 2003) clearly testify to this, and the main journal in this field, *Political Psychology*, which was first published in 1980, has a wide audience in diverse academic fields. The subtexts in many of the above publications represent attempts to consolidate and map out new avenues for the field of political psychology. These attempts to set the status quo for the field must be understood as the result of the increasing influence and recognition of the political nature of psychological processes, and, likewise, the psychological nature of political processes. While there is much to be said about the transformation process within political psychology at large, I will limit my focus in the following section to the sub-field of political psychology that focuses on war, peace, and conflict.

As opposed to mainstream political psychology, which has adhered to the demands of positivistic methodological ideals, it has not been possible to study the sub-field of war, peace, and conflict in the laboratory, for ethical and practical reasons (Jost & Sidanius, 2004, p. 12). Rather, the field of peace and conflict psychology forces more qualitative and innovative use of methodology than most conventional textbooks in political psychology would recommend, and this sets peace and conflict psychology apart from mainstream political psychology in distinct ways.

First, as was suggested above, peace and conflict psychology is characterized by *methodological* challenges. The infamous Milgram experiment on civil disobedience (or the lack thereof) from 1965 that was triggered by the Nazi death

camps during World War II provided valuable data but has been deemed unethical, and we cannot – and should not – strive to study psychological phenomena linked to conflict and violence in this way. Other attempts at bringing war, peace, and terrorism to the laboratory have been made (Beer et al., 2004; McDermott, 2004), but these kinds of experiments do not represent the general methodological tendency. In one edited volume on political psychology (Jost & Sidanius, 2004), the entire section on conflict, violence, and political transformation is comprised of conceptual studies, and the same is true for the section on international relations in Sears et al. (2003).

Second, peace and conflict psychology is characterized by a common focus on *thematic* issues. A closer look at the book publications mentioned above, and others, reveals that there are certain themes that fall under the war, peace, and conflict heading that run through many publications. The common denominator within these publications is the aim to understand, and conceptualize, the impacts that war, peace, and conflict have on our understandings of psychological processes on the individual, interpersonal, and societal levels, as well as vice versa.

Finally, Rosenberg (2002) argues that there is an urgent need within political psychology to open the field to new epistemologies and methodologies. This need is based in part, she argues, on an internal recognition that „most of what can be done within these [positivistic] frameworks has indeed been accomplished (Rosenberg, 2002, p. 329). There is a need to improve conceptualizations of the psychological implications of political variations and change, and to find methodologies that can map these processes rather than assume static relations between psychological and political phenomena. In addition, there is also a greater challenge coming from without the field itself, namely the post-structural and postmodern turn within the social sciences. Rosenberg argues in favor of an integrative social/political psychology that is characterized by intellectual pluralism, with an eclectic approach to methodologies and subjects:

in order to move beyond the limitations of contemporary social and political psychological approaches, a fundamentally new theoretical orientation is required. Such an orientation must recognize that social life is dually structured, by both thinking, feeling individuals and by socially structured discursively constituted groups and that both individuals and groups are at least quasi-independent sources of meaning and value. (Rosenberg, 2002, p. 335)

In other words, political psychology appears to be at a crossroads in terms of its thematic and epistemological outlook. New themes and methodological approaches coupled within „new – that is, structural and post-structural – ontologies and epistemologies are welcomed. It is at this new juncture that this doctoral dissertation finds its place. In the political psychological literature referred to above, none of the studies focus on gender in the context of war, peace, and conflict. One important contribution of this doctoral dissertation, therefore, is to bring gender issues, and sexual violence in particular, to the political psychological field of war, peace and conflict issues.

The aim of the doctoral dissertation is to show how the individual experience of a victim of rape has to be understood within the political context in which the events occurred. More specifically, the study begins from the view that sexual violence in war is best understood within a social constructionist framework, because it would be empirically wrong to argue that sexual violence in war is simply an outcome of male biological drives (essentialist position) or of the war system itself (structuralist position), but is instead, at the very least, a combination of the two. The social constructionist approach, which is categorized as post-structuralist by most textbooks (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 2000), is best equipped to conceptualize the ways in which femininity, masculinity, and violent political power struggles interact in constructing the meaning of the concept of sexual violence as a weapon of war. In this process, it has been important to create a political framework from which the individual experiences examined are understood.

The doctoral study therefore contributes to the field of political psychology in two important ways: first, by examining the impact that different sociopolitical contexts (prewar, wartime, and postwar Bosnia) have on therapy methods and social identity construction for victims of sexual violence; second, by bringing a social constructionist perspective to a field of study that has predominantly been characterized by positivist and post-positivist research paradigms.

Putting Gender Center Stage

This dissertation is written from the perspective that the use of rape and sexual violence during a conflict, as well as their impact in the aftermath of conflict, is

framed by sociopolitical constructions of gender. This means that the overarching argument across the five articles that constitute the thesis is that we cannot fully understand the implications of rape and sexual violence in war and its aftermath without understanding how gender relations – that is, notions of femininity and masculinity – are socially constructed in direct and symbolic social interactions. The analyses across the five articles emerge from the intersection between gender and the politics of ethnicity. This vantage point places the study theoretically within the field of social constructionist psychology and thematically within the interdisciplinary field of peace and conflict studies.

Gender in Social Constructionist Psychology

In this dissertation, I have tried to understand and conceptualize the aftermath of sexual violence in Bosnia through the optic of social constructionist psychology. This is not a uniform body of theory, but represents a coherent movement and mode of approaching psychological phenomena that differs from classical psychological research. I will therefore (1) briefly outline the basis for the movement and its impact on psychological thinking, and then (2) show how notions of gender are placed within this theoretical movement.

(1) Social constructionist psychology cannot be conceptualized without an understanding and appreciation of the larger paradigmatic changes that have taken place within social science over the last decades. Social science – and psychology in particular – was at its outset guided and informed by the epistemology and methodology of the natural sciences. It was, indeed, the methodology of natural science that made the study of social and psychological phenomena scientific, because it was through these quantitative and experimental methodologies that scholars were able to uncover the systemic patterns that were believed to rule human interaction. In the search for knowledge about human nature and interaction, the early psychological researchers did not sufficiently acknowledge their own impact on their research and research questions; nor were uniqueness and peculiarity considered to be valid scientific findings, because the overall aim was to look for and identify stable patterns of behavior. The ontological universalism on which this conceptualization of scientific work was based produced essentializing theories about human interaction and individuals that were at times benign, at other times demeaning, racist, and sexist.

It seemed inevitable that social groups who were not part of the academic establishment would react, as indeed they did. With the increase of female academics, people of color and citizens not belonging to the upper class graduating and taking seats at academic establishments, the legacy of the natural scientific mode of inquiry became increasingly criticized during the 1970s and 1980s. The critique came from feminist studies, Marxist studies, and politically driven research movements that argued that social scientific knowledge served to uphold certain political structures (e.g. capitalism and patriarchy), and that the role of research was to generate knowledge that contributed in generating sociopolitical change. Prior to this sociopolitical critique of the social sciences came the publication in 1962 of Thomas Kuhn's pivotal book *The Structure of Scientific Revolution*. In this work, Kuhn launched the notion that scientific inquiry is guided by *paradigms*. Paradigms are, according to Kuhn, introduced to denote a „sense of disciplinary matrix as heuristic framework for examining the social sciences (Kuhn, 1970, p. 229). Kuhn based his analysis on changes within the field of natural sciences, and he actually viewed social science as being in a pre-scientific phase owing to the lack of consensus on the mode of scientific inquiry. Yet, his work was instrumental in conceptualizing the changes that were taking place within the social sciences, where the methodologies and scientific ideals of the fields of the humanities, and most notably language and literary theories, were gaining increasing influence. The so-called postmodern turn which denotes the approaches that followed, is characterized by an analytical focus on language, signs, and symbols, in which these are not seen as transparent but rather as referential and constitutive (Taylor, 2001, p. 6). This understanding of language can be traced back to a number of thinkers, but perhaps the most important is Wittgenstein and his *Philosophical Investigations*. In Gergen's (1999, p. 34) account of Wittgenstein's work, he emphasizes that Wittgenstein refuted the pictorial metaphor of language and replaced it with that of the game. As in the game of chess, the individual pieces of the game have no meaning unless they are used in accordance with the rules of the game: „the meaning of a word is its use in language (Wittgenstein, 1978, Section 20e). The path to knowledge thus passes through, and is created in language and discourse.

One of the most influential thinkers since the 1980s has been French philosopher Michel Foucault and his discursive conceptualization of power/knowledge. Foucault regards discourse as a system of representations, and,

according to Hall (2001, p. 72), „by „discourse , Foucault meant „a group of statements which provide a language for talking about – a way of representing the knowledge about – a particular topic at a particular historical moment . Foucault s argument was that physical things and actions exist but take on meaning and become objects of knowledge within discourse. Further, discourse permeates every aspect of our worlds and nothing exists outside discourse. Foucault postulated a discursive relationship between power and knowledge. Truth is seen as secondary to, or one might even argue that it is irrelevant to, knowledge and power. Knowledge carries power, but not in a linear top-down fashion. Rather, power relations are circular and never monopolized at the center. A central concept that explains this dynamic is the notion of *subject positions*. Power follows the subject position and is not fixed and/or inherent. The subject positions are further embedded in simultaneous discourses. For instance, a woman can be a „mother , „daughter , „wife , and „lover at the same time, all being different subject positions within different discourses. The aim of the researcher is then to show the genealogy of knowledge by analyzing the subject positions of the knowers.

Foucault did not believe that knowledge existed in and of itself, but argued that it was always a result of power within discourses. It is perhaps the theory of power/knowledge that has been Foucault s most important contribution to modern social science. There are numerous examples of research based on Foucault s theories. The most famous, of course, are Foucault s own, but studies of the nation-state, nationalism, and national identity (see examples in Jørgensen & Phillips, 1999 and Neumann, 2001) provide contemporary examples of the Foucaultian way of thinking. In these studies, the aim is to show how, for instance, the notion of the nation-state is manifest in different institutions (such as parliament, the judicial system, schools, churches), in different central texts (such as national anthems, history books, national art), and in the delineation from other discourses (such as globalization, Internet, environmental issues). The aim of these contemporary research examples is to identify the representations of the different aspects of the discourse and the levels on which it operates. Today, social science is characterized by parallel paradigms and considerable diversity in epistemological and methodological approaches. Guba & Lincoln (1994, pp. 105–117) have described what they regard as the status quo of social science and outline four different paradigms – positivist, post-positivist, critical,

and constructivist – where no particular paradigmatic approach dominates. All four approaches have their respective schools of thought, journals, and professorships.

The postmodern turn within the social sciences also had an impact in the psychological field. While traditional psychology has tended to identify psychological phenomena within the individual, social constructionist thought locates the psychological within the social (Hibberd, 2005). Social constructionism, argues Hibberd (2005, p. viii), „emphasizes the historicity, the context-dependence and the socio-linguistically constituted character of all materials involving human activity. The psychological processes of human beings are ... essentially social and are acquired through the public practice of conversation . The important qualitative change that social constructionism represents is the transition from regarding the person as a perceiver to regarding the person as a *conceiver and constructor* (Ashworth, 2003, p. 15). The implication for psychological research, according to Ashworth (2003, p. 22), is that „psychology should not pretend to reveal progressively true, universal human nature, but should make us aware of the implicit assumptions (about “human nature” and kinds of human experiences) that are available to the members of a social group for the time being . The focus of analysis, in other words, is on the person as sense-maker. The research goal is to find ways of understanding psychological *processes* of social life rather than psychological *being* in and of itself. While Hibberd focuses her presentation and discussion on social constructionism on the epistemological level, this line of thinking can also be found in conceptualization of psychological therapy (Hare-Mustin, 1997; Marecek, 1997; McNamee & Gergen, 1992). This line of thinking, therefore, not only represents a shift in how psychological theories develop, but also impacts the ways in which psychologists carry out their therapeutic work.

(2) The social constructionist mode of analysis, and conceptualization of individual identities, has had a major impact on the ways in which gender is understood within psychological research. Historically, conceptualizations of gender and gender difference have followed much the same turns as other developments within the larger psychological field. The status quo is one of multiple models of feminist research, in which the conceptualizations of gender and research aims vary. Harding (1986, 1991) helps us understand how epistemological modes of science create different ways of doing feminist research in various fields of social science. She distinguishes between

feminist empiricism (which is seen as inherently conservative and positivist), standpoint feminism (which takes the patriarchal power relationship between men and women as the starting point of analysis and links this relationship to class, race, and culture), and postmodern feminism (which is based on an inherent skepticism to grand theories and looks at how acts, beliefs, and behaviors become gendered through direct and symbolic transactions). The social constructionist conceptualization of gender falls under Harding's epistemological conceptualization of postmodern feminism. Social constructionist (or postmodern/post-structuralist) approaches to gender are further characterized by certain topical and methodological traits. Burman (1998, pp. 2–3) argues that the status quo within feminist post-structuralist scholarship is characterized by a common focus on women's psychological experiences while simultaneously maintaining a feminist critique of methodological and epistemological approaches within the field of psychology at large.

What sets postmodern/post-structuralist feminism apart from empiricist feminism and standpoint feminism is the conceptualization of gendered power relations. Haavind (2000) argues that the way of approaching an understanding of the asymmetric power structures between the genders is by focusing on the interaction in gender (in Norwegian: *kjønn i samspill*). The basic notion is that gender differences are not innate but serve to construct interactions between people in a power relation to each other. The research aim, therefore, is to investigate what forms of power are associated with masculinity and femininity. Hare-Mustin & Marecek (1990) conceptualized the workings of these forms of social differentiation by examining the ways in which men and women come to be seen as representing, and constituting, difference in language, signs, and symbols. More specifically, their primary research interest was to look at the „processes by which gender, like other categories of social reality is constructed and given meaning through social interactions (Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1990, p.6). Social constructionist psychology locates its analytical understanding of gender differences on transaction processes between the sex of the given person (i.e. the biological constitution of him or her) and the sociopolitical context in which the individual is situated. Social constructionist approaches to gender stretch from a radical post-structuralist approach that debates whether biological difference has any significance at all (e.g. Butler, 1990) and other approaches that take the biological differences between men and women as their basis for understanding (e.g. Gilligan, 1982/1993). Social constructionist approaches discuss

the distinction between sex and gender, and look at how gender relations are produced through actions, inactions, and perceptions of what we do as men and women, boys and girls. „Doing gender“ is a term introduced by West & Zimmerman (1987), and it reflects an understanding that gendered social differences are not natural, essential, or biological, but socially constructed. Male and female identities are negotiated interpretations of what it means to be a man or a woman, which exist in perpetual and contested power relationships. The methodological approaches within this particular field of study are qualitative, transactional, and based on dialogue with the research subjects. The path to knowledge goes through generating understanding of experiences, perceptions, and actions. These particular methodological points will be discussed at length below.

Gender in Peace and Conflict Studies

Since the mid-1980s, the work of Boulding (1981), Elshtain ([1987] 1995), Enloe (1983, 1990, 1993, 2000), Tickner (1992) and others has been instrumental in placing the role of gender on the agenda within peace and conflict studies. These writings have registered three major achievements: they voice a sharp and forceful critique of the narrow focus within peace and conflict research; they do so in a way that cannot be dismissed as mere polemic; and, on the back of the critique, they have established a challenging new agenda to be assessed and explored. Of course, there continues to be dismissive reactions to this body of work, along with attempts to marginalize and ghettoize it. But, to its great credit, there has been a shift in the center of gravity of discussion within peace and conflict research, as the realization has grown that issues of gender raised important and previously ill-considered issues. It is, perhaps, especially as peace and conflict studies have come, with the end of the Cold War, to look more closely at conflict resolution, reconciliation, and peacebuilding that the relevance of gender issues has struck more and more scholars in the field. The relevance of gender awareness has not only been seen within academia, but has also resonated within the United Nations system and among non-state actors engaged in peacebuilding efforts. The adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 in October 2000 marked an important step in committing United Nations member countries to increasing gender awareness in all aspects of their international engagements related to peace and conflict matters.

In addition to – or perhaps because of – the theoretical shift within the thinking, writing, and reporting of war during the 1990s, there has been more awareness of gender issues than ever before. This increased attention has led to a new wave of empirical studies of women's diverse experiences during war (Bennett et al., 1995; Cockburn, 1998; Machanda, 2001; Skjelsbæk & Smith, 2001; Waller & Rycenga, 2000; West, 1997; Wilford & Miller, 1998; Giles et al., 2003). These studies focus on women as victims, political agitators, soldiers, mothers, and caretakers, and have differing aims and political agendas. Some confirm and uphold gendered stereotypes by focusing on the differing forms of women's victimization during war, while others challenge conventional understandings of male and female relations by focusing on women's roles as political agitators, war-supporters, and soldiers. Whatever the theoretical or political aim of the various studies, this increase in empirical academic work has led to a growth in qualitative and quantitative data.

Alongside this academic development, sexual violence in war has become increasingly visible in the wars of the 1990s. The fact that warring parties in the many lethal conflicts during the 1990s resorted to the use of knives, handguns, and rape as their weapons of choice seems at odds with new advancements in military technology that would increase the separation between perpetrator and victim. The renaissance of primitive weapons can be seen as a reflection of the kinds of wars that bloomed in the aftermath of the collapse of the Eastern bloc: ethnic wars in which the attacks were not primarily on territories or natural resources but on people's identities. In the case of Bosnia, simply being Bosniak, Croat, or Serb could expose one to various forms of violence. In this context, it was former neighbors, friends, and fellow community members who could represent the major security threat. They did not constitute an organized military unit with new and advanced military weapons, but were comprised of local gangs, fractions of the former Yugoslav National Army (JNA), and paramilitary groups. Sexual violence mostly against women, but also against men, proved to be an effective weapon of war in this type of conflict.

The study of wartime sexual violence and its aftermath in Bosnia brings two important aspects to the field of and peace and conflict studies. First, as has been stated above, we cannot understand the political importance of sexual violence in an armed-conflict situation if we do not have an appreciation of the ways in which gender differences shape, and are shaped by, war. It is the ways in which gender identities and relations become politicized that create the basis for sexual violence to

be an effective tool of war. Studying wartime sexual violence and its aftermath therefore highlights the necessity of integrating gender dimensions in conceptualizations of armed conflicts. Second, studying wartime sexual violence also allows us to nuance the far too common misconception that women are passive victims in war. In much of the popular understanding of war, in journalistic reports, within national and international nongovernmental organizations, and in academic writing (feminist writings included), women are overwhelmingly portrayed as belonging to the „women, children, and the elderly“ group who are vulnerable and in need of protection. While this situation is a clear reality for many women around the world, it is also clear that by placing women in this group they become silenced and overlooked: they are politically significant only insofar as they are in need of protection. This kind of reasoning has also guided much of the reporting, understanding, and writing on women suffering from wartime rape. Sexual violence in war represents one out of many ways in which women are victimized, and one important contribution that this doctoral dissertation brings to the field of peace and conflict studies is a nuancing of conceptualizations of female victimization, both on the individual and societal level.

Research Questions

Attempting to understand the political psychological aftermath of the Bosnian war rapes from a social constructionist perspective has implications both for the kinds of research questions one can ask and the methodological choices that can be made. In this section, I will define and account for the overarching research questions guiding the entire doctoral project.

First, in contrast to what conventional political psychology might suggest, the analysis does not look at how psychological modes of explanation can help us understand political phenomena, but instead turns the coin. The aim, therefore, is to look at how political contexts constitute psychological phenomena. If we bring notions of gender into the picture, this twist of approach might become clearer. A conventional political psychological approach to war rapes might have asked questions about male aggressiveness, sex drives, military socialization, and so on, to understand the use of sexual violence in war. A social constructionist approach,

however, asks how a situation of war creates different femininities and masculinities, and examines how these processes are linked to the larger sociopolitical context. My first research question in this doctoral dissertation has therefore been:

How are social constructions of masculinity and femininity linked to war rape, and what power relations emerge as a result?

This question implies that the political aim of the perpetrator and the political impact of the sexual violence on its victims are neither given nor universal.

Second, the dissertation aims to bring an understanding of the conceptual question formulated above to one specific location: post-conflict Bosnia. This effort constitutes the empirical part of the doctoral study and should be considered the main part of the doctoral dissertation. More specifically, the empirical section looks at how the changing politics of gender in Bosnia from prewar, wartime, and postwar years is linked to the wartime use of sexual violence; how therapeutic work with victims of sexual violence brings out different discourses of therapy and violence against women; and, finally, how narratives of victimization by wartime sexual violence sufferers bring out different conceptualizations of politicized identities from postwar perspectives. The overarching research question guiding the empirical research part has been:

How are social constructions of masculinity and femininity linked to sociopolitical changes in prewar, wartime, and postwar Bosnia, and what understandings of war rapes, and the individual war-rape experience, emerge as a result?

Finally, the doctoral study has had to grapple with numerous methodological challenges in order to answer the research questions above. Conducting field interviews in a postwar and foreign-language setting is not common in psychological research. Or, put slightly differently; there are numerous studies within cross-cultural psychology that are carried out in settings foreign to the researcher, but these studies are predominantly carried out in order to show universal human traits across different cultures. One example is Shore (1996), who is looking for a psychic unity of mankind

from an anthropological perspective; another can be found in Smith & Bond (1993), who search for universal social psychologies in different cultures. My aim has been to look at the interconnection between the sociopolitical context and the individual experience from a social constructionist perspective, and in this effort there have been few similar studies from which it might have been possible to draw insight on methodological and analytical approaches. But, perhaps the greatest methodological and ethical challenge of all has been to find modes of research that enable research on a theme that is most often characterized by silence. As has been shown above, war rapes are highly stigmatizing experiences, not only for the individual sufferers but also for those associated with them. The biggest research challenge in this doctoral project has therefore been to develop a methodological and analytical framework that balances voicing and silencing of these highly traumatic events in an informative way. The overarching methodological challenge has therefore been how to design a research methodology that provides insights on the individual and sociopolitical impact of war rapes while respecting the sufferers' right to remain silent.

Over the remaining pages, I will show how I have attempted to answer the questions raised above by outlining how I gathered and analyzed the research data, and how one can evaluate the main findings in this dissertation.

Research Design

In this project, it was crucial to find ways of talking about a theme that is often silenced, shame-ridden, and taboo. Talking about silence appears to be a contradiction in terms; however, with different qualitative data-gathering techniques and analytical approaches, I found that it was possible to come near an understanding of the aftermath of sexual violence, and to give voice to experiences that have not been subject to extensive analysis in the past.

The present section will map out the overall research design for the entire doctoral project and discuss how to evaluate qualitative data analysis in general and in this doctoral project in particular. Qualitative research design, argues Janesick (2000, p. 379) is much like choreography: a good choreographer captures the complexity of the dance/story by using rigorous and tested procedures, and in fact refuses to be

limited to one approach to choreography. The research design in this doctorate study has been a choreographical challenge.

The articles that comprise this study are in many ways various analyses of how to study a particular form of experience: sexual violence in war. I have used different methodologies (literature survey; focus-group interviews; dyadic interviews), focused on different sub-themes (conceptualizations of sexual violence within scholarly publications in the 1990s; social constructions of female identity and sexuality across changing political environments in Bosnia; therapeutic work with victims of sexual violence in war and postwar Bosnia; victim and survivor identities among women who experienced war rapes during the Bosnian War; the use of interpreters in fieldwork interviews), and employed different modes of analysis (literary analysis; social constructionist analysis; discourse analysis; narrative analysis). This polyphony of data and methodological approaches is based on several factors.

First, the social constructionist premise that experiences are conceived and constructed, rather than perceived, calls for multi-sited, multi-topical, or multi-level approaches. This does not mean that all studies under the social constructionist heading are necessarily all of these approaches at once, but in this particular doctoral project I found it necessary to approach the issue of war rape from a multi-topical and multi-level approach. Because my aim was to understand the individual war-rape experience in a cultural and linguistic setting different from my own, it was important to create a research design through which I could approach the individual experience in a step-by-step (thematically and level-wise) fashion. This step-by-step approach to the individual experience mapped out the *context* in which the war-rape sufferer is *positioned* by others, and where she *situates* herself.

Second, from an ethical perspective it was important for me as a novice to the Bosnian sociopolitical context, and to the war-rape trauma in particular, to find a pragmatic way of educating myself on the theme at hand. Talking to war-rape sufferers about their war traumas without having an appreciation of the larger postwar context in which they lived seemed disrespectful to a degree that bordered on unethical. I needed to learn how to talk to women who have endured severe trauma in ways that would not aggravate their suffering, while also having enough contacts in the field so that I had a safety network that I could turn to in case the informants needed help I could not provide. Therefore, talking to and getting to know health workers, therapists, and workers in different nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)

who work with Bosnian women at large and war-rape sufferers in particular was crucial.

Lastly, the need to be innovative and rely on different methodologies and modes of analysis is also a reflection of the fact that sexual violence in war is a theme that has not been the subject of extensive and systematic research in the past (see discussions in Article I (Skjelsbæk, 2001, pp. 212–214)². There are, in other words, no authoritative studies from which one can adopt methodologies or in relation to which one can draw comparisons and discuss approaches. In this new-trodden territory, the study has had to grapple with political, practical, and ethical challenges in many shapes and forms. At a basic level, the doctoral dissertation can be seen as divided into three main parts:

1. a *conceptual* part (Article I), mapping out the relationship between sexual violence and war in general terms;
2. an *empirical* part (Articles II–IV), looking at the aftermath of wartime sexual violence in the Bosnian context;
3. a *methodological* part (Article V), reflecting on interview methodology/analysis and the role of interpreters.

What unites these three major parts of the doctoral dissertation is not only their thematic focus on wartime sexual violence, but also their inherent assumption that knowledge generation is based on individual reconstructions coalescing around consensus (Lincoln & Guba, 2000, p. 166). One of the major tenets of social constructionist thinking is that social phenomena are given meaning by the ways in which they are described, construed, and contested in a cacophony of difference *voices*. The three major parts of the doctoral dissertation can therefore be seen as an enterprise in which knowledge production rests on reconstructions of understanding based on multiple voices.

In the following, I will map out how these reconstructions of understanding have come about and why, and how I regard the findings as valuable knowledge within the fields of peace and conflict studies and social constructionist psychology. The data on which the entire study is based come in three distinctly different forms:

scholarly publications in the field by other authors and organizations, *interviews* carried out by myself, and an analysis of the *processes* of carrying out interviews with interpreters.

1: Conceptualizing Sexual Violence and War

Collecting scholarly publications was the first methodological step in this research journey. While the aim of the doctoral study has been to look at the aftermath of sexual violence in the Bosnian context, it was important to see the Bosnian setting in comparison to other conflicts. The first step was therefore to gather information and data not only from the Bosnian conflict, but also from other conflict areas. The way this was done was to collect publications that focused on systematic analyses of sexual violence in war. I collected 140 publications, the majority of which were published during the 1990s, reaching a peak during the Bosnian War. How this was done and the structuring of the analysis is described in considerable detail in Article I (Skjelsbæk, 2001, pp. 214–215). The gathering of these scholarly publications was important for three main reasons.

First, the scholarly texts enabled me to contextualize the documentation and analysis of the Bosnian war-rape phenomenon in relation to the documentation and analysis of war rapes in other conflicts. What was particularly striking with these scholarly publications on sexual violence in war was the fact that the number of publications peaked in the years 1993–95, incidentally at the height of the Bosnian War and the 1994 Rwandan genocide (Article I: Skjelsbæk, 2001, p. 232). In addition, it was also clear that the majority of the publications during the peak period focused on the Bosnian War. Through the gathering of these scholarly texts, it became clear that the Bosnian war-rape phenomenon is by far the best documented, most analyzed, and most discussed episode among all the publications on sexual violence in war. Through these efforts, I found support for the claim that it was the Bosnian War that lifted, at least to a certain extent, the taboo that has made it impossible to make the phenomenon of wartime-rape a subject of social scientific study.

Second, the collecting and analyzing of these scholarly texts enabled me to see how different authors attempted to create understanding of the war-rape phenomenon in different ways. As is shown in Article I (Skjelsbæk, 2001, p. 215), there was a

² Article 1 in the doctoral dissertation has already been published and will be, when referring to specific

distinction between the groups of victims (all women in the war zone, targeted women in the war zone, and targeted men and women in the war zone) to which authors of the scholarly publications related their theoretical arguments. Authors arguing for an essentialist understanding of war rapes seek to explain why it is that all women in a war zone seems to be at a heightened risk of being raped in comparison to women outside the war zone. The explanation is found, the authors argue, in the way in which (para)military units cultivate a militaristic masculinity. Those who argue for a structuralist understanding of war rapes seek to explain why targeted groups of women in the war zone are at greater risk of being raped than others. The explanation is found, these authors argue, in the way in which the overall political structure of the conflict is played out: which political, religious, or ethnic groups are fighting whom? The social constructionist position, however, places itself between the previous two conceptualizations in that it seeks to explain why targeted men and women are more vulnerable to war rape than other non-targeted men and women. The explanation is found in the ways in which acts of war rape sexualize non-gendered identities – that is ethnic, religious, or political identities.

Finally, the reading and collection of these publications was part of an important sensitizing process for me. The articles, books, and journalistic accounts presented numerous first-hand accounts of war rapes, primarily by women (but also some by men), all of which were shocking and gruesome in different ways. In working with this particular theme, I saw a methodological need to be sufficiently affected and moved by these stories to be empathetic towards the individual stories I would hear in the field interviews, while also being so familiar with the traumas that I would be able to analytically dissect significant points when hearing individual accounts. In other words, I had to strike a balance between my own emotions and my structural thinking, and this was an important part of the initial reading process.

2: Collecting Empirical Data

The greatest methodological challenge in this doctoral dissertation was to collect and analyze interview data from the Bosnian field. This was a challenge not only in terms of recruitment (whom to interview, when and where, and by what means?) but also in terms of research design (which informants would provide the richest and most

pages, denoted as Skjelsbæk, 2001.

informative insights?). Before mapping out the reasoning behind my methodological choices, however, I will briefly present the different interviews I did over the course of five field trips in 2001–02. The dates of the field trips are as follows:

Field trip 1: 2–9 September 2001

Field trip 2: 12–17 November 2001

Field trip 3: 29 January–3 February 2002

Field trip 4: 15–21 April 2002

Field trip 5: 10–16 June 2002

Conducting interviews in the field was important in order to establish an understanding of the postwar sociopolitical context in Bosnia. It should, however, be noted that the duration of these trips was fairly short, and these field interviews should therefore not be thought of as constituting fieldwork in the classic ethnographic sense of the term. Classical ethnographic research entails participant observation to such an extent that it is „impossible to disentangle the method of study from either the theory employed or the person employing it (Vidich & Lyman, 2000, p. 51). My aim, however, was to adopt what Reason (2003) terms a cooperative inquiry, in which the interviewees contribute in forming the research process. The process of cooperative inquiry is laid out in the following way:

The methodology of cooperative inquiry draws on a fourfold extended epistemology: *experiential knowing* is through direct face-to face encounter with a person ... it is knowing through empathy and resonance, that kind of in-depth knowing which is almost impossible to put into words; *presentational knowing* grows out of experiential knowing, and provides the first form of expression through story ... *propositional knowing* draws on concepts and ideas; and *practical knowing* consummates the other form of knowing in action in the world. (Reason, 2003, p. 207, summarizing Heron, 1992, 1996)

While this doctoral research project has not approached an understanding of the aftermath of the Bosnian war rapes explicitly in the manner suggested by Reason, it does share some of the same goals, in that the aim has been to produce knowledge that is useful to a group of people and to empower people through the process of constructing and using their own knowledge (Reason, 2003, p. 207).

My spin on Reason's outline was to develop a research strategy in cooperation with central people and institutions in the field, and to let them inform me about how they thought I should best approach an understanding of the aftermath of the war-rape phenomenon on a societal and individual level. I came in contact with local partners through individuals and NGOs in Norway who were or had been involved in psychosocial work in Bosnia during and immediately after the war. These Norwegian contacts introduced me to local organizations, which in turn invited me to Bosnia and provided logistical help. Getting in touch first with two psychosocial centers (see the Appendix to Article III on the background for the psychosocial centers) turned out to be sufficient in terms of enabling contact with other interviewees, because the psychosocial centers made their networks and connections available to me.

Basing my interviews on five different field trips to different geographical locations within Bosnia proved to be a viable method for developing a research strategy in cooperation with local partners. In the gaps between trips, I was able to transcribe and evaluate interviews, which gave me ideas for conceptualizations, interpretations, and early analyses that could form the basis for questions and discussions in subsequent trips. In this snowball fashion, the field trips took shape.

The interviews were carried out first with representatives from different local organizations and people of various professions:

Figure 1: Interviews with Representatives of Different Organizations and Professions

Profession	Female Interviewees	Male Interviewees
Health worker*	23	
NGO worker	2	1
Medical doctor	1	
Academic professor	4	

*This term refers to people of different backgrounds and professions working at a psychosocial center. Article III is based on these 23 interviews.

These interviews were invaluable because they helped me understand the local perception of the sociopolitical dynamics of the war-rape trauma vis-à-vis current – that is, post-conflict – problems related to violence against women in Bosnia. In addition, these interviews provided me with a network of local experts who could guide me to war-trauma sufferers who they thought would be willing to talk to me. It was crucial, the health workers argued, that I also talk to sufferers of other kinds of

war trauma, not just rape victims, in order to see the totality of the suffering that so many Bosnians had endured. On the basis of their recommendations, then, in addition to war-raped women, I also interviewed women who had experienced loss of family members in the most violent circumstances and/or had themselves been concentration camp inmates.

Figure 2: Interviews with War-Trauma Sufferers

War Trauma	Female Interviewees
Family loss	5
Torture in concentration camp	3
War rape	7*

* This number reflects the number of interviews, not the number of interviewees. Two interviewees were interviewed twice, meaning that the total number of interviewees was five. Article IV is based on these seven interviews.

The women who had experienced dramatic family loss had lost their loved ones in the Srebrenica massacre in July 2005. At the time of the interviews, these women were living as internally displaced persons (IDPs) in other regions of Bosnia. I visited these women in their current homes, which were all houses that had been deserted by their previous owners. In addition, I was an observer at two therapy sessions at a collective center (a euphemism for a refugee settlement) for IDPs. The concentration camp victims had all been subject to severe torture, but not rape, and had been detained for several months each. All these 15 women had received a limited amount of financial and psychosocial help, but at the time of the interviews were living with considerable uncertainties in relation to their living conditions (fear that the previous owners might reclaim the house/apartment) and their economic situation (irregular financial support and fear of losing financial aid altogether), along with severe physical and psychological pain. These issues, in addition to the war traumas, were central in the interviews with these women.

Figure 3: Focus-Group Interviews

Focus Groups	Female Participants	Male Participants
Sarajevo, 20–30 years	2	2
Sarajevo, 30–40 years	2	2
Mostar, 20–30 years	1*	1
Mostar, 30–40 years	1	1
Banja Luka, 20–30 years	2	2
Banja Luka, 30–40 years	2	2

* The fact that there was only one man and one woman in each of the two focus groups in Mostar was due to miscommunication between the organizers in Mostar and me. I had, however, no other choice than to carry out the interviews with the people available, because I was only in Mostar for one day. Article II is based on all the focus-group interviews.

The interviews in all three interview categories lasted approximately one and a half hours each, and they were all recorded in and transcribed by me. The transcriptions contain descriptions of the interview setting (the location, the atmosphere, other people present, and more); transcriptions of the actual conversations between me (the researcher) and the interviewee as conveyed by the interpreter; and remarks in parenthesis on non-linguistic features (such as the interpreter, the interviewee, or me crying, interruptions, and more). The result has been close to 800 pages of transcribed text that have served as the basis for the analyses in the three empirical articles in this doctoral dissertation. In addition to these transcribed interview texts, personal observations, informal conversations, field notes, and observation of the physical reality in which the interviewees found themselves were important factors in establishing the context from which the analyses could emerge.

With the exception of the focus groups and two of the individual interviews, all interviews were carried out with an interpreter and in English (the two interviews without the interpreter were also in English). For practical reasons, I was unable to use the same interpreter throughout the entire interview stage, but instead had to rely on three different interpreters. I made sure, however, that the interpreters were women and that they had worked with, war-raped women or torture victims before. I used local contacts in order to identify interpreters who would match these needs, and the interpreters I worked with were all deeply engaged and involved in the interview process. The use of interpreters will be discussed at length below, and it is also the focus of Article V.

3: Interview Methodology and Analysis

The main empirical data-gathering methodology has been the use of open interviews. An interview is a qualitative data-gathering methodology that can serve different research functions depending on the epistemological premise of the study. Kvale (1996) clarifies the differing epistemologies by means of two different metaphors: that of a miner versus that of a traveler. The miner „pictures a common understanding on modern social science of knowledge as given ... while the traveler metaphor refers to a postmodern constructive understanding that involves a conversational approach to social research , argues Kvale (1996, p. 5). The present doctoral dissertation has approached the interviews from the vantage point of the traveler.

All interviews were carried out using an interview guide (see Appendix II). The guide helped me structure the conversations and ensure that interviewees would relate their talk to the war-rape phenomenon at relevant points during the conversation. As discussed at length in the different empirical articles (Articles II–IV), maintaining a war-rape focus proved a demanding task in many of the interviews, for various reasons. In the analyses, therefore, it has been equally important to reflect on how and why the war-rape phenomenon has *not* been an explicit theme in some of the interviews, and how and why it has been talked about explicitly in others. Mapping silence, as well as talk, turned out to be the major methodological and ethical challenge in the interview situations, as well as in the analyses that followed. I will return to this point in the following section.

Ethical Considerations

The ethical demands a researcher needs to adhere to in an interview setting are well spelled out in the methodological literature. In order to do research on and in cooperation with human beings, researchers must avoid harm, obtain informed consent, and maintain the right to privacy (Fontana & Frey, 2000, p. 662). For the interview methodology, however, Kvale (1996) argues that ethical issues must be considered and evaluated at every step of the interview process. The researcher must consider the *theme* of study and ask if the knowledge sought can improve the human situation investigated. The researcher must also *design* the interview properly; obtain informed consent, ensure the interviewees' confidentiality and evaluate the possible consequences of the study for the subjects and, finally, consider the *interview*

situation and how the stress of the interview interaction might be taken into account. After the interviews, the researcher must consider the *transcription* process and ask what is a faithfully written transcription of an interviewee's oral statements, and must consider the *analysis* and how deeply and critically the interviews can be analyzed. Lastly, the researcher must consider the *verification* of knowledge and make sure that knowledge is as secure and verified as possible, and consider the *reporting* of the interviews in the final report/article/dissertation and the implications for the interviewees and their affiliates (the four last sentences are paraphrased from Kvale, 1996, p. 111).

In the interview process, I have attempted to adhere to these ethical standards outlined by Kvale in the following way. The choice of research theme is in itself an ethical one, in that the goal – beyond mere knowledge production – has been to generate awareness about war rape, in the hope that its sufferers will be more visible to relevant institutions and agencies that can provide help and support during and after violent conflict. Further, all interviews were based on volunteer participation and informed consent. All interviewees were provided with an information letter before the interviews took place, which briefly described the doctoral project, its aims, its publication strategy, and how the interview material would be treated. This letter was made available in both English and Bosnian (see Appendix II). It was also made clear to the interviewees that their identities and institutional affiliations would be concealed in the analytical texts. This was a premise for the talks for some, though a source of disappointment to others.

The ethical consideration in the actual interview situation varied according to the type of interview that was being carried out. In the interviews with representatives from different organizations and professions, the ethical considerations were fairly straightforward. These interviewees were interviewed at their work premises, and the questions revolved around their daily professional chores. For the group of war-trauma sufferers, however, the picture was very different. These were interviewed about severely traumatic events in their lives, and the mere talking about these events could trigger retraumatization. In all these interviews, it was therefore crucial for me to have a network of professionals that I could contact in case of need. Those interviewees who had experienced family loss were all interviewed in their homes. It was their therapists who contacted them and asked them if they wanted to talk to me. While most of these interviews were carried out with only the interviewee, the

interpreter, and me present, it was not always possible to arrange for the interview to be completely private. Sometimes a child would come running in, and at other times other family members might pass by. This meant that some questions could prove more difficult to ask and were therefore omitted in order to spare the interviewee additional discomfort. The interviews with the war-raped women and the women who had experienced torture in concentration camps were all carried out in the neutral confines of local organizations. This meant that interviewees could talk about their experiences without fear of being overheard by other family members, and, again, there was a network of assistance available outside the door in case of need. In the focus groups, the ethical limitations were first and foremost based on how personal the questions could be. Asking questions about changing gender relations also involves questions about changing sexual relations. The main concern in the focus groups was therefore to balance questions in a way that did not lead to disclosure of information that the interviewee might consider too personal. This is discussed in greater detail in Article II, pp. 7–8.

In addition to these concerns, I also had to consider the ethical implications of using an interpreter, especially in the interviews with the war-trauma sufferers. This is the theme in the following section.

Interpreting Interpreters

The use of interpreters in interviews is a methodological, analytical, and ethical challenge. Before discussing the ethical implications, I will briefly discuss the methodological and analytical considerations entailed by the presence of an interpreter.

Standard textbook approaches to interviewing tend to ignore the possible use of interpreters in interviews. In the available literature on the use of interpreters, most of which focuses on ethnographic field work, they are seen as a problem rather than a resource, and interpreters are often ignored or renamed „field assistants“ or „research assistants“ so that the need for further analytical consideration might be avoided (Berreman, 1962; Borchgrevink, 2003). In the field of psychological qualitative interviewing, discussion of the use of interpreters is conspicuously absent, perhaps because psychological interviewing has not traditionally been done in foreign-language settings, nor have ethnographic data been regarded as particularly relevant to psychological theory development. The social constructionist turn within social and

political psychology makes questions of language competency, translation, and social interaction more acute, because here research data are generated through a cooperative inquiry between researcher and interviewee. Ultimately, the main question for this study related to how the transcribed analytical text is to be analyzed when it contains at least three different voices? This is the main theme of Article V.

While it is clear that I did not have direct access to the interviewees' speech during the interviews, I was able to communicate with most of them both prior to and after the actual interviews without needing to rely on an interpreter. The majority of the interviewees had a modest command of English, German, or French – languages that I also speak – but opted for conducting the actual interview in Bosnian with an interpreter. The small talk before and after the interviews was important, however, because it created a sense of rapport between me and the interviewees. In addition, those who had fairly good command of English were able to evaluate, and at times correct, translations made by the interpreter during the actual interview. At times an interviewee would stop the interpreter and ask her to nuance the translation to better fit what the interviewee meant. For many of the interviewees, this meant that they had some control over the interpreter's translations.

Can one design and create an interview situation with an interpreter that safeguards the confidentiality of interviewees and creates an interview interaction that does not have negative consequences for the interviewee or the interpreter? It was clear to me that it would be important to recruit interpreters who were, first and foremost, actively interested in the theme of study. Because of the sensitive nature of the research theme, it was imperative that the interpreters be female. The interview setting, therefore, became a small community of women (me, the interpreter, and the interviewee). Before working with each of the interpreters, I had a meeting to discuss the research I was doing and how I would like them to behave and translate during the interview. I was also keen to hear about their own interest in the research theme and to learn about how they had been involved with war-raped women in their current or previous work. Because I regarded the interview as a cooperative inquiry, and because the interpreters were particularly interested in the research theme, I encouraged them to give feedback on non-verbal aspects of the interview. This feedback consisted of observations on the actual interview (such as whether the interviewee talked freely, whether she seemed nervous, specific use of core terms, and more) and the interpreter's own evaluation of her own translations (Had she managed to translate as

well as she could? Were there things that made it difficult to break into the stream of talk and translate? Were there questions that I asked that had to be reformulated?). This feedback was recorded and made part of the textual commentaries to the actual transcribed interview texts. In addition, after all the interview sessions, the interpreter and I would go out for dinner and debrief and talk about the day. The interpreters therefore served not only as invaluable linguistic translators, but also as cultural ones.

The actual translations were in the form of summaries rather than simultaneous word-by-word translations. This mode of interpretation inevitably leads to much information being lost and made inaccessible to the researcher. While this was less of a problem in the interviews with those who had command of English and who could verify the major points being translated, it was more of a problem in the cases where the interviewees had no command of common foreign language. This was the case for all of the interviews with war-raped women (Article IV). This issue had to be weighed against the ethical considerations guiding the thematic choice in the doctoral dissertation, namely, giving a voice to war-raped women; the methodological disadvantage the use interpreters might create had to be seen in relation to the wish to make the war-raped w o m e n s v o i c e s heard .

My dilemma was as follows: Would it be unethical to ask women who had gone through tremendous pain to recount their experiences not only to me but also to an interpreter, or would it be unethical to refrain from doing so? My subsequent reasoning was based on an acknowledgement that by *not* using interpreters in a foreign-language interview setting, research would by default be limited to cultural and linguistic areas that are familiar to the researcher. While I do not mean to suggest that in-depth knowledge of a given sociocultural setting is in any way negative – on the contrary – there is, however, a danger in the ways in which discourse analyses are presented in textbooks that we will end up with research strongly limited to certain cultural settings, most often in English-speaking areas. However, as social science researchers, we must ask whether the limits of our ethical research training only stretch as far as our methodological toolbox, or whether they should be extended to include the questions we ask, in the settings that we ask them? It seems clear that, through the use of an interpreter, the perceptions and viewpoints of the war-rape sufferers could be put into words for a linguistic community larger than that of Bosnia. This goal superseded the methodological challenges that using an interpreter posed. The challenge was then to position these interviews in a methodological and

epistemological framework that would be as true to the speech of the interviewees as possible.

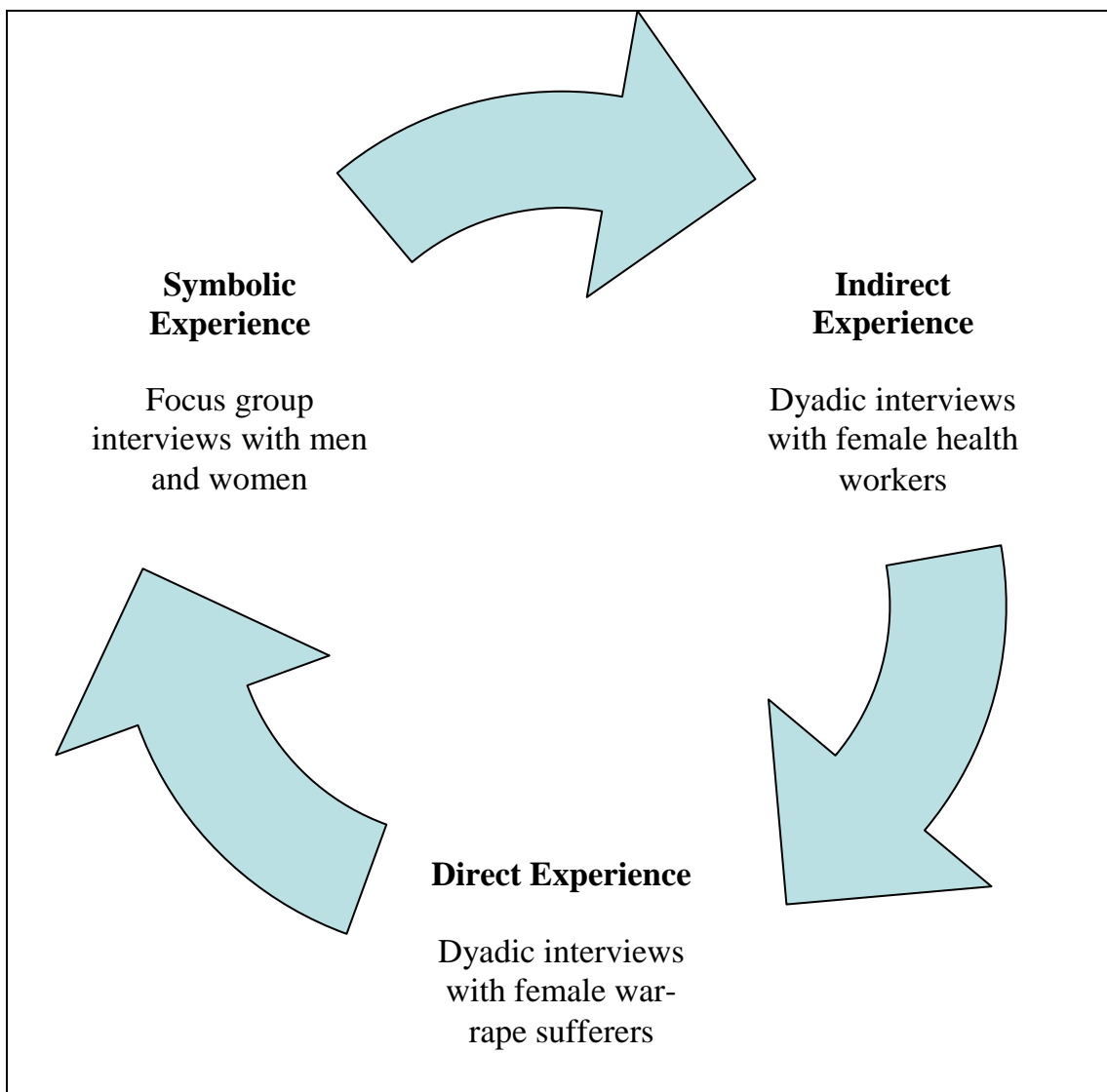
It was against this background that Article V was written. The discussion in this article shows that a careful analysis of the interpreter can contribute positively to knowledge generation within critical and post-structuralist research. Also, within a critical research approach, a carefully selected interpreter can act in ways that reinforce, linguistically and socially, the talk of the interviewee. The interpreter therefore contributes in generating critical knowledge that has a transformative potential. Within a post-structuralist approach, an interpreter can have a positive effect, in that his/her choice of words might indicate different subject positions within discourse. In this context, the interpreters act not as an extension of the interviewee but as a conveyer of the social positioning of people, experiences, and perceptions within a sociopolitical setting. The discussion, in Article V, also shows that interpreters clearly limit analysis of naturally occurring language-in-use. This makes it difficult to analyze interviews with interpreters from a structuralist/semiotic perspective.

Mode of Analysis

In a qualitative interview study such as this, the processes of data-gathering and analysis are intertwined to such a point that they appear indistinguishable. It is clear, however, that any given qualitative research project will move from being more data-gathering to being more data analysis over the over the duration of the project, but it is hard to determine the particular point at which the data-gathering stops and the analysis takes over. The following section, however, will attempt to clarify both the choices and the analytical implications of the choices and processes involved in the empirical interview data analysis on which Articles II–IV are based.

The selection of interviewees is crucial in any given interview study, and in this doctoral study it was important to create an understanding of sociopolitical context in order to understand the experiences of the individual war-raped women. The selection of interviewees was therefore based on the assumption that the interviewees would have different relations to the war-rape phenomenon, as outlined below:

Figure 4: Interviewees with Different Wartime Sexual Violence Experiences



These different modes of interviews and groups of interviewees probed different modes of analyses. One should, therefore, consider the three different groups of interviews as three different sub-studies of the major theme at hand: the aftermath of the war rapes.

Having completed my field interviews and transcribed all the recorded hours of talk, I was almost paralyzed by the 800 pages of transcribed text that I had compiled. Kvale writes about how to tackle numerous pages of qualitative data in his chapter „The 1,000 Page Question , and argues that one should never carry out research in such a way that one ends up asking „How shall I find a method to analyze the 1,000 pages of interview transcripts I have collected? (Kvale, 1996, p. 176). The obvious way out for me was to divide the 800 pages into three sub-studies, each

consisting of far fewer pages and interviews to analyze, which made the textual analysis much more manageable. As a general procedure, all the sub-studies were approached in the following way:

Repeated arguments, ideas, perceptions, and events were recorded (manually by me) while transcribing the interviews. These initial modes of organization were based on *listening* to all the interviews and were the first raw analysis.

Repeated arguments, ideas, and events were written down (manually by me) while *reading* the interviews after they had been transcribed. These modes of organization of the texts were based on assumptions made during the first raw analysis.

Repeated arguments, ideas, perceptions, and events were linked to the *what* and *why* questions guiding the three different sub-studies.

Miles & Huberman (1994) write that there are several ways of recording and managing qualitative data, ranging from the descriptive to the explanatory. These techniques include noting patterns, seeing plausibility, clustering, making metaphors, counting, making contrasts/comparisons, subsuming particulars under the general, factoring, noting relations between variables, and finding intervening variables. Use of these techniques is intended to lead to conceptual and theoretical coherence (Miles & Huberman, 1994, pp. 245–246). In the three empirical articles (Articles II–IV) the differing modes of data analysis are spelled out in detail.

(a) *Interviews with people with indirect experience of war rape* was the first step in the fieldwork interview process. The decision to start with this particular group of informants was based on two factors. First, on a pragmatic level, through connections in the field I was introduced to psychosocial center A in central Bosnia and invited to reside at the center for two weeks, to get acquainted with its work and interview its employees. Through other contacts in Norway I was able to repeat this mode of working (except that I could not actually reside at psychosocial center B) at a different psychosocial center in a different part of Bosnia. These interviews had two pragmatic benefits: contacts with local health workers led to direct contacts with war-rape sufferers who could be interviewed at a later stage; also, interviews with these local

health workers provided an important way for me to educate myself on how to conduct other interviews with war-rape sufferers – that is, women with direct war-rape experience. What would happen if I were to cry during an interview? How would that make a war-rape sufferer feel? Were there ways of asking questions about war rape in a sensitive and conducive way that the health workers could recommend?³

Second, on a theoretical level, the interviews with the local health workers enabled me to ask very concrete questions about their daily work, and through this to create a picture of how the war-raped women were situated in the local Bosnian context. The way in which the local health workers managed their work both with war-raped women and with female victims of violence (both war- and non-war-related) in the postwar era painted a telling picture of how war-raped women and violence against women were positioned in the local Bosnian context. In Kvale's terminology, the aim of this sub-study was to ask *what* characterized the health workers' work with sufferers of war violence versus postwar violence, and *why* did they see the need to have different approaches to these different groups of sufferers of violence? My analysis of their discussions was based on how they answered these questions from their subject positions as liaisons between their clients and the Bosnian community at large. The theoretical aim of these interviews was to find out (1) which interpretive repertoires were applied by the health workers when they described their work with victims of war rape, and (2) which interpretive repertoires were applied when the health workers described their work with sufferers of war rape vis-à-vis their work with victims of postwar rape. The analysis shows that the social status, therapy methods, and modes of talking about war-rape sufferers differ from those related to the postwar rape sufferers. The ways in which war-rape and postwar-rape sufferers are seen as different is outlined in Article III. The general conclusion one can draw, however, is that the different contexts (war versus postwar) create different therapeutic approaches to the traumas involved and different modes of understanding the needs of the rape sufferer.

(b) Interviews with people with direct experience of war-rape. On the basis of my interviews with the health workers and through their networks and contacts, I was

³ What I learned was that showing crying during an interview could do no harm, because, as the health workers pointed out, this shows the war-rape sufferers that their experiences are of such a nature that

able to establish contact with five women who had been subjected to mass rape during the war. These women were members of an organization for torture victims, and interviews with these women were all carried out at the offices of that organization. I interviewed two of the women twice, and the remaining three women were interviewed only once. The fact that two of the women were interviewed twice occurred because of a miscommunication with the local facilitators, but this proved to be a blessing in disguise because it allowed me to go deeper into some of the talking points from the first interviews, as well as to compare the two transcribed interviews and clarify certain points. It is hard to find the right words to describe these interviews. The interviewees were nervous, my interpreters were uncomfortable, and I was afraid that I was occasioning more pain to people (including my interpreters) who had already experienced so much suffering before. Therefore, the way in which the interviews were carried out became as much a part of the analysis (theoretically and ethically) as the actual words spoken. The greatest challenge was to come a point of disclosure of the war-rape experience so that I could ask questions about how this experience had impacted the interviewees' societal, interpersonal, and intrapersonal lives.

The study asked *what* the war-rape sufferers would choose to tell about their war-rape experiences, and *why* they would tell the story in the ways they did. Ultimately, the aim was to investigate how individuals narrated their social identities as war-rape sufferers in the postwar setting. In this study, it was important to analyze how arguments, ideas, and perceptions were linked to the war-rape event. But, as discussed in Article IV, the rapes took place in the midst of many other severely traumatizing events that the interviewees also wanted to talk about. My research challenge was therefore to find a way to map out the rape story within all the other war-trauma stories. Approaching this challenge from a vantage point of narrative analysis proved fruitful. By looking at their stories from a plot perspective – that is, asking how X led up to, explained, or rationalized the war-rapes, or how X is a consequence of the war rapes, and presenting this in a „beginning, middle, and end format – it became possible to link argument, ideas, and perceptions to the war-rape event. The major conclusion that emerged in this article was that since war rape

they cause not only pain for themselves, but also for others. In interviews with other victims of torture (not rape), this message from the health workers was confirmed.

attacks both the ethnic and the gendered identity of its victims, this creates an opportunity for the construction of a dual social identity in the aftermath.

c) Interviews with people who had symbolic experience with war rape. The term „symbolic rape experience may not be as self-explanatory as the two previous interview categories. In the writings on the Bosnian war-rape phenomenon, there is overwhelming evidence that the majority of the war-rape victims were female Bosniaks and the perpetrators male Serbs. While the ethnic Serb male perpetrator–Bosniak female victim relationship has been the most documented, it is also clear that other ethnic male perpetrator–female victim relationships exist, and that no ethnic groups were exempt from representation among the male perpetrators and female victims. The motivation for the focus-group interviews, therefore, was to investigate the extent to which the ethnically constructed perpetrator–victim relationship would enter into the focus groups discussions on changes in gender relations in Bosnia. I was interested in finding out whether the war rapes could be said to have had any symbolic impact on gender relations in the aftermath of the war – and, if so, how.

In order approach an answer to the above questions, I carried out six focus-group interviews in three different places in Bosnia: Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Mostar (Bosnia and Herzegovina), and Banja Luka (Republika Srpska). The focus groups consisted of men and women between the ages of 20 and 40. In fact, talking about the war-rape issue in the focus-group setting turned out to be difficult, but general conversations about changing gender relations was not. While the focus-group interviews proved to be an invaluable interview format for discussing gender relations, they also served as a great way of mapping out local sociopolitical perceptions on voiced and silenced constructions of femininity and masculinity. These themes are discussed in Article II.

Issues of Validity

The findings in the empirical articles outlined above must be viewed in relation to qualitative norms of validity. Notions of validity and reliability within this mode of research are not as straightforward as in traditional positivistic psychological research. In recent publications on this issue, the problem of establishing all-encompassing modes for assessing valid qualitative research have been discussed at great length (Smith, 2003; Gergen & Gergen, 2000; Jørgensen & Phillips, 1999; Wetherell, 2001).

The notion of validity varies in these different publications, but Smith (2003, pp. 232–234; inspired by Yardley, 2000) attempts to summarize the situation by outlining three principles that each researcher ought to consider in any given qualitative project:

The researcher must be sensitive to *context*. Good qualitative research should demonstrate sensitivity to the context in which the study is situated. The context can be widely construed as the sociopolitical setting, previous knowledge, and debates.

The researcher must demonstrate *commitment, rigor, transparency, and coherence* in the presentation of the qualitative data.

The researcher must outline the *impact and importance* of the findings.

The aim of the empirical articles described above has been to create an understanding of a given phenomenon: the aftermath of the Bosnian war rapes based on local Bosnian voices. In this attempt, different groups of people have been interviewed, and different interview techniques and modes of analyses have been employed. The premise for this research design was that in order to understand the individual experience of a given person who had suffered wartime rape, it is vital to understand the societal context in which that person lives. My way of getting to this understanding, therefore, was to find ways of encircling the individual experiences. I needed to talk to people with direct experience of war rape, people with indirect experience of war rape, and, finally, people with symbolic experience of war rape. This meant that the interviewees were talking from different subject positions within the postwar Bosnian sociopolitical context.

The claim to knowledge is based on the creation of multiple *descriptions* (or „interrelated propositions“; see Mosciovici, 1989, pp. 416–428) emerging from people situated in multiple subject positions. Descriptions are seen as a set of interconnected concepts, or discourses. For this reason I have quoted the interviewees' perceptions, disagreement and arguments in the analytical text to make the basis for the analysis visible and transparent.

In sum, the guiding overarching social constructionist assumption in this interview design was that in order to understand the social identity impact of a war-rape experience, one must look at the experience from the vantage point of those who

have endured these crimes while simultaneously taking into account the sociopolitical context in which they find themselves. By listening to the voices of war-rape sufferers, local health workers, and focus-group interviewees, I hope to have managed to develop an understanding of the mutual dependency between the social and individual levels of war-rape suffering.

Revisiting the Research Questions

In his article on the history of knowledge in human science, Polkinghorne (1989) argues that one ought to look at the different stages of development as conversations on various topical points. Kvale (1989) follows up by making the assertion that to validate is to question and theorize. In trying to engage the findings of this doctoral project in a dialogue with other topical themes and theoretical discussions, I now return to the main research questions:

How are social constructions of masculinity and femininity linked to war rape, and what power relations emerge as a result?

One major conclusion that emerges across the five articles in this doctoral dissertation is the finding that war rape must be understood as a violent relationship in which the perpetrator is masculinized and the victim feminized. In this process, other identities linked to the masculinized perpetrator and the feminized victim are sexualized in a hierarchical fashion, where power follows masculinization and powerlessness follows feminization. This means that the use of rape in war not only manifests a violent hierarchical relationship between the male perpetrator and the female victim, but also situates other identities in the political power struggle in a similar way. The process of masculinization and feminization on which war-rapes are based, confirms the claim made by feminist scholars within peace and conflict studies that war polarizes gender relations in hierarchical and patriarchal ways, but takes the argument one step further. The ways in which masculinization and feminization polarize other identities are intimately linked to the overall conflict structure, and it is this mechanism which makes rape a powerful weapon of war.

The implication of this understanding of war-rapes is that the intersectionality of gender and other identities in conflict become the barometer for understanding sociopolitical change at large. In Bosnia, it seems that this conceptualization of sociopolitical struggle, first violently manifest in the war-rapes, has been carried over to the post-war era. Examples of these forms of change would be the fact that the discourse of a backlash, increasing religious dominance, and traditional modes of life in postwar Bosnia is narrated as increasing restriction of mobility for women in public space, restrictions on abortions, and increasing domestic violence. Likewise, the discourse of a transition towards increasing Westernization and a market economy is narrated as an increasing openness about human rights abuses against women, an increasing use of female prostitutes and trafficked women by domestic males, and a sexualization of public spaces through blatant advertisements for places where sex can be bought and sold. These are core issues discussed in Article II.

The finding that rape sexualizes sociopolitical change in war and post-war leads to a conclusion that is different from the arguments of scholars like Allen (1996), Nordstrom (1996), and MacKinnon (1993). They have argued that we recognize the impact and consequences of rape in times of war because we know its impact and consequences in times of peace. The main reason this claim has not been debated within the scholarly literature on war rape has to do with the fact that little research, if any, has focused on the social impact that war rape might have in the aftermath of a given conflict beyond the harm it inflicts on its individual victims. I will argue, however, that we cannot recognize the impact and consequences of rape in times of war solely based on the impact of rape in times of peace because rape in war sexualizes other gendered and well as non-gendered identities for political purposes and thereby alters the ways in which masculinization and feminization is perceived. We can, however, assume that rape in war alters the intersectionality between gender and other political identities, and thereby situates gender as the optic through which other forms of sociopolitical changes are viewed and understood.

How are social constructions of masculinity and femininity linked to sociopolitical changes in prewar, wartime, and postwar Bosnia, and what understandings of war rapes, and the individual war-rape experience, emerge as a result?

The answer to this question builds on the answer outlined above. If the use of rape in war alters the intersectionality between gender and other political identities, what does this mean for local understandings of the Bosnian war rapes and for the individual war-rape sufferers? In Article III, Bosnian health workers discuss at great length how the political nature of the war rapes changed local perspectives on sexual violence against women. The war rapes were clearly construed as a political phenomenon with political implications and intent. One of the health workers described how, paradoxically, the war created a „good basis“ for therapy with rape sufferers, because the situation parameters for the crime were so different from postwar rapes. To some extent, the ways in which sexual violence became politicized took the stigma away from the female victim. Her ethnicity determined whether she was „eligible“ for attack. Through the situating of victims of sexual violence as ethnic subjects, a sense of unity was created between men and women within the same ethnic group. For the local health workers, this unity created a basis for therapy, because victims of sexual violence received support and understanding from their families and communities. In the postwar context, sexual violence and its victims are situated differently. The political context shifted, and sexual violence became more a question of male and female power relations, less a question of ethnicity. For the health workers, both lines of argument have led to various changes in terms of work methods (more focus on long-term abuse and family therapy), choice of clients (more focus on the role of men in families and adolescent behavior), and outreach target groups (more focus on reaching boys and girls of school age).

For the individual war-rape sufferers, the intersectionality between gender and other political identities that the war rapes brought about has meant different possibilities for situating their war-rape experiences in the postwar setting. The five protagonists in Article IV showed that rape in war has an impact upon and violates the social identity of its victims in at least two distinct ways: Rape in war targets both the *ethnic* and the *gendered* identity of its victims, and this dual identity violation creates a possibility for dual identity construction in the aftermath. Through their accounts, the five women created two distinctly different narrative plots, within which their primary positioning in the stories varied. As ethnic victims, the elements of their stories created a *survivor* plot characterized by absence of guilt, support from family members, and active engagement in getting their perpetrators convicted. As female victims, however, the elements of their stories created a *victim* plot characterized by

feelings of guilt and shame, hiding their stories from immediate family members, and bodily pains and immobility.

These observations show: (1) that the victims have power to redefine their social identities in the post-conflict sociopolitical space; (2) that their ability to do so, however, depends on the material, social, and political context in which they find themselves in the post-conflict setting, as well as the ways in which their „supporting cast plays its part; and, finally, (3) that positioning oneself mainly as a victim as opposed to a survivor (or the other way around) has different impacts on intrapersonal, interpersonal, and societal relations.

This doctoral dissertation has also shown that there are methodological ways of circumventing the problem that many war-rape victims chose to remain silent about their experiences. First, it is clear that there will be people in a given conflict setting who will have extensive knowledge of experiences of war rape though they are not direct war-rape sufferers themselves. The study with local health workers showed that, as liaisons between war-rape sufferers and the Bosnian community at large, health workers were able to provide invaluable insights into both the social and the individual implications of wartime rape. Second, the use of interpreters in the interviews with war-raped women also proved to be a way of giving voice to local women and their experiences in ways that might otherwise have been disregarded. In the examination of the interpreter interviews, it was shown that if the latter are carefully chosen they can potentially bring yet another layer of understanding to the overall analysis.

Conclusion

This doctoral dissertation shows that the use of rape in the Bosnian war was an effective weapon. Not only did it have a significant political impact during the conflict from 1992 to 1995, it also contributed to changing prewar modes of social and gendered interaction. For individual war-rape sufferers, the harm and trauma inflicted is undisputable, but the ways in which these individuals live with their war-rape experiences in the aftermath take diverse forms. One of the reasons for these variations is the fact that the use of rape in war transforms notions of femininity and masculinity by sexualizing other (political) identities (see Articles I and II). Tragically, male war-rape against female members of opposing warring groups does

achieve its political objective of destroying the existing social fabric, but by doing so war rape has an unintended potentially positive side-effect in that it creates new spaces for the social construction of gender. This change of social constructions of femininity and masculinity shows that rape in war has societal consequences that extend beyond the harm and devastation these acts of violence inflict on individual victims, and it also shows that these larger societal changes have implications for psychological therapy with war-rape victims (see Article III) and for the ways in which individual victims regard their war-trauma experiences (see Article IV). Against this backdrop, then, an optimistic potential for policymakers and psychological therapists comes into relief, in that an increased focus on the sociopolitical nature of war rapes and notions of femininity and masculinity can counteract the stigmatization of rape victims, because it lifts the individual experience out of the individual sphere of private suffering.

Policy Implications

This study has shown that policymakers aiming to assist war-raped communities and sufferers must be aware of several factors. First, they must not assume that war rape has universal effects on its sufferers, but realize that this particular form of war violence has multifaceted outcomes. Close cooperation with local partners (such as the health workers in this study) is crucial in assessing the impact of war rape in the given conflict setting. Second, the fact that war rapes have political significance in conflict settings means that there is a potential for transforming the traditional stigma normally attached to rape victims. Local authorities in a particular conflict setting (for instance, religious and community leaders in Bosnia) can counteract the stigma normally ascribed to a rape victim by talking publicly about how these acts of war are political forms of violence and by pointing out that no form of guilt or responsibility should be ascribed to individual sufferers. When this is done with authority, repetitively and compassionately, the rape experiences will be made visible in ways that can have a positive effect on the self-perception of the individual war-rape sufferer and her ways of living with the trauma. A third theme, one that is not covered in this thesis, is the situation for children conceived through acts of war rape in Bosnia. These children are now coming of age and are starting to ask questions about the war, their fathers, and their mothers. Policymakers and aid workers can profit

from the organized local knowledge and recognition of the war rapes in order to meet the needs and concerns of this particular group of children.

Implications for Future Research

Future research in this field must have as a premise that the consequences of acts of sexual violence are not given. The effects and consequences of such violence will most likely vary according to time, culture, and the nature of the conflict. It is only through interaction with the female victims and male perpetrators, as well as an understanding of the nature of the conflict and culture in which the acts of sexual violence took place, that the researcher can explain the impact and consequences of wartime sexual violence in any given conflict context. Generalizations about the impact of sexual violence on individual victims and their respective sociopolitical communities can only be made by comparing multiple local studies, simply because one cannot adequately assess the individual impact without an appreciation and understanding of the wider sociopolitical context in which given acts of war rape occurred and in which the war-rape sufferers live in the aftermath of the events. We thus need more in-depth and case-based analyses of war-raped women and communities in order to compare situational parameters and local variations.

As mentioned above, this study has not focused on the possible impact of war rapes on the children conceived through such acts, the impact of war rapes on male partners of female victims, and the ways in which verdicts in local and international courts against perpetrators affect individual, interpersonal, and societal understandings of war rape. These are themes that ought to be subjects for future research, and hopefully this will lead to improved understanding of war rape and the best possible help for its sufferers.

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Appendix I:

Interview Guides for the Different Interview Groups

Interview Guide for Representatives of Different Organizations and Professions

Thank you very much for being willing to participate in this interview. Before we start I would like to give you some pieces of information.

First, it is important to emphasize that this interview is confidential. Everything you say here will be only between you and me (and the interpreter). Quotes and comments that might be used in the articles will be rewritten to make them anonymous.

Second, because I am not able to make accurate notes of everything you say the interview will be recorded. The minidisks will, however, stay with me at all times and will be destroyed when the project is finished

Third, because this interview is based on volunteer participation you should feel free to not answer questions you may not wish to reveal answers to. If you wish to stop the entire interview, you are also free to do that whenever you want.

Lastly, it is important for me to find out how you think about the different questions I will ask. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions, you are the expert and it is my goal to try to understand how you make sense of your work. The interview will last about 1, 5 hours.

Interview No.:

Age:

Education/Training:

Nationality:

Has been at the current job since:

1. What can you tell me about the start-up of the center/NGO?

Follow up questions:

What were the major objectives?

Why was the center/NGO necessary?

What were the major activities? How were the activities organized? Why were they organized in a particular way?

What were the major difficulties? How were they difficult? Why were these things difficult?

What were the greatest achievements?

Who was selected for treatment/help/assistance? Why were these women selected? How long were these women in treatment?

What kind of treatment did the center provide? Why was it decided to provide medical and psychiatric help?

2. Can you describe your work?

Follow-up questions:

What is your work at the center/NGO?

Do you work in teams or alone?

Are most weeks the same? What makes the work varied?

Does working at the center make life difficult for you in any way?

Do you enjoy working at the center/NGO? Why? In what way?

How has your work changed since you started working at the center/NGO?

What characterizes a good week? What have you achieved?

3. *There are mostly women working at the center, and mostly women who are treated at the center, what are your thoughts about that?*

Follow-up questions:

Why is it best to have only women (workers and clients) at the center?

Has working in this mostly women environment changed you? How? Why?

Would you have liked to have men working with and as clients? Why (not)?

4. *What are your thoughts about the center's change of focus from war-related sexual violence to domestic violence?*

Follow-up questions:

When did this change of focus take place?

Why did this change take place?

What has happened to the survivors of war-related sexual violence? Do some of them still get help from the center? What kind of help?

Do the survivors of war-time sexual violence need help today? What kind?

How is domestic violence in Bosnia today related to war-time sexual violence? Are the victims the same? How? Are they different? How?

Was this, in your view; a right change for the center to make?

How has this change affected the work at the center? Do you use the same forms of therapy? Why can the same form of therapy be used (or not be used) for victims of domestic violence as for victims of war-related sexual violence?

5. *It is interesting to know how the local community looks at the work the center does. What is your impression of how the local community regards the center?*

Follow-up questions:

What do people in the local community know about the center?

Do people other places in Bosnia know about the center? What do they know?

Is it regarded as a center for war-victims? If, so, how are the war-victims looked upon?

Do the women who come to the center feel stigmatized by their communities? Do they have to come in secret? If so, how do they do that and why?

Is the center accepted by the local community – how and why?

Could similar centers have been established at other places in Bosnia?

Does working at the center make your life difficult in any way?

How do you get feedback about people's reaction to the center?

Is the feed-back from the local community different now that the center has changed focus to domestic violence?

Does the community's impression of the center change with other changes in society? (Hague, prostitution, Kosovo war)

6. How do you see the center/NGO in the future?

Follow-up questions:

Why is it important to have a center/NGO like this one in Bosnia today?

Do you think centers like this center/NGO are needed other places in Bosnia today? Where and why?

What will be the greatest challenge for the center/NGO in the future?

What groups of women will be selected for treatment/help/assistance in the future and why?

7. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you very much for your participation. Should you wish to contact me to add something you should feel free to contact me at any time. Good luck with your very important work in the future.

Interview Guide for War-Trauma Sufferers

Thank you very much for being willing to participate in this interview. This interview is part of a research study on how survivors of war-time sexual violence in Bosnia live today and I have been informed briefly about your background. I would like to emphasize, however, that this study is focused on the present and we do not need to talk about things that make you feel uncomfortable or things that you do not want to tell me about what happened especially to you during the war.

Before we start I would like to give you some pieces of information.

First, it is important to emphasize that this interview is confidential. Everything you say here will be only between you and me (and the interpreter). Quotes and comments that might be used in the articles will be rewritten to make them anonymous.

Second, because I am not able to make accurate notes of everything you say the interview will be recorded. The minidisks will, however, stay with me at all times and will be destroyed when the project is finished

Third, because this interview is based on volunteer participation you should feel free to not answer questions you may not wish to reveal answers to. If you wish to stop the entire interview, you are also free to do that whenever you want.

Lastly, it is important for me to find out how you think about the different questions I will ask. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions, you are the expert and it is my goal to try to understand how you make sense of your work. The interview will last about 1, 5 hours.

Interview No.:

Age:

Education/Training:

Nationality:

1. Can you describe your daily life today??

Follow-up questions:

What kind of work do you do?

What is your family situation?

What are the major struggles?

What are the major resources for joy?

If I ask you to characterize your life today in one word – what would that word be?

What characterizes a good week?

2. When did you first come in contact with [Name of organization]?

Follow up questions:

How did you hear about [Name of organization]?

Was it in any way difficult for you to come to [Name of organization]?

Do you remember your first feelings when you came to [Name of organization]?

What kind of help did you want from the people at [Name of organization]??

Did you feel that you got the help that you needed?

Was there help that you did not get, but that you would have liked to get?

Were there other people that you knew who would have needed help from [Name of organization] who did not contact [Name of organization]? Do you know why they did not contact [Name of organization]?

3. There are mostly women working at [Name of organization] and only women who receive help, what are your thoughts about that?

Follow-up questions:

Why is it best to have only women at [Name of organization]?

Has your contact with this woman-only environment changed you? How? Why?

Would you have liked to have seen men accepted as clients at [Name of organization]? too? Why (not)?

4. What is your relationship to [Name of organization] today?

Follow-up questions:

Do you use any of the [Name of organization] facilities regularly? Which ones?

Is there any kind of help that you need that [Name of organization] does not offer?

Are there people that you know who have experienced the same as you who need help from [Name of organization] but who are afraid to contact them? Why are they afraid?

Do you feel that the help that you have received at [Name of organization] helps you to handle difficult feeling and thoughts relating to your war-time experience? Can you describe in what way it helps?

If you contact [Name of organization] on an irregular basis, what is it normally that makes you feel a need to contact the people at [Name of organization]??

What sort of help is most useful for you?

5. Many people who have experienced sexual violence, whether in peace or war, feel ashamed even when it is clearly not their fault, has that been a problem for you?

Follow-up questions:

Have you told your family what you have experienced? Was this difficult – in what way?

How do you feel that people in Bosnia at large (or hometown) look at that particular form of war experience? Do you feel that people know what happened to you? How do they react (protective, dismissive, other?) – how is this shown?

Is the Hague tribunal important for you? Do you feel that it creates a sense of justice?

When do you choose to tell people about your war-experiences? Why?

Are there things that were difficult in the beginning after the war, that are easier today? Why?

Are there things that were easier in the beginning after the war, that are more difficult today? Why?

Do you have contact with other women who share your experiences?

Was the fatwa issued by the imam in Sarajevo on 1994 important for you? In what way?

Do you feel that your experiences with sexual violence are like the experiences of the women who suffer from domestic violence? Can you share experiences with them? Teach coping strategies and the like?

Why do you think sexual violence was to such a large extent during the war? What do you feel that this form of violence destroys? What does this form of violence not destroy?

6. How do you see yourself in the future?

Follow-up questions:

What would you like to do?

Would you like to remain in Bosnia?

Where in Bosnia would you like to live?

7. What is the most important help that the international community can give to survivors of war-time sexual violence?

8. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you very much for your participation. Should you wish to contact me to add something you should feel free to contact me at any time.

Interview Guide for Focus-Group Interviews

Thank you all very much for being willing to participate in this interview. This is a group interview which means that it is the discussion between you which is my primary interest. The focus of the interview is on the roles of men and women in Bosnia.

Before we start I would like to give you some pieces of information.

First, because I am not able to make accurate notes of everything you say the interview will be recorded. The minidisks will, however, stay with me at all times and will be destroyed when the project is finished

Second, this interview is based on volunteer participation you should feel free to not answer questions you may not wish to reveal answers to. If you wish to stop the entire interview, you are also free to do that whenever you want.

Lastly, it is important for me to find out how you think about the different questions I will ask. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions, you are the expert and it is my goal to try to understand your viewpoint on the different issues. The interview will last about 1, 5 hours.

Interview No.:

Age:

Education:

Work:

Place of Birth:

Current place of living:

Nationality:

1. Many people I have interviewed have said that Bosnia is a very traditional society. What does that mean?

Follow up questions:

How is a „traditional Bosnia family?

Who defined the roles of men and women?

In what ways are the roles defined? Examples?

What is the role of religion in the definition of traditional gender roles? Examples?

Who makes the money?

Is Bosnia a traditional society today? In what ways?

Is Bosnia *not* a traditional society today? What has changed?

Where in Bosnia are gender roles the most traditional? Why? How is this visible?

Where in Bosnia are gender roles the least traditional? Why? How is this visible?

2. How would you characterize the gender roles in your family when you grew up?

Follow-up questions:

Were your mother at home and your father at work?

What sort of job did your mother/father have?

What were your own expectations for your future life in terms of gender roles (marriage/education/work... .)

3. How would you characterize gender roles in your environment today?

Follow-up questions:

Are the gender roles traditional or un-traditional? In what way – examples.

Is the situation in Sarajevo/Mostar/Banja Luka very different from other places in Bosnia?

What makes Sarajevo/Mostar/Banja Luka different from the rest of Bosnia?

Are there differences in gender roles among the different ethnic groups in Bosnia today – how is it your own age group?

What are the reasons for these differences?

Do you consider gender roles in Bosnia today as very different from the gender roles in your parents generation?

What are the major differences? What are the reasons for these differences?

What is expected from young women in Bosnia today in terms of education, family, work? Is there a difference between Sarajevo/Mostar/ Banja Luka and the rest of the country regarding this? Is there a difference between ethnic groups regarding this?

4. During the war there was a lot of attention given to the sexual abuse of women. How is the attention given to this particular form of violence in Bosnia today?

Follow-up questions:

Is this a theme that is addressed in Bosnian public discourse? In what ways? By whom?

Is a raped woman stigmatised?

Who stigmatises her?

How is this shown? By whom?

Is there a difference between being raped in times of war and times of peace? In what ways? Is there a difference in the public opinion about this as well? How? In what ways?

Is violence against women more openly discussed in Bosnia today?

In what ways is it more open?

What is the most difficult for women who have been sexually abused? (to get married, be accepted by her family, establish relationships, etc... ?) Is there a difference between the war-raped and the peace-rapes?

5. Do you envision changes in gender-roles in Bosnia in the future?

Follow-up questions:

Why do you envision changes?

What kind of changes do you envision? (political /social)

On what basis will it change/not change? (will all the educated women leave Bosnia and only the uneducated stay and thereby sustain traditional gender roles?)

6. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you very much for your participation. Should you wish to contact me to add something you should feel free to contact me at any time

Appendix II:

Letter Given to All Interviewees in English and Bosnian

Letter in English

Making Sense of War-Time Sexual Violence in Peace-Time Bosnia-Herzegovina

By researcher Inger Skjelsbaek at the International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO).

The experiences of women in war have generally not been devoted much attention in peace and conflict studies. Even less attention has been given to the specific issue of war-time sexual violence. During the recent conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina, however, more attention was given to this particular war-aggression than ever before. But, since the 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement little has been written about the hazardous aftermath for the survivors, their families and communities. This research project will be one step toward filling a big gap in the gendered knowledge and understanding of the impact of war and the complexities of peace. It is my belief that those who work directly with survivors of war as well as those who approach war and peace issues from a theoretical perspective will benefit from more systematic knowledge about war-time sexual violence and the aftermath; theories on war and peace will be more complete and aid workers will be better prepared to handle gender different experiences in war.

My aim is to investigate how survivors, their families and communities, in Bosnia-Herzegovina relate to the issue of war-time sexual violence today.

How do survivors look upon their experiences today?

How do health professionals provide care/help today?

How is sexual violence looked upon by local communities in Bosnia-Herzegovina today?

This is a qualitative study based on knowledge from social psychology on how people relate to each other in order to understand the world around us and make sense of chaotic and traumatic experiences. To get a complete picture I want to systematize what we know from scholarly literature on the issue of war-time sexual violence, and interview survivors and health workers to learn to understand the meaning of having experienced sexual violence in a war situation. Further, I want to understand how this is understood and handled by young men and women in Bosnia-Herzegovina who have not themselves been affected by this particular form of war-violence. This gives me insight into how war-time sexual violence is looked upon by Bosnian communities.

All interviews are based on volunteer participation by the informants and will be made anonymous. The final analyses will be sent to key-informants for comments before publication.

The output is four scholarly articles for international publication in peer-reviewed journals (one has already been published in the *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 7(2), pp. 211-237, 2001). The project is funded by the Norwegian Research Council (NFR). Professors Hjørdis Kaul and Berit Schei at the Norwegian University for Science and Technology (NTNU) are academic supervisors.

Thank you for sharing your experiences with me.

Inger Skjelsbæk
PRIO, August 2001

Letter in Bosnian

PRONALAZENJE SMISLA U SEKSUALNOM ZLOSTAVLJANJU U BOSNI I HERCEGOVINI TOKOM RATA

Inger Skjelsbæk, International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO)

Ratnim iskustvima žena nije posvećeno mnogo pažnje u studijama koje se bave mirom i konfliktom. Još je manje pažnje posvećeno posebnoj temi seksualnog nasilja u ratu. Ipak, tokom nedavnog konflikta u Bosni ovoj posebnoj ratnoj agresiji je dato više pažnje nego ikada pre. Međutim, od potpisivanja Dejtonskog Mirovnog Sporazuma, malo je napisano o strasnim iskustvima preživelih, njihovih porodica i zajednice u vremenu posle nasilja. Ovaj istraživački projekat će biti jedan korak ka popunjavanju velikog jaza u znanju o polovima, razumevanju uticaja koji rat ima kao i kompleksnosti mira. Moje je uverenje da će od sistematizovanijeg znanja o seksualnom nasilju u ratu i njegovom uticaju na život žrtava posle rata imati koristi kako oni koji su direktno uključeni u rad sa preživelim tako i oni koji se temom rata i mira bave sa teoretskog stanovista; teorije rata i mira će biti kompletnije a zaposleni u aid agencijama će biti bolje pripremljeni da se nose sa iskustvima polova tokom rata.

Moj cilj je da otkrijem kako se preživeli, njihove porodice i sira zajednica danas odnose prema problemu seksualnog nasilja u ratu.

Kako preživeli danas gledaju na svoja iskustva?

Kako zdravstveni radnici danas ukazuju pomoć?

Kako zajednice u Bosni (i Hercegovini) danas gledaju na problem seksualnog nasilja?

Ovo je kvalitativna studija zasnovana na znanju iz socijalne psihologije o tome kako se ljudi odnose jedni prema drugima kako bi razumeli svet oko sebe i našli neki smisao u haoticnim i traumatičnim iskustvima. Da bih dobila kompletnu sliku ja želim da sistematizujem saznanja o seksualnom nasilju u ratu, koja imamo iz naučne literature, kao i da intervjuisem preživeli i zdravstveno osoblje kako bih razumela kako ovo shvataju i nose se mladi ljudi i žene koji sami nisu doživeli ovu vrstu ratnog nasilja. To mi omogućava uvid u to kako se na ratno seksualno nasilje gleda u sredinama u Bosni i Hercegovini.

Svi intervjui su zasnovani na dobrovoljnom ucescu i bice anonimni. Konacna analiza ce pre izdavanja biti poslata kljucnim izvorima na pregled.

Rezultat ce biti cetiri naucna clanka (jedan je vec izašao i *Evropskom zurnalu za medjunarodne odnose*, Vol.7 (2), str.211-237, 2001). Projekat je finansiran od strane Norveskog istraživačkog saveta (NFR). Akademski supervizori su profesori Hjørdis Kaul i Berit Schei sa Norveskog Univerziteta za Nauku i Tehnologiju.

Zelesa bih da zahvalim zato sto su podelili svoja iskustva sa mnom.

Inger Skjelsbæk
PRIO, avgust 2001

Introduction to the Articles

Article I, „Sexual Violence and War: Mapping Out a Complex Relationship (*European Journal of International Relations*, 2001, vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 211–237), starts from the premise that in the 1990s there was more focus on wartime sexual violence than ever before. Within academia, among policymakers, and in the media, there emerged a consensus that sexual violence can be used as a weapon of war. This article attempts to understand the complex relationship between sexual violence and war by presenting three different conceptualizations based on a literature study of 140 scholarly texts published mainly during the 1990s. The crux of the article is the argument that the relationship between sexual violence and war is best conceptualized within a social constructionist paradigm. My analysis shows that it is the social constructionist conceptualization that is best equipped to explain the complex empirical reality at hand.

Article II, „The Changing Politics of Gender: A Social Constructionist Approach to Bosnia-Herzegovina (submitted to *British Journal of Social Psychology* for possible publication), examines the relationships between sociopolitical change and social constructions of gender. More specifically, the article examines how gender relations are constructed within different sociopolitical contexts, and how sociopolitical contexts are constructed through narratives of changing gender relations. The study is based on an analysis of focus-group interviews with six ethnically homogenous (Serb, Croat, and Bosniak), gender-mixed focus groups whose participants were all between the ages of 20 and 40. The focus-group participants were asked to characterize and discuss changes in gender relations, behaviors, roles, and expectations in Bosnia and Herzegovina since the years of communism, through the war years, and up until the present time. Through its analysis, the article provides new understandings of the gendered sociopolitical foundation for, and implications of, the war rapes committed during the 1992–95 Bosnian War.

Article III, „Therapeutic Work with Victims of Sexual Violence in War and Post-War: A Discourse Analysis of Bosnian Experiences (*Peace and Conflict: Journal of*

Peace Psychology, 2006, vol. 12, no. 1, pp. 93–98), presents a discourse analysis of 23 interviews with local Bosnian health workers at two different psychosocial centers. The main premise for the study is based on an acknowledgement that many victims of war rape will choose to remain silent about their ordeals, and that studies of this particular war phenomenon must therefore be based, in part, on other local voices in the field. The main focus is on the ways in which the interviewed health workers describe their work with victims of sexual violence in war and postwar settings in Bosnia. Through their descriptions, we gain unique insight into how the issue of war rape was addressed and dealt with at the local level. Further, on a general level, the study shows that the impact of sexual violence in war varies according to context, an insight that has implications not only for our general understanding of the phenomenon, but also in the use of particular therapy methods. These therapy methods must balance between the assumption that there are universal effects of sexual violence that cut across various contexts, on the one hand, and cultural relativism, which assumes the opposite, on the other.

Article IV, „Victim and Survivor: Narrated Social Identities of Women Who Experienced Rape During the War in Bosnia-Herzegovina (*Feminism and Psychology*, 2006, vol. 16, no. 2, forthcoming), presents a narrative analysis of interviews with five women who were victims of war rape during the Bosnian War. It is commonly believed that, when utilized in ethnic conflicts, as in the Bosnian case, sexual violence is employed as a weapon of demoralization against entire societies. Such demoralization is characterized by a violent invasion of the interior of the victim's body, which thereby constitutes an attack upon the intimate self and dignity of the individual human being. By giving a voice to women who have experienced such an ordeal and letting them position their experiences, we gain insight into the diverse impacts that war rapes have on different victims, their families, and their relationships. The narrative analysis makes it possible to analyze the war-rape experiences of these women as unique and different from other war-trauma experiences, while simultaneously recognizing the totality in which the war rapes occurred.

Article V, „Interpreting the Interpreter: Reflections on Transcribed Fieldwork Interviews with Interpreters (submitted to *Qualitative Research Methods in*

Psychology for possible publication), asks what the presence of an interpreter does to a transcribed interview text. The current lack of methodological and theoretical discussion of the impact of the interpreter becomes an acute problem when the researcher attempts to analyze the transcribed fieldwork interview text. This text is blurred by the voices of the interviewee, the interviewer, and the interpreter, and does not fit most textbook descriptions of social text analysis. This article presents different modes of untangling the social position and textual impact of the interpreter within critical, structuralist, and post-structuralist theory.

* I would like to thank J. Peter Burgess, Hjørdis Kaul, Berit Schei, and Dan Smith for comments on earlier drafts of this introductory text. Thanks also to Jørgen Carling for formatting the maps for me. John Carville deserves a special thanks for his language-editing of the text. Responsibility for the final text, however, rests entirely with the author.

Article 1

Article 1 is not included due to copyright.

Article II

Article II:

(Submitted to *International Feminist Journal of Politics* for possible publication)

The Changing Politics of Gender:

A Social Constructionist Approach to Bosnia-Herzegovina

INGER SKJELSBÆK

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Abstract

The article examines the relationships between sociopolitical change and social constructions of gender. More specifically, it examines how gender relations are constructed within different sociopolitical contexts, and how sociopolitical contexts are constructed through narratives of changing gender relations. The study is based on an analysis of focus-group interviews with six ethnically homogenous (Serbs, Croats, and Bosniaks) mixed-gender groups whose participants were all between the ages of 20 and 40. Participants in these focus groups were asked to characterize and discuss changes in gender relations, behaviors, roles, and expectations in Bosnia-Herzegovina since the years of communism, through the war years, and up until the present time. Through this analysis, the article brings new understandings of the gendered sociopolitical foundation for, as well as the implications of, the war rapes committed during the 1992–95 Bosnian war.

Keywords: *Bosnia-Herzegovina, gender, social constructionism, intersectionality, discourse, sexual violence*

Introduction

Here I have a job, which is good, and I have my flat and my daughter and my husband and I am trying to make the situation in my home normal. I am trying to make my daughter a good pupil, a good woman and a good girl, but I cannot explain to her what the future will bring, what are the right values, what are the good values in this society and that is really hard. (Croat woman, born 1967; interviewed in June 2002, Bosnia-Herzegovina)

This article starts from the premise that notions of gender are socially constructed within sociopolitical space. As the above quotation demonstrates, this theoretical assumption is not just a conceptual abstraction but also a real-life challenge, one that is managed and contested in everyday social and symbolic gendered relations and interactions.

Forming the background for this article are the dramatic and violent sociopolitical changes that have taken place in the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina (hereafter: Bosnia) since the years of communism, during the war, and up until the present time. During these changes, which occurred over a relatively short time period, the sociopolitical parameters for gender constructions have changed dramatically in Bosnia. The most violent manifestation of such changing parameters was the use of rape as a weapon of war during the war from 1992 to 1995. The aim of this article is to show how gender relations were constructed before the war, during the war, and in its aftermath, and through this to shed new light on the basis for – and implications of – the use of rape in war on a sociopolitical level. The analysis is based on six focus-group interviews with local Bosniak,¹ Croat, and Serb men and women between 20 and 40 years of age, during which they discussed the changes in gender relations as they saw them.

¹ The term „Bosniak“ has a long history in Bosnia and has been used both as a generic term for inhabitants of Bosnia (*Bošnjak*) and as a term for Muslims living in Bosnia at different points in time (for an elaborate discussion, see Bringa, 1995, pp. 34–36). In present-day Bosnia, however, according to Ronelle Alexander, Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures at the University of California, Berkeley, the term „Bosniak“ has replaced the religious identifier „Muslim“. Thus, „Bosniak“ now denotes Muslims in Bosnia, while the term „Bosnian“ denotes inhabitants of Bosnia of different nationalities (Ronelle Alexander, presentation at the conference „The Muslim World in Eastern Europe“, UC Berkeley, 26–27 April 2003).

Conceptualizing Change: Social Constructionism, Intersectionality, and Discourse

The primary aim of this article is to explore the relationship between sociopolitical change and social constructions of gender through the following two questions: (1) how are gender relations constructed within different sociopolitical contexts, and (2) how are sociopolitical contexts constructed through narratives of changing gender relations? In attempting to answer these two overarching questions, we need to know more about the social constructionist theory, the concept of intersectionality, and discourse.

Social constructionist approaches have gained increasing momentum within psychological research.² Works by Gergen (1985, 1994, 1999), Potter & Wetherell (1987), Wetherell, Taylor & Yates (2001a,b), and Smith (2003), among others, have been instrumental in changing the way psychological phenomena become subjects for research. The social constructionist claim to knowledge presupposes a postmodern stance to truth claims. Postmodernism, argues Gergen (1999, p. 195):

is characterized by a loss of confidence in grand narratives of past such as the modernist faith in the individual mind, rationality, objectivity and truth. Postmodernism, albeit difficult to define, can be seen as inter-related dialogues on our current condition; and it is within this cultural condition that social constructionism finds its place.

Social constructionist research is therefore at its very outset anti-essentialist and anti-realist (Burr, 1995, pp. 5–6). Notions of gender, therefore, are seen as socially constructed phenomena, which come into being by, and through, different practices, signs, and symbols. This mode of thinking about psychological phenomena, such as gender identities, forces a stronger emphasis on sociopolitical factors than has been common within mainstream psychological research. Studies of gender identities and personalities have a long and turbulent history within psychological scholarship, and can therefore be considered as a core theme within the field. However, because

² The term *constructionism* is often used interchangeably with the term *constructivism*. However, in psychology the term *constructivist* is often used to denote a set of cognitive theories that emphasize the individual's psychological construction of the experienced world. Both constructivism and constructionism unite in their emphasis on knowledge and perception as constructed, and in their challenge of the traditional view that the individual mind is a device for reflecting the character and conditions of an independent world (Gergen, 1994, p. 67). Since I am a psychologist by training, I use the term social constructionism, rather than constructivism.

biological paradigms have historically represented the hegemonic frame for psychological conceptualizations of gender, the impact of sociopolitical factors has been undermined. In contrast, in Hare-Mustin & Marecek's groundbreaking article from 1988, sociopolitical factors are placed center stage in the conceptualization of gender difference. It is in this spirit that the research for the present article was carried out, thus situating the study within the realm of social/political psychology. Social constructionist approaches, however, are not prominent within political psychological scholarship, which has been dominated by positivistic and post-positivistic paradigmatic thinking (Rosenberg, 2002). But, argues Rosenberg (2002, p. 335), those paradigms have now been exhausted (i.e. what can be studied has been studied), while at the same time the field is challenged by the postmodern and post-structuralist turn within the social sciences at large. Against such a background, concludes Rosenberg (2002: p. 363) „a fundamentally new theoretical orientation is needed . By virtue of its epistemological and methodological approach, the present study aims to meet such a need. On the other hand, argues Lane (2002, p. 357), the field of political psychological scholarship is also challenged by a need to move away from the dominant focus on the psychological basis for political phenomena towards an increased focus on the political basis for psychological phenomena. By allowing the sociopolitical context to serve as a vantage point for analyzing the social construction of gender identities, this study also meets the challenge outlined by Lane.

Intersectionality is an emerging term within gender research. It has evolved out of a frustration over how the conceptualizations of the links between social change and gender have historically been carried out (De los Reyes & Mulinari, 2005). Feminist research in its many forms – Marxist feminism, liberal feminism, socialist feminism, and radical feminism – have to a large extent been attempts to inscribe gender dichotomies within different political ideologies (Burr, 1998). Few attempts have been made to examine the flip-side of this picture. De los Reyes & Mulinari (2005) argue that we also need to need to integrate other social processes in the ways in which we conceptualize gender. This is necessary not only from a purely academic viewpoint, but also because we need to recognize that gender as a social category carries different weight when intersected with other social categories, such as class, ethnicity, sexuality, etc. De los Reyes & Mulinari, (2005) base their critique on the hegemonic mode of feminist research carried out in Sweden, which has not

been sufficiently able to conceptualize immigrant women. Søndergaard (2005, pp. 191–192), however, warns us that intersectionality is not intended as a term that only adds social categories such as class, race, ethnicity, etc. to gender, thus creating hierarchies of marginalization. Such an additive approach would fail to account for the „complex mutual saturation and toning among categories . By looking at the intersectionality of gender and other social categories, we may gain insight into the „discursive practices being taken up and reproduced or altered, reiterated or challenged by the subject and groups of people that come into existence through them (Søndergaard, 2005, p. 192). The goal of the present study is to contribute to providing such insight.

Discourse analysis is at the heart of the social constructionist movement (see Gergen, 1985) and the understanding of intersectionality. According to Jørgensen & Phillips (1999, p. 13), social constructionism is a term that covers many new theories about culture and society. Common to many of these theories is the emphasis on, and use of, discourse analysis. Burr (1995) argues that within psychological social constructionist research, there is a distinction between „analyses of discourses and „discourse analysis . Analyses of discourses, argue Burr (1995, pp. 1-17), and Jørgensen & Phillips (1999, pp. 121–122), are based on Foucault's discourse theory (the genealogy and archeology of knowledge of a given phenomena) and focus on how our understanding of our social worlds and our identities are constructed and changed within discourses. It is within discourse, argues Foucault (1972), that actions and physical things take on meaning and become objects of knowledge: „Foucault argues that since we can only have knowledge of things if they have a meaning, it is discourse – not the things-in-themselves – which produces knowledge. Subjects like “madness”, “punishment”, and “sexuality” only exist meaningfully within the discourses about them (Hall, 2001, p. 73). The second approach, discourse analysis, focuses more intimately on how text and talk are rhetorically organized and thereby sustain certain constructions of our social worlds. This study is based on the Foucaultian notion of discourse and therefore falls into what Burr (1995) and Jørgensen & Phillips (1999) would call „analyses of discourses . Knowledge production, then, rests on dialectical and hermeneutical methodologies where language, signs, and symbols are the subject matter for research. In this respect, language, signs, and symbols are not seen as

mirror images of an objective reality to be uncovered by mastering and understanding the codes they represent, but as elements of discourse.

One way in which social constructions work is by means of situating the given phenomenon of study within discourse. Within social constructionist terminology, this is known as *positioning*. It is people within a given socio-cultural context that, from their *subject positions*, do the positioning of a given phenomenon through talk, through the creation and interpretation of signs and symbols available to them.³ The research aim, therefore, becomes to capture and create understanding of how a social/psychological phenomenon comes into being and changes within different contexts. Different forms of being enable and legitimize different forms of behavior and social interaction. In this process, the researcher constitutes an intractable part of the social constructionist process.

Focus-Group Methodology

The data in this analysis are discussions carried out within six different focus groups (see the Appendix for an outline of the focus-group participants), which were held at three different locations in Bosnia. The major asset of the focus-group interview technique is that it allows the researcher to gather more elaborate and cumulative data than is possible in the dyadic interview setting. Essentially, this form of interview is a qualitative data-gathering technique, where the researcher acts as moderator and interviewer at the same time. From a social constructionist perspective, the focus-group interview can be regarded as sense-making in a constrained social context. The context is constrained by the people who sit down to talk (the interviewer/researcher and the focus-group participants), the physical context in which the talk takes place (an office facility), the discussion themes defined by the researcher (gender relations and female sexuality across changing times in Bosnia), and the sociopolitical setting (war survivors talking from a postwar perspective to a Western European researcher). In this setting, we can assume that certain ways of talking about gender relations will be more socially „permissible than others. In other words, we can presuppose that what can and cannot be said within the groups will reflect a hegemonic discourse on gender, and that this

³ „Discourses offer *subject positions* which when taken up have implications for subjectivity and experiences , argues W illig (2003 ,p. 171).

hegemony forms the perceived „truth about gender relations in Bosnia. In her analysis of the focus-group methodology, Wilkinson (2003, pp. 186–187) argues that social constructionist knowledge production must be based on the social processes within the groups: *what* can the participants openly discuss? *how* do they discuss the core theme(s)? and, finally, *why* do they discuss core themes in one way or another?

There are many ways in which the focus-group analysis can be organized. In this article, I have chosen to organize the discussions along a temporal axis: prewar (the years up until 1991–92),⁴ war (1992–95), and postwar (1995 onwards). The focus-group participants discuss and narrate nearly all events and perceptions along this timeline. Structuring the analytical presentation along the same timeline, however, does not presuppose a linear development in the perceptions and social positioning of female identities, but is a way of creating order out of chaotic and sometimes contradictory accounts.

In practical terms, this approach implies that I have gone through the focus-group discussions and have grouped statements and arguments about gender relations, expectations, and behaviors as they relate to the different time periods outlined above. Then, I have looked at the ways in which female identity is situated within the different discourses on gender, and at the political reasons given by focus-group participants for the characterizations they provide of the notions of female identity they construct. Through this, I have been able to identify the dichotomies that characterize female identities within different, and at times extremely violent, contexts.

The Traditional and Unambiguous Prewar Years

The prewar years, we must remember, are described from the perspective of the focus-group participants postwar lives. If we assume, as Middleton & Brown (2005, p. 85) argue, that remembering (and forgetting) are „social acts – that is, „ways of accomplishing some activity in the present by invoking the past in an appropriate and resourceful manner – we can presume that the way in which the past is narrated is done for specific (conscious and subconscious) reasons. This

⁴ The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia disintegrated with the secession of Slovenia and Croatia in 1991 and 1992. The Bosnian War started in April 1992.

assumption will be discussed in more detail below, but first we need to have some sense of the sociopolitical setting of prewar Bosnia. The prewar era is delineated only by a clear end-date – the disintegration of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) in 1991 – and has no clear starting point. Given the age span of the focus-group participants, however, we can establish a starting point for the purpose of this analysis. The focus-group participants were all born between the late 1960s and the early 1980s. This means that their coming of age coincided with the last years of communist rule, the death of Tito, and the years immediately preceding the war. In order to get a sense of the political turmoil in which the focus group participants grew up, I will briefly recapitulate some of the significant political events preceding the outbreak of war.

The beginning of the end of the stability Bosnia had enjoyed since World War II (as one of the six Yugoslav republics) was the death of Joseph Broz, or Tito, in 1980. With Tito's death, political support for his ideology of „brotherhood and unity – characterized by many as the glue that kept the South Slav peoples together – lost ground, and Yugoslavia descended into a period of political, economic, and civil instability. At the same time, the decline of communism,⁵ epitomized by the collapse of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, took its toll on the people in Yugoslavia in much the same way as it did in other communist states,⁶ Privatization efforts affected the job market and people's financial situations. Secure jobs, housing, childcare and health benefits that came with many jobs in the communist system had to give way to a capitalist-driven economy and greater insecurity for many. In the realm of politics, new parties grew in popularity and power, a development accompanied in the Yugoslavian case, where the phenomenon was perhaps more predominant than elsewhere, by the rise of nationalist sentiments.

⁵ It is important to point out, however, that Tito's break with Stalin in 1948 meant that Yugoslavia was expelled from the common institutions of the Eastern bloc. The politics of non-alignment adopted in the aftermath of 1948 meant that Yugoslavia was not a traditional communist country, despite its one-party communist political structure and the socialist organization of the state's welfare and work. The people of Yugoslavia enjoyed greater freedom than their communist neighbor states and could, for instance, travel to other countries.

⁶ The characterization of Bosnia as a post-communist society was challenged by some of the informants in this study. Rather, they encouraged me to talk of a post-socialist state, thereby differentiating Yugoslavia from other Eastern-bloc countries. In the international literature, however, it is more common to use the term post-communist rather than post-socialist for the situation in Bosnia, and I will therefore use this term while recognizing that it does not do justice to Yugoslavia's non-aligned status and the social privileges that came with that.

These sentiments and ambitions eventually lead to the disintegration of the Yugoslav state and a series of wars.

During the years of Tito's rule, women entered the workforce in great numbers, as did women in other communist countries. Maternity leave and state-run childcare made it possible (and obligatory) for women to be workers in the public sphere. In the private sphere of home and family, however, it was business as usual. Women were still in charge of the household, and there was no increase in male involvement in domestic work. „Under Yugoslav socialism, while “the woman question” was purportedly solved by incorporating women into production and self-management, and by providing services to make this “social activity” of women possible, the unequal citizenship of women was never addressed, nor was the patriarchal nature of all states, says Benderly (1997, p. 61). But, according to leading Bosnian feminist Nada Ler Sofronic, compared to neighboring republics Croatia and Serbia, Bosnia was particularly traditional.⁷ The central issue for the Yugoslav feminist movement⁸ was to challenge the official view of the status of women and the gap between Marxist theory and social reality (Drakulic, 1993, p. 127). According to Mønnesland (1992, p. 238), attempts to make feminist concerns visible in the public sphere were met with great skepticism from two fronts: men and women adhering to traditional gender roles, values, and ideologies, on the one hand, and ardent communists who saw these attempts as ways of introducing bourgeois ideologies, on the other. Gender-based violence, as a consequence, was a non-issue in the limited public discourse on male and female relations.⁹

How, then, do the focus-group participants recount their memories from these years, and how do they talk about gender relations in the period? To discover

⁷ Sofronic draws this conclusion on the basis of her own experience of attempting to introduce feminist thoughts and ideals to the Bosnian public during the Tito reign: „The situation [at that time] was very different in Bosnia. There were not so many culturally open places as was the case in for instance Zagreb and Belgrade. First of all we were smaller and the new ideals were very difficult to get through here in Bosnia because it is really a place with very strong dogmatic convictions. The mere vocabulary of feminism was seen as something very bad, and had very bad connotative meaning. It was seen like a bourgeois ideology ... and it was perceived as something very bad (interview by author, 15 June 2002, Sarajevo).

⁸ The first feminist convention in Yugoslavia took place in Belgrade in 1978.

⁹ A useful illustration can be found in Gal & Kligman (2000: 96–97), where the authors describe how the response to the opening of an SOS Hotline in Belgrade in the late 1980s radically changed the public discourse on violence against women. Rape between married couples had been regarded as a non-issue, but through the effort of the Belgrade SOS Hotline it came to be perceived as a social problem – that is, something that could be of public concern – rather than an integral part of married life.

this, I posed questions such as: What did your mother/father do? Did they both work? Who did what around the house? Who took care of the children? Further, I asked all of the participants in the focus groups to evaluate whether their upbringing/childhood had been traditional or non-traditional, and to describe the ways in which they thought their family life to be one or the other. Here is what they emphasized in the Bosniak groups:

Bosnia was a very patriarchal society before, and in the social organizing of our society men had more rights. It was like, they could say that you cannot participate in this or that, but women had the role of mother, be at home and be a daughter.... And in our society it was not really common to see the man with their families, everybody wanted to have a mother left at home. (Bosniak woman, born 1981)

Would a traditional Muslim family be the same as a traditional Croat family for instance?

Yes. (Bosniak woman, born 1974)

Yes, I agree, I would say that it was almost the same, it was affected by the patriarchal system and everyone was protected by the patriarch so all religion in Bosnia was the same when it comes to gender roles. (Bosniak woman, born 1981)

... You have all told me that you had mothers who worked outside the home when you grew up, but did that mean that your fathers did more housework than, for instance, your grandfathers did?

Well, during the communist time everybody was equal, but in the houses they kept the traditions. (Bosniak man, born 1981)

For the young Croats I interviewed, it was important to emphasize that they did *not* grow up in a traditional family:

My family was in no way traditional because, for me, traditional is some kind of primitive lifestyle. I had all my freedoms and they, my parents, were always supportive. (Croat woman, born 1973)

So when you say that your family was non-traditional you mean that your parents shared duties at home?

My mother did most of the work at home even if she had her own job, and my father would maybe fix things, but he never did the dishes or fixed things like that. I would also say that there were differences between the different nationalities, mostly in the house, and how we acted in the house, those things were, I do not know, the different customs and the way we made tea and coffee and just small things. But these small things meant something for many people, like not to eat pork, and how to pray is a different. But it was mostly in the house. (Croat man, born 1978)

My parents were partners so whoever had the time did the dishes and raised the kids. (Croat woman, born 1973)

To me traditional means the Ottoman heritage, meaning that women must work in the house and that she must work for her husband and children and have no right, and that men have rights. This is Balkan heritage, and all the nations here have that mentality, that kind of framework. But I made some progress in my own family, I have done something that is unusual for this country and area, I left my girl surname and my husband surname so I have both. And even my father told me 'what are you doing, your husband will be crazy'. But I have not had any problems with that, but my husband is not very impressed. (Croat woman, born 1967)

The Serb groups emphasize family union:

Our grandparents lived with their families and they had lots of children. Today's families normally have one or two children maximum, but my grandparents had six or something like that. It was a big family and all of them worked in the household and it was organized so that all decisions inside the family was made by the pater familias. (Serb woman, born 1980)

But when you were young and grew up under the communist system, how were things then?

I think according to law everything was perfect and everything was great [during the communist era]. Women had all the possibilities for education and employment and they had social protection. They could have kids and maternity leave ... the problem was that men were not influenced by this. For example if the woman was very successful in her job and in education she still had to cook and clean and it means that it was not equal. She could do what she wanted but at home she had to play the right role and this meant that for other people in the society the roles of women did not change. (Serb woman, born 1963)

My wife takes care of the kids and that is how we do it ... and that is how my father was raised and I was raised. (Serb man, born 1970)

Perhaps the most striking feature of the above accounts from focus-group participants is their similarity. Gender relations, participants argue in unison, were first and foremost based on a traditional patriarchal family structure. Within this family structure, the man had the economic power („my father made all the money [Bosniak woman, born 1967]), the moral power („my father made all decisions [Serb woman, born 1968]), and the legal power („my father had more rights [Croat woman, born 1967]). This family structure is seen as „old – one informant sees it as a legacy of the Ottoman rule – and as an original way of life that predates not only the war, but also the communist years. In this picture, a woman was economically and legally inferior to her husband and children („the woman had to work for her husband and children in the house and she had no rights [Croat man, born 1967]), but was paradoxically considered to be the pillar of the family („the woman was not equal with the man, but still we used to say that women were the pillar of the family [Serb man, born 1972]). Other characterizations of the traditional patriarchal family

include descriptions of a close-knit unit in which the younger generations respected their parents, respected the elders in the family, and had strong family links to the extended family. How, then, are we to read these narratives? And what discourses are evoked in their recounting of gender relations in the past?

First, it is clear that the narratives of patriarchal gender relations are placed within a discourse of private-versus-public modes of life and gender relations. The private sphere of family and domestic life is presented as being in stark contrast to the public sphere of life for the different Bosnian families before the war, were at odds with the dominant political ideology at the time; Marxist notions of equality, (also between men and women) What is also clear, however, is that the public-private distinction between gender relations is described as a distinction between an ideological (public work sphere) world and a „real (family and domestic life) world. In the „real world, although there were exceptions, the hegemonic account is one of pan-Yugoslav patriarchal gender relations. These gender relations are construed as *non-ethnic*. In other words, the dominant/hegemonic discourse on masculinity and femininity in the prewar era is rooted, one might argue, in Tito's communist political ideology of Yugoslavism (brotherhood and unity). Inadvertently, the focus-group participants reveal that although there was considerable difference in terms of gender ideology and equality in the private and public spheres, this difference was the same for all the different ethnic groups in the region. While this hegemonic conceptualization is powerful, it does not completely rule out other conceptualizations. Closer reading of the discussions reveals that that participants did see ethnic differences in gender relations in the private sphere of family life. In the home environment, one young Croat tells us, there were differences between the different ethnic groups, and these differences lay in seemingly insignificant domestic details. Perhaps such differences were under-reported in the focus groups for political reasons: Do the ethnic differences that existed in the past seem insignificant when compared with the political significance that ethnic difference took on during and after the war? Or, is it possible that the ethnic differences that did exist before the war seemed so insignificant because it was women, subordinated in traditional patriarchal family structures, who marked the difference? The focus-group participants let us know that it was the work and behavior of women that marked and maintained ethnic difference. The seemingly insignificant domestic details were

expressed in chores performed by women (making tea or coffee, cooking or not cooking pork, etc.).

Second, the narratives of traditional patriarchal gender relations in the private sphere of domestic life position female sexuality in distinct ways. While female sexuality is not explicitly at the forefront of the focus-group participants' accounts, they let us know that the primary role of a woman was to be the „pillar of the family and to have „lots of children . One way of reading these accounts would be to say that a woman becomes the pillar of the family by having lots of children. In other words, the well-being and continuity of a given Bosnian family rested, suggest the focus-group participants, on the woman's fertility. Against such a background, it is perhaps not surprising that rape within marriage was an inconceivable notion in prewar Bosnia,¹⁰ and this may be one of the reasons why there are no records – or at least only a few, unreliable ones – of rape in Bosnia before the war. A man's right to have sexual relations with his wife was considered more important than a woman's need to protect and define her own sexual life. Female sexuality, therefore, was clearly situated as being inferior to male sexuality, which ensured the patriarch's „right to manifest his legal, moral, and economic status through sexuality too. Female sexuality, then, was construed primarily as a procreational issue and was a service to the male (who „owned her sexuality), to the family, and to society in general.¹¹ Bringa (1995) suggests that the ways in which women were expected to maintain and portray good/clean/honorable sexuality were to some extent defined in ethnic terms and had ethnically different outcomes. Bringa's (1995) study of identity and community in a central Bosnian village in the immediate prewar years reveals details of how women played their roles as maintainers of ethnic difference within the traditional patriarchal family. She argues that „the ethnoreligious dimension of ... Bosnian identity was ... physically and morally demarcated by women (Bringa, 1995, p. 84). To ensure that this was done properly, a woman had to present herself

¹⁰ Several people I have interviewed in the field have made this point: for instance, Jasna Baksi-Muftic, Professor and lawyer at the Sarajevo law faculty (interview by author, Sarajevo, 13 June 2002); Lana Jajević, NGO worker in „United Women (interview by author, Sarajevo, 12 June 2002).

¹¹ The ultimate manifestation of the traditional patriarchal gender relation could be seen, argues Bringa, in the way in which female fertility and reproduction was controlled. Across ethnic groups, birth control was seen primarily as a male responsibility. Unwanted pregnancies, of which there appear to have been a substantial number, were perceived as the man's fault and as resulting from lack of self-control. Men, therefore, should have control over reproduction and thus ultimately over women, concludes Bringa (1995, p. 104).

as hardworking, good, clean, and honorable (Bringa, 1995, p. 103). This role for women also had a sexual component, in that controlling her sexuality according to ethno-religious norms and morals was perceived as essential for maintaining an image as good, clean, and honorable.¹² Bringa (1995, p. 103) describes an example of Muslim women performing ritual washing after sexual intercourse, a key ritual that distinguished not only girls from wives, but also Muslim wives from Catholic wives.

Finally, does this explain how and why rape became a weapon of war during the war? If the war rapes in Bosnia were based on the non-ethnic, traditional patriarchal construction of gender and female sexuality, it is difficult to understand why rape became such a powerful weapon of war between the various ethnic groups in the region. Bosnian poet Senadin Musabegovic has said that the Bosnian war did not start because the cultural differences were so big, but because they were so small,¹³ and if we take this notion to the realm of gender relations, it urges us to focus on the under-communicated gender relations in the narratives above – that is, the stories of gendered ethnic differences. In other words, we need to look deeper into how the intersectionality between gender and ethnicity is narrated during the war years.

The Violent and Partly Silenced War Years

In April 1992, the violent conflict that had begun in Slovenia and Croatia reached Bosnia with full force. The months that followed were marked by extreme violence, killings, and mass rapes, particularly in the areas bordering Serbia. The ethnic cleansing of this region meant that numerous Bosniak families were driven from their homes; men and women were separated, and men were kept in detention and/or killed, while many women also were raped and/or kept in detention. As the years went on, numerous villages were ethnically cleansed, and there are heroes, villains, and saints on all sides of the ethnic divides in Bosnia. Here, I will not recount the major events of the war: numerous excellent volumes have already done that (see, for example, Malcolm, 1996; Ramet, 2002; Silber & Little, 1997; Woodward, 1995).

¹² For more details on this theme see Bringa (1995, pp. 103–105).

¹³ Quote from *Kobra*, a programme produced by Swedish National Broadcasting (SVT), 24 November 2005.

However, I will provide a brief overview of what we know about the use of sexual violence during the war.

It has been established beyond doubt that rapes were an integral, effective, and important part of the war in Bosnia. The academic literature has pointed to the existence of the so-called RAM plan (Salzman, 1998, p. 356), which was allegedly drawn up by Serb army officers in late August 1991. This plan mentions raping women and children as an efficient and integral tool in the process of ethnic cleansing of Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina.¹⁴ Salzman therefore concludes that the organized structure of the mass rapes and rape camps was planned as early as August 1991. Allen (1996, p. 65) explains that restaurants, hotels, hospitals, schools, factories, peacetime brothels, and other buildings served as rape camps, and that the aggressors were mostly Serb personnel from the Yugoslav Army, irregular Serb soldiers, Chetnics,¹⁵ and even civilians. Allen's description captures only part of the picture, however, because *rape occurred on all sides of the conflict*. Stiglmayer (1994, p. 115) emphasizes that one can find documentation of rape camps on the Bosniak, Croatian, and Serbian sides alike. In addition, the Helsinki Watch report from 1993 documenting war crimes in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Volumes I and II) contains entries for all nationalities. As to the number of women raped, there is great uncertainty in the literature. At the end of 1992, the Bosnian government released figures suggesting that the number of women who had been raped was about 14,000 (Olujic, 1998, p. 40). Later the same year (in December), the European Community set the number of women of Muslim ethnicity that had been raped by Bosnian Serb soldiers at around 20,000 (Olujic, 1998, p. 40; Nikolic-Ristonavic, 2000, p. 43; Drakulic, 1993, p. 270; Wing & Merchan, 1993, p. 11, note 54; Meznaric, 1994, p. 92). For its part, the Bosnian Ministry of the Interior set the figure at around 50,000 (Olujic, 1998, p. 40; Nikolic-Ristonavic, 2000, p. 43; Wing & Merchan, 1993, p. 11, note 54). In a report by the Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR, 2002), it is stated that the European Union Commission estimated the number of victims at 50,000. The Commission for Gathering Facts on War Crimes in Bosnia and Herzegovina sets the number of raped women at 20,000 (Tokaca, 1999). The true

¹⁴ Salzman (1998, p. 356) explains that it was the Yugoslav National Army's Psychological Operations Department that made the following observation about Muslim behavior: „their morale, desire for battle, and will could be crushed more easily by raping women, especially minors and even children .

numbers will never be known, but it is clear that the use of rape as a war strategy was widespread.¹⁶

Against such a background, I asked the participants in the focus groups to characterize gender relations, and changes in them, during the war, and I found that they did so in very different ways. The Bosniak group, for instance, focused on Muslim extremism, most notably in the town of Zenica, and they let one woman's story of an encounter with foreign mujahideen fighters take center stage:

Zenica used to be a real communist city. It was developed and it was a workers town where there was equality and everybody worked and it was a great time because of the steel factory. But during the war, many people came to Zenica. (Woman, born 1981)

But they were not all from Bosnia. (Man, born 1979)

Well they were from other countries, Muslim countries and many of them ... many women married them. I think the price for them was about 100 DM (Woman, born 1981)

So you could buy wives?

Yes. Something like that ... and girls ... most of them were refugees, Zenica was the biggest town in the free territory, and many of the people who were there were very desperate and they turned to religion. And because of the influence of the Muslim extremists many of the domestic people also became extreme in their religion. I have one interesting example for you. I was sitting on a bench with a boyfriend, and we were just sitting and not touching or anything, and some of them [earlier in the interview she has clarified that she is referring to what she calls religious extremists] came in the car and put their guns towards us just like that, and they did not speak word to me. They asked my boyfriend what is the relationship between us and he had to lie and say that we were married. Then they asked how old I was and I answered out loud because I was scared, but he was expecting the answer from my boyfriend. The rest of the conversation was between them and my boyfriend and I was just an object who was sitting there. But since we were 'married' it was ok, but we were not supposed to have any physical contact in public. (Woman, born 1981)

Yes ... it was really extreme during that time [the war]. (Man, born 1979)

In the Croat groups, the focus is on the behavior and customs of rural internally displaced persons (IDPs) coming to Mostar: how they get married early and have many children, along with a suspected rise in domestic violence:

¹⁵ Serb monarchists.

¹⁶ The United Nations envoy to Bosnia from 1993 to 1995, Thorvald Stoltenberg, has said that almost all of the meetings he had with the leaders of the various warring parties (Slobodan Milosevic, Alija Izetbegovic, and Franjo Tudjman) would start with accusations being thrown back and forth about the number of women that had been raped by soldiers from the various sides (interview with author, Oslo, 7 February 2002).

Just before the war started we were a very civilized community but since the war many people left ... and people from the small places and the villages moved to the cities and the towns and they brought with them their primitivism ... for instance they grow up and have boyfriends and then get married and then they have kids ... and it has kind of become an epidemic this getting married. (Croat woman, born 1973)

Yes, people are getting married much younger than in my generation, they will be from 20 to 25. It could be the influence of the Catholic Church or the insecurity of the situation. It is difficult to say really. I know some of my friends who got married, also during the war, but I could understand that under the pressure they felt that they could share something. (Man, born 1970)

But there is also much more divorce now than before! (Croat woman, born 1967)

And why is that, do you think?

I think domestic violence has increased in these marriages. During the war we witnessed so much violence. In 1992 and 1993 it was normal to see a dead man, you would see a dead man in the street and just walk by. But now you also have the economic situation: you have to feed your kids and if you cannot you get nervous. And if the wife said the wrong word you can freak out. I think the level of tolerance is lower. (Croat woman, born 1973)

If you are a man and the pater familias of the family and you do not make enough money you are under tremendous stress and pressure and they lose it. Many people here are under tremendous pressure and then they get totally lost, like zombies, because there is no future. (Man, born 1970)

In the Serb groups, however, it is mostly the men who talk, and they describe how many women appeared willing to enter into „sponsored“ relationships in order to obtain money and things that were hard to get during the war:

When the war started all the moral values were destroyed and I felt that we were moved back to the time before communism. I have been stunned to see today, especially with women how things have changed.... I remember when I was in high school it took me months to get a girlfriend, but when the war started it was a piece of cake ... there was money and everyone was disturbed! (Serb man, born 1972)

So was this prostitution?

It was a kind of prostitution, sponsorship, and it is not good. (Serb man, born 1972)

When did the phenomenon of sponsorship start?

Maybe it has always been like this but before it was not common. (Serb man, born 1972)

I think it started in Belgrade in 1994 during the sanctions. (Serb man, born 1970)

But can you imagine how it is for that girl, she has given her whole life away, and maybe her parents even think it is ok! (Serb woman, born in 1963)

I agree, we say that it is imported from Serbia, because in the old Yugoslavia women had a very high status, but when the war started they wanted to continue to have such a status and then, how should I say this, they started to fake the high standard of living ... the way of living has changed. (Serb man, born 1970)

The first thing to notice about the discussions above is how different they are from each other. In other words, the discussions of gender relations during the war bring out heterogeneous narratives of gender relations compared to the participants prewar accounts. This heterogeneity is connected to the ways in which discourses of change in gender relations are nested within discourses of sociopolitical change during the war.

Let us briefly recapitulate what the participants have said about the ways in which gender relations are described as having changed during the war differ within the different ethnic groups in order to make this clearer. For the Bosniak woman, her movement and interaction with men in public space was restricted owing to the influx of foreign mujahideen fighters who had married local women and thereby exercised increasing influence in the region. This restriction is based on Muslim notions of good/decent/honorable expressions of female sexuality, which sets the women's restrictions apart from those of her Serb and Croat friends. In other words, in the Bosniak account it is the increasing influence of *religion* that has set new parameters for the interaction between men and women. The Croat participants focus on an increase in young marriages among the rural population as an expression of a „primitive lifestyle (having many children and starting at an early age) that is contrary to their modern civilized urban mode of life. The war „forced this „primitivism on them, because these rural people were mostly IDPs who had been forced to leave their homes and towns at gunpoint and had sought refuge in Mostar. In other words, *demographic changes* during the war have forced rural and urban modes of gender relations to coexist within ethnically defined geographical areas. For the urban Croats in the focus groups, it is clear that they felt trapped in a restricted geographical space with people who would otherwise have been defined as an out-group (rural), but owing to the war the parties were situated together as an in-group (Croat). In the Serb groups, another element of the war is brought out, namely, changing *economic* structures. These structures altered notions of male and female sexuality through the issue of „sponsorship . Female sexuality became a commodity for sale, and men with cash or other material goods to offer, had a new

market for sexual outlet. The focus-group participants situate this as an ethnic phenomenon, because it started, they argue, when the international community implemented sanctions against Serbia. The scholarly literature on women and war has emphasized that war zones tend to polarize gender relations, in that men are called to fight while women are tasked with keeping the home fires burning (Enloe, 1983; Elshtain, 1995; Goldstein, 2001). However, the above excerpts show that polarization between the genders extends beyond the fighting/non-fighting distinction. Clearly, the war in Bosnia has altered gender relations in ways that are intimately connected to the political nature of the conflict – that is, the rise of religious/ethnic sentiments, as well as demographic and economic changes.

The second thing to notice is the conspicuous silence about the war rapes within the groups. I was surprised to discover that the massive attention given to the war-rape issue at high political levels, both domestically and internationally, had not become part of the collective memory of the war. Or, put differently, the war rapes had not become part of the collective memory that the focus-group participants wished to disclose. Perhaps this silence was simply an extension of the silence that follows experiences and themes that are shame-ridden and taboo within any given culture, and, since I – a researcher from a different country – was not part of their culture, they did not feel comfortable talking to *me* about this?¹⁷ Maybe the war rapes were part of the war experiences of the rural population, and were not part of the urban memories of the focus-group participants? Or, maybe participants did not want to disclose insights on this particular theme in the presence of the other focus-group members for political or personal reasons? The distribution of guilt and complicity is not evenly distributed between the different ethnic groups in Bosnia,¹⁸ and this is also true in relation to the war rapes. This meant that by asking direct

¹⁷ Among many Bosnians, there is a general fatigue with foreigners, like myself, coming to the region and exclusively focusing on the war as if there had been no life before the fatal years between April 1992 and December 1995. The resistance I experienced from focus-group participants, therefore, was based on a sense of irritation that, on one level, seemed to have little to do with the theme of study, but was rather related to the fact that the presence of foreigners often meant that individuals were forced on a mental journey back to traumatic and violent times.

¹⁸ Zarkov (1997) has written an excellent article on this highly contested theme, in which she points out that the rape-victim identity in the writing on the Yugoslav War has become synonymous with a Bosniak woman (and a Serb male perpetrator). This identity construction has overshadowed all other victim-perpetrator relationships, creating a hierarchy of rape victims in which some gender/ethnic combinations take precedence over all others. Also Ramet (2002) points out how this victim-perpetrator construction is problematic, especially because it also devalues acts of sexual violence committed against men.

questions about the war rapes and their impact, I could risk mistrust, resistance, and even hostility from the focus-group participants, because seemingly innocent questions could be taken to mean support for or condemnation of one ethnic group over another.¹⁹ It was only in the Bosniak groups that I was able to elicit some explicit comments about the war-rape issue and the silence that accompanies it:

There are probably lots of women who were raped here [in Bosnia] but we do not know! (Bosniak man, born 1974)

I have heard that there are some organizations that help these women, and I have heard about it happening, but if you see them you would not know what had happened. I worked as a translator for people who worked for the Hague tribunal and then I saw what had happened, but still we in Bosnia do not have all the information about what happened and about the destroyed lives. (Bosniak woman, born 1974)

Kitzinger & Farquahar (1999) discuss whether focus groups are suitable for „sensitive topics? The authors argue that there has been a tendency to assume that focus groups are inappropriate for sensitive themes owing to the risk that social pressure within the groups might elicit unwanted personal disclosure. They argue that themes related to sexuality have typically been considered too sensitive for this particular research methodology. Therefore, they argue, research themes relating to sexuality have often been masked behind other themes. Maybe this is precisely what the focus-group participants have done in their accounts above?

While none of the discussions in the focus groups are construed as directly related to the war rapes, one could argue that, in shape, format, and content, they parallel the ways in which most bystanders, perpetrators, and victims perceived the war rapes. Through the war rapes, female identity had become a political arena. This politicization, for better or worse, opened up for new expressions and manifestations of female sexuality, some violent (war rapes) and some not (like the examples provided by the focus-group participants). Female sexuality had gone from being a non-ethnic issue to becoming the hallmark of the ethnic group the woman was seen to represent. Through this radical shift, there was a transition in the way in which female identity was situated in public and political life. For the focus-group

¹⁹ Conducting field interviews in a context where every mundane aspect of daily life has political overtones, and where the identity of the researcher is by no means „neutral but is indeed part of the conflict lines, forces self-reflection and methodological creativity. I had learned over several field trips to the region that simply asking about someone's education, name, and family relation could trigger the most devastating war-rape story.

participants, this transition meant increasing restrictions on female mobility, commodification of sexual relations, and increasing diversity in gender relations in urban areas, while for the war-raped women it meant that their sexuality was violated for political reasons. Whether it was the war rapes that caused the intersecting between gender and other political phenomena or the intersecting between gender and other political phenomena that paved the ground for the war rapes is difficult to determine. It is clear, however, that „something happened during the war that altered the intersectionality between gender and other social categories, such as religious, demographic, and class identities. In order to see the full impact of this change, we need to look at how gender relations are narrated in the postwar setting and how the focus group participants reason for these changes. Did the war years trigger permanent changes in gender relations, or were they simply an aberration?

The Transitional and Ambiguous Postwar Years

The Bosnian war, the most prolonged and lethal conflict on European soil since World War II, ended with the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA) in Paris in December 1995 by the governments of Bosnia, Croatia and what was left of Yugoslavia. This agreement resulted in the creation of a unified democratic state comprised of two entities: the Croat/Muslim Federation and the Serb Republic. Since 1995, Bosnia has been administrated militarily by SFOR (the NATO-led Stabilization Force operating under the auspices of the United Nations), but this role was taken over by European forces (EUFOR) in December 2004. Civilian affairs are overseen by the European Police Force (EUPF), which replaced the International Police Task Force (IPTF) in January 2003, the Office of the High Representative (OHR), and numerous central United Nations organizations.

The postwar situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina has been subject to extensive commentary and academic study, and the focus of most of the analysis centers around the ambitious plans for democratic reconstruction and rebuilding formulated in the DPA (see, for instance, Chandler, 1999/2000; Bose, 2002; Sokolovic & Bieber, 2001). It is clear that Bosnia has been the location of extensive social and democratic experimentation initiated primarily by the international community (IC). It should be emphasized, too, that these political undertakings have had varying

degrees of success.²⁰ In addition, the overwhelming international supervision of civilian and military institutions has deprived many Bosnians of a sense of ownership over their own country's democratic development.

The most visible gender aspect of post-conflict Bosnia is the fact that Bosnia is one of the most frequently used transit countries for trafficking of women from Eastern to Western Europe. In a report from Human Rights Watch from November 2002 focusing on the trafficking of women and girls in post-conflict Bosnia, it is claimed that there is a clear connection between the war and the increase in forced prostitution in the region. Trafficking started to appear in late 1995, after the DPA had been signed and the „internationals“ started pouring in.²¹ Experts from the UN Missions Special Trafficking Operation Program (STOP) stated at a press conference in 2001 that approximately 25% of the women and girls working in nightclubs and bars were trafficked. The majority of the trafficked women come from Moldova, Romania, and Ukraine, and the Human Rights Watch report tells of women being kidnapped off the streets in those former Soviet Republics, while others have been lured with job opportunities in Western European countries.²²

When individuals and groups are asked to characterize gender relations in post-conflict Bosnia, it is the sex trade that takes center stage, as seen in the Bosniak discussions below:

²⁰ The parliamentary election of October 2002 – the first election organized by the Bosnian authorities without the immediate supervision of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) – was in many ways a setback after many years of international effort. Not only was the voter turnout very low – only about 55% (Ourdan, 2002; *Le Monde Interactif*, 2002) – but the politicians that were elected also represented mostly nationalistic political parties.

²¹ In Bosnia, the term „internationals“ is used to denote a vast variety of people who have come to the region after the war. It consists of aid workers, members of the international bodies present in the region, researchers, negotiators, and peace workers. This group has taken on such a tremendous significance and presence that critical voices have argued that the international–non-international division constitutes yet another conflict line (Bose, 2002) in addition to the ones between the major ethnic groups in the region.

²² The situation for these women, who are between the ages of 15 and the early 30s, is devastating. Many have been robbed of their legal documents and therefore have very restricted mobility. The circle of people involved includes the local police and in some cases also the international police, as well as local politicians and other officials. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimates that between 6,000 and 10,000 foreign women currently are being coerced into prostitution in the republic. These women form part of an intricate network of buying and selling of human beings that cuts across many of the former Yugoslav republics. One informant that the IWPR interviewed in April 2002 said that most of the East European victims of forced prostitution pass through a certain house in Belgrade, where they are put up for sale like animals. Further, she said that the most attractive women go to Bosnia, where they stay one or two years, and then they are sent to Italy, Greece, or somewhere else in Europe, while women who are not considered sufficiently attractive are sent straight to Kosovo or Albania. In the human auctions, the women can be sold for €500–€3,000.

I think that now more people go to prostitutes. In other countries it is normal that people go to prostitutes, but here because of traditional attitude people did not go. But, now, with the foreign influence people go. (Man, born 1981)

So you are saying that because there are now so many internationals, the level of prostitution has gone up?

Well, there is a big market north of Tuzla in the American Zone [military zone] and I was working as a photographer for two and a half years, and I saw lots of foreign prostitutes from Hungary, Russia and Romania. (Man, born 1979)

So, one of you is saying that local prostitution has increased, while one of you is saying that it is the trafficked women that have increased?

There is an increase in prostitution in Bosnia in general, and perhaps we always had prostitutes, and they were here before the war and then they came back after the war. (Man, born 1979)

Yes, people like easy money and it is easy to make money that way. (Woman, born 1981)

And the customers are not foreigners, it was in the beginning, it was SFOR and those people, I was a photographer and I saw everything, but now it is more local. (Man, born 1979)

Yes, it started with the internationals, but now it is the locals. (Man, born 1981)

Now you can see flyers with adds for striptease clubs and you know what is happening there. It was never like that before. (Bosniak woman, born 1974)

In the Croat groups, they address the increase in HIV and AIDS:

Maybe two or three months ago there was a big article in the newspaper about the prostitution in Bosnia, but for Mostar, mostly the prostitutes want to get away from Mostar because they do not feel safe here. In the article some journalists had talked to the prostitutes and they had said that. Each day in the newspaper you can find some people that the police have discovered that there are many women from the ex-Soviet countries who have come here or even just going through Bosnia to go to other countries. (Man, born 1978)

I have read that there is an increase of HIV and AIDS in Bosnia because of the trafficking. Is that something that people are concerned with? Is that, for instance, written about in the newspapers?

Yes, I think so, there was a media campaign to have people use condoms, and it was like an AIDS protection day and they were giving out free condoms, it was the ICRC and the international community. But the guys have this expression that they will not have good sex if they use condoms and also the church, the influence of the Catholic Church is very strong, and I am catholic myself but I think it is cruel that they do not consider people as individuals, but as groups. (Woman, born 1973)

In the Serb groups, they are concerned with how visible and seemingly socially accepted the prostitution industry has become:

Prostitution and trafficking is a huge problem and tragically it is accepted. It was something that was unimaginable before. Today you know the houses and you know the bars and everything is known and it seems to be legalized. (Serb woman, born 1968)

But are people concerned about HIV and AIDS?

I think it is a huge problem because I think that our mentality is that that this is something that happens to foreigners and not to me, and to gays, and people in Africa and all the time other people, but not to us. (Serb woman, born 1980)

I think it is a problem that kids are so young when they start their sexual life.... I do not think it was like that 10–15 years ago ... and I remember when we heard statistics from other Western European countries we were shocked ... and now it has changed here. (Serb woman, born 1968)

The discussions about changing gender relations in the postwar setting turned out to be difficult to categorize, because they were not as homogenous as was the case in the prewar accounts, nor as ethnically heterogeneous as the war accounts. Rather, the discussions were homogenous when the groups discussed the issue of prostitution, but heterogeneous when they talked about other themes, such as violence against women, abortion rights, and sexual practices (see below). This confusing presentation of changes in gender relations can be seen as an expression of the fact that it is easier to sort out changes in the past than it is to address changes in the making. Further, the confusion may also be an expression of contradictory and ambiguous changes taking place in Bosnia in the postwar context. In sum, it appears that, according to the focus-group participants, the major changes in gender relations since the war can be seen in the increase in trafficked women and the impact that this has had on local Bosnians. Stories about the increasing sex trade are further qualified by statements like „there is a backlash of everything after the war (Bosniak man, born 1979), „there is a lot of transition entering all levels of society after the war (Bosniak woman, born 1967), „after the war we have a big wave of violence (Serb man, born 1976), „after the war there are so many divorces (Croat woman, born 1967), and „all our values have changed (Croat man, born 1970). The question, then, is what kind of change occurred that made it possible for the sex trade to get such a solid grip on Bosnian men and women? How are discourses of change within gender relations narrated within participants' accounts of the sex trade?

First, the narratives of gender relations are made in two discursive forms: as a transition towards increasing Westernization and a market economy, on the one

hand, and, simultaneously, as a backlash against traditional patriarchal modes of life, with increasing religious influence and control, on the other. Gender identity construction, then, becomes a manifestation of opposing sociopolitical forces. Let us revisit the focus-group participants' discussions to see how these opposing manifestations are played out. The discussions on the increasing sex trade tell stories of changing gender relations as changing sexual practices: it is now local men who go to the trafficked women (as opposed to the international men who did this in the beginning), and the issue of HIV and AIDS has become a matter of public concern that local NGOs and health authorities have been compelled to address through campaigns promoting the use of condoms. Further, female sexuality is a money-making business in which there are many investors, including women. It is no longer a question of individual women entering into „sponsorship relations: there are now other people behind the women, making easy money off the women's sexual „favors. The people running the trade are not just organized international criminals, but also local Bosnians. One example is provided by a woman in Banja Luka who has relatives who run a brothel in their own home, with everyone in the family – both men and women – involved in the „family business: „It was really a shock how they, educated people, mother and father and women and sons, how they all spoke about it, like some kind of business, and it was not something they were forced to do ... they have ordinary jobs (woman, born 1968, Banja Luka). The greatest change resulting from the commodification of female sexuality during the war is that the market has increased since and there are now far more people and money involved. As a result of this market expansion, female sexuality has become much more visible within the public space: „Now you can see flyers with ads for striptease clubs and you know what is happening there. It was never like that before (Bosniak woman, born 1974), says one focus-group participant; and „today you know the houses and you know the bars and everything is known and it seems to be legalized (Serb woman, born 1968), says another. The way in which these gendered changes are narrated suggest that the push towards increasing Westernization and a changed economic system is seen as having been imported (both by the international community and, in a very literal manner, through the trafficking of women from different countries), and this represents a decline in old morals and values (everyone, men and women included, sees a opportunity to make money; local men go to prostitutes in greater numbers than before; and the age of sexual debut appears to

have gone down). Alongside this development, or perhaps because of it, there is a competing discourse of backlash and increasing religious influence:

Well, I think it is not only among Catholics but also among others because religions spread during the war and each religion has its views, and it does not matter which. Each one is against abortion and free sex. They are the same. Also sex before marriage, so even if the last is still the same, the religious pressure has increased. (Croat Woman, born 1973)

Yes, I think with the war, what has happened here, and probably throughout Bosnia, is that these traditional patriarch values, and I am sorry to say so, but there has been a sort of backlash. (Croat Man, born 1970)

One of the main problems for women today is connected to the war. Because during the war those who could work were the women because the men were away, and in many cases, and especially in traditional families, they were shocked because they saw that women had become [taken on roles and responsibilities] that had traditionally belonged to men. They were maybe working at home or in factories or somewhere else in order to provide food for their families. (Serb woman, born 1980)

When talking about domestic violence, abortion, and divorce, the focus-group participants emphasize that the post-conflict era is seeing a return to traditional patriarchal relations, with clear ethnic and religious undertones. This backlash has taken the form of increasing control over female sexuality. The backlash does not represent a return to the mode of life in the communist prewar years, participants argue, but rather a return to the pre-communist years. At this point, it is worth noting that the same set of gender relations – that is, the traditional patriarchal family – represents a different development in the postwar era compared to the prewar era. It is no longer a non-ethnic pan-Yugoslav mode of life, but represents a change back in time, in which religious norms and values regulating gender relations also regulate ethnic differences. The issues of abortion and premarital sex, in particular, bring out religious arguments and restrictions.

Second, we see that the focus-group participants explain the changes above as being related to the war without making particular reference to the war rapes. The war rapes in Bosnia, however, did bring the issue of violence against women into the realm of politics through the intersection of female sexuality and ethnicity. It is this particular construction of gender relations that lies at the core of the contradictory sociopolitical developments accounted for by the focus-group participants' narratives of changing gender relations in the postwar era. The war rapes made violence against women part of a public human rights discourse. Indeed, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) is the first

international criminal tribunal that views rape not only as a human rights violation but also as part of a genocidal process. This conceptualization, however, rests on a conflicting notion that female sexuality is something that must be understood in ethnic terms, or, put differently, that female sexuality is understood as meaningful and significant only through its intersection with other politically significant social categories that are in conflict – in the Bosnian case, ethnic groups. When this particular intersectionality (gender and ethnicity) comes to represent unambiguous and stable gender relations in the prewar era and conflicting and ambiguous gender relations in the postwar period, it is because the parameters for positioning this particular mode of intersection have changed in the process. Explanations for this change might vary, but it is likely that the war rapes, the massive attention those acts received (domestically and internationally), and the ICTY's process to hold people criminally accountable altered the ways in which female sexuality was positioned within public discourse. Female sexuality had become a human rights issue, a mode of categorization that superseded local and traditional patriarchal notions of gender. As a consequence, violence against women, not only war-related, is now viewed in a different light:

Well ... two years ago we did not have a law that said that husbands could not rape their wives ... and there was no law that said that they could sue him ... but now we have and it makes a big change. Some people are saying that we did not have violence against women before the war, but that is not true, there was a lot of violence against women before the war, but maybe not in that number, and it was not so visible. (Serb woman, born 1974)

Before the war nobody wanted to talk about what happened in the families ... and especially not women ... if they were subject to torture or something like that ... but after some activities of local NGOs and the international community they find it easier to talk about it and that has given us the impression that it is spreading. (Bosniak Man, born 1971)

What the discussions above have shown is that gender relations, and female sexuality in particular, have become a marker for different and ambiguous sociopolitical changes in the post-conflict era.

Concluding Reflections

The analysis of the focus-group discussions above has shown that premises for the social construction of gender vary according to sociopolitical contexts. While this is

by no means a novel insight, the analysis has also shown that a social constructionist approach to understanding gender relations over different time periods and political regimes creates a different optic for understanding sociopolitical changes at large. In slightly different terms, one might say that changing sociopolitical contexts can be seen in the ways in which social constructions of gender are made – that is, how notions of good/decent/honorable masculinity and femininity are manifest in changing social practices and interactions. In other words, it is the intersectionality of gender with other social categories that becomes constitutive of larger sociopolitical changes.

More specifically in the Bosnian context, the analysis gives grounds for the following conclusion: the sociopolitical changes that have taken place in the territory of Bosnia since the communist years, through the war years, and up until the present time are manifest in dramatic changes and variations in the social positioning of gender relations, gender identity construction, and sexual practices. The focus-group discussions show that there has been a transition from a traditional patriarchal social construction of gender relations, one that was predominantly pan-Yugoslav (i.e. non-ethnic), in the prewar era to a transitional social construction of gender relations in which ethnic, religious, urban/rural, and class differences are dominant. In these processes of transition, female identities have become sexualized in different ways. In the prewar era, female identity was situated in the private sphere of family life, a woman's fertility secured the stability of family and home, and it was the male patriarch who controlled, and owned, the woman's procreative abilities. Gender equality within the public sphere of (communist) work life, therefore, did not translate into the private sphere, because the private sphere was not an issue of public concern. In the post-conflict era, however, female sexuality is situated within a Western market economy and is seen as a commodity for sale. In other words, female sexuality is a public issue in which there are many (dubious) stakeholders. Alongside this conceptualization, there is an emerging social construction in the postwar era that situates female sexuality as a human rights issue. This conceptualization casts a critical light not only on the sex industry, but also on traditional conceptualizations of female sexuality as the patriarch's prerogative, a way of thinking that the focus-group participants see as re-emerging with religious/ethnic overtones in the postwar era. Finally, the ways in which female identities intersect with other social categories also sexualizes political change. For

instance, Westernization is linked to a rise in prostitution and a commodification of female sexuality. This suggests, again, that not only do sociopolitical changes frame gender relations and female identity, but changes in gender relations and female identity also frame sociopolitical change.

Finally, and most importantly, the insights outlined above force us to reconsider the way in which we understand the basis for, and implications of, war rapes on a sociocultural level. If we accept that rape in war becomes an issue of female identity and sexuality in the aftermath of the actual events through the ways in which victims are stigmatized, the analysis above has implications that go beyond the local Bosnian context. Rape in war, by virtue of its political nature, brings the stigma normally attached to rape victims into a realm that is different from that of the prewar era. For the individual rape victim, and for women in Bosnia at large, the social parameters for good womanhood have changed dramatically since the years of communism and up until the present. How to situate oneself as a woman – or, indeed, as a rape victim – is by no means given. While the human rights discourse would encourage openness about rape and violence against women, the backlash discourse would suggest the opposite. It is in this transitional and ambiguous gendered landscape that local women must situate their individual war experiences and decide on trajectories for future actions and inactions. Claims made in the academic literature on rape in war to the effect that we recognize the impact of rape in war because we know its consequences in times of peace (Allen, 1996; Nordstrom, 1996; MacKinnon, 1993) need to be nuanced. The use of rape in war is most likely based on notions of female sexuality in times of peace, but its consequences for understandings of female sexuality (and stigma) may take unexpected turns. As we have seen above, the use of rape in war transforms notions of female sexuality, because this particular form of violence sexualizes other identities of the individual victim. Through this, rape in war has societal consequences that extend beyond the harm and devastation inflicted on its individual victims. This insight has implications for psychological therapy with war-rape victims (Skjelsbæk, 2006a), and for the ways in which individual victims regard their war-trauma experiences (Skjelsbæk, 2006b) and are stigmatized. Against this backdrop lies an optimistic potential for policymakers and psychological therapists, in that increasing the focus on the sociopolitical nature of war rapes and notions of female sexuality can counteract the stigmatization of rape victims.

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Appendix: The Focus-Group Participants

The study is based on six different focus groups in three different locations (Sarajevo and Mostar in the Bosnian Federation [BH], and Banja Luka in the Serb Republic [RS]). All interviews took place in the spring of 2002, ten years after the war in Bosnia started and more than six years after it ended. The selection of interviewees in the focus groups was based on the following criteria: language skills, age, nationality, and gender. These choices are discussed below.²³

Gender: Because the theme of research was perceptions and notions of female sexuality, it was crucial to have both men and women in the focus groups. In four groups, there were two men and two women; in the other two groups, there were only one man and one woman.²⁴ The assumption was that discussions of female sexuality would evoke multiple gendered subject positions (such as daughter/son, mother/father, sister/brother, etc.) and thereby different discourses of sociopolitical change.

Age: The youngest groups consisted of people between the ages of 20 and 30, while the older groups consisted of people between the ages of 30 and 40. The former groups were people whose formative school years were interrupted by the war. Their memories of prewar life were those of children and early adolescents during the last years of Tito and the early years of radical political change. Members of the older groups, however, had their formative schooling and education before the war, and their childhood and early adolescence were during the years of communism. Potentially, then, these groups were thought to represent different periods of ideological and political change.²⁵

*Nationality:*²⁶ Nationality is by far the most dominant political discourse in Bosnia today. The mere division of Bosnia into a Serb and a Croat/Muslim part

²³ Many thanks to the Nansen Dialogue Network, and to Ljiljeta Brkić at the Sarajevo office in particular, for helping me get in touch with people, driving me around, and letting me use office space for the interviews.

²⁴ This was owing to miscommunication between the local contacts and the researcher.

²⁵ It would have been very interesting to have even older people in the focus groups, but because participants had to be able to speak English I was restricted to younger groups of people.

²⁶ Distinguishing between nationality and ethnicity is no easy task, and the Bosnian context is no exception. Hastings (1997, pp. 2–3) identifies a *nation* (and nationality) as a self-conscious community identified by a literature of its own, claims to a political identity and autonomy as a

clearly speaks to this. It was therefore important that this was reflected in the choice of interviewees in the focus groups, and I chose to have the groups be ethnically homogenous.²⁷ Thus, two focus groups consisted of Bosniaks, two were made up of Croats, and two were with Serbs. By adopting such an approach, I did not make nationality and ethnicity distinct topics for discussion. Had the groups been ethnically heterogeneous, national identity might have become more salient: participants might have spoken from the subject position of an ethnically determined subject in contrast to other ethnically determined subjects within the group, something I wanted to avoid.

Language: All interviewees had to speak English because it would simply have been too chaotic to have an interpreter translate between all the people in the focus group. Pragmatics aside, this also gave a specific selection of people, namely, people with higher education, with previous contact and interaction with „internationals“, and with an urban background. The participants' accounts are clearly voiced from urban perspectives.

All interviews were carried out by me, the researcher, and were recorded and transcribed (also by me). All interviews lasted approximately 1.5 hours and followed an interview guide focusing on the following themes: how to define a traditional Bosnian family; how participants would characterize their own families in terms of traditional/non traditional; major changes in gender roles in Bosnia before, during, and after the war; attitudes towards violence against women (before, during, and after the war); and, finally, thoughts about the future. The interview guide was sufficiently open to allow for considerable flexibility.

people, and control of a specific territory. An *ethnicity*, however, according to Hastings, is a group of people with a shared cultural identity and spoken language. It is a subdivision with a loyalty of its own within established nations. Bringa (1995, p. 22) brings these terms closer to the Yugoslav field by specifying that while the inhabitants of the pre-1991 Yugoslav territory could claim membership of different nationalities – Serb, Croat, Slovene, Macedonian, etc. – and these national collectives were specifically associated with the people of one republic, the terms were not used locally in Bosnia before the war. Bringa argues that there were two levels of classification in prewar Bosnia: one communist-governed on the state level and one among civilian villagers in Bosnia (Bringa, 1995, p. 23). The nationalist discourse, according to Bringa (1995, p. 22), is primarily an imported conceptualization by non-Bosnian commentators.

²⁷ I asked all interviewees in the focus groups to list their nationality on a sheet of paper, together with background information about their age, education, work, place of birth, and current place of living. Of all the interviewees, only two declined to state their nationality.

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Article III

Therapeutic Work With Victims of Sexual Violence in War and Postwar: A Discourse Analysis of Bosnian Experiences

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This article presents a discourse analysis of 23 interviews with local Bosnian health workers at 2 different psychosocial centers. The main premise for the study is based on the acknowledgment that many victims of war rape will choose to remain silent about their ordeals, and studies of this particular war phenomenon must therefore be based, in part, on other local voices in the field. The main focus is on the ways in which the health workers describe their work with victims of sexual violence in the Bosnian war and postwar settings. Through their descriptions we gain unique insight into how the issue of war rape was addressed and dealt with at a local level. Further, on a general level, the study shows that the impact of sexual violence in war varies according to context, an insight that has implications not only for our general understanding of the phenomenon, but also in the use of particular therapy methods. These therapy methods must balance between the assumptions that there are universal effects of sexual violence that cut across various contexts and cultural relativism that assumes the opposite.

Rape is an integral, yet often unnoticed, part of warfare. During the final days of World War II, for instance, between 110,000 and 900,000 German women were raped by Russian forces (Seifert, 1994). Further, 20,000 Chinese women are thought to have been raped in Nanking following the Japanese takeover of the city in 1937 (Seifert, 1994). The “numbers game” in the former Yugoslavia indicates

that somewhere between 10,000 and 60,000 women of various ethnic groups may have been raped (Bernard, 1994; Jones, 1994; Jordan, 1995; "Rape as a Weapon," 1993; Stiglmeier, 1994; Thomas & Ralph, 1994). In Rwanda, it is believed that between 250,000 and 500,000 women, predominantly Tutsis, were raped (Human Rights Watch, 1996). Despite these high numbers, there are remarkably few studies about this particular war phenomenon. One prime reason for this lack of knowledge is the victims' silence about their ordeal. This silence was broken with the Bosnian war, during which we learned about the systematic use of rape as the events were taking place. Not only was this openness new, but it also meant that we had access to information about these acts of violence at a much earlier stage than in previous conflicts. Understanding the Bosnian experience is therefore critical to broaden our knowledge about this war phenomenon.

For the sake of argument, let us assume that (a) the impact of sexual violence in the Bosnian war is not known, (b) the victims of sexual violence in war most likely will remain silent about their sufferings, and (c) the truth about sexual violence cannot be attained because most research methods will be inadequate. Let us also assume that despite these difficulties we have ethical and pragmatic reasons for studying sexual violence in war. How, then, can the research community study this war phenomenon? Which data, that is, whose voices, can enlighten us? Which methods can be used and which theories can help us to understand what we see?

VOICES

One central premise of this article is that the victims of sexual violence will most likely not talk about their experiences. To analyze the impact of this particular violence, research must therefore rely, at least in part, on other voices. The following pages focus on how local health workers¹ describe their work, and themselves, in relation to victims of sexual violence in both war and postwar Bosnia.

Acts of sexual violence perpetrated against women in Bosnia–Herzegovina during the war of 1992–1995 received unprecedented attention in the media and among politicians and aid workers. This massive focus led to the establishment of numerous organizations aimed at helping the victims of this particular form of violence in the region. Women's nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), which provide social and legal help as well as psychosocial centers, are now scattered throughout Bosnia providing a network of expertise on both war and postwar

¹The term *health worker* has been used in this article to encompass the vast array of different backgrounds of the interviewees in this study. This approach means that the cook, the nurse, the theologian, the pedagogue, and the psychologist (to name just a few professional groups) are all included in the term *health worker*, because they all have been trained in various ways to meet and talk to severely traumatized people. Despite their different tasks, they all share a therapeutic function vis-à-vis the clients.

trauma. These health workers are among the few who have talked—and still talk—directly and regularly with victims of this particular form of violence, and they therefore have unique insights into how such violence has affected the victims, their families, and their communities. Further, these health workers act as links between victims of sexual violence and the Bosnian community at large. They not only work with the individual victims themselves, but they also do outreach work in their respective communities by directing attention to the situation of women in Bosnia and by making their work known to a larger public. In both of these contexts, the health workers have had to overcome taboos that make speaking about sexual violence a particularly difficult task.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This article will focus on the following research questions:

1. What interpretive repertoires are applied when the health workers describe their work with victims of war rape?
2. What interpretive repertoires are applied when the health workers describe their work with victims of war rape vis-à-vis their work with victims of postwar rape?

SEXUAL VIOLENCE DISCOURSES

In this article, I start from the premise that the meaning, understanding, and reality of sexual violence in war is shaped through discourse (Gergen, 1999; Jørgensen & Phillips, 1999; Wetherell, 2001). Social constructionist scholarship suggests that the researcher focus the discourse analysis on interpretive repertoires made available through talk, descriptions, and other manifestations of a given phenomenon. According to Potter and Wetherell (1987), an interpretive repertoire is “basically a lexicon or register of terms and metaphors drawn upon to characterize and evaluate actions and events” (p. 138). In other words, the aim of this analysis is to explain which statements, identities, and modes of practice are made possible within different discourses on sexual violence. Therefore, it is important to analyze sexual violence not only in the context of war, but also in the context of how this phenomenon is contrasted with sexual violence in a postconflict setting.

The ways in which sexual violence is conceptualized in the interviews with the health workers bring out two distinct yet highly interrelated discourses of violence against women. On the one hand, sexual violence is framed as war violence and is thereby assigned to a specific time period (the war between 1992 and 1995), altered material life conditions (threat of killings and destruction of homes and prop-

erties), and an aberrant set of morals and values (ethnic cleansing). Sexual violence in this context is contrasted with what is seen as postwar violence. This form of violence is euphemistically called domestic violence and is located within families and linked to patriarchal value structures. In the two main subsections that follow, we will see how interpretive repertoires and identities are constructed within discourses of war violence and postwar violence, respectively. However, before going deeper into the analysis itself, a few words on methodology are necessary.

METHOD

No all-encompassing methodology for the study of sexual violence in war can be defined. The researcher must approach the analysis of data from the perspective that the findings are one among many plausible avenues toward an understanding of the phenomenon under study.

Interviews and Participants

The primary data on which this article is based consist of 23 core interviews with health workers from two different psychosocial centers in Bosnia. Despite great diversity in their backgrounds, there are certain characteristics that unite these health workers. They all describe their initial interest in doing this work as a result of feeling paralyzed by the political situation in the early war years. The people who got together were colleagues, friends, and neighbors, and, consequently, it was a close-knit network that they established. The health workers were all women, and their ethnic background was predominantly Bosniak²: 78% of the interviewees were Bosniak, 13% were of mixed Croat–Serb background, 4.5% were of Croat–Bosniak background, and 4.5% were of Croat background. They ranged in age from 25 to 63 years. The interviews were conducted at the two psychosocial centers. In one case, I lived at the center for the week I was there, whereas, in the other case, I stayed at a nearby hotel and visited the center each day of my stay.

These interviews are part of a larger study focusing on how the rapes during the Bosnian war affected gender relations and perceptions of gender violence in the aftermath of that conflict. The total number of interviews in the larger study was 55.

²The term *Bosniak* has a long history in Bosnia and has been used both as a generic term for inhabitants of Bosnia (*Bošnjak*) and as a term for Muslims living in Bosnia at different points in time (for an elaborate discussion, see Bringa, 1995, pp. 34–36). In present day Bosnia, however, according to Ronelle Alexander, Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures at the University of California (UC), Berkeley, the term *Bosniak* has replaced the religious identifier *Muslim*. Thus, Bosniak now denotes Muslims in Bosnia, whereas the term *Bosnian* denotes inhabitants of Bosnia of different nationalities (Ronelle Alexander, presentation at the conference “The Muslim World in Eastern Europe,” UC, Berkeley, April 26–27, 2003).

The 23 core interviews on which this article is based were with health workers who worked full time at the two psychosocial centers. Their daily contact with women victims of violence set them apart from the other interviewees in the larger study. In addition to these 23 health workers, 17 interviews were with other professionals at medical centers, as well as lawyers, peace negotiators, members of the international community in Bosnia, and NGO workers, whereas 16 interviews were with women who received help as a consequence of different war traumas such as rape, torture, and the loss of family members in a massacre; finally, 6 interviews were with focus groups (in Sarajevo, Banja Luka, and Mostar). In addition, I was an observer at two therapy sessions at a “collective center” (a euphemism for a refugee settlement) for internally displaced persons (IDPs).

The full set of interviews was carried out over the course of five field trips between September 2001 and June 2002. The interviews, which lasted for approximately 1½ hr each, were all recorded and transcribed by me. The result has been close to 800 pages of transcribed text, of which the 23 interviews at issue here constitute but one part. In addition to these texts, personal observations, informal conversations, field notes, and observation of the physical reality in which the health workers find themselves are important factors in establishing the context from which the discourse analysis can emerge.

All interviews were semistructured and followed an interview guide. Within this guide, a number of core themes were considered particularly important: the health workers’ own accounts of the startup of the center and their involvement in that process, descriptions of their work, their perceptions of working in an all-woman environment, their perceptions of the change of focus from war traumas to postwar traumas, their thoughts on how the local community regarded the psychosocial centers, and their thoughts about and hopes for the future of the center.

With a single exception, all of the interviews were carried out with one of three local interpreters, all of whom were women. The decision against using the Bosnian language in the interviews was based not only on my very limited knowledge of the language, but also on the recognition that the theme of study could be so sensitive that it was likely to be very difficult for me to master nuances and distinctions regarding sexual violence and other kinds of war trauma.³

When I returned from the field to start analyzing my data, I was uncertain as to what kind of text the transcribed interviews actually represented. The text was inevitably the product of three different voices: the interviewer, the interviewee, and the interpreter. Little has been written about the methodological challenges within discourse analysis, and this is especially true for analyses within foreign language settings. Because the voices of the interviewees and the interpreters are blurred in the transcribed text, this indistinction forces an analysis with a broad focus. A

³More detailed information about the intricacies of interviews under such conditions is available from the author.

close reading of word selections, phrases, or pauses in the language will be difficult because it is not entirely clear whose words and voices are reflected in the transcribed text. Nevertheless, the text can be considered a manifestation of how meanings and implications of sexual violence are constructed by the health workers, in cooperation with the interpreters in the postconflict Bosnian setting. Within these discourses the health workers speak from different subject positions: as victims of war, as professional health workers, as liaisons between the rape victims and their local communities, and as women. The interpreters reconstruct the health workers' accounts by selecting words and references within the English language, which, in turn, bring the knowledge, experiences, and perceptions of the health workers out to a larger international audience.

DISCOURSES OF WAR VIOLENCE

Women's sexuality was not a theme for open debate in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia or in Bosnia. This does not mean that there was no recognition that acts of sexual violence took place, but rather that these were perceived as being private problems, not an area of public concern. A useful illustration can be found in Gal and Kligman (2000, pp. 96–97), in which the authors described how the response to the opening of an SOS Hotline in Belgrade in the late 1980s radically changed the public discourse on violence against women. It came to be perceived as a social problem, that is, something that could be of public concern rather than an exclusive part of married life.

To the health workers' knowledge, there were no such hotlines before the war, and therefore, no public discourse on the issue of sexual violence against women in prewar Bosnia. During the war years, however, sexual violence became a public theme as well as a tool in the political conflict. Not only was a public discussion about rape something new in the Bosnian context, it also represented a shift in the ways in which weapons of war were perceived and defined on the international level. The notion of sexual violence as a weapon of war is prevalent among researchers and journalists writing about the Bosnian war (see Allen, 1996; Bernard, 1994; Jordan, 1995; Vranic, 1996). In Salzman (1998), the systematization of the use of sexual violence is even given a name: the RAM plan (p. 356), which was drafted by the Psychological Operations Department within the Yugoslav National Army in August 1991. According to this plan, raping women and even children would help crush the Muslim population's morale and desire for battle. The United Nations envoy to Bosnia from 1993 to 1995, Thorvald Stoltenberg, provided another example. He said that at almost all of the meetings he had with the leaders of the various warring parties (Slobodan Milosevic, Alija Izedbegovic, and Franjo Tudjman), accusations would be thrown back and forth about the numbers of

women that soldiers from the different sides had raped (personal communication, February 7, 2002).

For the health workers in Bosnia, the challenge was how to deal with this violence in a therapeutic setting when they had no previous experience with this particular form of violence and no therapeutic language through which to address it. Somehow, the issue of sexual violence needed to be made explicit and recognized as a unique form of violence that should be given as much attention as possible during the war and to find ways of helping its victims. What the health workers did was to situate themselves both as victims of war, thereby focusing on having shared experiences with their clients, and as professional therapists, thereby focusing on being different from their clients. In addition, discourses of survival and shame were central themes in the health workers accounts, and in the following we will see how these themes are framed.

Discourses of Victimization

Despite their difference in age, education, and working history, many of the health workers found common ground in their descriptions of how they became involved in and motivated about working with women victims of violence. They were all victims of the war. One health worker explains how she perceived the situation:

We all lived with trauma in our families, fear of dying. If it was not from the shelling, then we were afraid to die from hunger. For almost 2 years, we were in the middle of a blockade, and we could not get anything from the outside. It is only now that I understand how traumatizing this was for us.

They describe victimization as loss of mobility, physical and emotional security, and a predictable future. For the health workers, the war meant a sharp decline in their standards of living, and this aspect of their victimization was hurtful and humiliating. One health worker described how she had to clean other people's houses to make ends meet after having been accustomed to having help at home herself. She polished her nails at night so that no one would see how worn her hands were. Another health worker described how she used her fur coat, a symbol of her former wealth and status, to fetch wood for her stove, which had replaced the electric oven they could no longer use. However, this form of victimization was described as being very different from the ordeals that the clients had gone through. The majority of the health workers lived in their own homes during the war. They were urban and educated, whereas their clients were predominantly rural and in many cases uneducated. Despite these differences, situating themselves as victims created a sense of unity between the health workers and the clients and was a prime motivation for initiating psychosocial work. It was the recognition that they were

all victims in different ways that gave the health workers the added energy they needed for the kind of work they did.

The first meetings with IDPs—many of whom had been raped, lost their homes, and seen family members killed—were difficult, but rewarding, as this woman explains:

Working with women at that time and at that stage made it easier for me to cope with myself and my life in a better way, if you can understand what I mean. Another thing was that I was happy to be of help. ... I was afraid that something might happen because it was the war, but seeing what the women had been through and they were still alive gave me the message that I will have the strength to go through whatever I have to go through, and I will live because if they do, I will as well.

Another health worker confirmed how the psychosocial work was a source of comfort, stability, and solidarity throughout the war years and in the aftermath of the conflict:

Very often I would feel support from the therapy group members who had numerous losses in their families. In addition to all their suffering, they managed to offer me their help, and the therapy sessions were therefore a mutual exchange of experiences, and that was very good.

Discourses of Professionalism

The recognition of shared victimization was, according to the health workers, important in motivating them for this particular kind of work. However, it was also important to create a distance between themselves and their clients to avoid getting burnt out. The health workers had to become professionals in dealing with war traumas. At the beginning of their work, the mere naming of sexual violence appeared as a major obstacle for the health workers, because they were then forced to make visible a “private” matter within a public (albeit confidential) space (the psychosocial center). The challenge was to acquire an appropriate language and appropriate therapy methods to deal with this issue. One health worker described this insecurity in her account of the first group of clients she had, of which several were rape victims:

I was silent and a little closed in myself and a little bit inhibited, and I was just looking at them. I could not see them so well because there were just candles [the electricity was out], but this field officer asked them questions about what had happened to them. I was afraid that I would hurt them if I asked them too many questions. In this first group of clients, we did not use

the word rape at all: they talked about when IT happened, and we asked questions about how and when IT happened, and we always talked about IT. And we tried to do some relaxation exercises, but we were all so tense: they were tense, and we were tense, and there was shelling, and sometimes the shelling interrupted the groups and we had to go into the basement and stop the therapy.

As this quote suggests, the issue of sexual violence was perceived as so taboo that it was difficult even to name it. Another health worker handled the issue by avoiding conversations with clients who would bring out the theme. Her solution was to sing when she was on night shifts:

In the beginning, I was afraid to start talking to them about the things that had happened to them, because I was not sure that I would be able to cope with it. So, you know, there were nights when we were singing all night. I am the last person to sing in public, but I would rather sing than have one or two or three start talking about painful issues. So I decided it was better to sing rather than have such messy questions and messy topics that I did not know what to do with.

The way the health workers coped with their own insecurities was through education. Before the formal opening of the centers,⁴ health workers were able to find scholarly literature in related fields in either German or English. One or two people would read these texts and translate them for the others, and through this approach, highly eclectic therapeutic models could be modified to fit the needs of their clients.

Midway through the war, the health workers came in contact with internationals who were willing and eager to fund and support local initiatives aimed at helping women raped during the war. It was these contacts that led to the formal establishment of the two psychosocial centers. These contacts also led to an array of courses and seminars offered to the health workers. Sometimes the educators came to them, and sometimes the health workers traveled abroad. However, few, if any, of the seminars and courses fitted the situation in Bosnia at the time, as the following quote suggests:

Everything we learned in those seminars [organized by internationals] and from the literature [Western psychology] we had to remodify because we worked in very specific conditions, and the issue of rape was a topic we had

⁴For further details on setting up the centers, see the Appendix.

not faced before ... and perhaps even we as therapists saw it as a kind of shame of the woman it happened to.

Most courses were organized by Western Europeans or Americans. The educators had no direct experience with sexual violence during war but used their expertise and experiences from other conflicts and trauma theory. The themes covered stretched from the Vietnam War syndrome and torture methods used in Chile to trauma education related to natural disasters and even traffic accidents. As the above quote suggests, the challenge for the international educators was not only to try to fit existing theories on sexual violence, trauma, and therapy to the extreme situation of the Bosnian war, but also to help the health workers overcome their inhibitions and inexperience in talking and dealing with the issue of sexual violence. For the health workers, on the other hand, there was a need to point out that the war in Bosnia was remarkably gruesome and the acts of sexual violence were such that it was difficult for even the most ardent psychiatric professional to find an appropriate way to respond:

You could be the best psychologist in Europe, but when it comes to war trauma you become a little toy student.

The previous statement could have indicated that the education they received was useless, but in fact, the health workers express considerable appreciation and eagerness to learn. The basis for such attitudes was twofold. First, the education they received made them better qualified to deal with the traumas of their clients, increasing their level of professionalism and their identity as professionals. It also served as a way of legitimizing their own intuitive—and often pre-education—responses to the clients, as the following statement illustrates:

I was wondering if my tears were helpful or damaging. Maybe I should not do what I was doing? And I had my doubts about my behavior and my empathy in that process. And later on I met a Dutch woman who helped me get rid of those doubts, and she said that sort of behavior had nothing to do with my knowledge but was part of my response.

Second, as a side-effect, the education provided them with a way of coping and understanding the distress, uncertainty, and pain they had all gone through during the war, and therefore served as a sort of self-help.

The identities the health workers developed as professionals in dealing with war traumas rested on how they contrasted their knowledge and experiences with those of their clients and educators. The education provided them with a language and therapeutic tools to address war traumas, sexuality, and violence vis-à-vis their clients. In other words, by adopting a therapeutic language and learning therapeutic

tools, they became better equipped to handle the traumas of their clients, which, in turn, gave them increased authority and responsibility. Yet, at the same time, the health workers were the experts on local perceptions and taboos regarding sexual violence. This meant that they acted as professionals in transforming scholarly knowledge and therapeutic tools related to war trauma to fit the context of the Bosnian war. It was the health workers who knew how to best balance outside knowledge (i.e., Western psychology) with inside (i.e., Bosnian) cultural taboos. One example of such balancing was the use of a female Muslim theologian and health worker at one of the centers. She made religious visits to women who otherwise might not have been allowed by their families to receive help from a psychosocial center. By making religious visits, the theologian was able to reach these women and talk about war traumas in a nonthreatening way and without creating problems for the women in their families.

Discourses of Survival

The health workers consistently and insistently refused to describe their clients as victims, referring to them instead as “war-rape survivors” or “war trauma survivors.” When I asked why they used the word “survivor” rather than the more common word “victim,” they replied that they did not wish to victimize the women further and that “survivor” evokes a more positive, stronger image than “victim.”

By insisting on using “survivor,” the health workers evoked the image of a fighting soldier, an image most often associated with men. This use of imagery was further affirmed and brought into the public discourse by the imam⁵ in Sarajevo, who issued a fatwa⁶ in 1994 in which he declared that Bosniak women who had been subjected to sexual violence ought to be looked on as war heroes, that is, viewed in the same way as soldiers. One of the health workers explained:

The Islamic Association—at that time most of our clients were Muslim women—issued a proclamation that women who were raped in the war should have the position of a soldier, of a fighter, you know. They were seen like equals, almost like war heroes who got killed, although these women did not get killed. The religious association said it was not by their will; they were misused for war purposes by the enemy. This religious approach changed the attitude of a lot of men, and they got a better understanding for what happened to their wives.

Among the health workers I spoke to both in Bosnia and abroad (I also interviewed three Norwegian and two German health workers), this fatwa was men-

⁵The man who leads prayer in a mosque; authority on Islamic theology and law and spiritual leader.

⁶Ruling on a point in Islamic law that is given by a recognized authority.

tioned as being very important. The experiences of the raped women were conceptualized on the same level as those of soldiers involved in the fighting. The fact that the religious leaders openly addressed the rape issue, and characterized the rape victims as war heroes, may have shifted the way in which the raped women were received and perceived within many families. One result was that the war-rape victims were often protected by their families rather than being ostracized. One health worker provided an example:

Sometimes the husband would come to the center and say that strange and brutal things had happened to his wife. And because some men had the experience of being in prison or in concentration camps, they were aware of the things that were going on there and they had an understanding of what their wives were going through.

This scenario suggests that the husband knew what had happened to his wife and wanted her to get help, which is in contrast to the common perception that a raped woman would be so stigmatized that she would be left by her husband or bring shame on her family (Allen, 1996; Brownmiller, 1994; Card, 1996; MacKinnon, 1994; Seifert, 1994). It is unclear how common this reaction was. However, for the health workers, the imam's engagement and public condemnation of the perpetrators created a possibility for a new understanding of the victims and could have positive implications for victim–family relations.

The discourse of survival brings out a new identity construction for the clients at the psychosocial centers. They are cast as ethnic survivors in a context in which different ethnicities are allocated innocence and guilt in a politicized manner. The discourse of ethnicity is the most prevalent one in the scholarly and political analyses of the Bosnian war. Ethnicity was seen as the prime reason for the conflict,⁷ as well as a key factor in finding a peaceful resolution to the fighting. The division of Bosnia today into a Serb Republic and a Croat–Bosniak Federation stands as testimony to how successful the discourse of ethnicity was and continues to be. The health workers are careful to point out, however, that they do not reserve their help for women of only one particular ethnicity. Both of the psychosocial centers are in principle multiethnic. Yet, casting the clients within ethnic boundaries creates a good base for therapy—both men and women were attacked, albeit in different

⁷In his memoirs of his role as peace negotiator in the Bosnian conflict, Richard Holbrooke (1999) described what he called “the Rebecca West Factor”: Rebecca West (1942/1977) wrote the first English-language book about the Balkan region in which she is overtly pro-Serb and anti-Muslim. In addition, Robert Kaplan's (1993) book, *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History*, echoed some of the thoughts of Rebecca West and influenced policymakers to think that the conflict in the region was based on age-old hatred between ethnic groups. It also convinced many—especially U.S. politicians and U.S. President Bill Clinton in particular—that nothing could be done about the bloodshed (Holbrooke, 1999).

ways, because they belong to the same ethnic group. The violated body of the Bosniak victim of sexual violence “belongs” to her ethnic group, and through these experiences the entire ethnic group is perceived as being attacked.

The combination of gender and ethnicity has become so powerful within writings on the Bosnian war that the image of the raped victim is the image of a Bosniak woman abused by a Serb male perpetrator, wrote Zarkov (1997). Other victim–perpetrator constellations have been overshadowed, which has hit Serb victims particularly hard, not only in Bosnia but also in the international media. For the Serb population, the survivor image of the rape victim might therefore have been a more difficult image to evoke, because the Serbian ethnicity has been conceptualized as the identity of the perpetrator. Mixed identities complicate this discourse even further, although this was not a theme in our interviews—most likely because the majority of the clients were Bosniak.

Discourses of Stigmatization

Although the Muslim leaders in Bosnia, through the fatwa described previously, lifted some of the stigma normally attached to victims of sexual violence, the threat of stigmatization remained throughout the war years. The health workers had to deal with this threat in different ways. They emphasized the importance of creating a safe environment for their clients. They thought it would be easier for victims of sexual violence to come to the centers if they had an all-female profile. However, in adopting such an approach, it was important to make sure that the centers did not become known as “rape centers,” because a “rape center would have no clients,” as one health worker pointed out. It would simply be too stigmatizing for the victims to approach such a center. They portrayed the centers as places where women with different war traumas could receive help, underscored by one health worker who explained that “all our clients were women with war traumas, physical and psychological.” If the clients’ reasons for coming to the center were multifaceted, then the help the centers offered needed to be equally diverse. One of the health workers at Center A explained:

We did several things to make the whole procedure easier. First of all, our services were always free of charge for our clients. Second, all the employees and professionals were women ... and the center was able to cover all segments of their need like accommodation, clothes, psychological assistance, etc.

At Center A, there was an additional reason for emphasizing treatment of different kinds of war experiences: the structure of the building in which the center was located. The waiting room at the front of the building had a glass door through which passersby could get a glimpse of the clients. If passersby knew that the cen-

ter treated women with different war traumas, it was not possible for them to know exactly why any one particular client was there.

Although Center A emphasized the positive sides of describing sexual violence as one of several war traumas that women victims of war suffered from, interviews with health workers at Center B revealed how this contextualization could also be problematic. They argued that describing sexual violence as one of several war traumas becomes a way of hiding—and thereby maintaining—the stigma attached to victims of sexual violence. They make extensive use of group therapy, and within such groups, everything that is said is confidential and does not leave the room. Still, the health workers at Center B explained that only rarely have they had cases where a client openly admitted to having been subjected to sexual violence. The alternative of having specific groups for victims of sexual violence, however, is ruled out as impossible:

It would never have been possible to form a [therapy] group of women who had that kind of trauma [rape], but it happened that amongst the groups' members there were women who had that experience, but very rarely would they speak of it in the groups. ... I figured that the reason might be that these groups consisted of women who knew each other before they became group members ... blood relations ... and ... neighbors. ... What happened was that some women in a secret manner would give me a sign that they wanted to talk to me about something they could not tell in front of the group.

When necessary, these secret signs were then followed by individual therapy.

Apparently, it was easier for the health workers at Center A to single out victims of sexual violence, and they even had therapy groups with this particular group of war-trauma victims. Both centers, however, appear to have succeeded in attracting women victims of sexual violence through their female war-trauma focus, but the ways in which this approach succeeded in providing the victims with psychological therapy varied.

Framing sexual violence as one among many war traumas women suffered was also important for the health workers and their relationships with the larger communities. Some of the health workers at Center A were born and raised in the city in which the psychosocial center is located. They revealed that this was slightly problematic because their workplace was known as the rape center in the city. It was as though the stigma that was attached to the rape victims had spread to them. But when they could explain to their neighbors and families that they worked with women who were traumatized in different ways—in this way creating a unity among women suffering from different traumas during the war—they felt it was easier for them vis-à-vis outsiders.

What I have described above are ways in which the stigma attached to victims of sexual violence was managed within the psychosocial centers. By making vic-

tims of sexual violence invisible, the centers removed the stigma that attached not only to the victims but also to the health workers and their other clients. Hiding the clients' war-rape experiences is largely explained as a pragmatic solution in response to a damaging identity. This way of arguing for and organizing psychosocial work shows that, despite the unexpected support that Bosniak victims of wartime sexual violence got from their religious leaders, the most prevalent way of conceptualizing victims of sexual violence was through stigmatization.

At Center B, where sexual violence was less visible in the therapeutic work than at Center A, those interviewed were clear about why women they suspected had been raped would not acknowledge this in group sessions or even in private conversations with the therapists. One concern could be the prospect of getting married in the future:

If they [potential partners] find out that they are with a girl who was raped, they would find it difficult. And if you think that you cannot live without a husband, and you have all those war trauma experiences, you need financial support, then you do not tell.

Another concern would be traditional male roles within families:

It [rape] was a weapon of war to destroy the family through the woman. . . . A husband cannot see the woman in the same way as he did before, because of the traditional way of education and raising boys. People think that women could often prevent those acts.

DISCOURSES OF POSTWAR VIOLENCE

The postwar years have been—and continue to involve—a struggle to reconstruct and create normal lives in the midst of extraordinary destruction and social problems. A *normal life* for many Bosnians was described as a combination of the life they enjoyed in the prewar years and the current Western European mode of living. With an unemployment rate well over 50%,⁸ young people fleeing the country to seek better futures elsewhere, and the scars and wounds of war still overshadowing the lives of most people, it is hard to patch together a normal life.

In the postwar period, the psychosocial centers have adapted their focus to address new social problems (see the Appendix for an outline of how they have developed). Sexual violence continues to be a primary concern, but the parameters

⁸The unemployment rate in Bosnia was estimated in 2002 to be between 40% and 80%, depending on the area considered (Becirbasic & Secic, 2002). The highest levels of unemployment are found in industrial areas where former communist-style industries have collapsed.

for this particular form of violence have changed. The following section focuses on how the new postwar context brings out new discourses of sexual violence, and analyzes how these discourses are understood and described as linked to the war.

Discourses of Transitions

Domestic violence, drug abuse, high suicide rates, and prostitution are among the new areas of concern the health workers have to deal with in the aftermath of the war. The ways in which these problems are understood and talked about is twofold: On the one hand, there is a perception that sexual violence has increased as a result of the social unrest caused by the war, whereas on the other hand, there is the contrasting perception that more attention is given to these issues primarily because of all the aid workers who have come to the region and initiated psychosocial activities. In both cases, the war is seen as instrumental in making gendered violence a theme of public debate and concern. The question, then, is how and why the health workers argue that there has been an increase in sexual violence in postwar Bosnia and what implications this escalation has for their work?

The fact that the war was marked by a collapse in morality, which has created an increase in violence within Bosnian families, is a core argument within the sexual violence-on-the-increase line of thinking. One health worker explained:

I think war trauma made a lot of problems for domestic violence. ... We had domestic violence before the war, ... but it was much more of a secret ... very secret. ... For example, now our ... soldiers say that they are more aggressive ... They think it is better to be violent against women than against children. ... And women have also changed. ... During the war, they accepted to work and make some money for their families ... when the husbands came from the frontline they were lost and had many war traumas and nightmares and a lot of mixed troubles. ... But everything is connected with the war. ... I used to say that we had war trauma and postwar trauma, because many people after the war had trauma with money, how to survive ... how to get by ... and this is just a new problem in Bosnia.

This health worker focuses on the changing identities of demobilized male soldiers in Bosnia. They are, she says, more aggressive; they suffer from a range of war traumas and nightmares. In addition, they have come home to women who have taken up roles as breadwinners and caretakers of the family in ways normally afforded men. In other words, women have entered male arenas, which possibly adds to the aggression and frustration of many men. On top of all this come the economic frustration and material insecurity under which everyone lives. This frustration and insecurity is a classic postwar, gendered consequence. For many men, the distress of postconflict life, coupled with the changing roles of women, may lead to

what Friedman (1992) described as a heightened male vulnerability. Feelings of helplessness and despair result from their inability to take care of their families and from having witnessed family members being raped, tortured, or killed. For some men, this vulnerability may lead to the use of domestic violence as a way of reestablishing control and power. For others, it may mean passivity and deep depression.

Another argument is that the symbolic value of women within Bosnian society changed after the war.

After the war came, we learned that people had been raped, and we had people in the streets who had been raped. ... After the war, people became less moral, and everything was allowed. ... This is a problem. ... And in our country, we completely changed our morals. ... Now it is normal to steal, and there is an increase in violence.

I think that the destruction of values was very important for people during the war. ... Girls were exposed to constant attack ... not only by the boys their own age, who also lost their values, ... but older men who experienced the war. We can understand the problems that they might have ... but they all go to solve their problems by placing the woman under them ... subordinate them.

In a thorough study of the roles of women in an ethnically mixed village in central Bosnia, Bringa (1995) argued that women in both Croat and Bosniak families were often seen as maintainers of family values and morals. The previous quotes suggest that as the war brought a collapse in normal values and morals, women increasingly became the targets of negative attention and violence. The values and morals they were seen to represent, according to Bringa, were distorted, and violence followed. This distortion means that the violence women experienced during the war did not end with the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement in December 1995 but was simply moved to the private sphere as a result of changing male and female identities.

The health workers went on to point out that postwar violence, which they call domestic violence or civil trauma, is very different from war rape. It is more difficult to evoke the survivor identity for the victims in the postwar setting, because the perpetrator–victim relationship does not run along ethnic or political lines. In the postwar setting, a rape victim is first and foremost a female party injured by a male perpetrator. Indeed, rape is a form of violence in which the relationship between the individual men and women involved is brought into question. One health worker explained:

I think that the stigma for women raped during the peace period would be much stronger than towards the women raped during the war. ... During the

war, we thought about our survival, and we thought about ourselves as a group against the enemy. ... But, in the peace, it is something else. ... We are not all equal. ... We have individual issues and lives. ... And the attitude towards individuals is different. ... This makes women alone in her trauma.

This development represents a shift toward normal perceptions of sexual violence in the Western world. In his introduction to the history of rape in France, Vigarello (2001) argued that the “crime is now glaringly visible, prominent as never before in police enquiries, court proceedings, newspaper articles and public concerns” (p. 1) and goes on to say that this claim holds true for most Western societies. Acknowledging sexual violence as a problem shared with other European (and American) societies is therefore paradoxically regarded as a form of development toward a “normal” society. The following quote illustrates this point:

Now it is similar as in any Western society: the accusation against women about why she walked alone at night, why she wore a short skirt, and why she provoked the rape.

For the health workers, the challenge is how to transform their experiences as therapists with war traumas and sexual violence during the war years to adapt to situations involving peacetime violence against women. The pragmatic challenge is to adjust therapy models to fit more long-term abuse:

Rape in war was often once ... and rape in domestic violence is through many years by a close member of your family. ... In the war, it is one soldier, and perhaps even someone you do not even know, and this might make it easier for her. ... In domestic violence, the woman will ask why her father is doing this. ... In the war, it is just normal for the soldier, because they test different things. ... It is the most difficult for domestic violence.

Further, the health workers see a need to carry out more preventive measures and have increased and strengthened their information and outreach work (see the Appendix).

By arguing that there has been an increase in sexual violence against women in the postwar setting in Bosnia, the health workers describe new forms of masculinity and femininity. Men are seen to be more aggressive, whereas women are seen as symbols of changing values and morals. When a woman is subjected to sexual violence her mode of behavior, clothes, and attitudes are brought into question, which in many cases will be contrary to the ways in which a victim of a similar crime will be perceived during times of war, according to the health workers. During times of war, a woman’s ethnic identity will come into play and will lessen her perceived degree of complicity in the acts. The health workers argue that what was consid-

ered abnormal behavior during the war—that is, aberrant modes of morals and values—has become, to some extent, normal behavior in the postwar setting.

Discourses of Traditions

Sexual violence is also seen as inherent to the traditional patriarchal family structure in Bosnia. The perceived increase, goes the argument, is simply the result of more attention devoted to this particular kind of violence. Although statistical measures might be able to evaluate this line of argument, such statistics do not exist. In any case, the reason that more attention is being paid in Bosnia today is because the war brought a new awareness about gender-related violence:

In the beginning, we started to work with women victims of war, and we started talking openly about the violence of war, and we were the first to talk about violence against women ... probably because we had so many journalists who came and wrote about the violence. Women who experienced domestic violence probably thought that people here would listen. ... I think that was the main reason why women started to come here. It was the trust during the war, and we were the first organization who openly started to talk about this.

Another health worker explained:

I know that there were rapes in Bosnia before. ... Whether the number of rapes have increased or decreased I do not know. ... It is maybe the point that we are more aware of the rape as a crime. ... Before, the woman would have to keep her mouth shut. ... The background story is that she caused it in this way or another ... by wearing specific clothes. ... Now, more and more people think that she should be allowed to wear what she wants. ... And now we talk about the issue for the first time in the history of this country ... and many women are now aware that no one has the right to rape them. ... Most are aware that they should talk about it and make it visible.

Yet, despite the optimism of this particular health worker, another health worker explained the difficulties they face when educating women about the issue of domestic violence, especially in what is considered traditional—that is, strongly patriarchal—families:

All of us Serbs, Catholics, and Bosniaks ... all of them they have the same way of thinking ... the same tradition. ... If you have a daughter, the purpose for that girl is to get married ... deliver babies ... cook and work in the field ... and it is hard work ... and to take care of her husband ... and to wash his

legs and to be very nice to her husband when he beats her. ... And some of them would talk to each other and say that my husband is very nice, he only beats me once a month, or only once a week ... because their fathers ... they are taught to live like that ... because he was beating their mother ... and that is normal.

Because violence against women also is seen as an integral part of traditional patriarchal family structures in Bosnia, the health workers have taken it on themselves to inform the larger public and change these perceptions. This has taken the form of extensive, professionalized collection, analysis, and dissemination of statistical information about their work and the prevalence of different problems. Furthermore, they often use the local media to promote their activities, while also focusing on women's rights in more general terms. In addition, both centers are parts of different networks—local NGOs and women's NGOs in Bosnia, as well as international networks for women's organizations. These efforts enable them to disseminate their insights and experiences more and more widely.

This transformation in information and activities, however, also has a down side. The increased focus on issues relating to women's rights in Bosnia has led to reduced contributions from foreign donors, which are primarily interested in war-related problems. It is therefore clear that the more the health workers make a connection between current problems faced by women and the war—that is, the more clearly they can argue that sexual violence during the war has been transformed into an increase in sexual violence in the postwar aftermath—the more likely they are to get attention from the internationals. On the positive side, however, these information efforts contribute to keeping sexual violence part of a public discourse in Bosnia. There are now SOS hotlines, established in the immediate postwar years, where people can call for legal and psychosocial assistance when they have experienced different kinds of violence, including sexual violence. To make their work known, the workers at the centers have publicized these SOS hotlines in the local communities, thereby acknowledging that sexual violence is a problem of public concern for which there are legal and psychosocial implications.

This line of argument shows that sexual violence is a grave problem in Bosnia today. However, the conceptualization of masculinity and femininity here is different from that found within the transition arguments. As the previous quote shows, the deeply rooted patriarchal structures of Bosnian families are seen as the prime reason for sexual violence. For a man to have sex with his wife when he wants is regarded as his right. Also, the notion of rape among married couples is perceived as a contradiction in terms. For many of the health workers, this kind of male–female relationship is viewed as not only traditional but also highly rural. The fact that the demography of Bosnia has changed drastically during the war years—many rural inhabitants have been forced to move to urban centers and live in refugee settlements—has also changed perceptions about what are considered normal relationships between men and women.

CONCLUSIONS

Returning to the initial assumptions of this article, we are faced with a central question: What have the health workers' reflections taught us about sexual violence in war in general and about the impact of sexual violence during the Bosnian war in particular?

First and foremost, this analysis shows that it is possible to study sexual violence in war in an empirical, qualitative manner, despite the fact that many victims of this form of violence remain silent. Questions about the ethics of such research can be answered by noting that it would be, in fact, unethical to not investigate this theme simply because it would be difficult. By not asking questions and trying to understand how sexual violence in war impacts victims and the societies and families to which they belong, yet another assault is perpetrated against them because their ordeals are made invisible. It was crucial to find a way to understand the impact of sexual violence during the Bosnian war without posing unethical questions to victims who did not choose to speak. The health workers provided valuable insights because they, as a group, speak as liaisons between victims, and potential victims, of sexual violence and their local communities. One conclusion, therefore, is that to study the impact of sexual violence in war, it is crucial that we identify people who have contact with the victims in the local community. These liaisons are best situated to explain the cultural implications of sexual violence in the given conflict setting.

Second, this study has shown that the impact of sexual violence in war varies according to context. The context of war brought a discourse in which sexual violence was defined as war violence. This discursive construction made it possible for both the women subjected to sexual violence and the health workers to be positioned as victims, albeit in different ways. Through this common identity, the health workers became motivated to work with women who had suffered from different kinds of war trauma, including sexual violence. To keep on with their work, however, it was important for the health workers to maintain some distance from their clients and situate themselves as professionals. This was made possible through education on war traumas and trauma psychology. In turn, this education enabled the health workers to talk about sexual violence with clients and others in ways they had not done before.

By naming and identifying sexual violence and its victims, the health workers were able to situate the rape victims and their experiences in different ways. On the one hand, the victims were seen as war survivors, in line with the fatwa issued by Bosnian Islamic leaders. The ways in which sexual violence became politicized took, to some degree, the stigma away from the female victim. Her ethnicity determined whether she was "eligible" for attack. By situating the sexual-violence victims as ethnic subjects, a sense of unity was created between men and women within the same ethnic group. For the local health workers, this unity created a basis for therapy because the victims of sexual violence received support and under-

standing from their families and communities. On the other hand, the most prevalent identity for the victims of sexual violence was as stigmatized women, which also had implications for the health workers. They risked being “smitten” by the same stigma attached to the victims. As a result, the psychosocial centers became multifaceted in outlook. They provided an array of services to their clients and addressed different kinds of war traumas such as rape, torture, and loss of homes and family members.

In the postwar context, sexual violence and its victims are situated differently. The political context shifted and sexual violence became more a question of male and female power relations, and less a question of ethnicity. It is through the health workers’ discussions about rape in postwar Bosnia that we see the contours of the long-term sociopolitical implications of war rape. On the one hand, the health workers describe an increase in sexual violence in the postconflict settings, which they attribute to a collapse in values and morals during the war years. The use of sexual violence during the war is seen as one manifestation of such a collapse. This analysis suggests a hegemonic gender relationship comprised of aggressive men and subordinate women. On the other hand, another line of argument claims that the hegemonic relationship between the genders has not been altered. Rather, it is awareness about women’s rights that has increased, owing to the huge focus on sexual violence against women during the war. For the health workers, both lines of argument have led to different changes in their work methods (more focus on long-term abuse and family therapy), choice of clients (more focus on the role of men in families and adolescent behavior), and outreach target groups (more focus on reaching boys and girls of school age).

Does this article represent *the truth* about the impact of sexual violence during the Bosnian war? Obviously, it does not. It does, however, present one avenue to understanding and shows that where other methods might fail due to unreliable or nonexistent data, discourse analysis is a useful first step in a comprehensive analysis of a complex phenomenon. Sexual violence is not simply sexual violence that happens to occur during the course of a war, but it is a distinct form of sexual violence that might require, as has been shown in this article, unique therapy methods from health workers. These therapy methods must balance between the assumptions that there are universal effects of sexual violence, which cut across various contexts, and cultural relativism, which assumes the opposite. Close cooperation between international and local health workers is one way of managing this challenge. This insight suggests that both aid workers and policymakers in conflict areas must also balance their efforts in postconflict settings to assist the victims in a nonstigmatizing fashion. Carefully analyzing the gendered pre- and postwar culture, along with the ways in which gender relations become politicized during the conflict, is therefore crucial to meet the needs of the victims most effectively. Finally, it is crucial to conduct more empirical research to compare findings across cultures. Increased empirical knowledge should bring us closer to an accurate defi-

nition of war rape, a definition that clearly sets these acts apart both from other forms of violence during times of war as well as from rape in postwar settings.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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APPENDIX: The Psychosocial Centers⁹

The establishment of both of the psychosocial centers followed similar patterns. Local women came together, motivated by a wish to help IDPs who were coming to the hometowns of the health workers. The formal establishment of the centers came about when foreign individuals and organizations arrived seeking local partners with whom they could establish psychosocial assistance specifically aimed at Bosnian women. These international humanitarian workers had been appalled by news accounts and reports of human rights violations in general, and the situation of women who had been subjected to mass rapes in particular. Collaborative efforts between internationals and locals led to the official opening of Center A in early 1993, and the opening of Center B in early 1994, although in both cases unofficial activities had been going on since 1992. In principle, both centers were multiethnic in outlook and staff, but in reality both staff and clients were predominantly Bosniak.

Center A, where I interviewed 14 health workers, was established to assist war-raped women and their families. The center offered medical, therapeutic, legal, and social help to its clients free of charge. Although their primary goal was to assist raped women, it was essential to all concerned that the center not become known as “the rape center.” Consequently, they welcomed women suffering from a vast range of war traumas, along with their families. Center A was comprised of several houses that served different functions such as a day clinic, living accommodation, and an information center. Some clients lived at the center for varying amounts of time, whereas others only visited during the day. In the beginning, potential clients were identified and approached during visits to collective centers in the town and its immediate vicinity. The health workers presented the work of the psychosocial center to encourage women who needed help to contact them. For the most part, employees work full-time and describe their work as being more than just a job. Their work and commitment has offered them safety, education, salaries, and even in some cases food during difficult times. The center has close contact and a degree of cooperation with local police, health authorities, and social services. In the years since the war, this cooperation has grown closer. The center, however, has struggled to stay afloat in the postconflict years because it did not attract the same level of engagement from international donors—on which they were entirely dependent.

Center B, where I interviewed 9 health workers, had a broader approach to war trauma. Unlike Center A, it did not single out victims of war rape in particular but

⁹The health workers deserve special thanks for having made the most important contribution to this study. Because the interviewees are anonymous, neither they nor the psychosocial centers can be identified. Their support and enthusiasm have been invaluable to me and I am deeply indebted to them.

rather included this particular experience within a wider framework. It was established as a day center for women and children, offering therapy, legal assistance, and social help. Here, too, all services were provided free of charge. There was, however, a very different employment policy in Center B. Health workers were employed for no more than half-time for two reasons. First, it was important for the founders not to “steal” employees from their other jobs; they hoped that local staff would find ways to combine work with the center and any previous employment. Second, that the employees had other jobs in the local community increased the possibility of identifying traumatized people who might be in need of help. As with Center A, the health workers carried out—and continue to carry out—a great deal of outreach work. They were able to reach people not only in collective centers, but in schools, hospitals, and other places in the local community where the health workers had their primary work. Although Center B has been a center for women and children, it has also provided therapy for men, albeit to a limited extent, and has focused considerable effort on adolescents. In addition to in-house work, the health workers also followed up group therapy in numerous collective centers in the vicinity of the town.

In the postwar setting, both centers focus on similar themes, such as domestic violence, suicide, drug abuse, and prostitution, and they have changed their focus from war trauma to postwar trauma (or “civil trauma,” as many of them call it). Politically, they have taken on slightly different roles in their local communities: one center has established an information department for disseminating information about its work, as well as on women’s rights in the larger community, whereas the other center has expanded its activities with more outreach work to new groups, such as adolescents, children, and men, and provides help with a vast array of psychosocial needs.

The majority of the health workers remained committed to their work throughout the war and postwar years, despite periods of extreme stress, uncertainty, and burnout.

Article IV

Article IV is not included
due to copyright

Article V

Article V:

(Submitted to *Qualitative Research Methods in Psychology* for possible publication)

Interpreting the Interpreter:

Reflections on Transcribed Fieldwork Interviews with Interpreters

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Abstract

What does the presence of an interpreter do to a transcribed interview text? The current lack of methodological and theoretical discussion of the interpreter's impact becomes an acute problem when the researcher attempts to analyze the transcribed fieldwork interview text. This text is blurred by the voices of the interviewee, the interviewer, and the interpreter, and does not fit most textbook descriptions of social text analysis. This article presents different modes of untangling the social position and textual impact of the interpreter within critical, structuralist and post-structuralist theory.

Keywords: *Interpreter, text, discourse, interviews*

Introduction*

What does the presence of an interpreter do to a transcribed interview text? The social science methodological literature – and the psychological methodological literature, in particular – provide numerous accounts of how interviews should be carried out in order to obtain the most reliable data. In any given setting, interviews fall under what Robson (1993, p. 227) calls self-reporting techniques, and the assumption is that the less influence the interviewer has on an interviewee's thoughts and reflections, the more accurate such self-reporting will be. „The reliability and validity of an interview depend largely on the skill of the interviewer , argues Lewin ([1979] 1987, p. 230), adding that „if the interviewer is clumsy and tactless the respondent will say little . If we adapt this line of thinking to the case of a field interview in a foreign-language setting with an interpreter, logic suggests that similar requirements need to be made of the interpreter – that is, that they should be tactful, skillful, and, above all, „invisible

If we depart from this dualistic mode of methodological thinking, however, and view the interview situation as a dialogical setting in which all participants – that is, interviewer, interviewee, and interpreter – interact in ways that create transactional data, we are forced to reconsider both the social position and the textual impact of the interpreter. The assumption within this line of thinking is that the interpreter is not simply a neutral conveyer of words, but rather that his/her presence does „something that in turn influences what is said and how perceptions and reflections are made. How, then, can and should we understand a social text that is blurred by the voices of an interviewer, an interviewee, and an interpreter? What does the presence, social position, and voice of the interpreter do to the social text? This article presents different modes of untangling the social position and textual impact of the interpreter within critical, structuralist and post-structuralist theory.

Background

The immediate background for this article is my own fieldwork – and experiences with interpreters – in a study of the discourse of wartime rape in peacetime Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereafter, Bosnia). The fieldwork for this study was based on dyadic and focus-group interviews conducted in Bosnia during five field trips in 2001

and 2002. All the dyadic interviews were carried out with interpreters.¹ I used three different interpreters, all local women from different places in Bosnia. One was a professional interpreter who currently works for the international community in Bosnia; the others had worked as interpreters for different representatives for the international community during the 1992–95 war in Bosnia but no longer work professionally as interpreters. My decision against conducting the interviews in the Bosnian language² was based not only on my very limited knowledge of that language, but also on a recognition that it would be extremely difficult for me to achieve sufficient command of the language to master the nuances and distinctions regarding sexual violence and other kinds of war trauma that would be necessitated by the study's sensitive theme. In using an interpreter aware of these problems, my thought was that such an approach might make it easier for especially the traumatized women to talk.

On a pragmatic level, the use of interpreters was for me a very positive experience. I was not only assisted by having a social and administrative contact in the local setting, but also surprised at how intimate a dyadic interview with an interpreter actually can get. The pace of the interview was slower than in the normal dyadic interview; and, while the interviewer was translating, it was possible for me to plan subsequent questions and think through previous answers. Furthermore, the process forced me to be very clear and simple in my choice of words. I had asked my interpreters not to translate word for word, because this would be distracting for everyone involved, so translations were provided in the form of summaries of what had been said.

Social/Political Psychological Fieldwork

On returning from Bosnia ready to start analyzing my field data, however, I was confused and uncertain as to what kind of text I was actually analyzing. The text that was the result of the transcribed interviews contained different voices (those of the

¹ The data on which I have based my study consist mainly of interviews with three primary categories of informants: therapists (psychological, pedagogical, and occupational) in Bosnia who have worked with women subject to violence (in war and afterwards); women who have been traumatized during the war (loss of family members and home, torture and sexual violence) and have received therapy; and gender-mixed but ethnically homogenous focus groups.

² There is much confusion about what the language in the region is called. In the Yugoslav period, the official language was Serbo-Croatian; but, since the disintegration of Yugoslavia, the official language in Bosnia is now Bosnian, in Croatia it is Croatian, and in Serbia it is Serbian.

interviewer, the interviewee, and the interpreter). The text was also a manifestation of translations that were delayed in time and given in the form of summaries. In addition, textbooks in discourse analysis to a large extent rely on examples of texts that contain detailed and precise accounts of the conversation that has taken place – a prerequisite for analysis that my interviews did not fulfill.³

My fieldwork was part of a study within social/political psychology, a social science discipline in which fieldwork is not as common as it is within, say, anthropology or sociology. The methodological literature within social/political psychology, therefore, does not go into any detail on how to conceptualize „the field when studying social/political psychological phenomena. Furthermore, psychological scholarship has an inclination towards universalism that makes psychological explanations and assessments of social and political phenomena overwhelmingly one-directional. Historically, it has been more common that psychological theories explain social and political phenomena than the other way around (Sears, Huddy & Jervis, 2003; Smith & Bond, 1993; Lavik & Sveaas, 2005). The field of political psychological scholarship is challenged, argues Lane (2002, p. 357), by a need for a shift away from the dominant focus on the psychological basis of political phenomena, towards an increased focus on the political basis of psychological phenomena. Taking this critique seriously implies that the political and social psychological scholarship needs to place more emphasis on fieldwork and look at how social relations and identities are shaped and formed within diverse sociopolitical settings. In addition, with the increasing influence of postmodern thinking in the field of social/political psychology, the impact of social/political context on psychological phenomena has become more prominent. Within the postmodern mode of scientific inquiry, *discourse* analysis, in various shapes and forms, has taken center stage. And, within the psychological methodological literature, this paradigmatic shift has resulted in numerous studies that are close readings of texts and language in use in the field (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Wetherell, Taylor & Yates, 2001a and b; Gergen, 1999; Smith, 2003).

The problem I was facing in my analysis was that my fieldwork interviews seemed to fall between several different modes of scholarly research. The principal reason for my difficulties was my use of interpreters in the field: this prevented me

³ On discourse psychology, see Willig (2003), Jørgensen & Phillips (1999, Chapter 4); on discourse and social psychology, see Potter & Wetherell (1987).

from going „native“ in the anthropological sense and hindered direct access to the language-in-use of informants, which forms the basis for the majority of psychological discourse analyses. The dilemma I was facing was whether the transcribed texts I was analyzing in the study were invalid or whether they represented texts that have not yet been adequately discussed in the literature on fieldwork and discourse analysis methodology. I chose to believe the latter.

Discourse, Language and Translation

As stated earlier, this article attempts to find a place for the dyadic fieldwork interview with an interpreter within discourse research. To do this, it is important to situate discourse research within social science thinking and methodology, and to map out the role and importance of language within this mode of scholarly thinking.

Discourse research emerged in the social sciences during the 1980s and is therefore a fairly new form of analysis. The different modes of discourse analysis „typically include some epistemological claims, a set of concepts and procedures for substantive work and a clearly marked out theoretical domain“ (Wetherell, 2001, p. 382). The change represented a clear departure from the positivistic ideals of the natural sciences, where the aim of the researcher was to uncover regularities in human and social life through quantitative and experimental measures.⁴ The hegemony of natural science thinking within the social sciences had been challenged in the pre-1980 era, most notably through the 1962 publication of Kuhn’s seminal work *The Structure of Scientific Revolution*.⁵ In this publication, Kuhn launched the notion that scientific inquiry is guided by *paradigms*. The paradigm concept is, according to Kuhn, introduced to denote a „sense of disciplinary matrix as a heuristic framework for examining the social sciences“ (Kuhn, 1970, p. 229). I will not dwell here on Kuhn’s theories,⁶ but rather assert that Kuhn’s analysis of the development of natural science has been endorsed by proponents of what has come to be known as the postmodern turn in social science. It may be difficult to define the postmodern turn as

⁴ Within the field of psychology, for instance, this line of thinking has led to an array of peculiar experiments attempting to map regularities in personalities, cognition, and social behavior. One example is the wide use of animals in social psychological research, which has brought cats, dogs, cockroaches, and monkeys into the laboratory (see, for instance, Lippa, 1990).

⁵ This was not a central theme in Kuhn’s work, but the *implications* of his theories have ramifications for social science research.

⁶ For further discussion of Kuhn’s theory of scientific revolutions, see, for instance, Giere (1988, pp. 32–38); for the implications for social science, see Guneriusen (1999, pp. 19–20).

a scientific revolution in Kuhnian terms,⁷ but it seems fair to say that social science today operates with several parallel paradigms. Guba & Lincoln (1994, pp. 105–117) have described what they regard as the status quo of social science and argue that there are four parallel paradigms: positivist, post-positivist, critical, and constructivist. Discourse research places itself within the latter two paradigmatic approaches.

According to Guba & Lincoln (1994, p. 109), critical and constructivist paradigms share a relativistic ontology, subjectivist epistemology, and hermeneutical and dialectical methodologies. However, this is as far as the agreement goes. It is tempting to argue that there as many discourse analyses as there are research projects. To some extent, therefore, any attempt to present an overview will be a simplification and will not do justice to the complexities and interdependence of the different approaches. On a very basic and simplistic level, one can argue that the definitions of discourse research vary according to how *language* is understood in relation to, and as constitutive of, discourse. Taylor's attempt at mapping out these different approaches is worth quoting in full:

In the first approach to discourse analysis, it is precisely the variation and imperfection of **language** which is in focus. Discourse analysts study **language** in use to discover how it varies and relate this variation to the different social situations and environments. In contrast, the second approach to discourse analysis focuses on the *activity* of the **language** use, rather than the **language** itself. Here the analyst studies **language** use as process, investigating the to-and-fro interactions (usually talk) between at least two parties and looking for patterns in what the **language** users (speakers) do. A third approach to discourse analysis is rather different. The analyst looks for patterns in the **language** associated with a particular topic or activity, such as the family of special terms and meanings around it: a study might focus on the **language** associated with a particular occupation, such as social work or nursing. And a fourth possible approach to discourse analysis is to look for patterns within much larger contexts, such as those referred to as „society“ or „culture“. (Taylor, 2001, p. 7; emphasis in bold text mine).

Taylor, as we see above, is careful not to label and define these different modes of discourse analysis and conceptualizations of language. Discourse analyses do not represent discrete analytical entities and are therefore difficult to single out in opposition to each other.

⁷ Especially since Kuhn himself did not focus on social science to the same extent as he did natural science. Kuhn actually regarded social science as being in a pre-scientific phase, precisely because of the lack of consensus on the mode of scientific inquiry. Furthermore, postmodern theories are so diverse that it is difficult to identify one common paradigmatic standpoint.

The centrality of language within discourse analysis proposes a new avenue to knowledge compared to the positivist/post-positivist traditions. While these modes of scientific inquiry aim to produce universal truth claims that are seen as value-free and in accordance with objectivist criteria for reliability and validity, discourse analyses are quite different. Findings within the latter mode of research aim at generating local knowledge that is seen as interpretations, and versions, of a given reality. Indeed, the entire notion of truth, knowledge, and reality is brought under epistemological scrutiny, as are the notions of reliability and validity. What, then, determines good research from a critical and constructivist vantage point? How can one claim that research findings within discourse analysis are plausible if they are so dependent on time and circumstance? What requirements are placed on language and language competence?

As Taylor (2001, p. 6) indicates, the epistemological understanding of language within discourse analysis is that it is not transparent, but referential and constitutive. This understanding can be traced back to a number of thinkers, but perhaps the most important is Wittgenstein in his *Philosophical Investigations*. In Gergen's (1999, p. 34) account of Wittgenstein's work, he emphasizes that Wittgenstein refuted the picture metaphor of language and replaced it with the metaphor of the game. As in the game of chess, individual parts of the game have no meaning unless they are used in accordance with the rules of the game: *'the meaning of a word is its use in language'* (Wittgenstein, 1978, section 20e). The path to knowledge, then, must go through language, and good research is largely determined by the researcher's ability to master, interpret, and code language-in-use by the research subjects. Validity, therefore, must be redefined, and Wetherell (2001, p. 395) argues that it must include logical coherence, generation of novel perspectives and findings, plausibility, grounding in previous research, and more. Taylor (2001, p. 18) argues that *'at the most basic level, the researcher needs to understand the language and references used by the interview participants or the writers of documents'*. Neumann (2001, pp. 50–55) adds that, in addition to linguistic skills, one should have cultural learned knowledge of the social phenomena under study. He defines such knowledge in an anthropological sense, meaning that one should have knowledge of the language, signs, and symbols of the culture in which the study is carried out. The solution seems to be that discourse analysis in foreign cultural settings must resort to traditional anthropological methodology – meaning extensive fieldwork, learning the

language, and trying to go beyond the conventions and contrivances of complex foreign settings.

There are two problems with such claims. First, discourse analysis becomes restricted to language areas where the researcher has language competence. This can clearly be seen in many textbooks on discourse analysis, where the majority of the studies that are used as examples involve English-speaking researchers in English-speaking (sub)cultures.⁸ Needless to say, this limits research in terms of both culture and outlook. There might be good reasons for carrying out discourse research in foreign-language settings without having to completely master the local language. The (cultural) sensitivity of the research topic, as in my Bosnian war-rape research project, is a case in point. Also, although anthropological field methodology is held up as an ideal for data collection, there is reason to be skeptical about just how „native anthropologists actually are in the field. The need to resort to interpreters and to base ethnographic data on translated social text may be much more common than most anthropologists might like to admit. It is therefore interesting to note that in the field of anthropology there have been discussions about the use of translators. Berreman's 1962 monograph *Behind Many Masks* discussed his fieldwork in a peasant village of the lower Himalayas of northern India. In that study, he used different interpreters (one Muslim and one Brahmin), which gave him access to different types of people – and in the end different data for analysis. In his conclusion, he argued that the use of interpreters in the field was a methodologically advantageous aspect of his fieldwork. Borchgrevink (2003) argues in the same vein in his description of his fieldwork in the Philippines. He argues that the lack of discussion about the role of the interpreter reduces the question of language competence to an either/or: either you know the language or you work through interpreters. The fact that you might have learned a language but have poor command of it and a heavy accent is therefore not a theme for analysis within the methodological literature. In their account of the interview method within qualitative research, Fontana & Frey (1994) also address the issue of language competency. They argue that even when an interviewer is fluent in the foreign language, the possibility of grave misunderstandings is always present, and they point to a 1960 study by Wax as an example. In this study, a US researcher (Wax) was carrying out research on „disloyal Japanese in concentration camps in the United

⁸ See Wetherell, Taylor & Yates (2001a,b), Neumann (2001), Gergen (1999), Jørgensen & Phillips (1999).

States between 1943 and 1945 (Fontana & Frey, 1994, p. 366). Despite the researcher's command of Japanese, she had difficulties communicating with her informants because there were cultural codes of which she was unaware. We can clearly see that the art of cross-cultural communication is difficult even when one has good command of a foreign language. From his anthropological perspective, Borchgrevink concludes that most anthropologists will hide the fact that they have used interpreters in the field, and therefore that this aspect of data collection has been insufficiently examined not only within anthropological scholarship but also in other fields of social science where fieldwork is used.

Let us now return to the dyadic field interview setting and look at the assumptions embedded in this methodology. The interview method is widely used within many fields of social science, and the purpose, theory, and questions asked vary, naturally, according to the given field and theme of study. Interviews can be structured, semi-structured, or open. Within quantitative research, it has often been pointed out that the „problem with interviews is that the researcher may influence the interviewee with the result that findings are biased.⁹ Within qualitative research, this aspect is taken into account and has become integrated as part of the research process. This is especially made salient within feminist research, where the genders of interviewer and interviewee are brought to the forefront of study.¹⁰ Some have gone as far as calling the entire interview a masculine paradigm owing to the hierarchical relationships between the interviewer and the interviewee (Oakley, 1981).

Irrespective of the kind of interview to be carried out (structured or unstructured, individual or group), the researcher needs to consider the following elements: the setting, self-presentation, location of informant, establishing rapport, creating trust, and finally finding a common language within which to communicate. It is obvious that all these elements will be influenced by the use of an interpreter. The researcher needs to consider whether, and how, the interpreter knows the interviewee from before; whether the self-presentation should include the interpreter; whether the informant has been located through the assistance of the interpreter; with whom the interviewee should establish rapport and trust (the interpreter or the researcher?); and how the translation will be carried out. These questions are again related to how the interpreter is being perceived within the situation – is she, or he, an extension of the

⁹ See, for instance, the discussion in Lewin ([1979]1987, Chapter 9).

¹⁰ See, for instance, the discussion in Fontana & Frey (1994, pp. 369–370).

researcher or the informant? When does s/he play which role, and how should this positioning be made clear? The answers to these questions pertain to the central themes discussed in this section, namely, discourse, language, and translation. In the following, I will discuss three different approaches (critical, structural, and post-structural) to the understanding of language and relate these to the analysis of the outcome of a dyadic interview carried out with an interpreter in a foreign-language setting. It is important to point out, however, that the differences between these different forms of discourse analysis are not necessarily as rigid as they might seem from the descriptions to follow. It has been important to illustrate different possibilities for interpretation, and I have therefore focused on the aspects of the various forms of analyses that can create difference, rather than discussing their similarities and interdependence.

Placing the Interpreter Within Different Discourse Analyses

In order to be able to carry out a meaningful analysis of a text based on fieldwork interviews with interpreters, we need to establish some ground rules for how we can control the making of the text. In other words, we need to think critically about what kind of knowledge we are seeking and which conceptualization of discourse will be the most conducive in generating the desired insights. The following attempt at placing the interpreter within different modes of discourse analysis is organized along the lines suggested by Wetherell et al. s (2001, p. 5) definition of discourse domains. She argues that one can distinguish between (1) the study of social interaction; (2) the study of minds, selves, and sense-making; and (3) the study of culture and social relations. In turn, these discourse domains correspond, at least in this article, to what I have called critical theory, structuralist theory, and post-structuralist theory. The latter two strands of theory are often placed within constructivist paradigms (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 2000), while critical theory is seen as a paradigmatic approach of its own.

Critical Theory

The historical development of critical theory can be traced back to the Frankfurter School of the 1930s and 1940s, where the leading proponents of this movement (Adorno, Horkheimer and Marcuse) were strongly influenced by the social analyses

of Hegel, Kant, Marx, and Weber. Studies carried out by a critical researcher will be aimed not only at gathering and expanding knowledge per se, but also at social and cultural criticism. Basic premises shared by researchers within this field include the notion that all thoughts are:

fundamentally mediated by power relations which are socially and historically constituted; that facts can never be isolated from the domain of values or removed from some sort of ideological inscription ... that certain groups in any society are privileged over others and, although the reasons for this privileging may vary widely, the oppression that characterizes contemporary societies is most forcefully reproduced when subordinates accept their social status as natural, necessary or inevitable ... that mainstream research practices are generally, although most often unwittingly, implicated in the reproduction of systems of class, race, and gender oppression (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1992, pp. 139–140).

Within this framework, language is seen as originating within social interaction and struggle (Maybin 2001, p. 64; Fairclough, 1992, 2001), and language is *the* site of social struggle. Language is central to the formation of subjectivity (conscious or unconscious), and hence to perception of how the self is situated within the power struggle. In the following, I will base my presentation of the understanding of language within critical theory on the writings and interpretations of Bakhtin. Bahktin s writings stem from the same period as the Frankfurter School, but his works were not translated into English until the 1960s, at which point he gained considerable popularity among critical theorists. Bakhtin s associate Volosinov writes about the Marxist underpinnings of language by stating that:

all social signs, including language, emerge from social interaction where language is always motivated and therefore framed within the struggle between different social groups ... because of the way language inevitably passes judgment on the world, even as it describes it ... rather than reflecting reality, language should be seen as „refracting it through the lens of social struggle (cited in Maybin, 2001, p. 65).

According to Bahktin, the primary struggle between words, text, and people runs along the lines of centripetal and centrifugal forces – that is, the opposing forces of centralization and diversification. The centripetal forces are associated with political authorization, cultural canons, scientific truth, religious dogma, and moral status. The opposing forces are in constant struggle with the centripetal forces, but also

simultaneously interpenetrated by them. Feminist scholarship, for instance, has taken the Bakhtinian conceptualization of language to heart. Centripetal forces can easily be translated into male-centered values – moral, authority and the like– where the centrifugal forces represented by women are in constant struggle with and in a position of inferiority vis-à-vis male centripetal forces in the social system of patriarchy. Harding (1986, p. 23) outlines this tension in *The Science Question in Feminism*:

The concern to define and maintain a series of rigid dichotomies in science and epistemology no longer appears to be a reflection of the progressive character of scientific inquiry; rather, it is inextricably connected with specifically masculine – and perhaps uniquely Western and bourgeois – needs and desires. Objectivity vs. subjectivity, the scientist as knowing subject vs. the objects of his inquiry, reason vs. emotions, mind vs. body – in each case the former has been associated with masculinity and the latter with femininity.

Jørgensen & Phillips (1999, Chapter 3) also embrace the Bakhtinian conceptualization of language in their presentation of discourse analysis. They argue that the aim of research is to show the linguistic and discursive dimensions of cultural and social phenomena. Furthermore, these linguistic and discursive dimensions are seen as constitutive and shaped by dominant ideologies, and the aim of research is to generate knowledge that has an emancipatory function for the non-dominant discourses. The quote by Sandra Harding above is an example of this, in which she shows how the dichotomies in scholarly discourse are situated in a hierarchical relationship, where the „good“ is associated with masculinity and the „bad“ with femininity, thus confirming a patriarchal social ideology.

Because the aim of the scholarly inquiry within critical discourse analysis is transformation through critique (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 112), it follows that the use of an interpreter in fieldwork interviews must be understood within the same parameters, i.e. critically informed critique. The interview is in itself a hierarchical power situation, where it is the interviewer – that is, the academic scholar – who sets the parameters of the social setting. It is the interviewer who decides the questions, themes, and setting of the interview. Furthermore, the questions, themes, and choice of setting have been decided on the basis of recommendations by other researchers, books on methodology, and other accumulated insights in the field of social science. In other words, the researcher's scholarly research design represents what Bakhtin

would label centripetal forces: authoritative knowledge. The role of the interpreter is to give voice to the interviewee, whose words and metaphors will communicate to the centripetal forces represented by the questions asked. Furthermore, the interpreter adds to the emancipatory aims of this kind of research because s/he gives voice quite literally to the interviewee, who would not otherwise have been able to communicate with the researcher. Oftentimes, the researcher will speak the dominant language of power – for instance, English, French, Spanish, and/or other world languages. Through looking at the dyadic field interview from a power perspective, it becomes clear that the primary role and social positioning of the interpreter is one of being on the side of the interviewee and making the interviewee's viewpoints and reflections available in the common language used in the interview. With this in mind, it will be crucial for the researcher to be sensitive to the interpreter's background – including such factors as class, gender, ethnic, religious, and possibly political affiliation – in addition to his/her language skills. It is important that these non-linguistic aspects of the interpreter are in sync with the interviewee so that they do not hamper the latter's willingness to talk. By being sidelined with the interviewee, both in a linguistic and sociopolitical sense, the interpreter empowers the language and experiences of the interviewee. The interpreter, therefore, contributes linguistically to the critical/transformational potential.

In my research project on the discourses of wartime sexual violence in peacetime Bosnia, I was careful to choose interpreters of the same gender (women) and ethnicity (Bosniak) as the interviewees. This was a conscious strategy aimed at situating the interpreter on the side of the interviewee and thereby empowering the interviewee's perceptions and understanding. I was careful to choose female interpreters who had knowledge of the study's theme beforehand. Before the interviews, they were all briefed about my study and encouraged to choose words and phrases that were non-threatening to the interviewees. When interviewing war-rape victims, for instance, the interpreters and I discussed possible ways of asking about rape in ways that would not be too direct and intimidating for an interviewee. In addition, I urged of all the interpreters I used *not* to attempt to remain detached from the interviewees, but to feel free to suggest that we take a break if the interview process became too fraught or difficult. This resulted in the interpreters „taking care of the informants in ways that are perhaps uncommon. Several times during the interviews, especially during those with women who had experienced rape,

interpreters were so affected by the informants' stories that they cried while the stories were told. During discussions with local psychological experts, as well as with other torture victims in Bosnia, I had been told that this was a way of showing empathy with the interviewees' war-rape experiences. What I had not counted on, however, was the effect this particular aspect of the interviews might have on the interpreters. In retrospect, it is clear that I had empowered the interpreters to act as moderators and interpreters in the interview setting. Their „duties“ extended beyond the mere translation of words, because it was important for the study to make the interviewees feel as comfortable as possible in disclosing traumatizing and shame-ridden experiences. In this scenario, the interpreters were placed in a situation whose consequences I had not adequately thought through. I had been careful to secure a safety network for the interviewees in case of need, but neither I nor my methodological textbooks had reflected sufficiently on the needs of the interpreters themselves. It turned out that being the translator of traumatic experiences connected to a setting in which both the interpreters and the interviewees lived also caused the former considerable pain. Through the interviewees' stories, they were reminded about their own war experiences, and they experienced significant discomfort in hearing about what had happened virtually next door to their present homes. Post-interview debriefing for the interpreters (and myself), therefore, was more important than I had anticipated.

In conclusion, when aiming to generate knowledge with a critical and transformative potential, it is important to carefully select interpreters whose background and social positioning vis-à-vis the given field setting will be compatible with that of the interviewee. This will, potentially, increase the empowerment of the viewpoints and reflections of the interviewee. It might also, as has been seen above, create a social link between the interviewee and the interpreter which is of such a nature that ethical considerations normally reserved for the interviewee might need to be also extended to the interpreter.

Structuralism

Structuralist research does not share the strong critical/transformational approach to knowledge proposed by the critical discourse analysis. Here, the aim is not primarily to provide a form of cultural and political critique and change. Rather, structuralist research is a form of analysis that attempts to show how language shapes perceived

reality. Structuralism brought language to the forefront of analysis, and many protagonists in this line of thinking and research argue that it is structuralism that represents the linguistic turn within social science. According to Manning & Cullum-Swan (1994, p. 467), structuralism is „a formal model of analysis derived from Saussurian linguistics [and] sees social reality as constructed largely by language, and language forms as the material from which social research is fashioned . Saussure argued against understanding language as transparent and as a way of getting access to the reality of speaker. Rather, Saussure argued that the „content of the word is determined in the final analysis not by what it contains, but by what exists outside it (Saussure 1986, p. 114, quoted in Neumann, 2001, p. 18). Saussure s structural analysis of language is based on a set of key concepts that include sign, signifier, *langue*, and *parole*. In his presentation of Saussure, Kress (2001, p. 31) explains these concepts:

The sign is a device for permitting form to express meaning because it is a means for allowing one element to be the form (the signifier) through which another element, the meaning (the signified) finds its realization, its expression. A rose can be the form for the expression of the meaning „love . A connection is made between an element in the system of language, and elements in the systems of culturally salient values.... The meaning of an element in the system arises by virtue of its *opposition* to the other elements. That meaning is its *value*. The greater the number of elements in a system, the greater the possibility of choice, the smaller the value of each element.

According to Saussure, meaning arises in the possibilities of selection from a range of elements within one paradigm and in the cultural encoding of different forms of behavior. Further, Saussure argued that meaning was both arbitrary and conventional. The search for meaning was made within the language systems rather than based on reference . So the meaning of, say, the word „snow would not be determined by the physical aspects of snow, but in relation other descriptions and words such as „cold , „ice , „winter , etc. In addition, Saussure made a distinction between *langue* and *parole*, where the latter is the spoken word and the former is the structure of signs and symbols. The approach to truth and knowledge, is through analyzing the structure of language and the oppositions and contrasts that constitute meaning. Conversation analyses (see, for instance, Wooffitt, 2001, pp. 49–92) can be regarded as examples of research based on such an understanding of language. In this form of analysis,

naturally occurring language is in focus – that is, the speaker's own selection of words and phrases.

Returning to the dyadic interview with an interpreter while bearing the structuralist discourse analysis (also called semiotic analysis) in mind, we will need to consider the following aspects. First, access to the *langue* – the structure of language – will be through *parole*, the spoken word. The problem, of course, is that the spoken word in this situation will be both the common language of the interviewer and the interpreter and, simultaneously, another and different common language shared by the interviewee and the interpreter. The transcribed text that will form the basis of analysis will therefore be the „pure *parole* of neither interviewee nor interviewer, and the transcribed text must therefore be regarded as a hybrid *parole*. Second, this hybrid *parole* also creates a hybrid structure of *langue*. The internal system of signs and signifiers will be based on a language that belongs only to the interview setting and the three people involved. It will therefore be impossible to argue that the analysis of the transcribed text can have authority outside of the particular setting in which the analysis has taken place. A new interview with a different interpreter will bring about a new and different hybrid language, and thereby an altogether new analysis.

In my Bosnian study, I found it difficult to analyze my interviews from a structuralist perspective as defined above. In the translation process with the interpreter, which took the form of summaries, much information and nuances in the spoken language were lost. But, perhaps most importantly of all, I did not have access to naturally occurring language-in-use. Or, put differently, I had access only to a naturally occurring hybrid *parole*, which could only be analyzed in relation to the restricted social setting of the interview. One way of attempting to approach my study from a structuralist viewpoint might have been to have several interpreters translate the same interview with the same person. This would bring more nuances and linguistic information out of the original interview. However, from my perspective, even adding interpreters to the analysis would not solve the basic problem – namely, that the end result would be analysis of hybrid *parole* and would not generate decisive insights on the ways in which meaning is created within language systems.

Against this background, it is clear that dyadic field interviews with interpreters do not lend themselves easily to structuralist/semiotic analysis, because of the inaccessibility of language-in-use in such cases. In such a context, therefore, the interpreter acts a distracting factor.

Post-Structuralism

The post-structuralist movement can be seen as a continuation and merging of the critical and structural forms of analysis. Here, the focus on language and power becomes integrated. While the structuralists regarded the structure of language as fixed, the post-structuralists have included, and returned to, the critical discourse analysis of *power*. In order to get a better grip of this line of thinking, it is necessary to turn to the writings of Foucault. Foucault moves away from Saussure and the latter's definition of *langue* as a system of signs, towards regarding language as discourse, which is seen as a system of representations (Hall, 2001, p. 72). Describing Foucault's theories further, Hall goes on to say that „by “discourse” Foucault meant “a group of statements which provide a language for talking about – a way of representing the knowledge about – a particular topic at a particular historical moment” (ibid.). Foucault's theories brought the subject and the physical back into the analysis. The argument made by Foucault was that physical things and actions exist, but they take on meaning and become objects of knowledge within discourse. Further, discourse permeates every aspect of our worlds, and nothing exists outside discourse.

On the basis of studies of madness, sexuality, and morality (to mention just a few), Foucault postulated a discursive relationship between power and knowledge. Truth is seen as secondary to – or one might even argue that it is irrelevant to – knowledge and power. Knowledge carries power, but not in a linear top-down fashion. Rather, power relations are circular and power is never monopolized at the center. This means that we are all oppressors and oppressed at the same time. This notion makes the post-structuralist mode of thinking different from the critical Bakhtinian view. A central concept that explains this dynamic is the notion of *subject positions*. Power follows the subject position and is not fixed and/or inherent. Subject positions are further embedded in simultaneous discourses. For instance, a woman can be a „mother , a „daughter , a „wife and a „lover at the same time, all being different subject positions within different discourses. The aim of the researcher, then, is to show the genealogy of knowledge. Foucault did not believe that knowledge existed in and of itself, but rather that it was always a result of power within discourses. Foucault's theory of power/knowledge has been perhaps his most important contribution to modern social science, and there are many examples of research based

on Foucault's theories. The most famous are Foucault's own on sexuality, madness, and the criminal system, but studies of the nation-state, nationalism, and national identity (see examples in Jørgensen & Phillips 1999; Neumann 2001) are contemporary examples of the Foucaultian way of thinking. In these studies, the aim is to show how, say, the notion of the nation-state is manifest in different institutions (e.g. parliament, the judicial system, schools, churches, etc.), in different central texts (e.g. national anthems, history books, national art, etc.), and in the delineation, i.e. how it is construed as different from other discourses (e.g. globalization, the Internet, environmental issues, etc.) The aim of research is to identify the various representations of the different aspects of a given discourse and the levels on which it operates. Post-structuralist analysis examines not only the power language of the interviewee (as an exponent of centrifugal forces, as in the example of critical discourse) or the structure of the *parole* of the interviewee (as with semiotic analysis): it is the social setting of the interview itself that is the part of the analysis. This means that both the researcher, the interviewee, and the interpreter are sources of analysis. In the transcribed text of the interview, different subject positions will be revealed – and thereby different discourses. The language of the interpreter reveals this in many forms.

In my Bosnian research project, the transcribed field interview text is full of conflicting uses of pronouns. In some cases, an interpreter will use the first-person pronoun „I“ when referring to what the interviewee is saying, thereby merging her own voice with that of the raped woman. In other cases, she may use the third-person pronoun and say „she“, thereby distancing herself from the raped woman. Further, the interpreters are also inconsistent in their use of the core terms of my study. The transcribed text is full of different descriptions of war rape, using expressions such as „rape“, „war trauma“, „it“, „that thing“, „the war crime“ and „those criminal acts“. Sometimes, I heard the interviewee use the Bosnian word for rape, *silovanje*, but this was not the word used by the interpreter. One possibility for analysis would be to have an external interpreter go through the recorded interviews and create an alternative interpretation. The aim of this endeavor would not only be to create more nuances in the transcribed text: such an approach would also be a way of indicating how the interpreters in the interview setting managed and reconstructed the information and accounts provided by the interviewees. This form of analysis could, potentially, show which contextual settings in the interviewees' accounts bring out

which terminology for war rape and also suggest when a non-victim (i.e. the interpreter) identifies with the victim (when using the pronoun „I and „we) and when she creates a distance (when using the pronouns „she and „they). By doing so, it might be possible to delineate the contextual settings in which the woman who experienced rape is seen as a war survivor and when she is seen as a rape victim.

These are some examples of how the interpreter has different subject positions in the interview setting, and in turn positions the stories and identity of the interviewee within different social categories. By virtue of his/her choice of words, the interpreter serves as social interpreter and resource for the researcher. In this way, the interpreter not only facilitates communication between the two parties in the interview situation, but also blurs the power relations in the situation, thus creating a system of representations that is more complex than that of regular interview situation.

Conclusion

The aim of this article has been a preliminary attempt to conceptualize the impact/significance of the interpreter in dyadic fieldwork interviews and to examine how the transcribed social text lends itself to different forms of discourse analysis.

The fact that discourse analysis has gained such momentum within the social sciences forces us to be critical and innovative. So much academic energy has been spent on the struggle between the so-called postmodern sciences (of which discourse analysis is a part) and the more positivist forms of social science. Little has therefore been written about the methodological challenges within postmodern discourse analysis, and this is especially true for analysis within foreign-language settings, in fields other than anthropology. Assumptions about previous knowledge of the phenomenon of study and the cultural and linguistic significance of words within particular language cultures make it difficult and discouraging for the researcher to enter into a foreign-language setting. This difficulty creates a danger that we limit discourse research to settings that are familiar to the researcher and of which s/he has sufficient background knowledge. There is an inherent danger that we will only get discourse research on social phenomena that belong to the linguistic and cultural environment of the researcher.

The discussions presented in this article show that careful analysis of the interpreter can contribute positively to knowledge generation within critical and post-structuralist research. Within the critical approach, a carefully selected interpreter can act in ways that reinforce, linguistically and socially, the talk of the interviewee. The interpreter therefore contributes in generating critical knowledge that has a transformation potential. Within a post-structuralist approach, an interpreter can also have a positive effect, in that his/her choice of words might indicate different subject positions within discourse. In this context, the interpreters act not as an extension of the interviewee, but as a conveyer of the social positioning of people, experiences, and perceptions within a sociopolitical setting. The discussion has also shown that interpreters make analysis of hybrid *parole* possible, but clearly limit analysis of naturally occurring language-in-use. This makes it difficult to analyze interviews with interpreters from a structuralist/semiotic perspective.

Against this background, it is clear that the social scientific field needs to be more sensitive to the significance and impact of interpreters. A first step is to admit that we use them, to acknowledge that we are dependent on them in many more cases than we might like to admit, and to make them part of our reflections on knowledge production. While this article is only an attempt at grasping a large and complex phenomenon, I believe that further investigation and research is needed not only on the use of interpreters and language skills, but also on the role and potential of discourse research in foreign language-settings more broadly.

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