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1. Introduction

Sexual violence against women in times of war is not a new type of warfare, in fact it might even be safe to say that it has occurred in every war, but it has been considered as a side-effect of warfare by experts for a long time. The usual explanation has been that men have needs and when they have lived in celibacy for a long period they tend to force themselves upon women, and that sexual violence is also used as an attempt to humiliate the male enemies (Seifert 1994:58-59). So it should come as no surprise that acts of sexual violence have been committed even before the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. However, it was not until the Bosnian conflict that sexual violence began to be largely categorized and recognized as ethnic cleansing by different international organizations and politicians (Stiglmayer 1994: 85).

Reasons to why wartime rape was becoming recognized as an actual weapon of war may, as Ruth Seifert puts it, be that women’s social status had improved over time and therefore atrocities like that were not expected to occur (Seifert 1994:54). Another reason may be that this actually happened in the middle of Europe in a modern time when such assaults were thought to be a thing of the past. As journalists reported on stories almost unbelievable for people living a few miles from the war zone, Western societies had to react. To take a standing against this violence, Western societies condemned the atrocities and installed a war crime tribunal to punish the perpetrators for sexual violence and other crimes against humanity.

It is obvious that ethnic cleansing means to purge a particular territory of a particular ethnicity, but it does not necessarily have to include mass deportations or murder. Surprisingly, it may be sufficient to terrify members of a particular ethnicity, using different methods, so that they flee themselves and do not return to that particular territory when the war is over. Helsinki Watch, an American human right organization, stated that sexual violence in the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina was committed for specific reasons, e.g., to ensure that women and their families will flee and never return (Stiglmayer 1994:85).

The civil war in Bosnia, and the fragmentation of Yugoslavia, resulted in a huge refugee flow to many countries around the world. Large quotas of the total number of refugees originating from former Yugoslavia were in fact women (Castles & Miller 2003:9). Since a refugee is not a voluntary migrant, but a person who is forced into the process of migration,

1 From now on I will refer to the country as Bosnia.
other countries are supposed to give them protection as their status is recognized. The Geneva Convention of 1951 states that persons who are located outside their country and are unable or unwilling to return because of a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion have refugee status in countries that have signed the convention (Castles & Miller 2003:103). Therefore many countries granted the refugees temporary protection as a primary solution, but many refugees became permanent residence in the host countries and the refugees' permanent resident became an issue in several countries (Vranjić 1996:61-62).

It is difficult to establish the accurate number of victims of sexual violence in Bosnia. One reason is that many women were (and still are) afraid to speak up since they might have to face a divorce or the destruction of a recognized status. Another reason is that many women, who have been raped (especially in camps), were killed or died themselves due to severe bleedings, or committed suicide with the unbearable shame as the motive (Olujić 1998:40-41). However, it has been established by the European Union that about 20,000 women were raped (Siglmayer 1994:85), while the Government of Bosnia-Herzegovina states that there are about 50,000 female victims of sexual violence/rape (Olujić 1998:40).

It is not a new phenomenon that conflicts result in migration and therefore it is important to understand what happened during the conflict to figure out the possible migration aftermath. To understand why some refugees avoid repatriation when the conflict ends becomes important for understanding the process of involuntary migration. The refugees are prepared to leave behind everything that is familiar and throw themselves into unknown communities rather than returning to their homes. In addition, like other social events armed conflicts in one country can affect another country. The fact that people are fleeing from their country of origin does not mean that their problems are left behind and that they can enjoy normal life in the host country. Putting aside obstacles involving language difficulties and the cultural change, women who have been exposed to sexual violence need rehabilitation and a lot of medical attention in their host countries in order to help them restore their lives. In contrast to voluntary migrants they are not that affected by push and pull factors concerning economics and poverty, but are affected by personal experience and social circumstances in the community of origin even after the end of the armed conflict. Thus to investigate events during conflicts becomes important in order to understand the resulting migration process of the victims: why some refugees return home while others refuse to.
2. Purpose and Empirical Approach

The aim of this study is to provide an in-depth understanding of how sexual violence in Bosnia-Herzegovina was constructed to have an intended effect on the female victims. The study will focus upon two aspects:

1) How the sexual violence is conducted and systematized so that it will contribute to ethnic cleansing.
2) On what bases sexual violence affects the female victims when it comes to migration.

This study is not a comparative one (although it might be of interest to compare this particular case with other cases in other communities). This study has more limited focus: to study women in Bosnia-Herzegovina, particularly in the region of Prijedor, who have been sexually violated during the civil war in Bosnia-Herzegovina 1992-5, and what the consequences of the violations have been to such women.

It is obvious that a society and its inhabitants undergo significant changes when there has been a conflict within the society. As migration is often a result of conflict/war it may be of interest to look at the issue from different aspects. This study will regard the issue, not from the point of view of receiving countries, but of the conflict country as an attempt to understand how particular events during conflicts prevent return migration when the conflict is solved. Women who survived sexual violence during the war became refugees because they were unable, or unwilling, to return to their original place of residence due to fear and the stigma of shame that is attached to them. To figure out the impact of sexual violence on the female victims there are questions that need to be answered in order to realize the aftermath:

1) Was the pre-conflict cultural norm regarding gender roles able to strengthen the stigmatization of the female rape victims?
2) Are female victims of rape unable to reside in their community of origin due to the fact that they have been exposed to sexual violence during the war?

I have chosen to concentrate this study on the region of Prijedor which is situated in north-western Bosnia-Herzegovina. My reasons to focus on this particular area is primarily its pre-
war ethnic diversity, which to some extend could even represent that of the country itself. Another reason is that the region of Prijedor has lost a large number of its original non-Serb population during the war as the ethnic cleansing was effective. Many of its original inhabitants are today living in other countries or other communities in Bosnia. Furthermore, although some figures are presented in this study it does not aim to regard the issue from a quantitative perspective but a qualitative one. This study aims to give an in-depth understanding of one of many reasons why refugees find it difficult to return to their countries of origin.

2.1 Method

In order to answer the questions posed in the previous section I will use a qualitative approach. Since this is a social research that is limited in both time and resources, I have excluded field work as a method. I have conducted an interview with an expert on the subject, but I have not been able to interview victims. Thus, this research will to a large extent consist of secondary data which have been gathered from documents such as books, articles, and a documentary film. As I have not conducted field work on my own, and witnessed specific events myself, the data is used with caution; however, I accept the data presented in this research to be fundamentally reliable.

Tim May writes that there are criteria when it comes to documentary sources, and he points to credibility, authenticity, representativeness, and meaning (May 2001:189). Although a lot of the documentary sources are written by journalists, I consider them to be credible since they are usually first-hand reports of different events. However, I am aware, and have taken into consideration, that their choice of language often aims to carry out different representations, meanings, and provoke certain emotions.

Regarding my personal background, I am aware of my gender role and ethnicity along with other factors that may colour this research. I know that it is impossible to simply reflect or be indifferent when it comes to different social events. Obviously, as one has chosen to conduct a research upon a specific social event/issue, one is likely to find the subject interesting, hold certain emotions about that particular subject, and to be consciously or unconsciously promoting one’s own opinion (2001:9). However, I am aware of my own background and I have throughout the research attempted to remain as objective as possible.
2.2 A Qualitative Approach – Using Secondary Data

The data has been collected, as I mentioned before, from books, articles and such. The books were usually found through bibliography from different books and the electronic articles have been collected mostly through the University’s Library, but there are some sources that have been found through different search-sites (e.g. Google Scholar): one example is the documentary film. I have looked for terms such as sexual violence, rape, refugees, armed conflict, ethnic cleansing, war damage, sexual violence as a weapon and so on, always together with Bosnia-Herzegovina, Yugoslavian war, Balkan Wars and the period of 1992-1995.

I use documentary sources written by journalists because they are usually first on the scene and gain primary data by being on the spot, but I also use documents written by different scholars, who base their study largely on primary data, as I consider their academic approach towards the subject credible due to their clarification of methodology. Although most of the journalists explain their method throughout their texts, they tend to design their texts differently from the scholars and diverge from traditional social research. Some of the texts involve interviews done by the scholars/journalists which I will use in my analysis. Once again the question of credibility and validity arises. Therefore I have chosen to include only documents where the authors explain the process of the interviews. In some cases interviews have been conducted by researchers who speak the same language as the interviewees, and in other cases researchers have been in need of interpreters due to language barriers.

2.3 Expert Interview

In addition, I have conducted an interview with field manager Barbro O’Connor at the Swedish Red Cross Centre for victims of tortured and war in Malmö. The interview is a semi-structured interview which I believe is a good alternative for qualitative studies as the interviewer is able to ask fixed questions and simultaneously able to ask for clarification and elaboration on certain answers within the topic (May 2001:123). The interview consisted of 7 “fixed” questions and a number of resulting questions in order to create an environment where the interviewee and the interviewer could generate a dialogue. The reason for the dialogue is for the interviewee to be able to expand the answers and give in-depth answers rather than short comparable answers which are more fit for a quantitative study (May 2001:122).
interview was held in Malmö at Barbro O’Connor’s office and took about an hour.

2.4 Documentary Review

In my analysis I have used secondary data such as interviews and analyses made by other academics to provide an in-depth understanding of how sexual violence was conducted and systematized, the obstacles that female victims of sexual violence faced, and on what bases it affected the female victims when it comes to migration.

In my analysis I have used the documentary film, Calling the Ghosts: a Story about Rape, War and Women (Ormand, Jacobs & Jelincic 1996). The documentary is directed by Mandy Jacobs and Karmen Jelincic and has received an Emmy Award for best documentary and directing. The documentary is based on the testimonies of a few women from Prijedor who were kept in Omarska. Most focus is put on the testimonies of Jadranka Cigelj and Nusreta Sivac who have decided to speak their stories in public. I have used their stories for my analysis regarding stigma and the use of sexual violence and affect it has. I have also used a few interviews made by Seada Vranil, who is a journalist, from her book Breaking the Wall of Silence the Voices of Raped Bosnia (Vranil 1996). She interviewed most of her respondents either in refugee camps or as she was introduced to the interview respondents by different NGOs, such as the Red Cross personnel in the refugee camps in Croatia. Vranil uses pseudonym for all her respondents’ names in an order to preserve their anonymity. Other interviews have been taken from the article The Rapes in Bosnia-Herzegovina by Alexandra Stiglmayer (Stiglmayer 1994), a journalist who covered the war in former Yugoslavia.

Furthermore, Catherine A. MacKinnon’s article, Turning Rape into Pornography: Postmodern Genocide (Stiglmayer 1994), is used in the analysis to point out how the raping of women has been shown publicly in form of films and that women live with the fear that someone will make these films public. MacKinnon is a feminist and writes from a feministic point of view where she puts the strongest focus on how women are dehumanized. She draws parallels between rape and pornography, arguing that rape with pornographic segments has become a feature in postmodern genocide.

The article Psychiatric Aspects of the Rapes in the War against the Republics of Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina (Stiglmayer 1994), by Vera Fojnagovic-Smalc, explains the suffering of the women after they have been exposed to different degrees of sexual violence.
The author is a psychiatrist from Croatia who has been working with raped women. She explains the problem the women are facing as a consequence of their community’s lack of understanding, the women’s fear of being stigmatized and disgraced if their identity is revealed and their suffering from trauma and post traumatic stress disorders.

2.5 Delimitations

Additionally, I have refrained from using a quantitative approach since there are several obstacles preventing an accurate quantitative analysis. It would have been informative to use a quantitative approach in order to show how many women there are that face some or all of the problems brought up in this study. However, a quantitative approach is not entirely accessible. Firstly, not all women who have been raped and left their countries have reported that they are victims of sexual violence to official authorities or NGOs (the Police, the Red Cross, UNHCR, and so on), as they could attain refugee status on other grounds, and therefore the number of women who have been raped can only be an assumption. Secondly, due to the complex end of the war in Bosnia and the Dayton agreement\(^2\), the country did not have one elected president but one elected representative for each of the three ethnic groups. As a result, an official count of the population in Bosnia has not been performed as they cannot come to a final solution as to whether people who left Bosnia during the war and reside in other countries, but who still are citizens, should be included in the census. Even if most countries that have provided protection for refugees have statistics on repatriation it becomes difficult to make an estimate of how many persons have returned to particular territories in Bosnia as the country have no clear statistic on the issue. Finally, women have not been placed as an independent category in refugee statistics but are registered together with children. It is then difficult to estimate how many women are refugees.

As a conclusion, the delimitations and problems that have occurred have of course had an impact on the result of the research. The outcome of this study will therefore not be evidential in quantitative outline but rather in a qualitative document analysis which I find greatly adequate as it focuses upon the female victims themselves and their reasoning about the problem, since they are the ones who have been subjected to sexual violence, and

\(^2\) The Dayton agreement is the peace agreement for Bosnia-Herzegovina which was signed by all the three parties in 1995. The agreement gives the Bosnian-Serbs 49% of the country and the Bosnian-Muslims and Bosnian-Croats the remaining 51%. In addition, it respects three sovereign parties in one sovereign nation.
therefore an understanding of *their* decision making is central to the research.
3. Contextual Background

This section will provide the reader with an understanding of the civil war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the traditional male dominance that coloured cultural life in former Yugoslavia. The first part will focus on elaborating on male dominance in former Yugoslavia and gender roles in order to understand why sexual violence became such a strong weapon during the war. The following part will focus on the war in Bosnia (and not on the fragmentation of former Yugoslavia). The civil war in Bosnia was complex due to the fact that all of the major ethnic groups were at some point at war with each other. Therefore, this part will attempt to shed a light on the political situation in Bosnia, particularly on the region of Prijedor, and not elaborate on the conflict between Bosnian-Croats and Bosnian-Muslims. It is important to note that this is a very simplified version of the conflict due to the fact that the aim of this research is not to understand the conflict itself, but how victims of sexual violence, in the conflict, became refugees. In addition, the part involves facts about the region of Prijedor and the ethnic cleansing that took part in the region, and it introduces the detention camps where women have been exposed to sexual violence.

3.1 Gender Roles in Former Yugoslavia

Before the Second World War and Tito’s Yugoslavia, women did not enjoy many societal rights. The patriarchal culture was rooted in both private and public social structures. However, in former Yugoslavia, under the rule of Tito’s Communist Party, women gained more societal rights approaching equality, and opportunities such as education and access to the national labour market. Reforms on women's behalf were made not by women themselves but by men. Men spoke on the behalf of women's rights and responsibilities, the role of women within the party and the society, while women were largely excluded from this discussion (Cockburn 1998:156-158). Even though there were a lot of written rights, rules, and regulations on behalf of women there were also many unwritten rules and regulation that disadvantaged women's position within society (Stojsavljević 1995:37). Former Yugoslavia had a traditional male dominated atmosphere that was difficult to leave behind during Tito's

3 Josip Broz Tito was the Communist leader and president of Yugoslavia until his death in 1980.
rule (Cockburn 1998:156-158), and a strong rooted culture of honour codes, especially connected to sexuality (Olujić 1998:31-36). Women were an important part of the Tito's Communist ideology where people regardless of gender, ethnicity or religion should enjoy equal rights and opportunities as well as equal accountability. On the other hand, the motto *Brotherhood and Unity* was not necessarily applicable to (or concerned) gender equality in the sense that it was created to strengthen affinity among the six ethnic groups of former Yugoslavia. As mentioned previously, gender equality was discussed and set up by men. Although women were introduced to the labour market and education in higher scales, there were unwritten rules they were supposed to submit to. In line with the male dominance in former Yugoslavia, women were expected to care for the house and the children, and behave in an obedient manner (Cockburn 1998:157-158). They were wives, mothers, and workers. In addition, women’s sexuality was connected to their honour, but more importantly it was connected to the honour of their male relatives (Olujić 1998:36). After Tito’s death the different nationalistic parties introduced the woman in an even more nationalistic sphere: she would renew the nation through motherhood (Cockburn 1998:161). The woman became an even greater national symbol as the mother of the nation’s brave sons.

In former Yugoslavia women were not regarded to have the same position as men either publicly or privately. Obviously one has to remember that there are always exceptions and that male dominance is not stronger amongst a certain people of Yugoslavia due to their ethnical origins or their religious belief; especially when one is relating male dominance to Bosnia, a state that has a mix of ethno-religions: Catholics, Orthodox, and Muslims (Allen 1996:92). Male dominance was considered a normal thing in Yugoslavian culture and all ethnicities; a husband dominated his wife, a father dominated his daughter and so forth. Men were considered to be the ones who had the dominant blood and women the opposite, so the lineage was inherited from the men and not the women (Olujić 1998:35). Hence, a woman was not equally valued as a man in the natal family. Instead she was to become a part of her husband’s family lineage. Her children would then inherit the lineage of their father and not of their mother.

To fully understand the cultural norm regarding gender and sexuality, one must realize the order of status. This cultural norm followed a three-tiered hierarchy of status: husband, family, and village (Olujić 1998:34). The code of honour and shame through sexuality was

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4 *Bratstvo i Jedinstvo/ Brotherhood and Unity* was a slogan which spoke of no difference between the different ethno-religious and social groups. This slogan was created and used by Tito’s Communist Party.
put both on women and men, but their partaking was not similar and could not be equally justified in public. Maria B. Olujil writes that men would brag about the number of women they had sexual relations with, while women should not discuss their sexuality nor share it with anyone else but her husband. If a woman would share her sexuality with another man, or talk about her sexuality for that matter, she would bring disgrace upon her husband, her family, and the entire village/community (Olujil 1998:34). It becomes quite obvious that sexuality had different meaning when it comes to men and women. Sexuality made men more manly and dominant while women’s sexuality was a thin thread between honour and shame.

3.2 Background to the War in Bosnia-Herzegovina

After Josip Broz Tito’s death in 1980, different nationalistic parties arose and spoke of more or less differentiation which lead to the fragmentation of Yugoslavia. Slobodan Milošević stated that Serbia is where Serbs are buried, and pointed to all of the states of former Yugoslavia, thereby legitimizing the attack on the states (Stiglmayer 1994:16). While Croatia was at war with the rest of Yugoslavia as a result of their independence declaration, members of the party SDS in Bosnia, lead by Radovan Karadžić, started to install autonomous areas in Bosnia-Herzegovina according to old maps and named the area Republika Srpska. In 1991 ballots were opened only to Serbs living in Bosnia to vote for independence of Republika Srpska, and in January 1992 Republika Srpska was proclaimed independent before the Bosnia government voted in parliament (Cigar 1995:43). Subsequently, the state of Bosnia declared independence, and was recognized as an independent nation-state, in February 1992 after a positive election on independence. As a result, in April 1992 Bosnia was at war: a civil war (Cigar 1995:48).

The region of Prijedor, situated in Krajina, was declared as a part of the Serbian Republic. The region of Prijedor had a population of 112,500 and was ethnically diverse according to the census of 1991. Of the total population 44 per cent were Bosnian-Muslims, 42 per cent were Bosnian-Serbs, 6 per cent Bosnian-Croats, and the remaining percentage were other.

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5 The former President of the state of Serbia.

6 The leader of the party SDS and the declared president (1992) of the autonomous region in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Republika Srpska.

7 Republika Srpska is the Serbian Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina which no longer was possible to control for the Bosnian-Herzegovina government but the party SDS (Cigar 1995:43).
ethnicities (Stiglmayer 1994:86). Seada Vrančić writes that the city of Prijedor was taken without a single gunshot had been fired as the Serb military police arrested the authorities of the municipality (Vrančić 1996:277). According to Norman Cigar the rapid and efficient ethnic cleansing of this region could be accomplished with such success because preparations had been made months before the war broke out, such as arming the Bosnian-Serb population and planning the takeover (Cigar 1995:48). The media was controlled from Belgrade and in April, 1992, non-Serbs lost their jobs and Bosnian-Serbs replaced them (Cigar 1995:65; Stiglmayer 1994:86). The following month roadblocks were set up on the roads and telephone connections interrupted as the ethnic cleansing had begun by the end of May.

As a beginning of the ethnic cleansing of Prijedor region, villages of the region were first targeted before the city of Prijedor was. It was also in May that the different detention camps for non-Serbs were opened. Non-Serbs that were considered to have important positions, i.e. influential, rich, educated, politically active and so on, were killed immediately (Stiglmayer 1994:86-87). The ones that were not killed at once were gathered and deported to these camps which served for different purposes. The camps could either be schools, hospitals, old mines, cafés, mills, and so on, where people were collected and violated by different means (Vulliamy 1994:201). Methods used as ethnic cleansing included killing, mass deportation, torture, and sexual violence/rapes (Cigar 1995:3). Vrančić says that sexual violence was exerted and controlled by the authorities of the camps and persons who refused to commit rape were punished (Vrančić 1996:293). She concludes, like the UN Commission of Experts did, when considering the testimonies and other evidence, that the camps were installed to aid the ethnic cleansing of non-Serbs from the different territories. The UN Commission of Experts wrote in the report that "(t)he Bosnian Serbs used the camps to attain the control of the areas and to exile and eliminate the other ethnic and religious groups from their respective areas" (1996:298).

Omarska and Trnopolje are two of the camps in the region of Prijedor where non-Serbs were gathered, tortured, raped, and murdered. Omarska was an iron mine that was classed as an interrogation camp almost only for men. But investigating the UN and the International Red Cross reports reveal evidence of systematic killing, torture, sexual violence and so forth (Stiglmayer 1994: 87-88; Vulliamy 1994:101, 108). Trnopolje, which used to be a school, was at first regarded as a less dangerous camp, but due to reports mentioned previously it soon became recognized similar to Omarska. The difference between Omarska

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8 The capital of today's Serbia and the former Yugoslavia.
and Trnopolje was that in Trnopolje there were, more or less, captured men, women, and children from the region of Prijedor who were awaiting, while exposed to atrocities, for deportation either to Croatia or other territories of Bosnia that were still considered as Bosnia and not Republika Srpska (Stiglmayer 1994:87-88; Vulliamy 1994: 104-105). Stiglmayer states that camps like those fulfil three important functions:

First, they serve as collection point for the population before their final deportation; it is more practical to have everyone in one place. Second, the population there is combed through one more time, and all those who could later be a dangerous threats- able-bodied men who might plan revenge or potential leaders who could organize and incite the people- are killed. And third, they instill fear in everyone- women, men, children, old people, young people. The purpose is to scare them to death so that they never get the idea of wanting to return to their homeland again. (Stiglmayer 1994:87)

The area of Prijedor was effectively taken over and ethnically cleansed rapidly. According to Stiglmayer (1994) the Prijedor Homeland Club in Zagreb had estimated (in 1992) that out of the approximately 65,000 non-Serbs of the region: 20,000 were murdered, 30,000 were driven away. . . . (Stiglmayer 1994:86). Today the area of Prijedor is still under the Serbian Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina as a result of the Dayton peace agreement.

3.3 The Ideology of Collectivity

According to the national census of 1991, in Bosnia-Herzegovina there were 44 percent Muslims, 31 percent Serbs, and 17 percent Croats (Cigar 1995:5). It is important to understand that the Serbian politicians and elite, lead by Milošević, at this point had already portrayed the Serbian people as having been exposed to genocidal actions by the other ethnicities and thereby trying to make their offensive attacks seem defensive in the public eye (Stiglmayer 1994:16). Milošević’s and Karadžić’s propaganda spread fear and uncertainty amongst all peoples in Bosnia. This fear was spread amongst Serbs too as their neighbours were portrayed as potential enemies. They created an ideology were ethnic cleansing could be legitimate, and promoted the thought of territorial unity of the Serbian people (Cigar 1995:23). The occupation of the territory aimed to drive out non-Serbs by means that included
ethnic cleansing of Bosnian-Croats and Bosnian-Muslims and acts of genocide towards the targeted groups (Stiglmayer 1994:16-17).

This map of Bosnia-Herzegovina demonstrates the territorial division during the war and cases of rapes. On the map the ‘out of Serb control’ territory, point to Bosnian-Muslim and Bosnian-Croatian territory during that specific time period. In addition, the dots that represent ‘case of rape’ refer to cases of rape which have occurred in that particular place and been reported (Vranić 1996:8).

The politics and propaganda of the two nationalist leaders’ ideology did not only legitimate the atrocities towards non-Serbs, but promoted collective action, where individual responsibility was no longer a possibility without risk. Serbs who did not subject themselves to this ideology or tried to protest could risk facing the same fate as non-Serbs since they could be marked as traitors (Cigar 1995:84). Instead collective responsibility was emphasized to assure that non-Serbs were driven out from a particular territory and thereby single individuals could not be blamed because everybody was responsible. The sociologist Leo Kuper explained their ideology of collective actions as follows: ‘At least when operating collectively, they need an ideology to legitimate their behaviour, for without it they would
have to see themselves and one another as what they really are — common thieves and murderers (Cigar 1995:22).
4. Theory

This chapter will explore forced migration processes and aim to clarify why some refugees do not wish to return to their country of origin. In addition, it will define the concept of stigma and the concept of sexual violence both in times of peace and in times of war.

The first part will discuss Stigma mainly from Goffman's point of view as his theory of stigma is usually the fundament for other stigma theories. This part will try to define stigma as a phenomenon and understand how it functions in social context; it will explain what it is to be stigmatized and what it is to stigmatize. The second part will discuss sexual violence both during peace and war, and shed light on what sexual violence is and what it does to the victim. I have chosen to use Ruth Seifert's theory of sexual violence for this study as she puts forward and elaborates on different hypothesis for sexual violence from a psychological point of view. Moreover, the third part will discuss stigma and sexual violence, and try to shed light on how victims of sexual violence are regarded. Finally, the last part will present the process of forced migration and why some forced migrants choose that process even if it does not benefit them; in addition, it will present how the forced migrant links the country of origin to the host country and why the sexual violence then becomes important to understand and realize when some forced migrant refuse repatriation.

4.1 Stigma

The term stigma is broadly and interdisciplinary used although the most common definition is that stigma is a negative attribute that is attached to a person. Erving Goffman explains that the term stigma is actually a neutral term, but that it is negatively associated and often refers to an attribute that is deeply discrediting (Goffman 1963:13). He writes that stigma is a special kind of relationship between attribute and stereotype (Goffman 1963:14). Bruce G. Link and Jo C. Phelan agree that stigma occurs when certain elements, such as labelling, stereotyping and discrimination, fall together in a power situation that allows these processes to unfold (Link & Phelan 2001:382). Social power orders, and of course periods of time, tend to set different social and cultural norms. Hence, a person could be exposed to stigmatization in one culture and regarded as normal in other cultures (Link & Phelan 2001:368, 375). In addition, persons who are stigmatized may consider themselves to be
normal while others consider them to be different to some extent from the normal (Goffman 1963:132-133, 149).

When a person is stigmatized certain attributes or characteristics are fixed to the person. These characteristics or attributes then affect the personal and social identity of the stigmatized person. The attributes or characteristics usually carry a negative connotation in given social context, and are then being converted into the social identity of the person (Link and Phelan 2001:364). Conversely, the personal identity is combined with what is known about the stigmatized person’s background and the characteristics that the stigma conveys. Goffman means that these characteristic could either be regarded as marks of uniqueness or negative identity pegs (Goffman 1963:73-74). The given connotation of the mark (or label) is decided by the social context in combination with the stigmatizer’s knowledge about the person’s identity. Thus personal identity becomes important when differentiating stigmatized persons from normal persons. Identity becomes a part of a structured and standardized function in a social order because of its one-of-a-kind quality (Goffman 1963:75). This basically means that the person considered to contain certain attributes or characteristics is regarded as different from us who do not have those characteristics. The process of differentiation, stereotyping and oversimplification through personal identity divides people in groups (Link & Phelan 2001:368, Goffman 1963:74).

Taking the power relation-mentioned above-into consideration, a stigma occurs on basis of social selection in given social structures of power. It is then the social structure that is crucial for the differentiation, stereotyping, and oversimplification. Nevertheless, when this process has started the stigmatized persons automatically fall into certain categories differentiating us from them (Goffman 1963:35). The stigmatized person then becomes a member of a group we refer to as them. We will find reasons to why they differ from us based on their personal identity. The characteristics that we attach, to the person in question, based on his/her personal identity can become a part of their social identity when the stigma is revealed (Goffman 1963:30-31, 84). Consequently, the group called them becomes discriminated by us in one way or another due to his/hers stigma. In addition, as they are perceived to be different from us the process of severe stereotyping can occur. By differentiating them from us we can justify the attachments of certain attributes and characteristics on them since they are not us (Link & Phelan 2001:370). The community could tend to reduce [the person’s] life chances since they differ from us due to the constructed stigma that evokes discriminating behaviour among us (Goffman 1963:15). The behaviour of us towards them does not have to be of a negative nature, it may be sufficient enough to
receive *special treatment* to feel discriminated. Furthermore, not all stigmas are visible straight away and personal identity becomes the central piece of information to create the process of stigma. As the person in question might be able to hide the stigma, the important part that would reveal the *true*\(^9\) personal identity about the stigmatized person is his biography. Goffman means that a biography can be everything from personal documentation to stored files of a person (Goffman 1996:80). The social and personal identity of the person in question will vary greatly depending on whether or not others have knowledge about his/her biography and the person can never be completely sure what and how much is known about him/her (Goffman 1963:85). However, the person in question will try to hide his/her stigma from certain people while revealing the stigma to a smaller group of people who he/she relies on (Goffman 1963:117), thereby creating groups on his/her own. But the person might also try to reveal the stigma publicly- to tell his/her story and thereby try to make an own representation- as an attempt to make his/her situation seem more reasonable so that they can seem more normal (Goffman 1963:133).

### 4.2 Sexual Violence in Peace and War

Sexual violence is usually perceived as a form of violence that is mixed with sexual segments and is often also perceived as torture. Rape and other forms of sexual violence should not be confused with voluntary sexual acts, not even with aggressive voluntary sexual acts, as it is usually very little that combines sexual violence with eroticism. People have different sexual natures and therefore different forms of eroticism, but if the sexual act is involuntary then it is a form of torture against the one that is submitted to sexual violence and often combined with other violent acts. Therefore, during sexual violence it is involuntary intercourse that is performed; however, neither the perpetrator nor the victim considers the violation to be sensual but rather an act of violence and an expression of power. Ruth Seifert writes that sexual violence does not origin from passion but from the desire to control, and obtain and exercise power over the victim. In addition, she means that the perpetrator's sexuality is not the core of the act, but it is hate and a desire to exercise power; his sexuality is in this case only an instrument to achieve his desire to exercise power (Seifert 1994:56). In conclusion, sexual acts are considered legitimate by the actors involved if the acts (no matter their nature)

\(^9\) I use the word *true* sceptically since personal identity may not be complete only when the stigma is revealed. Instead the stigmatizer presumes the stigmatized person’s identity to be true once the stigma is established.
are approved by those involved. Sexual violence, on the other hand, occurs when one of the actors is not approving access to his/her body and is thus tortured with sex as an instrument to achieve torment, be it rape or other forms of sexual violence. At the centre of the sexual violation is a will to humiliate, degrade, and damage the victim.

Seifert writes that sexual violence is not an aggressive manifestation of sexuality, but rather a sexual manifestation of aggression (Seifert 1994:55). Apart from the physical damage that the victims experience during the violation and then after the violation, the personal identity of the victims is exposed to severe damage. The perpetrator enters the victim’s body without permission or approval and therefore the victim loses control over his/her body. The sexual identity is very closely linked to the personal identity of a human being, which results in a severe trauma and an attack on the victim’s dignity when the person is exposed to sexual violence. The result of sexual violence is then of course physical pain, loss of dignity, an attack on the victim’s identity, and a loss of self-determination over his/her body (Seifert 1994:55).

Regarding sexual violence in armed conflicts, Ruth Seifert (1994:58-66) talks about five theses to why sexual violence in armed conflicts occurs. The first thesis that she takes up is Rapes are part of the rules of war; which points to sexual violence as a by-product of the war and that whoever conquer a particular territory will spread fear amongst the civilians in one way or another. The second thesis is: in belligerent disputes the abuse of women is an element of male communication. This means that women’s bodies are used to send a message of their superiority to their male enemies and to communicate to their male enemies that they are not capable of protecting their women and therefore not masculine enough. Gender roles are of importance here as men and women are divided in categories; women are more vulnerable and therefore men need to protect them. If their men are not able to protect them their masculine pride will be hurt and their enemies become superior.

Rapes also result from the offers of masculinity that armies make to their soldiers, or from the elevation of masculinity that accompanies war in Western cultures is the third thesis that points to how we presume that real men ought to be and the notion that the military is highest ranking on the masculinity scale. Seifert takes up the language in Western societies which mix violence with sexuality. An example is the word conquer which is used when speaking of battlefields but also refers to sexual relations and that women are conquered in the bedroom. To hold up a masculine identity the soldiers are supposed to have distance to what is considered to be feminine, i.e. compassion, emotions, regret etc, and ought to act contrary to what is perceived as femininity. To suppress what is considered feminine they tend to become
antifeminist and they tend to exercise their power over women through sexual violence.

The fourth thesis *rapes in wartime aim at destroying the opponents’ culture* explores the female role in a culture and puts the civilians in the centre of the war. This thesis points to the female role in the culture as the very essence of the culture. Her position in the family as the mother, the wife, and her position in the culture makes the woman the centre of the culture. If the aim of one party is to destroy a culture, the civilians have to be targeted as they have to be destructed together with their culture into submission, and therefore the women play a specifically important role for the aim to succeed because “the female body functions as a symbolic representation of the body politic.”

Seifert’s final thesis is: *the background to rape orgies is a culturally rooted contempt for women that is lived out in times of crises*. This thesis speaks more or less of hate towards women and the construction of women’s social status in Western societies. Women are in times of war considered, unconsciously, to be enemies (although the women are not usually aware that they are enemies). Seifert takes up pornography in peacetime as an example of what sexual relations between men and women looks like. She writes that it is normal to both men and women that women are submissive and men dominant, and that an exercise of power is occurring. Even though actual violence is not used there are acts that symbolize sexual violence and in armed conflicts these actions are lived out on the female body.

### 4.3 Female Victims and Stigma

This sub-chapter will open with a brief discussion on the notion of *male dominated societies* that I will apply in this text. I have chosen not to apply the term *patriarchy* because the concept is problematic and there are different theories regarding it (Yuval-Davis 1997:5-7). I will therefore refer to the cultural norm in former Yugoslavia, thus including Bosnia, as male dominated due to the male elite’s unwillingness to introducing women into particular societal and private spheres, thus limiting women to particular societal and private spheres. More importantly, I will refer to the society as male dominated because the cultural norm connects women’s sexuality to honour and shame (Cockburn 1998:157-159). However, women are not entirely submissive when it comes to gender relations, nor are all women on the same power level within the society and they are not experiencing the same levels of oppression (Yuval-Davis 1997:8); therefore, I believe that the term patriarchy would not be proper to use in this theory. However, male dominance was inherent into the culture of former Yugoslavia and so I
will use that notion *male dominated societies*.

Obviously, in male dominated societies there are certain predetermined expectations on women. There are prejudices on how women should behave publicly and privately. Goffman writes that a wife is actually a person who is regarded as a member of a category, and therefore we regard her conduct and nature as an instance of the category ‘wife’ (Goffman 1963:70). Our prejudice, stereotypes or expectation of how she is supposed to perform varies from society to society as well as over time. He says that such prejudice, stereotypes and expectations might be that she is able to be with child and care for the household. In addition, in male dominated societies prejudice, stereotypes, and expectations emphasize women’s chastity (but connects it to the male relative that the woman belongs to), as well as her caring for the household and the children. The category *wife* is further divided in other categories (such as good wife and bad wife) depending on different events. Consequently, the identity of a woman does not stand alone but co-exists with other factors (Weitsman 2008:564).

Systematic sexual violence cannot succeed as a weapon of ethnic cleansing if sexuality is not bound to the concept of honour or shame. The sexuality of women should therefore be particularly bound to the concept of honour and shame. A lot of weight and value should be put on the women’s virtue in male dominated societies, and her sexuality should not belong to anyone else but to her husband (Olujić 1998:36). To be able to understand the cultural norm in male dominated societies regarding sexuality one must realize the status order. An example of status order is a three-tiered hierarchy of status: husband, family, and village (Olujić 1998:34). Male dominance becomes then the norm of the culture. For the woman to be dominated by another man, even involuntary, could be considered as bringing shame upon the entire family and even the whole community.

As rape is a form of domination, being exposed to sexual violence could be regarded by others, and the self, as being labelled, marked or branded by another man. Being a victim of sexual violence or rape could be considered as bringing dishonour upon the kin. In addition, women who have been raped could be considered to be impure and would therefore lose their status in the family and the community (Stojsavljević 1995:39). In some cases it could be crucial to hide the stigma from one’s own relatives as that specific stigma is connected to shame and dishonour. On the one hand, it could be more difficult for the victims’ family to accept the stigma, since they have to share it to some degree, than it is for the rest of the community (Goffman 1963:71). On the other hand, their whole family may be exposed to certain stigmatization because of the sexuality’s honour/shame ideology of the culture and therefore force the family members to behave in a certain manner. Possibly, the family would
consider another community more fit to re-establish, or even repair their lives and simultaneously be able to avoid the stigma that would be attached to them.

I would like to return to Goffman’s discussion of personal identity and biography. Goffman focuses on famous people who have their biographies published, so that almost everybody can know of the person. However, average people do not have that many moments in their lives that are outstanding (differentiating them from us). But there are some occasions that may make them memorable such as witnessing particular interesting and important events in a given social context such as murder and rape, or being in a serious accident themselves (Goffman 1963:88-89). Such events then become part of the person’s biography and even personal identity. Sexual violence could be considered to be such an event that is considered to be memorable.

Persons who live in communities (villages, cities etc) are more likely to be known personally than known of by others from that particular community (e.g. neighbours) (Goffman 1963:87-88). In this case the person’s personal identity becomes more important than his/her social identity because the social identity gives away the person’s stigma through symbols that convey particular meanings in the given social context (Goffman 1963:61). But an invisible stigma can only be known of through personal identity as there are no visible symbols to suggest the stigma. Nevertheless, people who are famous to some extent in a community, as their personal identity is known of through their biography or undocumented personal history, will receive different kind of recognition depending on the grounds for their fame. Regardless of the person’s reason for fame it can be overwhelming. When a person is known merely by his social identity, and is a stranger to the people surrounding him/her, the person in question can attempt to conceal a particular stigma (Goffman 1963:85-86). But once the person’s biography is known in public his/her biography can be known about by even more people that those who know him/her personally.

For women who have been raped or exposed to violence, personal identity and biography becomes an important issue. Not all women carry visible marks or symbols that suggest to a stranger that they are victims of sexual violence. Instead, their stigma might be known by others who witnessed the atrocity or who know of it. If it has occurred in places where some people know the woman personally, they might later on inform or start rumours that the woman has been there – attaching a biography to the woman’s personal identity. Thus, her

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10 In small communities people can know personal information about people although it is not documented, and I will therefore refer to it as undocumented personal history.
stigma can become publicly known. Therefore, the woman is not guaranteed that she can remain unidentified because even though people do not know her personally they know of her (Goffman 1963:86,104). In addition, women who have chosen to tell their stories have their testimonies documented whether they want to be anonymous or not. It means that the biography of the women whose identity is not anonymous is public can be known of almost by anyone and her personal identity would also be known of. Furthermore, women who have chosen to be anonymous when their testimonies were documented risk having their identities revealed if someone who has witnessed the atrocity (or know of it) recognizes their story. Similarly, if other people are aware of a person’s stigma, or if a stigma is in a person’s past, then those who are aware of the stigma can become potential threats. Therefore, the person in question might have to live a double-life and have to consider his/her relationship with the person aware of their stigma. However, when a particular humiliating attribute or characteristic is a part of a person’s past, and known by only few, the person in question can conceal his/hers stigma. Still, the person will have to live a double life to some extent as he/she will have to play different roles with people who think that they know the person, and the people who really know the person (Goffman 1963:97-98).

4.4 Migration Theory

Refugees and asylum seekers are migrants who are forced into the process of migration. They are not motivated by economic or other benefit reasons, but instead find themselves in a situation where the flight to another country/community is usually necessary for their very survival. A refugee is then a person who is, as defined by the Geneva Convention of 1951, a person residing outside his or her country of nationality, who is unable or unwilling to return because of a well founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion (Castles & Miller 2003:103). Obviously there are refugees who fear persecution due to more than one of the mentioned reasons. Nevertheless, these are people who have a recognized refugee status in countries that have signed the Convention and respect the non-refoulement principle, i.e. not to return the refugees as long as they risk persecution. In addition, the refugees are represented and protected by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Internal refugees, people who are still within their national borders but unable or unwilling to return to their community of origin are defined as Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and are usually also protected by
UNHCR. Unlike refugees, asylum seekers are people in need of protection but their reason for refuge cannot be clearly define according to the Convention and therefore the host country has to determine whether or not the person in question is in fact in need of protection or not. They may stay in a country for years waiting for determination on their appeal while living on low social welfare and due to their status have limited rights within the host country. During the process of determination, the asylum seekers are in a very uncertain situation when they hold no status and do not have any control over their future and know that some view them as disguised economic migrants and not persons in need of protection. Yet, that alternative may still be more favourable than to stay in his/her country of origin. A forced migrant usually finds the situation in the country of origin unbearable and therefore leaves; however, what is unbearable is of course subjective and can clash with legal rights and regulations and may not be defined within the Geneva Convention (Castles & Miller 2003:103-104). A female victim of sexual violence may therefore find her situation insupportable for different reasons even when the armed conflict has ended and do not wish to return to the country of origin. This can become a problem for the countries that grant the refugees protection but only as a temporary solution while some refugees regard it as a permanent solution and refuse to return (Castles & Miller 2003:106-107). If female victims of sexual violence obtain refuge in another country, or are asylum seekers awaiting determination, and refuse to repatriate or return then what happened in the country of origin becomes a concern for the host society as the refugees/asylum seekers link them together.

The migration process is of importance for female victims of rape. Firstly, perhaps they want to escape the armed conflict and the violence in order to save their lives. And, secondly as they are in a host community perhaps the thought of going back is terrifying as many perpetrators today still live within the country of origin and have still not been prosecuted; the women risk becoming recognized by witnesses or the perpetrator in their community of origin and this in turn might jeopardize their life situation. Thirdly, women who have been exposed to sexual violence probably have degrading mental and physical health, and are in need of support and rehabilitation to get through the day. Finally, a female victims of sexual violence may feel that she has more control over her identity and thereby the stigma in the host society as her stigma does not have to be directly visible and she could therefore conceal the stigma if her personal biography is not public (Goffman 1963:85-86). For many victims of sexual violence staying within the community of origin, or the community where the violations took place, may be a great risk and an extremely mentally stressful way of living, for both the victim and her family, whether her biography is public or not. If the biography is unknown by
her family then the woman would fear that it would come out, and if it is known by her family then the woman’s family has to share the stigma and everything that it involves together with the woman. The change of community might be a first solution for the victim whose personal identity is known of by others in the community of origin. Still, the female victim’s biography must be known by only a few persons or completely unknown in the host community, so that the stigmatized woman can be received by others only through the social identity that will transmit, or not transmit, important information about her stigma (Goffman 1963:88). The process of being able to hide or conceal a stigma at some point (i.e. to be regarded normal) is to pass (Goffman 1963:95). Complete passing is to be able to conceal the stigma in all parts of life and usually has to do with a person leaving his/her community for a different community where the person can remain unidentified (Goffman 1963:100). There the exposure of information about his/hers personal identity will be largely decided by the stigmatized person since his/hers biography is unknown. The victim can then be privately and not publicly stigmatized as the victim alone (or almost alone) is aware of the stigma (Goffman 1963:123). Due to the woman’s change of community she will leave behind her personal identity with the biography attached to it. The victim will only leave behind the great risk of being recognized by the perpetrator(s), potential witnesses, and rumours that may be connected to her; however, the woman will not forget what has happen and will probably not be able to live a fully normal life when she has left behind the place of the sexual violence due to her change of community. The woman will probably still be afraid of rumours and the stigma which will also affect her health, but she might find it somewhat easier as there is a distance between the place of the violation and her home and she could choose what to transmit in the host community if the stigma is not visible.

To migrate, or in this case actually flee, to another country could first function as an affirmation of desperately needed security for many women where they would escape the direct sexual violence (if they leave their country when the armed conflict is ongoing) and where they could be in control of their personal biography. Yet, the new community will obviously attach a new biography to the woman, but she might be able to avoid that particular biography that conveys her stigma. A stigmatized person is generally wanted not to imply that he/she is troubled or burdened by his/her stigma and that the stigma does not make him/her different from us and at the same time accept that we do not accept him/her fully like us (Goffman 1963:147). Therefore the women who have suffered sexual violence might find themselves in a moral dilemma whether they should conceal their stigma or not. The process of double living starts as there are people who know different versions of the victim’s
personal identity (Goffman 1963:98-99). Perhaps the woman in question is not accepted for, or allowed to be, what she actually is and conceals her stigma because of fear of being excluded by a certain social group. If the woman has such relationships to others, she might considers it best to act as normal as possible (Goffman 1963:148), and therefore the return to the country/community of origin might threaten or hinder her to keep the secret and could then ruin her social relations to other persons which could lead to exclusion and severe discrimination.
5. Discussion

This chapter aims to put the woman at the centre of the issue and to highlight her situation from different perspectives which include both private and public spheres. However, this study does not neglect the suffering and pain of their men and other family members, but rather focuses primarily on the woman herself. This analysis will not generalize the female victims’ decision to leave the community of origin; it will instead try to provide an understanding of why the female victims may not have wished to remain in their community of origin and why sexual violence committed in one country affects other countries when the women flee and do not wish to return.

5.1 Sexual Violence

As women’s identity did not stand unaccompanied in former Yugoslavia, victims of sexual violence received a stigma attached to them as sexual violence was used to bring shame primarily upon the women’s male relatives. Women were seen as properties of male relatives in peace time and therefore their identity did never stand independently (Olujić 1998:34). The nationalistic parties that arose after Tito’s death spoke of how women should build and renew the nation through motherhood, and the woman was declared as central to the states (Cockburn 1998:161). In this case the woman is considered as a symbol of the nation. To rape a woman could be a metaphor of the rape or disgrace of a man’s entire lineage since women are reproducers and the blood of men was considered to be stronger than that of the woman (Olujić 1998:35, 45). Therefore, in armed conflicts the rape of a woman can easily be parallel to the rape of the nation-state and the lacks of men’s control over their women and thereby their nation. It becomes then reasonable that female bodies were violated to symbolically hurt an entire nation. The rapes during the war in Bosnia struck the whole world. Women were raped in camps, in their homes, on the street, in front of their family members; women were brought to brothels and sold between soldiers. The ones that did not manage to flee, or were killed, could end up as sex slaves, or impregnated with the purpose of ethnic cleansing (as men’s blood was considered active and women’s passive) and sent home when an abortion was no longer possible, or sold to other soldiers that would keep them in brothels or other places and rape them continuously. There was, no doubt, a systematic approach to the mass
scale rape. The United Nation commission of experts together with the European Community and NGOs, such as the Red Cross and Amnesty International, have condemned the massive scales of sexual violence during the war and found that they were not isolated incidents or side-effects of the war, but rather that the sexual violence was systematic and the intention of the sexual violence carried a greater meaning than the mere sexual violation. Helsinki Watch stated that:

[w]hether a woman is raped by soldiers in her home or is held in a house with other women and raped over and over again, she is raped with a political purpose-to intimidate, humiliate, and degrade her and others affected by her suffering. The effect of rape is often to ensure that women and their families will flee and never return. (Stiglmayer 1994:85)

Nusreta Sivac and Jadranka Cigelj\textsuperscript{11} are two women from Prijedor who were exposed to sexual violence during the war. Nusreta Sivac worked as a judge in the town of Prijedor and was a co-worker and friend of Jadranka Cigelj who was a lawyer. They were both brought to Omarska where they and 36 other women were exposed to sexual violence continuously. In the interview Nusreta says that her husband managed to leave Bosnia but that she stayed behind to look after their property as she could not think that she as a woman and civilian would be in any direct danger. Nusreta could not believe what she witnessed because it seemed surreal and like something taken from movies. She said that there were 36 other women there and that the nights were worst for the women as it was at night that the soldiers came and took out women and raped them. Jadranka points out \v{C}eljko Mejaki\textasciitilde, who was superior authority of the camp, as the main perpetrator. She found it very humiliating when Mejaki\textasciitilde would, during the day, come out to the women and ask if anybody forced themselves upon them, if anybody hurt them, and if so they should tell him and he would deal with it. Jadranka says that this was an even greater humiliation as he was the main perpetrator and initiator when it came to sexual related violence and torture. Jadranka\textasciitilde parents said to the interviewer that after Omarska, Jadranka was a different person. She was not afraid of gun shots but of human touch, and Jadranka says that she felt that there was a brand left on her body and soul.

\textsuperscript{11} Nusreta Sivac and Jadranka Cigelj are not a pseudonym. The interview is taken from the documentary film “Calling the Ghosts”.

Women were sexually violated by men they knew before the war which made the violation even more humiliating. Nusreta Sivac explained during the filmed interview that she knew the perpetrators personally by name. They used to drink coffee together at work, but in Omarska they pretended that they did not know her. She continues with speaking of the collectivity in their atrocities, where she point out that everyone committed them or helped commit the atrocities, so that no one could later on be accused alone. Jadranka too speaks of the collective and public atrocities against the women that took place on St Peter’s day. According to the Serbian tradition they lit torches on that day, but to make a greater fire camp guards burned tires and threw people who were wounded and helpless into the fire to burn alive. I will always remember that day Jadranka said. The orgy would heighten when they brought out a woman she said, since the women were raped and exposed to other sexual violence in front of the camp guards and the other detainees. Furthermore, Nusreta said that during the conflict women were raped in their homes, in front of their families, in camps, and other places. Not just were the women raped by the camp guards but other male detainees were forced to abuse the women sexually. There were even cases when the detainees had known the women (or girls) personally and that it was horrible to watch. But Omarska was not the only camp where women were exposed to sexual violence in front of other detainees; Amira said that she had been raped in Trnopolje in front of the detainees, who were forced to witness the rape, and that she was afraid that someone might have recognized her (Vranić 1996:295-296). Due to the public knowledge of mass scale rape on women it was assumed that a woman who had been taken by Serbian military must have been raped. Sajma H. says that if a Muslim woman fall into Serb hands and then says later that she was exempt from rape, she does not speak the truth (Vranić 1996:277).

Some of the rapes/sexual violence were even filmed by the perpetrators. Catherine A. MacKinnon wrote, in her article Turning Rape into Pornography: Postmodern Genocide that non-Serb women were filmed and portrayed as Serb women who were raped by non-Serb forces and the film was shown on television. She writes that the faces of the women were visible on the television while the faces of the perpetrators were not. These atrocities are usually carried out in front of other men (mostly other soldiers). Even the sexual violence and the rapes have been conducted to be used as pornography; they were treated as women in pornographic films and magazines for men some women recall (McKinnon 1994:76-80).

12 Amira is a pseudonym. Interviewed by Seada Vranić.

13 Sajma H. is a pseudonym. Interviewed by Seada Vranić.
MacKinnon quotes a non-Serbian woman who says that the perpetrators would invite their friends to come watch the rapes. That was like in the movie theater (McKinnon 1994:78). Catherine points out that, women dread to tell that their rapes have been filmed (made into pornography) more than they dread to speak of the actual rapes as their stories might be doubted since they were portrayed many times as if they were voluntarily performing.

Disbelief from outside combines with humiliation, shame, and a sense of powerlessness inside (McKinnon 1994:81).

5.2 The Silence

Women who have been exposed to sexual violence find it very difficult to speak of the atrocities committed against them as a testimony usually makes them re-live the violations over again. In addition, female victims might find it difficult to speak of the atrocities committed against them for reasons involving disgrace, humiliation, and stigmatization. The issue of whether or not to speak of what has happened carries a great weight for the women. Their stigma may not be directly visible and could therefore be concealed by the victims, but once the stigma is revealed the person in question could be exposed to severe discrimination.

Maria B. Olujić writes that she experienced that divorced women were more likely to speak of what has happened to them than married or single women. It is common sense that divorced women have already had sexual intercourse and thus they have no husband to bear their shame. Unmarried and married women, on the other hand, are afraid that the fact that they have been raped may jeopardize their virtue and thus their chances to get married or their status in the marriage. In addition, regardless of the civil status the women says that they are not prepared to ever go back to their villages because they have been raped, as they feel that the torment of shame would be too much to bear (Olujić 1998:44). Alexandra Stiglmayer was told by a physician, Jusuf Palisic who was a detainee in Trnopolje, that there is patriarchy in the Muslim society and that the honour of the women is greatly valued: If a man has even the slightest suspicion that his wife may has been cooperated voluntarily, the marriage is over (Stiglmayer 1994:91).

For Jadranka the issue of telling or not telling her story was posed as a moral question to herself. She knew that if she spoke of it in public she would expose herself to people who would not understand, but she also felt that it was her duty to speak for the women who did

14 Pseudonym.
not survive and the women who are still exposed to such atrocities. Before she decided to speak publicly about the crimes that were committed to her, she talked it through with her son. She told him that her life would now be known of by others and that people will have their own opinions of her (and her family) due to her decision to speak of it.

Nusreta also felt that she had to speak about what did happen; she had to tell the world what was going on that it was not right. However, she tells the interviewer that she speaks least with her husband about what has happened to her even though he wants to know. This is because she does not want to burden him, she says, and not because he would not accept her. She chose to speak of it publicly because she feels that it would not be fair to the women who were left behind or who were killed after they were raped. Yet, there are women who are not able to speak of it for different reasons. Nusreta says that a woman told her that she was divorced because her husband could not live with the fact that his wife had been raped by other men. She says that the woman was depressed and terrified that her son would find out what had happened to her. It then becomes quite evidential that the female victims fear stigmatization by their own kin. Folnegovic-Smalc writes that women who have been raped in front of their relatives, their husbands, their children, their parents and so forth, suffer from severe trauma (Folnegovic-Smalc 1994:175). The psychological damages of the female victims are then affected by the victims’ surroundings and the support they receive from their social surrounding. If the women have family members and friends who are understanding and give them support then their psychological damages are more likely to decrease than if they are condemn by their family members and friends (Folnegovic-Smalc 1994:177).

Returning to Goffman’s theory of stigma, he points out that members of a family may find it more difficult to accept a stigma as they have to share it to some degree (Goffman 1963:71). This might frighten the woman from talking with her family about the violation that she has been exposed to, and in turn the silence could damage the woman’s mental health even more as she is not able to process what has happened. Consequently, she might feel that the community of origin is a constant threat to her private life and the secret which she wishes to preserve when it comes to the sexual violence that she has been exposed to.

### 5.3 The Society’s Response

There are more obstacles that the women have to face when they attempt to restore their lives.

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15 Jadranka Cigelj was divorced before the war.
An important milestone for the victims is that the perpetrators are captured and convicted so that the society realizes that the sexual forms of torture were atrocities and that it is not accepted. The authorities of the community have to condemn and oppose the sexual violence so that the victims are not pushed aside into a private shame and a public disgrace. As mentioned about, the female victims’ health depends greatly on how her social surrounding is accepting what has happened to her. The victims must be free from guilt as they are not the ones to blame for the violence that they have been exposed to. Unfortunately many communities lack the ability to punish those who ought to be punished and thereby indirectly legitimize such forms of violence by blaming the victims. An example is from Banja Luka, a town not far from Prijedor, where some women tried to contact the police to report rape. The policemen underestimated the crime, or they did not consider rape to be a serious crime, or they blamed the women themselves for being raped. Seada Vrančić takes up examples from her interviews when women in Banja Luka turned to the police officials in the city:

**Example 1:** "Raped? You are alive and what else do you want? You did okay!" (Reported by rape victim A.N., 27 years.)

**Example 2:** "We are helpless. It happens in every war." (Reported by rape victim N.R., age 19.)

**Example 3:** "How do you have the nerve to come here with such lies?" (Reported by rape victim T.A., age 49.)

**Example 4:** "If your daughter did not swing her ass, guys would not react." (Reported by parents of rape victim M.K., age 15.) (Vrančić 1996:289-290)

There is obviously no interest in the women and girls who have been raped, and rape is not considered to be a crime at all nor is it something that the perpetrators could be blamed or punished for. Instead the female victims who speak up are blamed for being subjected to sexual violence by the authorities of the community. Thereby the stigmatization of the female victims becomes legitimized and approved. In addition, the women do not receive support from the authorities when they report the atrocities nor are they suggested some form of rehabilitation or other health care. Instead they are indirectly told to keep quiet and accept that rape is a part of war. In that way the society tried to normalize the process of warfare rape and sexual violence, while simultaneously condemn women for being raped. The psychiatrist, Vera Folnegovic-Smalc, writes that women who have been raped suffer from severe psychological damages such as Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome as they, and their families,
become stigmatized (Folnegovic-Smalc 1994:176). Although they receive sympathy to some degree there is also the negative attribute that is attached to them. The women are regarded as disgraced and dirty; they represent ìa disgrace to [their] family and [their] (national, religious, political) communityî (Folnegovic-Smalc 1994:176).

5.4 Stigma

A significant and complicated issue arises when one is trying to refer to the female victims by using different expressions. The expression itself victims of rape is a direct stigma on the victims. Nusreta discussed the expression rape victims during the interview where she means that the expression needs to be substituted with another expression such as women victims of war. The expression is judgmental and the attribute becomes attached to the identity of the women, as if their main characteristic is that they have been raped. The female victims of rape are then burdened with their stigma as the community may accept them to some extent but not fully as they have this characteristic attached to their personal identity which separates them from us (Goffman 1963:147). In addition, the ground for their fame is that they are victims of rape. They are then women who have been raped during the conflict by the foe. Their biographies are then memorable as they have been exposed to particular atrocities during the war. In turn their biographies are remembered by us and we will continue to remind the women about their biographies (that we attach to their personal identity) by stigmatizing them. Goffman says that a person who lives in a community is more likely to be known personally than known of; thereby their personal identity is more important than their social identity.

Nonetheless, there are women who have been exposed to sexual violence publicly. In these cases the expression rape victim, together with a particular biography and stigma, is attached to the woman regardless of whether she chooses to speak her story or not. The personal identity of the woman, which is known personally by the community, is changed due to the new piece of biography that will continue to construct her personal identity and in that way change or push aside other characteristics by attaching the main characteristic: rape victim.

When it comes to the cases where rapes have been turned into pornography the women may feel particularly exposed and live in a constant fear of the publicity from the pornographic films. The women are aware of the fact that the pornography might be shown in
public, if it has not already been shown, e.g. television or the Internet, and that this could be a reason for their fame. If the woman then comes from a smaller community where everybody knows everybody or a larger community where there are people who know her personally and people who know of her, she would become not only a victim of rape but also a victim of stigmatization as we have the possibility to see the atrocities committed against her if we wish. The fear of being judged by your own social/ethnic/religious group or kin may be a reason to maintain residence in a foreign community. There the woman in question could be able to conceal her stigma to some degree and choose who she will reveal her stigma to.

5.5 Sexual Violence: the Migration Aftermath

Although sexual violence/rape may be spoken of generally, on different national and international levels, it is still very different when one’s personal and horrible experiences are public. Many women who have been raped choose not to speak of it for reasons involving shame. An escape to another community/country could perhaps prevent the female victims from being exposed to a certain stigma and/or discrimination. Folnegovic-Smalc also points out that ethnic cleansing is achieved because the women and their families consider the flight from the native community as the only possible solution to avoid the stigmatization of shame and disgrace that is attached to them (Folnegovic-Smalc 1994:176). In addition Alexandra Stiglmayer was told by a male physician, Jusuf Pasalic16 who was captured in Trnopolje and had to help to treat the other detainees, that the women were raped at regular basis: "The people in authority all knew what was happening. . . .They liked it because of 'ethnic cleansing.' What mattered to them was that the people from our region should clear out, should never come back; and rapes are a splendid way to get that result" (Stiglmayer 1994:89-90). Furthermore, it is important to note that due to different methods of ethnic cleansing a lot of regions in Bosnia-Herzegovina had lost their original inhabitants, especially non-Serbs. With that in mind it becomes rather logical to understand why victims of sexual violence would find it difficult to reside in a community that has lost its original inhabitants and where the female victims might even come into contact with the perpetrator/s.

Moreover, Nusreta Sivac believes that the sexual violence was a side effect of the war but that it was planned to systematically humiliate the women; to destroy their families and to "make them realize that they can’t live there anymore." And due to the ideology of

16 Pseudonym.
collectivity, mentioned above, a whole community could be responsible for atrocities and not just certain persons. The violation of the female victims would therefore be known by the inhabitants, and a stigma would be attached both to the victims and their families. To be aware, as a victim of rape, that others know you have been raped can cause severe stress due to the stigma that will be attached to you. The severe stress can easily result in degraded mental health which usually is followed by degraded physical health. Whether the fact that you have been raped is known by a large public or a smaller public, the fact that you are considered to be different from the others emerges. The awareness could make it even more difficult to consider repatriation during peace time. Then, obviously, a slower, passive and complex process of ethnic cleansing is continuing after the war as the women regard themselves as more or less involuntary migrants even if they choose not to go back.

5.6 The Swedish Experience

Sweden is one of the many countries which received refugees and asylum seekers during and after the Bosnia-Herzegovina armed conflict, and many of them were women who had been sexually violated during the conflict. I have interviewed Barbara O'Connor, at the Swedish Red Cross Centre for victims of tortured and war, to better understand the female victims' social and health situation and how they reacted on return policies.

O'Connor agrees that sexual integrity is something that people values a lot and that it is closely connected to the identity of a person. Therefore, sexual violence/rape is one of the most insulting forms of torture where a person is degraded, humiliated and disgraced. She means that when a woman is raped it affects her, her family, and the entire nation. And in certain societies women's sexuality is bound to their honour, and thereby if their relatives would find out that they have been raped could lead to severe consequences and the woman could be blamed by others or blame herself for not having done enough to protect herself. When it comes to Bosnia-Herzegovina, the authorities in the country did not do enough to help the women and the women would seek protection in other countries. The women that O'Connor has met at the centre in Sweden have all been damaged; their mental and physical health has been damaged, and their integrity hurt together with their human rights. But it has been important for the women that it is the Red Cross that arranges such rehabilitation centre as the Centre for victims of tortured and war since they are not as stigmatized there as they would be in other institution, since the Red Cross aim to protect human rights and the women
would not be treated as mentally disturbed but their particular experience would be worked on together with the team of the centre when the woman is ready to say that she has been raped or in other ways sexually violated. O’Connor says that overall their health and social condition is worse than others who have not experiences that particular violation. Many women suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome, and other mental and physical problems which often lead to problems within the family, especially if no one is aware of the violations she has suffered. Once again the woman’s social surrounding is important for her well being; whether her nearest surrounding (e.g. her family) accepts what has happened to her and support the woman or if they reject the woman on the basis of the stigma. The women can suffer from flashbacks during sexual acts with their husbands. This can create severe problems if the rest of the family is not aware of the violations and the woman may have to meet the requirements in another way and she could end up so mentally damaged that she has to be put in hospital because she cannot handle the situation. It just becomes something that one cannot handle,” says O’Connor.17

O’Connor explains that there have been refugees and asylum seekers who came during the conflict, but that there have also been asylum seekers who came after the conflict. Women and their families have tried to stay in their community of origin and tried to restore their lives there but found that it was impossible and the situation was unbearable. When the women were denied asylum they thought that if they would tell the authorities they had been raped it would change their decision, but it seldom did and they were told that the risk that it would happen again was not big but they had to put that behind them and go back18 (interview). O’Connor says that these are the women who have been worse off in terms of health and social conditions, and that their belief that their testimony would help to grant them asylum made them feel even worse as the testimony was not on their terms and the situation would feel like reliving the violation. When the female victims received rejection on their asylum application they would fall apart. According to O’Connor, the psychiatric ward was over-full with people who had their asylum applications rejected and that these persons were primarily women who had been sexually violated.

However, many women could not handle to return due to the fact that the perpetrators were in the community of origin and they risked meeting other people who might recognize them and connect them to the violations, together with the authority’s lack in providing the

17 “Det blir bara någonting som man inte kan klara av.”

18 “Risken att det skulle hända igen var inte särskilt stor, utan det fick man lägga bakom sig och åka tillbaka.”
women accurate rehabilitation and other basic help they needed. Furthermore, if the woman did not tell her husband she would fear that he would find out and if so that he would leave her or that he would feel obligated to avenge his woman which puts the man and the rest of the family in a discomfited situation. It is also important to know that many women were raped by perpetrators they knew personally before and that this made the violation even more inexplicable and humiliating. O'Connor believes that the strongest reason that prevents them from returning is the fact that someone might recognize them and that a stigma would then be attached to them which could lead to consequences and in the worst case some form of exclusion. Therefore, many women chose to go underground and be in Sweden on illegal terms rather than returning to their community of origin. The women would feel safer in Sweden than in the community of origin, O'Connor explains, as in the community of origin there might always be someone who knew, saw, heard and so on. Especially if they keep the violations a secret as they would feel that they have more control over their secret in Sweden than in their community of origin and they would not be reminded of what happened all the time as they would if they still lived where it all happened.

Living under illegal status in Sweden was not easy for the women and their families. O'Connor said, "You have to understand that this is so strong and so impossible since one chooses to go underground where one perhaps has to move from one family to another and hide. Like parasites, feel as bad as one does and have no money"\(^{19}\)(interview). Their men would not have proper jobs but instead work illegally for extremely low payments, and their children could be prevented from going to school due to fear that the police would turn up and send them back home. But in 2005 Sweden granted amnesty for hidden refugees (asylum seekers who had applied for and were denied asylum before a certain period) and O'Connor says that many of these women were granted residence permit but that they were still in need of rehabilitation and that it was (and still is) difficult for them to restore their lives and process the violations. They seldom visit the community of origin or go there for vacation. Usually it is the men who want to visit their community of origin and then if the women have kept the violations a secret they have to explain why they do not want to visit or they stay in another town than their community of origin or the community where they were exposed to sexual violence if they visit at all.

\(^{19}\)"Ni måste ju förstå att det här är så starkt och så omöjligt eftersom man väljer att gå under jorden där man måste flytta kanske ifrån den ena familjen till den andra och gömma sig. Som parasiter, må så dåligt som man gör, inte ha några pengar."
6. Conclusion

Women have been raped and violated sexually in all times and in all wars, but during the armed conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina sexual violence in an armed conflict was recognized as a crime against humanity—a war crime. During the conflict women were raped both publicly and behind closed doors. They were raped in their homes, in detention camps, on the street, in front of other people, including in some cases their kin. There was no doubt a systematic approach to the mass rapes that struck women in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the rapes were considered to be a tactic of ethnic cleansing by the international society. The armed conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina resulted in 20,000-50,000 rape victims. Many women fled to other communities which provided them with temporary protection, but many women refused to return to their communities of origin after the conflict ended. This study aims to provide an in-depth understanding of how sexual violence in during the armed conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina contributed to ethnic cleansing and what affect it had on female victims when it comes to migration.

Former Yugoslavia was a society where men dominated. Women were not completely suppressed, but they were usually dominated by male relatives. Chastity was preferable and a woman could not be promiscuous or share her sexuality with another man than her own as she would bring shame not only upon herself but her entire kin. This resulted in a stigmatization of the female victims of sexual violence. To be stigmatized is to be differentiated from the normal; to have an attribute that is degrading in a given social context (Goffman 1963:13,132-133). The women felt ashamed, humiliated, and disgraced that they had been exposed to sexual violence and many of them would remain silent about it. Many of the female victims are likely not to have reported the violations, nor did they speak of it to their family members—i in many cases their husbands. To speak of what has happened usually made women re-live the violations over again. The very expression victim of rape is greatly stigmatizing since it is the fact that the woman has been raped that is the reason for her recognition, and the expression victim of rape becomes her main characteristic. Thus, a moral dilemma arose for the women; should they speak, would the listeners understand or would they be judgmental and ignore sexual violence as a crime of war? For the women who have been exposed to sexual violence the attitude of their social surrounding is of great importance for their mental and even physical health.

Folnegovic-Smalec means that if female victims of sexual violence are supported by their
family, friends and so forth, they have a better chance to recover than women who are condemned by their family and friends (Folnegovic-Smalec 1994:177). Together with friends and family, it is also of great weight how the society responds when such atrocities have been committed. For women to feel free from guilt and secure, the society has to condemn the perpetrators and provide the victims with proper rehabilitation and other forms of help and support which they are in need of. In the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the society responded extremely poorly. The perpetrators were not captured or condemned appropriately which resulted in an even greater private shame and stigma for the women who have been exposed to sexual violence. They could risk meeting the perpetrators continuously in their community of origin which of course is devastating for the women as they would get flashbacks that would worsen their mental health by causing them severe stress. In addition, if they have not told their family of what actually happened to them, they risk that the truth would come out together with possible consequences. And if they did tell their husband, then he is put in a difficult situation when he feels that he has to revenge her.

To stay in the community of origin is usually too difficult for the women. Together with the stigmatization, the continuous risk of meeting the perpetrators, the lack of rehabilitation, support and help, and the deteriorated physical and mental health conditions, and the constant fear that others might find out makes the women unwilling to reside in their community of origin. It just becomes something that is too difficult to handle. Repatriation, or the risk to have to return, is very difficult for the women to face. There are women who did not become refugees during the war but instead stayed behind and tried to restore their lives but it was too difficult. There are women who came to Sweden after 1996 as asylum seekers. They were denied protection in Sweden since the armed conflict was over. The women then faced the moral dilemma: should they say what happened to them even if they had tried to keep it a secret to avoid consequences and still risk denial, or should they remain silent and be returned definitely to a community which is simply impossible to live in? This impossible situation made many women say that they had been exposed to sexual violence and hope that the country would grant them asylum on those grounds. However, in the case of Sweden the state did not grant protection to the women as it was considered that the sexual violence was not likely to be repeated as the armed conflict has ended. This resulted in an even worse condition of health, mainly the mental health, as the return was not an option and to stay was not possible. Instead many women chose to go underground and live under terrible circumstances where they did not hold any legal status and did not have any rights or benefits. In due time, Sweden provided amnesty for people who had their asylums denied before a certain period of
time, and several women were granted residence permit.

I believe that women were not merely targeted to hurt the male pride as they were also raped isolated (not public) and the perpetrators probably thought that they would be quiet about what had happened to them due to the cultural norm. As the sexual violence was systematic the women were raped in masses. The purpose of the rape, the sexual and mental abuse, then was systemized to frighten the women from staying in a particular community and preventing their return after the war; in addition, their stories and the rumours of what had happened to them would intimidate others from the same ethnic group and perhaps affect their decision of maintaining residence in their community of origin. Thereby, the sexual violence affected both women who have been exposed to it and other who feared it; this probably accelerated the refugee flow and the refugees’ migration process later on which could contribute to indirect ethnic cleansing as there were refugees who could not stand to return. Repatriation for refugees or asylum denial was something that the female victims in Sweden could not take in. Due to the stigma that was attached to the woman, or could be if someone would recognize her, combined with the risk of meeting the perpetrator(s) and the flashbacks that would follow would most likely degrade the woman’s mental health which in all probability leads to a worsened physical health. The whole process of returning could be similar to a domino effect when it comes to the woman and her family’s private life, integrity, and most importantly their health.
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Acknowledgements

I would like to direct my sincerest gratitude to my supervisor Jonas Alwall, head of Malmö University department of International Migration and Ethnic Relations, for excellent supervising.

I would also like to thank Barbro O’Connor, field manager of the Swedish Red Cross Centre for victims of tortured and war in Malmö, who has given me a deeper understanding of the issue.

I am grateful for all the persons who have provided me with knowledge and their insight of the issue as well as their support.

Thank you.