Positive Memories?

A narrative analysis about positive experiences during a war childhood in Sarajevo under Siege

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Abstract

The siege of Sarajevo 1992-1996 is often discussed in terms of the flourishing cultural scene or the struggle of civilians to survive. The childhood experiences of those who grew up in Sarajevo during the war have been explored and written about, but rarely has there been anything published about the positive experiences of their daily lives. The aim of this research is to provide a deeper understanding of the complexity of a war childhood by examining the perception of the positivity of children. By using a thematic narrative analysis this paper explores the perception of children's positivity during the war in Sarajevo in interviews provided by the War Childhood Museum. The analysis is written through the lens of the concepts normalisation, victimisation and memorisation. The paper identifies the existence of positivity and six factors which contributed to the creation of positive experiences: creativity, relationship to neighbours, children's perspectives, shifted realities, 'Sarajevo humour' and the resistance of children. This study contributes to the understanding of the complexity of a war childhood in Sarajevo with results that can be transferred to other war zones.

Key words: War Childhood, Positivity, Sarajevo, Normalisation, Victimisation, Memorisation, Thematic Narrative Analysis
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1 List of Abbreviations

BI = Balkan Insight
BiH = Bosnia i Hercegovina
IR = International Relations
PTSD = Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
UNICEF = United Nations Children’s Fund
US = United States
USA = United States of America
WCM = War Childhood Museum
YNA = Yugoslavian National Army
2 Introduction

I became interested in the topic of childhood and war while reading ethnographic research about the daily life during the siege of Sarajevo by Ivana Maček (2009) during the module of "civilians in and after war". I used the opportunity in the 5th Semester of my studies to undertake an internship in Sarajevo, in the War Childhood Museum (WCM). Working with issues related to childhood, war and memory made me realise how crucial it is to portray war childhood in its whole complexity, without simplifying it.

2.1 Research Problem

Most of the time, the siege of Sarajevo is memorised in terms of destruction of the city's architecture, daily shelling and the struggle of the population to survive (Kurtović, 2012: 197). When reading more about the war time, it occurs that there also exists literature which studies the life of civilians (Maček, 2009) or emphasises the strong cultural scene during the siege. A broad range of activities are portrayed, from concerts and theatre plays to the Sarajevo Film Festival (Kurtović, 2012: 197; Sontag, 1994: 87). Instead of investigating, for example, the cultural life in Sarajevo, this thesis will focus on children who grew up in Sarajevo under siege.

There is academic literature which discusses some aspects of childhood experiences in Sarajevo, such as the system of education (Berman, 2005; Swee, 2015) and the impact of the war on children's mental health (Werner, 2012; Lucić, 2016), but none of them thematised the existence of positive moments. Regarding the complexity of a war childhood experience (Halilović, 2018: 22/23), which is influenced by many factors, I assume that children were able to have positive moments, despite the hardships.

Therefore, this thesis argues that childhood experiences in Sarajevo also had positive moments and aims therefore to reveal such experiences.
2.2 Aim & Research questions

Children were victims of the cruel siege of Sarajevo, but they should not be portrayed only as victims. Children were also resilient, creative and flexible survivors. The aim of this research is to provide a deeper understanding of the complexity of a war childhood in terms of the perception of positivity for children.

In order to explain the research question better, the terms: 'children' and 'positivity' need to be defined. All participants of this study were when the war started between 2 and 17 years old, therefore I define children as everyone under 18.

Positivity is a very subjective notion which cannot be defined as precisely as 'child'. Positivity in this thesis is linked to moments of joy, to laughter and to feeling good. In the Cambridge Dictionary (2019) to be positive is referred as to be "full of hope and confidence, or giving cause for hope and confidence"

The aim is formulated in the following research question:
How do children¹, who grew up during the siege of Sarajevo, perceive positivity when they think back to experiences of their war childhood?

In order to be able to answer the research question, I also use two operational questions, which will guide the analysis:
- In what ways do children remember positive experiences of their war childhood in Sarajevo?
- What factors contributed to the creation of positive moments and experiences?

2.3 Relevance to PACs

This research focuses on children who grew up during the war in Sarajevo. They faced direct violence (Galtung, 1964) and organised violence (King, 2003: 239), in terms of being exposed to snipers and daily shelling (King, 2003: 235).

¹ these children are at the time of interviewing adults
The course literature from the module about 'Civilians in and after war' is part of this research and relates to the topic. Nordstrom's (2004) book describes, among other issues, children who lived in the shadow of war, while the anthropological book by Maček (2009) about the siege of Sarajevo is a very detailed description about the living conditions of civilians.

2.4 Delimitations

I am aware of a set of delimitations of this study. The researcher's bias in qualitative research is not avoidable and therefore the analysis will be impacted by the profile of the researcher (Creswell, 2011: 192). The study is centered around the researcher's interpretation. The lack of generalisability is due to the sample size, but also due to the area of investigation. The study was narrowed down to study only war childhood in Sarajevo, and not other war zones. War childhood is a vast subject and therefore to conduct research into this requires the researcher to focus on a particular case or data set. With this in mind, a qualitative analysis of 23 interviews is used, and is connected with existing literature and studies on the same topic.

This study only focused on children not on a particular gender, which could offer further opportunities explore.

2.5 Thesis Outline

After the introduction, this paper consists of a background (chapter 3), which provides the reader with knowledge about the war in Bosnia i Herzegovina (BiH), the siege of Sarajevo and about the living conditions of civilians and children, in particular.

Chapter 4 presents previous research about different aspects of a war childhood, partly about Sarajevo, but also from other conflicts across the world. This chapter helps to understand, why it is important to study the meaning of positivity in a war childhood, because this field has had little attention before. The theoretical framework, in chapter 5, explains and links the concepts of normalisation, victimisation and memorisation to each other and connects them to the aim of the thesis. The combination of these concepts allows for a relevant and deeper analysis of the material.
In chapter 6, the thematic narrative analysis and the data will be presented and criticised as part of the methodological framework which includes strengths and weaknesses of the method and material. This chapter includes ethical considerations about the thesis.

The analysis in chapter 7 is structured according to the operational questions and, at the end chapter 7, the results will be presented and discussed. The conclusion (chapter 8) summarises the most important points and suggests possible future research.
3 Background

3.1 War in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) with the capital, Sarajevo, has a long history of being squeezed in between different foreign powers. It was part of the Ottoman Empire hundreds of years ago, it was under Austro-Hungarian rule in the 19th century and on the 28. June 1914, the Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand was shot there (Kuper, 2014). This murder sparked the beginning of World War I.

In the recent history, namely from the beginning of the 1950s BiH was part of former Yugoslavia with long term president Tito, who followed the dream of a multi-ethnic Yugoslav state in the Balkans.

A few years after Tito's death, the Serbian leader Slobodan Milošević became president of Yugoslavia in 1989. He left the ideology of multiculturalism behind and aimed for Serbia to dominate the remaining states in the federalism. In the meantime, every country became more nationalistic. Tensions arose along ethnic lines and started to manifest themselves in the minds of people. At first, Slovenia declared independence in 1991 which led to 10 days of war, until an agreement was made, which included the withdraw of the troops of the Yugoslav National Army (Povrzanović Frykman, 2008: 167).

Croatia was seeking independence and shortly after the war in Slovenia, an "undeclared war" (Silver & Little; quoted in Povrzanović Frykman, 2008: 168) broke out in Croatia and slowly moved towards the borders of BiH.

In BiH the ethnic lines were not as clear as in the previous mentioned countries, the population was mixed of mainly three ethnic and religious groups. At that time, BiH was populated by 43% Bosniacs (Muslims), 31% Serbs (Christian Orthodox) and 17% of Croats (Catholics) (Swee, 2015: 159). Additionally, in Sarajevo lived a small Jewish minority. The ethnic groups were living mixed in villages and towns throughout the country, there was no geographical separation of the different population groups, and mixed marriages were a
common thing. During this time of rising tensions, the Serbs wanted to remain part of Yugoslavia while the Croats intended to become part of Croatia while the Bosniacs sought independence. A referendum about the independence of BiH in April 1992 lead to first clashes in Sarajevo and marked the begin of the war in BiH: The pro-independence coalition of Croats and Bosniacs against the Serbs who did not participate in the referendum (Swee, 2015: 159).

The war went on for four years until a formal peace agreement was reached. By that time, 97,207 Bosnian citizens were killed or missing, 40,82% of them were civilians. About 200,000 people were wounded, around 50,000 of them were children, (Povrzanović Frykman, 2008: 170) and around 2,2 million Bosnians were displaced. Between 2-4 million land-mines were laid and until today, children are the most common victims. Sarajevo was one of the most affected places during the war.

3.2 Siege of Sarajevo

"Welcome to a city without water, a city without power, a city without food, a city without medicine. Welcome to Sarajevo in the 1990s."

Jasminko Halilović (War Childhood, 2018)

Sarajevo is a 15km long and 4km wide city located in a valley surrounded by mountains. Therefore the geography offered a strategically good spot for a siege, which started on 5th April 1992. The Army of Republika Srpska\(^2\) was stationed mainly on the slopes of the mountains and bombarded the city with artillery units. The average amount of attacks were 330 shell impacts a day (Bassiouni, quoted in Lucić, 1994: 89).

Under the runway of Sarajevo airport, there was a tunnel to escape the city and to bring supplies. It was the only way to get in and out the city. The official name is Objekat Dobrinja-Butmir, but better known as the "Tunnel of Hope" (Lucić, 1994: 97; Banjeglav, 2019:12)

However, the siege was well covered by media and pictures of civilians living in the besieged Sarajevo are for many people still present, life was like the quote from Halilović:

\(^2\) Army of Republika Srpska = Bosnian Serb Army
Sarajevans\textsuperscript{3} waiting in lines to fill their water canisters, civilians standing to get bread, to collect fire wood. We remember Sarajevans running across streets to avoid being shot by a sniper, because every spot in the city from which you could see the mountains, snipers were able to locate you.

Maček (2009) writes in her book 'Sarajevo Under Siege' about how people are still attached to values from before the siege, to behave as they did before the war started: there is one anecdote which tells the story of two women who went out for a party, during summer 1992. When they were on their way, being dressed up immediately shelling and sniper fire started. One of them was hiding in a ditch, while the other was still standing exposed at the street, because she was afraid of her clothes to be destroyed when to lay down in the ditch (Maček, 2009: 7). The illusion of a normal life was always present (Berman, 2005: 10).

But life had to continue for the people, non-ordinary things became ordinary. There was no life on the streets, most things were happening inside 'safe' apartments or in basements, where some people had to stay for weeks because it was to dangerous to go outside. To keep up some form of normality and, even more important, trying to get along with that horrible situation people in Sarajevo became famous for their dark humour. To make jokes was seen a "form of resilience" (Maček, 2009: 51). Another example is the Sarajevo Survival Guide, which is a Michelin Style Guidebook containing survival categories from during the war. The sarcastic guide was issued 1993.

At the begin of the war, Sarajevo had about 400000 inhabitants. During the siege in Sarajevo 9,502 were killed, out of whom 4,954 were civilians (Tabeau, et al., 2003: 2) and about 1,500 were children (BI, 2010). Towards the end of the siege it is estimated that around 300,000 people still lived there.

After the Dayton Agreement was signed in December 1995 it still took some weeks until the end of the siege. The last day of the siege was February 29th in 1996. It was longest siege in modern history, even a year longer than the siege of Leningrad during World War II (Lucić, 1994: 89).

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\textsuperscript{3} Sarajevans = People who live in Sarajevo
3.3 The Life of Children in Sarajevo

UNICEF estimated that between 65,000 and 80,000 children lived in Sarajevo during the siege. About 1500 were killed. Around 40% experienced being shot at, 51% saw someone killed, 39% saw a family member being killed, 19% observed a massacre, the homes of 73% of the children were attacked or shelled, and at least 89% had to live in basements (Bassiouni, 1992).

Children were the most innocent victims of that cruel war and their life was affected in various ways.

Until the day when the siege began, children had a normal life. They had to go to school, played with their parents or friends and lived a life without violence.

Some families tried to bring their children out of the city in order to provide them with safe living conditions and good education (Maček, 2009: 99/100), others did not manage or were not able to do so for various reasons. For those who remained, the life was tough.

Suddenly, they were exposed to sniper fire and shelling when going to school, if the school was still open. Their biggest desires, like playing outside in the backyard, or on a playground with other children were hardly possible. Either it was too dangerous, or these places were already destroyed (Jabuacar, quoted in Lucić, 1994: 91).

Children had to fulfil other tasks, like waiting in lines for water or bread, which were for some of the parents too humiliating, since they couldn't provide their children with basic needs anymore. Life was changing, when the shelling started, people had to hide in basements, so children were inside for days. They were highly affected by the siege in all forms of their lives. Water, electricity and heat were so rare that children celebrated the moment it became available (Maček, 2009: 63).

3.4 Life After the War

After the siege was finally lifted, life in Sarajevo moved on, but slowly. Today, Bosnian society dwells in the "long shadow of war" (Lucić, 2016: 103). Scars are visible on faces and buildings, many are not even rebuilt. The most famous memorials of the cruelties are the
"Sarajevo Roses": remaining marks of shelling where people died were filled with red resin, giving the impression of a rose, or blood stain (Halilović, 2018: 13).

In addition, there are various other ways in which the memory of what happened, is preserved. One institution is the War Childhood Museum (WCM), founded by Jasminko Halilović, a war child from Sarajevo. It opened its doors to visitors from around the world in 2017. Objects and stories from childhoods affected by the war in BiH are exhibited. The heart of the WCM is "the telling of stories, not histories". The museum calls for the mostly unheard voices of children who grew up during the war. One of the participants, who donated an object and a story to the museum said: "thank you for giving the youngest survivors their dignity and self-confidence back" (Halilović, 2018: 232).
4 Previous Research

This chapter concentrates on research previously done on the topic of children who grew up during war time in general, and on studies which explored the life of children in Sarajevo during the siege in particular. The chapter focuses the different forms of psychological impact of war, education, playing and finally elaborates on arguments that define children as resilient survivors.

4.1 Psychological Impact of War on Children

Generally, children struggle with many psychological effects caused by war. Following Punamäki (2002), a childhood becomes immediately interrupted and ends too early, while children affected have to grow up too fast (Punamäki, 2002: 46). According to her, the minds and behaviour of children is dramatically changed by the experience of war with several components being impacted, such as "thinking, remembering, problem solving" (Punamäki, 2002: 57) as well as the ability to show emotional expressions (ibid.). In addition, Punamäki points out that boundaries are blurred, children can't judge whether something is actually dangerous or only a constructed fear in the children's own fantasy (Punamäki, 1982: 32).

Schneider (2000) adds that the children's vulnerability increases, related to a more magical thinking and the abilities to remember a trauma, but also to understand and process it will decrease (Schneider, 2000 quoted in Punamäki, 2002: 46).

Werner (2012) concluded that the more a person is exposed to violence, the bigger is the psychological impact of the war (Werner, 2012: 554).

Moreover, Lucić (2016) studied the relation between the surroundings and the psychological development of children in Sarajevo under siege. The city was in its most parts destroyed and he explored how the development of “psychological functions follows environmental forms” (Lucić, 2016: 104).
Pritchard & Rosenzweig (1942) stated that issues such as the separation of children from their families or fear of air-raids can lead to a variety of mental health issues, such as anxieties or even psychoneurotic problems (Pritchard & Rosenzweig, 1942: 330, 343).

An important distinction about mental health issues during and after a war is made by Miller and Rasmussen (2009): there is on the one hand the "psychosocial approach" (Miller & Rasmussen, 2009: 7), which occurs in terms of poverty, or lack of food caused by war, in other words, the loss of social support and the struggle to survive. On the other hand, there are situations when children face life danger or threats in daily life, which means in "scientific terms to be exposed to traumatic stress" (Punamäki, 2002: 45; see also Miller & Rasmussen, 2009: 7).

### 4.2 PTSD

Werner (2012) defined Post traumtic stress disorder (PTSD) by symptoms, such as "re-experiencing" the traumatic event, "avoidance symptoms" which means to avoid proximity to the traumatic event and "hyperarousal symptoms" like nervousness and sleeplessness (Werner, 2012: 553).

Normally, PTSD is considered more as an individual phenomenon, while during war it is rather seen as "communal and as a manifestation of a social disorder" (Reichenberg & Friedman, 1996; Straker, 1996 quoted in Wessells, 1998: 643). According to Punamäki, children are personalities who deal with traumas in their individual way: while some treat their traumas by speaking about them or by drawing what happened, others play certain games or listen to fairytales. However, in any case, there is always the risk that they are transported back to the traumatic experiences (Punamäki, 1982: 30).

Within various accounts on the impact of PTSD on children in Sarajevo by different scholars, the numbers of affected children range between 10% and 50% (Attanayake, et. al., 2009; Fazel; Wheeler, & Danesh, 2005; quoted in Lucić, 2016: 82). The higher the exposure of children to life threats and to the proximity to death, the more likely it results in PTSD (Duraković et. al., 2003, quoted in Werner, 2012: 554).

Following from that arrives a need to investigate children who grew up during war regarding positive experiences during the siege, as Werner (2007) suggests: in general, he
focuses his study on PTSD and other negative psychological effects on children during war, as most of the previously mentioned scholars did. However, he also stresses the factors influencing the psychological health in a conflict setting positively. These factors are identified by him as a close relationship to family or other caretakers, to express humour and to have "a shared sense of values" (Werner, 2007: 555). He suggested future research of factors that contribute to the wellbeing of children during war, since that field is rarely discussed. This study can be seen as a contribution to that scientific area, because this thesis attempts to identify the meaning of positivity during a war childhood and investigates factors which contribute to positive experiences. According to Jones and Kafetsios (2005) it is significant how children "make sense of events" (Jones & Kafetsios, 2005:158) in a war childhood. As stated by Werner, there is an opportunity to give a positive meaning to certain moments during a war childhood, but the existing research hardly touches upon this.

4.3 Education

As mentioned before, the children of Sarajevo during the war were investigated in terms of PTSD by various scholars, but further, education for children is necessary to explore. Thereby, scholars focused mainly on schooling during the wartime (Berman, 2005; Lucić, 2016; Swee, 2015). According to them, Sarajevo is famous for the attempt to provide schooling during war. Sarajevans had to adapt everything to the given situation and even in the most violent winter in 1994, schooling continued, for the most time at least (Lucić, 2016: 82). The schools even received a special name: ratna škola⁴ (Berman, 2005:6).

The schooling situation in Sarajevo is best investigated in Swee's article about the education in Sarajevo: due to the destruction of schools and the danger to go outside, most classes were moved inside to a shelter, or a basement. The danger of being shot made the school to hide somewhere, in order to continue teaching during the war. (Swee, 2015: 160). Swee's results show that the secondary schooling heavily declined under the war, while due to the "War Schools" the primary level wasn't as affected. On secondary level, more males than

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⁴ Translation: War School
females did not attend school anymore, the author assumes that this might relate to the military draft. (Swee, 2015: 171).

In his article, Berman (2005) describes the war schools in Dobrinja⁵ as a form "civilian resistance to the enemy" (Berman, 2005: 6). One former teacher of these schools, Smail Vesnić goes even further: “We didn’t fight with guns. We fought in this way, to defend our homes, our families. We saved those kids. We moved them off the streets to the classroom, and we saved them” (Vesnić, 2001; quoted in Berman, 2005: 57).

The war childhood in Sarajevo as well as the way of providing education has been discussed previously and identified many relevant issues. This is an important part of research about children's life in Sarajevo during the war, but scholarship had not focused on positive moments, neither in education in particular, nor in life in general.

4.4 Playing During War

The Finish scholars Paksuniemi, Määta and Uusiautti (2015) investigated to what extent children had to work during World War II in Finland and whether they had time to play or not. This study emphasised the aspects of "children’ s survival, hope, courage, and strength" (Snyder & Lopez 2002, quoted in Paksuniemi, et. al., 2015: 123). Their results showed that children had to start working very early, since most dads were at the frontline. Most children started working with the age of 5-6 and did sophisticated and physically demanding work at the age of 14 (Paksuniemi, et. al., 2015: 118). There was still time to play, but they had to be creative and to invent new games, since they were lacking everything, including toys, which they finally designed and made themselves (ibid.: 120). Paksuniemi et al. present another important finding in their article. Especially boys adapted their selection of games to the war: disarming of mines and creating explosions were in favour and obviously much more dangerous (ibid.:122).

Kirschman (2009) have found out that "children are able to react positively even in the most negative conditions. Therefore, it would be important to be able to enhance, protect, and make use of children’ s existing resources" (Kirschman, 2009 quoted in Paksuniemi et al.,

⁵ neighbourhood in Sarajevo
2015: 123). When it comes to playing one should consider that it can protect the children from what is happening, in addition it can help to recover traumas (Kaplan, 2000 quoted in Paksuniemi et al., 2015: 122; see also Punamäki, 1982). To recover from traumas is important to experience a childhood with rather positive moments.

Paksuniemi et. al. (2015) investigated the conditions of children's play, which is relevant in research about a war childhood, but they did not emphasise whether or not it led to good moments in a war childhood. One can assume that they had good moments, but it needs a further clarification and investigation.

4.5 Children as Resilient Survivors:

Whenever children are emphasised, they are rather seen as victims than as actors (Wessells, 1998: 636) and they are rarely portrayed in headlines of the media (Gabarino et. al., 1999: 458).

By describing children as individual actors, Nordstrom (2004) researched about children who had to live in the shadow of war. She found that they are rather described as a "lost generation" (Nordstrom, 2004: 184) than as resilient survivors of poverty and war, as she does. Lucić (2016) agrees, since he stated that children from Sarajevo are "neither hopeless nor revengeful, and certainly not a lost generation" (Lucić, 2016: 104). Children, not only in Sarajevo, also in other parts of the world are trying to make the best out of their lives (Nordstrom, 2004: 104).

Nordstrom observed war orphans who were living on the streets in Angola, and her guiding question was related to where peace actually derives from. She argues that peace more likely develops in the "epicenters of violence" (ibid.: 177), rather than by signing any peace agreement, because these children developed their own way to organise their life. The observed children who lived in the middle of a war, but tried to establish peaceful conditions in their microcosm. Their live is determined by common values, such as sharing what they have, finding solutions whenever they face problems and, they had to be really creative to survive and to bring some joy in their lives. She describes extremely resilient survivors who have to live in the shadow of war and therefore had to invent "a strong code of conduct" (ibid.: 176) to have at least some peace.
This research follows the line of thinking that describes children as resilient survivors. It therefore expands the research on war childhood in Sarajevo, since the issue of positive experiences has been rarely discussed before. Furthermore, I argue that it is connected to the research of Ivana Maček. She focuses in her anthropological book 'Sarajevo under siege' (2009) and in the article 'Imitation of life' (Maček, 2007) on the life of civilians and on their living conditions in general, but not on children in particular. The relation of her research and this thesis will be elaborated in the theoretical framework.
5 Theoretical Framework

5.1 Normalisation

The concept of normalisation is used in a broad variety of scientific disciplines and can explain human as well as societal behaviour.

In sociology, it was introduced by Michel Foucault, a French sociologist. He noted that normalisation is a concept to explain the power relations of a society, and its aim is not only to distinguish the majority of 'us' from the minority of 'them' (Leitch & Motion, 2007: 7), rather about the relation of power and knowledge and about the implementation of societal norms. To be outside the societal norms one risks to be punished (Foucault, 1977).

Furthermore, the concept is used in many different settings and context, scholars give various meanings to the concept and use it in combination with several perspectives. I will elaborate on it briefly, before I clarify the relation to this paper.

Some scholars from the fields of education and health sciences (Bronston, 1976; Deatrick et. al., 1999;) use the term normalisation as follows: normalisation helps to reduce prejudices and biases against people of our society who are in any form distinct. Bronston (1976) refers to it as consciousness-raising, furthermore he concludes that "normalisation is a value-based set of principles" (Bronston, 1976: 492). Normalisation describes the process of the integration of an outlying behaviour into the society, or in a smaller group, such as a family.

However, for Taylor (2009) the meaning of normalisation is explained as a refusal to the acceptance of what is considered as "natural, necessary and normal" (Taylor, 2009: 46). Certain patterns of behaviour that are repeated to often, become, when times passes by, accepted as 'normal' (Taylor, 2009: 47).

Having in mind some general thoughts about normalisation, we need to investigate the normalisation of war to understand the analysis and the creation of positivity better. This term appears on a regular basis in academic literature. Several scholars (Solomon, 2009;
Bacevich, 2005; Gavriely-Nuri, 2009) from the field of International Relations (IR) used the concept to explain how wars are justified in the public in order to achieve 'common goals', according to the political perspectives of a country. It was heavily used to argue for the so-called 'operation enduring freedom', the invasion from United States of America (USA) into Iraq in 2003. The public opinion was influenced to link the invasion of Iraq to the war against terror which was fought in Afghanistan, Iraq was presented as a "threat" to the values of the US-American society (Solomon, 2009: 271). Therefore, the public opinion considered the war in Iraq on the same level as the war in Afghanistan and provided support. At some point, people were proud to pay homage to the own troops and did not have to feel guilty for supporting their own troops anymore (Bacevich, 2005: 7). For US citizens the war was normalised, which included a different role of the army: soldiers were supposed to look after each other. (ibid.). Gavriely-Nuri (2009) claims that the consistent use of 'war - metaphors' contributes to a normalisation of war, in the sense that war is considered as a "normal phenomenon" (Gavriely-Nuri, 2009: 153) of humanity and as part of daily life that people do not question anymore (ibid.: 154).

The previous part offers the reader an overview about the concept of normalisation and, for instance, how a war can be normalised within a population. It is done from the perspective of supporting the own troops and the perspective of politicians to justify a war, but not from the viewpoint of civilians who were directly affected by the war. The next section is about the effects of normalisation on the daily life of civilians during the siege.

Maček writes in several of her articles and books about the ordinary life of civilians, which implies as an individual the attempt to have a 'normal' life, but also how societal and therefore collective norms changed during the war.

In her article "the imitation of life", Maček (2007) emphasises that civilians were the main targets of the war, their normality was completely destroyed. The extreme scarcity of water and food supplies created a change of normality and therefore became to the main tools of the besiegers in making the city suffer (Maček, 2007: 42). The only way to avoid the "disrupted normality" (ibid.: 50) was to leave the town behind.

The civilians who stayed, found themselves unwillingly in a "state of waiting" (ibid.: 43), since they could not control their daily life anymore, the population had to adapt their personal life to the environment. The new conditions had to be integrated in the ordinary life, norms were shifting. This was "a process which caused a change in what was perceived as
normal" (ibid.: 55). For example, direct violence (Galtung, 1964), as the exposure to snipers was present in daily life during the simplest tasks, like going to school or while getting some bread. People tried to reestablish their normality every day, but a few seconds later something unexpected happened and one had to "witness its destruction" (Maček, 2007: 57). Some norms, as the good relation to neighbours remained during the war, but most were changed.

Furthermore, there is a connection between individual and societal norms which were shifting. Maček describes in her article that some Sarajevans could not accept humanitarian aid from Islamic donors, since that would mean to accept Islamic norms which could be a threat to the secular Sarajevo (ibid.: 44).

As we can see, norms were shifting and had to be negotiated day by day. Some citizens accepted changes, others found individual ways to deal with it (Maček, 2007: 55; Kelly, 2008: 354). Sarajevo became famous for its war humour, which was based on that everything could happen and that nothing is normal. This certain form of dealing with a situation can be seen as that a "creative acceptance of one's condition is a form of resistance" (Maček, 2007: 55).

In general, one can argue that the concept of normalisation applies to this case, since attitudes, conditions and behaviours which were not in relation at all with daily life before, became immediately normal for people. Unordinary activities and attitudes were normalised, which led to different perception of reality. This is in particular important if we assume that children who were born just before the war, do not know how life used to be like. Children were only familiar with the conditions the knew and these were the conditions "they had first-hand experience of" (Povzanović Frykman, 2016: 98). They grew up in a Sarajevo with a completely different daily life than just a few years before. Non-ordinary conditions, which adults were forced to accept as the state of living in that very moment, is for children accepted as normal, given the fact that they do not know another form of life. To have a different perspective on life, on how to experience daily life might influence the perception of positivity. Thus, it is possible to study the meaning of positivity during a war childhood in Sarajevo through the lens of the concept normalisation.
5.2 Victimisation

The civilians who lived in Sarajevo during the siege were victims, and are often portrayed as that. One attempt of this thesis is to argue that one should not describe them only as victims, because they were also resilient survivors, in particular children. In order to understand why and why not, the concept of victimisation applies to the case of Sarajevo, I will elaborate on the theoretical approach of that concept.

During the war in Yugoslavia, large parts of the populations suffered and were victimised (Ewald; von Oppeln, 2002:39). Ewald and von Oppeln state that the term victimisation is in our world nowadays "highly politicised" (ibid.: 40), which is used to justify political strategies, including war. During their 'war on terror', the USA depicted itself as a victim, threatened by the evil, while the civilians affected by the wars started by the USA. The 'other victim' was "defined as collateral damages" (ibid.). Therefore, we can see that it might not be easy to distinguish between perpetrator and victim, but can also see how the concept is used as a political tool. Jalušić (2004) writes about self-victimisation as a concept used by states to legitimise their actions. Self-victimisation is implemented by politicians in combination with the narrative of victimisation to strengthen and solidify this narrative within a society. The combination of both, self-victimisation and the narrative of victimisation forms a collective identity which claims his own truth and blames the other (Jalušić, 2004: 160). The narrative of victimisation is used by populist parties in Western democracies, such as the French Jean Marie LePen and was, as described above, used by the USA after 9/11 (Ibid.: 161).

Since the existence of the so-called 'new wars' that target intentionally civilians (Ewald & von Oppeln, 2002: 41; Kaldor, 2012), the concept of victimisation becomes, in modern warfare, even more meaningful. Wood et al. (2012) researched on the relation of victimisation and armed intervention, because an intervention results in a shift of power balances within a conflict. This shift impacts the "willingness to target civilians" (Wood et al., 2012: 657) and therefore influences the level of victimisation. Downes (2006) instead argues that civilians were always targeted and killed, no matter how long ago. However, for him there are two

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6 wars such as in Iraq or Afghanistan

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main reasons why to use victimisation as a tool during war. On the one hand, it will save lives of the own troops while it destroys the morale of the noncombatants (Downes, 2006: 189). On the other, in particular when the war is about the annexation of territories, victimisation is a useful method to intimidate the population. Important to mention is that liberal democracies victimise populations even more likely than autocracies do (ibid.: 190).

Holstein & Miller (1990) as well as Enns (2007) do have a slightly different approach to the concept of victimisation as described previously, or rather question it. Enns argues that it can occur that when "everyone is a victim no one is a victim" (Enns, 2007: 3) anymore. He demands a "break out of the world view of the victim and the perpetrator" (ibid.: 33), because at some point one has to 'let it go'. Enns refers to Frantz Fanon, "who witnessed its festering wounds as a psychiatrist in French colonised Algeria, refused victimhood" (Enns, 2007: 35).

Assuming that victimisation is a "social process" (Holstein & Miller, 1990: 103) which establishes victims, it is crucial to study the social construction which can be seen as an "interactional phenomenon" (ibid.). Holstein & Miller investigated the practices which constitute victims instead of studying the person's behaviour and personality (ibid.: 116). Their conclusion describes that "a person as 'victim' can debilitate that person in the minds of other as they interpret ongoing activities through the victim framework" (ibid.: 119). That quote supports my aim of portraying children not as victims, instead to focus on their resilient survival which made it possible to create good moments.

Victimisation as a concept is chosen for this research due to the combination with normalisation in the case of Sarajevo. The Army of Republika Srpska held Sarajevo under siege, and therefore tried to victimise the population (Ewald; von Oppeln, 2002: 39), which had a strong impact on the daily life of civilians in the city. This victimisation forced the population to adapt their life to the given conditions, and this is the point where the concept of normalisation links to victimisation. The civilians, including the children, had to normalise activities, which were not normal before as a result of victimisation.

When looking through the lens of victimisation, the analysis will explore to what extent victimisation actually had an impact on the creation of positive moments, or whether children were resilient to it.
5.3 Memorisation

When doing a narrative research about the past, one has to consider the concept of memorisation in detail. Memory can justify and create behaviour of individuals and groups (Brewer, 2006: 215). The way how the past is remembered matters when researchers want to find meanings of events that happened years ago, because the memory can be influenced by various factors which will be explained in this section. This research relies on personal memories and therefore it is crucial to have a deeper understanding of different types of memory in order to be able to give meaning to what the participants remember when they look back to their childhood.

In sociology, memory has, according to Brewer (2006), different dimensions, an individual and a social one (Brewer, 2006: 214), though other scholars made distinctions between collective and cultural memory. The individual memory is a 'personal remembrance' about the past (ibid.), but also a part of each individual which affects the personal presence and future (Uchendu, 2007: 394). Predominantly, it is hard to preserve the personal memory as an individual or victim, since the history is written by the elite (Seoighe, 2016: 360), but also because memory can be "selective and affected by social change" (Brewer, 2006: 214) and therefore affect the personal narrative. Written history creates a "collective memory which provides a context for identity" (Pennebaker & Banasik, 1997: 18).

"Social remembrance" (Brewer, 2006: 214) dominates the formation of collective memory within a nation or ethnic group. Meanwhile, collective memory in modern societies or nations derives mostly from war time memories (Hoepken, 1999: 190), which is in particular in South East Europe the case, since the emergence of nation states is linked with the collective memory (ibid.: 192).

In BiH the collective memory is strongly connected to ethnicities. Despite this, the War Childhood Museum (WCM) tries to create a collective memory by only focusing on children experiences and not on ethnic belongings, because the ethnicity did not have major effects on the children experiences (Takševa, 2018: 5).

Brewer emphasises the term of "social memory" (Brewer, 2006: 214) which is a modern development in sociology. It connects the collective with the individual memory: personal memory is individual, but contributes to shape social memory (ibid.: 215).
Seoighi (2016), in her article about Sri Lanka's civil war, connects the concepts of victimisation and collective memory. The author found that one party of the civil war reclaimed "conflict memory as a history of resisting victimization" (Seoighe, 2016: 373). Though her research links collective memory to victimisation in a very specific case, it can be transferred to the subject of positive experience during a war childhood in Sarajevo. As I will elaborate in the analysis, by having good moments and experiences during the war, children tried to resist victimisation and therefore the individuals manifested a collective memory which is based on the complexity of a war childhood, as presented for instance in the War Childhood Museum, and not on victimisation.
6 Methodological framework

6.1 Epistemological Standpoint

The epistemology I am using in this thesis is constructivism. Constructivism, portrayed from a broader perspective, aims to have a more "sophisticated understanding of 'traditional security' dynamics than traditional security approaches" (McDonald, 2013: 76). This thought derives from the assumption that "security is a social construction" (ibid.: 71), which is understood differently in certain settings or context. For constructivists, the world is "socially constructed" (ibid.: 70), which allows for the idea that it is always possible to make a change.

An analysis from a constructivist perspective stresses the relevance of various factors, such as social, cultural and historical ones (ibid.: 67). Therefore, it leads to a broader understanding of the lived reality of participants in a study, since a constructivist standpoint includes different perspectives on a subject. By analysing personal narratives, this study stresses various factors which contribute to the construction of, in this case, children's reality during the siege of Sarajevo.

6.2 Method

The chosen method for this paper is a thematic narrative analysis. This qualitative research method is by Creswell described as a "strategy in which the researcher studies the lives of individuals and asks one or more individuals to provide stories about their lives" (Riessman, 2008, quoted in Creswell, 2014: 42). This method offers the chance to center a study around stories which were told by individuals about one event (Creswell, 2007: 54). Chambliss and Schutt (2010) refer to narrative analysis as a way of focusing on individual "experiences in their lives and so make sense of events and actions in which they have participated (Chambliss & Schutt, 2010: 265).
A researcher using this method, has the responsibility to gather information about the context of the 'event' in terms of time and place within the research project (Creswell, 2007: 56), which is done in the background of this paper.

In general, a narrative research should be accompanied by a theoretical framework or perspective, (ibid.: 55) in order to have a lens through which the researcher can give meaning to the collected stories. One other task for the scholar is to "restory" (ibid.) the individual stories into one storyline, basically to create a coherent order according to the existing framework.

In my case, the study will be a thematic narrative analysis. According to Riessman (2005) it is about "the context of a text, what is said more than how it is said, the 'told' rather than the telling" (Riessman, 2005: 2). For me, another criteria to use the thematic narrative analysis is that language is not considered as an object to study itself, instead it is a medium to transfer the content (ibid.: 3), which is important since the material is translated. Detailed information about the material is provided in the next section.

To conduct a thematic narrative analysis allows my research to have rich descriptions of my studied topic and enables me to give meaning to the experiences. Further, to conduct this method allows me to get an in-depth understanding and a holistic depiction of the participant's perspectives by analysing their interviews. Qualitative research is in my case very useful, because it helps to determine the "meaning people give to their lives and actions" (Chambliss & Schutt, 2010: 245).

In general, the weakness of qualitative research is bias and it is centered around the researchers' interpretations, so it is a weakness in this paper.

### 6.3 Material

To conduct thematic narrative analysis, a very rich material is needed in order to explore the meaning of a chosen 'event'. The material for this analysis is provided by the War Childhood Museum (WCM) in Sarajevo. The WCM collects and exhibits personal belongings in combination with a short, very personal story and displays video testimonies. The items are collected from children whose childhood was affected by war, but mainly from those who
lived in Sarajevo and BiH during the war in the early 1990s. A selection of personal belongings and video testimonies is permanently displayed in the exhibition.

I became familiar with the data, because I did an internship at the WCM in autumn 2018. In this paper, a sample of the video testimonies will be analysed. The video testimonies are filmed interviews and were conducted by staff of the WCM in a period between 2015 and 2019. I received transcriptions of the interviews which are translated to English. The original language of the interviews is Bosnian. All translations into English are made by employees of the WCM.

The interviews are semi-structured which allows the interviewee to respond either with a short or a long answer, but also provides an insight into the interviewees' perspectives of an event (Brounéus, 2011: 130, 145). In addition, to use open ended questions helps to "listen to people as they describe how they understand the worlds in which they live and work" (Rubin & Rubin, 1995: 3, quoted in Chambliss & Schutt, 2010: 235).

For this study, I had access to 30 transcribed interviews. Therefore, it is a random sample I received, and I selected out of them 23 interviews who identified some positive moments and experiences during their war childhood and are therefore used in the analysis.

For several reasons, I have to preserve the identity of the interviewees. Therefore, I will only use the first letter of the name and year of birth which can be found in brackets after each quote in the analysis. This procedure is approved in an agreement with the WCM. I am not allowed to publish the interviews, except of the quotes used in the analysis, therefore, all quotes in the analysis are referred to the WCM, although I will not state that after every quote.

The strengths of these data are that they allow a deep insight in the daily life of children and to give a meaning to the positive experiences, which was for me the main criteria to select transcribed interviews as data for this study. Another reason for me to choose this data was the uncomplicated accessibility for me.

Further, Chambliss & Schutt (2010) suggest to think about who is owning the used data of a research paper (Chambliss & Schutt, 2010: 275). In my particular case, the analysed data is owned and stored by the WCM and I only have access to the documents for a limited amount of time.

I did not collect the data by myself, thus it is described as "secondary data" (Chambliss & Schutt, 2010: 192), which is one weakness of the data. When conducting interviews, it can be interesting to have personal interactions as a researcher with the interviewee and observe
the reaction to certain questions. I did not conduct the interviews and therefore my information about the participants is limited. Further, it is hard to make generalisations, because the data reflects the subjective experiences of each participant.

6.4 Ethical Considerations

In social science and in particular when working with personal data, as interviews, the researcher has to consider several ethical aspects.

Usually, as Brounéus (2011) stresses, to conduct interviews can put individuals at risk, such as security concerns in the field, but participants can potentially suffer on "research fatigue" (Brounéus, 2011: 141), when there were previously several other researchers. The main objective as a researcher should be to not harm anyone (ibid.). In my case, ethics play an important role, because this paper is about children's experiences, who belong as minors to "vulnerable populations" (Creswell, 2014: 89), which are exposed to higher risk of being harmed. The interviewees were at the date of the interview all adults who spoke about their childhood and therefore able to sign an informed consent. An "informed consent" (Chambliss & Schutt, 2010: 243) needs to be signed in any case, because participants have the right to know what is the data used for. Since I did not conduct the interviews by myself, I did not have to consider the previous points.

Instead it is relevant to anonymise the identities of the interviewees, as described in the previous section.

Another ethical consideration is about me as a researcher. I had a happy childhood and never had to witness violence. I am also aware that war is in general not positive. I conducted this research to contribute to the understanding of the complexity of war childhood.
7 Analysis

In this first part of the analysis, several interviewees are quoted regarding the first operational question on how they define or remember positive moments during their childhood, before I try to provide a deeper insight on what led to these circumstances. The quotes from the interviewees will be analysed with the help of the concepts mentioned previously. By looking through the lens of normalisation it is possible to explore a distinct perception of positivity, compared with adults. The lens of victimisation offers the opportunity to see to what extent this concept had an impact on the creation of positivity of children, while memorisation is important in the way the participants remember the past. Additionally, I will refer back to the previous research, in particular by the scholars who described children as resilient survivors and not only as victims.

To introduce the analysis of memories regarding positive moments and experiences, I argue it is extremely important to state that a war childhood, in general, is definitely not positive in any sense. Therefore, I will begin the analysis with a negative quote to give an example of how children felt who were affected by the war, before I move on to positive experiences. Further, I want to clarify that some of the interviewees did not speak about anything positive at all. B. describes the last day in his childhood before the war started, as follows:

"It was a very sunny day and the windows were open, I was sitting on my parents’ bed and reading “Orlovi rano lete”7 by Branko Ćopić... and that’s the last memory of some normal feeling in my life! Everything after that was an absolute catastrophe, one horrible and traumatic experience..." (B., 1984)

For him the siege was a horrible experience, he was not able, even about 20 years later, to see anything positive, because he could not remember a single good moment in those four years. We have to assume that this is not only the case for B., but also for many other people in Sarajevo who were children under the siege in the 1990s.

7 Translation: "Eagles fly early"
7.1 In What Ways Do Adults Remember Positive Experiences of Their War Childhood in Sarajevo?

From now on, I will focus on the positive experiences because this is the aim of this paper. "...the first thing that came to my mind was how happy we were, and not how we felt scared!" (D., 1987) answers the question of how she remembers her war childhood. She does not elaborate on what she means by "happy", but it can stand for a variety of moments. Another example, For E., the memory is more reflected, but he emphasises the positive moments rather than the negative ones: "I like to remember the good ones more than the bad ones" (E., 1984). This might be related to what is known as a 'selective' memory, which in scientific terms is known as the "Pollyanna Principle" (Matlin & Gawron, 1979: 411), but is based on a novel by Porter from 1913 (Peterson & Steen, 2002: 244). Pollyanna has since then been seen as a synonym for someone who only remembers the positive experiences (Matlin, 2017: 315). The term "Pollyanna Principle states that pleasant information is processed more accurately and efficiently than less pleasant information" (Matlin & Gawron, 1979: 411).

As presented in the previous section, there are participants who have positive memories about their war childhood. The aim is to find out how these moments and experiences were characterised, which I will do in the following section.

D., who was almost a grown up during the siege, was able to speak more precisely about the good memories:

"In 1993, I met my soul-mate, my forever love, spent the whole war with him, married him, and today, out of that love, we now have two beautiful children. In a certain sense this love makes me a war profiteer." (D., 1976)

For her, the memory is based on something which lasted for the longest possible time. One of the most beautiful things, which we as humans can experience is to meet the right person to share life with, happened to her during the war.

For some others, these 'good' moments happened during parties, for smaller children when celebrating a birthday, as for J.: "My mom would make a crepe cake for my brother’s birthday... all the kids who lived in our building would be invited to the birthday party... Everyone was so happy" (J., 1984). Small, usually daily presents, such as having some
delicious sweets and coming together brightened a day to make everyone feel good. It is preserved as a good memory.

What is for smaller children the cake, is for youths a party with friends. To hang out, dance, sing, listen to music or even play music combined with good memories belongs to most of all teenage years. So it is remembered also for adolescence during the siege, speaking about a party in one of the many basements in the city: "... there were a lot of us and a couple of our friends would play guitars. And that was, somehow... I can rightly say that it was, looking back on it, the most wonderful part of my life!" (M., 1977). Even though it was wartime, it is considered by her as the most beautiful times of her life.

When T. thinks back to her childhood, she remembers the marriage of her uncle in particular:

"those were really moments when you would forget about the war, you would simply... Enjoy. And you would have fun. But unfortunately, those moments were rare because that's what's the war like" (T., 1984).

She remembers these rare moments very well, but is still realistic to say, that the whole childhood was not positive, indeed it was mainly determined by the negative effects of war.

For children of a younger age during the war, their memories are a mixture of forgetting about the war and positive memories. Positive experiences occurred in other contexts than presented before: their life is rather determined by playing with toys and the need to feel protected and loved by their parents or teachers: "In the kindergarten we had songs, toys, other kids, fun, teachers who were always smiling, and that was... When we would enter it, we would completely forget about the war" (I., 1990).

Other children had fun and good moments when they were playing, like children play, with friends and toys. Just to have the opportunity to play is one of the main demands for children in general. For E. this was when she had the opportunity to visit a friends' home: "I remember that they had a huge apartment and that I had a lot of fun there because they had a lot of toys and I was able to play with them" (E., 1984).

For some children, their entire war childhood was to a certain extent a positive adventure. Daily risks were embedded in their playtime, something dangerous was remodelled into something fun. F. reflects on it as being as a child trapped in the contradictions of war, or as he formulates it in being "in the grey zone. To us, the war was a
positive thing. I mean, positive is an idiotic word, but it wasn’t... We remember it as something fun" (F., 1981). Important to mention is, that he added that this positive or 'fun' experience was only possible for him, since he had "so much fun because no one died." This sounds like a reflection about his experiences, what he perceived as positive could potentially be horrible for others. Werner (2012) came to a similar result: he stated that the higher the exposure to violence, the bigger the psychological impact of it (Werner, 2012: 554), which means that 'fun' experiences were more likely to occur when there is little or no contact with violence. F.'s quote can be put in relation to the meaning an individual gives to experiences, which can be different, depending on the context. Even years later, the given meaning can totally change interrelated to the "familial, historical and cultural context" (Reese & Fivush, 2008: 202).

Therefore, many children were living in their own microcosm, a world which is based on their constructions of realities. As a result of the normalisation of attitudes, conditions and behaviours, which did not exist before the war, daily life changed. Thus, children took the conditions for granted, since they had never experienced anything other than war. Therefore, children were growing up in these normalised conditions, which for example meant being exposed to snipers and not having enough food. They created their own meaning for their experiences, which turned out to be positive as well. This is similarly described by Nordstrom (2004) when she states that children who live under the shadow of war try to make the best out of the situation (Nordstrom, 2004: 104). They are not biased like adults in the sense that they know other condition of daily life, but were forced to act according to the 'new norms' which developed due to the siege. However, while children created their own world, parents and neighbours contributed by creating an environment, which gave them opportunity to enjoy positive moments. The process of the creation of such a 'safe space', either way by parents or the children themselves will be discussed in the following section.
7.2 What Factors Contributed to the Creation of Positive Moments and Experiences?

7.2.1 Creativity and Small Children

Positive moments and memories do not appear out of nothing, no matter if within a war or in times of peace. Somehow there has to be a construct of causes which contribute to the creation of positivity. Especially during the siege of Sarajevo, which was determined by scarcity of food, water and also toys or any other items, a high level of creativity was demanded. Regarding the voices of the interviewed persons, there are two main reasons that helped the creation of a 'good' or positive memory: on one hand, the ability to improvise by being creative and solidarity on the other. For younger children, the parents created and made up items to play with, as A. remembers: "they used seat-belts from cars to make us swings between the sheds, so we had a small playground in the basement" (A., 1985). Sometimes, during the rare moments when the shelling was not intense, it was even possible to play outside like in winter 1993. In Sarajevo skiing is actually very popular, but during the war, people had to use home-made skies: "This is how we made them: we would find a plastic crate, destroy it, bend it to make skies, and so we all had small skies and everyone was skiing..." (M., 1984).

7.2.2 Creativity and Youth

As everywhere else in the world, adolescents had other interests than sitting on a swing or playing with hand-made toys. They wanted to party, dance and have fun! But in order to listen to music, electricity is required, which was not available the majority of the time.: E. went to quite a few of these innovative parties, she shared that moment in the following way:

"C\(^8\). had an exercise bike... So, the DJ, that is, the person who was lucky enough to be the DJ for the night, would have to sit in the armchair and spin its pedals to..."

\(^8\) C. was a friend of E.
generate power using the bicycle dynamo that we used to listen to cassette tapes. The DJ would change tapes while we danced, occasionally making eye contact and flirting with our crushes. We used to spend hours – entire days – that way” (E., 1978).

The previously mentioned quotes show the creativity in practical terms, the creation of an environment which gives the opportunity to smile and to have a good time. The reason to have enough creativity and the will to set up a surrounding like the ones just presented demands a particular mindset of people: the process of normalisation is progressing, the negotiation of what is considered as 'normal' shifted from day to day (Maček, 2007: 54), but the war also forced almost everyone into a mood of "amazing mental and emotional display of creative power" (ibid.: 55).

However, creation, the creative power, can also be executed internally: "we imagined situations with which we made our days better, simply bringing some light into this darkness" (D., 1976).

7.2.3 Relationship to Neighbours

In addition to the term 'creativity', there is another really important factor which contributes to good moments: the relationship with neighbours, which was stated by several interviewees. People shared the little they had with others, not only in a materialistic sense, but also in terms of taking care of each other. The younger children B. (1987) and I. (1990) perceived it as positive, they felt secure in that environment and perceived it as an improvement of life: "That’s one positive side of living in the basement – you shared everything with your neighbours!” (B., 1987). Or I. emphasises that: "They all wanted to look after us because we were the youngest there. We played, talked, cuddled with our mum. There” (I., 1990).

One tried to integrate the new situations in the daily life, such as the living in the basement and adapted the way of life to the given conditions. This can also be identified as a typical process of normalisation, as the daily repetitions of activities become normal at some point (Taylor, 2009: 47).

The manifestation of such new norms, the adaption of life, as living in the basement and trying to have an ordinary life, was labelled as "the imitation of life" (Maček, 2007: 55).
7.2.4 Children's Perspective

The construction of children's reality and what children perceive as normal depends on the conditions they grow up in. The relevance why this research seeks to discover how children perceive normality and the relation to positivity will become clearer in the following section. The next quote shows that the perception of normality is very different for children compared to adults or even adolescents, who remember the time before the war. "When you're a kid, when all the kids get together in that dark basement, it looks different, because you don't know for any better. You don't know that there are different ways of life out there" (A., 1983).

Children recognise what they experience as normal, and they do not know that it could be different. A. mentions to not know another world, or another reality than being in the basement, so to so stay in the basement was not considered as something humiliating or bad. Therefore, children constructed their world which was studied more detailed by Jean Piaget. He did research on the topic of how children construct their own world. He introduced the term "the moral judgement of the child" (Lickona, 1978: 26). According to him, children make judgements whether something is right or wrong, fair or unfair without being educated in it. Children develop these ideas by themselves (ibid.). Further, "Piaget believed that the child organises her world by first organising herself" (Mahoney, 2002: 746).

Piaget's theoretical contribution can help to understand why children perceive certain things or situations as positive, while the parents have negative associations, as depicted in the following quote:

"And I know that I loved eating lentils, which my parents detested – to them it was something disgusting, while my brother and I enjoyed eating lentils and pasta, but especially lentils, and they thought it was something terrible – I think they never even tried them." (I., 1990)

Children did not have prejudices against food, they judge based on their taste or what they liked. However, some parents perceived this food negatively, because they received it through humanitarian aid. This reminded them that they weren't able to provide food for their own families, which was humiliating for some adults. In general, when it comes to humanitarian
aid, children perceived it as something good, they looked forward to receive some sweets. Children make their judgements based on their senses (Povrzanović Frykman, 2016: 96).

Furthermore, for the children it was familiar and normal to live in a world with permanent changes and the possibility to lose everything. The war was not an interruption of the everyday life as it was for adults and adolescents, because the only life Sarajevo children knew, the only they had a "first-hand experience of" was a life of war (Povrzanović Frykman, 2016: 98).

### 7.2.5 Shifted Realities

Following from that, it seems that children perceived the state of war as normal, which led to a change of their own constructed reality in comparison to their parents' reality. Children developed a different perspective on life which in this case I will call the 'shift of reality'. The following quote shows that something abnormal was considered as normal (Maček, 2007: 54):

"I didn't perceive my wounding as something unusual – that was ok, you know...
Because after that I went back to the basement - to my usual life...We were not aware of anything, of what was going on. We had fun in the basement: adults always tried to entertain us; they would make up games" (B., 1987)

As B. mentioned, extreme situations such as being wounded become normal, which is a more extreme form of normalisation than what has been described previously in this analysis. Especially children had to take risks in order to fulfil their daily tasks, such as going to school or to play. But it was not seen as something extreme: a pragmatic statement to the experience of threats in the daily life was expressed by V.: "you make things that were not normal-normal and that was the only way out, actually" (V., 1978). Incredible things became normal, not only to hide in basements, but also live under a permanent threat to life.

Furthermore, one of the biggest desires of children is to play, so "We would even escape from one basement to another so that we could be together and play with each other" (A., 1984). In order to have a positive experience, incredible risks were taken. When children escaped from basements they usually were immediately exposed to sniper fire. So, they took highest risks in order to play and to have fun. But, as previously mentioned, children are
creative when it comes to playing. In the surrounding environment, ways to play were always found, not thinking that it was actually really risky:

"I found it interesting. I was a kid, so for me everything about it was fun: running; having to memorise which stretches of the route I needed to sprint through, where I’d have to walk against a building, how to hide... I found it interesting." (M., 1984).

At some point, it was not only normal to take risks in order to have some good moments, which we saw in the previous paragraph, but the 'shift of reality' continued to the point that the children's perception was overall dominated by the war:

"And I know that when I talk about the children’s perception of the war, I know how I was embarrassed because my father wasn’t wounded. I mean, it’s crazy. (laughs) That only talks about how kids think about it because everyone had someone who was wounded in the war. There were kids whose fathers were wounded, and my father, our father wasn’t, and I was feeling somewhat embarrassed. And one day my dad comes and says that while he was waiting in the line for water, a shrapnel scratched him... I was so happy..., terrible, terrible. I just went out and I was telling everyone: "A shrapnel scratched my father’’, I mean it was crazy because I was proud of it, horrible." (H., 1984)

The shift of reality came to the point that good and bad were intertwined in a very complicated way. It was common and normal to see someone wounded, something which did not disturb anymore. Based on the previous quote we can conclude that a happy moment in a war childhood is not necessarily connected with a positive experience, it also can be related to a horrible event as children can misinterpret the situation.

The next quote is also about the interconnection of good and bad. It is how an actually good moment, a positive event can become horrible due to the circumstances:

"Once I received humanitarian aid because I had been wounded – that’s one of the difficult memories... I also remember that one day at school they were giving us toys; we were divided into two groups: ‘‘those who had lost mother or father’’ and ‘‘those who had been wounded’’. There was a huge pile of toys, so those who had lost a parent got better toys than those who had been wounded. I had mixed feelings – you know... I looked at that pile and saw that they had better toys... I picked some plastic iron; I don’t know where it is now, but I know I took it. And I
also remember that one boy from my class also got a toy, and so we were talking about it, you know: “What did you get?” “Well, I see that our pile was better than yours,” and then some of the wounded kids said: “I wish I had lost someone, so that I could pick a better toy!” which was just awful. Terrible! But I will never understand that segregation. That’s the memory that I associate with toys and the way we managed to get them. Of course, some international organisation was giving those toys, so..." (B., 1987)

To receive a present, or to get a toy is actually something which probably most of us will preserve as a positive memory, but as we can see in this case, under the condition of war an actual positive act can become extremely difficult. Parents, the caretaker of the children did not have the resources to get new toys, due to the war. As they had to adapt their life to only focusing on surviving there was, as mentioned previously, a scarcity of pretty much everything, and it was therefore normal not to have any toys. From the perspective of the humanitarian aid organisation, the children were very vulnerable in the war and therefore in need of their help. Obviously, children were victims, the most innocent victims, but it was not considered that by portraying a person like that, someone can become weakened in the minds of others (Holstein & Miller, 1990: 119). Therefore, as we can see when thinking about the quote from B., the children were unnecessarily victimised, because the humanitarian aid which aimed to support, failed in that sense to provide help. Actually, by their distinction of the children, they made it worse. The vulnerable perspectives of the children changed to the extent that they wished to lose their parents, because it would give them access to the 'nice' toys provided by the humanitarian aid organisations.

In the context of the previous quote by B. (1987), there is another significant finding regarding memory. As stated in the theoretical framework, usually, the individual memory forms the social memory (Brewer, 2006: 215). In this specific case, the individual memory does not contribute to the social memory of war childhood in Sarajevo. In general, humanitarian aid organisations are in the social memory of children considered as something good (Povrzanović Frykman, 2016: 98), while B. (1987) has bad associations and therefore memory with humanitarian aid.
7.2.6 Children and Sarajevo Humour

As mentioned in the introduction, the definition of the term positivity is very subjective, but in this thesis, it is linked to joy and to be able to laugh. However, laughing is often combined with humour. As mentioned in the theoretical framework, Maček (2007) pointed out that the way of using humour during the wartime in Sarajevo was important when dealing with the situation, the conditions of daily life. It can even be considered that a "creative acceptance of one's condition is a form of resistance" (Maček, 2007: 55). As a result of normalisation of the condition, some people lost hope, or accepted their life as it was, but most tried somehow to manage the daily life. To be able to use humour helped a lot to express critique or comments (ibid: 56) on the conditions. The use of humour as a tool was not only exclusively for adults, children did it as well, since children imitate their parents. This form of children’s learning was observed in particular when it comes to "parental role-behaviour" which can be surprising for parents (Bandura, 1963: 2). Thus, during the siege, children imitated the dark Sarajevo humour. L. and his friends have an example from playing soccer:

"all of us played together. It was a quite good situation, so to say, and I remember some of our jokes, like: “It doesn’t matter if someone ends up in a hospital, everything’s OK as long as sniper doesn’t hit the ball”, because we had enough people, but we didn’t have a ball" (L., 1984).

Regarding the definition of positivity which states that it is combined with joy and laughing, the resistance to the conditions through the use of the dark humour can be seen as a contribution to positivity.

7.2.7 Resistance of Children

Consequently, there are, apart from humour, other possibilities to resist the war and the given living conditions in order to create positive experiences: Adults, as well as children, still tried to live a 'normal' life, a life which is similar to before the war started. They did things which are normal in times of peace, for instance reading sophisticated literature:

"We thought that it was completely normal, for example, to read books, to feel like we are part of the civilisation. That was our form of resistance. We, the young people, used to read Dostoevsky, Hesse, and Goethe despite the war...These are some positive things that I carry from the war." (N., 1974)
Resistance to the war can differ from child to child, and, it can be a positive memory. Resistance therefore is only the attempt to pursue the daily life or activities: "I trained for competitions even though Sarajevo was under siege. I trained for dance competitions. And I’m really glad I did. I think that’s a great thing." (A., 1983).

This resistance, the motivation to survive, to play and have fun which is in relation with hard training makes clear, how children were not only victims, but also resilient survivors, who tried to follow their dreams, at least to the extent to which it was possible under the siege.

Children in Sarajevo are therefore not a "lost generation" (Lucić, 2016: 104), as they are suggested to be according to Lucić. Of course, they were victimised, since that strategy was heavily used by the Serbian Army during the siege, but one can argue, that the occupiers failed to some extent. One reason why victimisation was used as a war strategy was to intimidate the population and to take away the civilians' dignity (Downes, 2006: 190). But, as shown in the previous quotes, at least the children did not lose their dignity. They faced challenges and extreme situations which were not positive, like the exposure to violence, but still 'kept their head up'. Children were resilient enough to find their own way to organise their life, they appreciated sharing the little they had with, for example, their neighbours out of solidarity. Nordstrom described a similar resistance to war when writing about children on the streets of Angola, who resisted by sharing with each other, and whenever a problem occurred they were creative to find a solution for it (Nordstrom, 2004: 176). The link of resistance with positivity lies in neglecting the war by continuing 'normal' activities which include positive experiences.

However, children found their original forms of resistance to the war while not necessarily acting as a victimised group. It is important to understand why children still had the energy to do so. Kirschman explains that children are able, even in the worst conditions, to react positively (Kirschman quoted in Paksuniemi et al., 2015: 123).

7.3 Discussion & Results:

The first operational question about the definition of positive moments and experiences during a war childhood differs from person to person. Some of the interviewees said that they
prefer to remember the good moments, these were for some the moments in which you could forget about the war. The younger the children, the more these moments were connected to play, celebrations or getting a cake - very little things. For adolescents it was for example to have the opportunity to go to a party and dance. As we can see, there is a difference in the perception of positivity between younger children and adolescents, but this difference is not due to the condition of war, rather about the interests of the different age groups. While younger children like more to celebrate a children's birthday party while being surrounded by parents or caretakers, adolescents prefer to dance, listen to music and hang out with friend of their age.

In general, one can argue that these moments and experiences did occur in relation to a 'normal' life. These moments are not much different than for children who grew up in times of peace, but maybe they are better remembered, or even perceived as more positive, since the childhood for the most children was dominated by an un-normal life which became normal (Maček, 2007: 55).

The second operational question sought the factors which contributed to the creation of such positive moments and experiences. The discussion will follow the different sections and conclude the results.

Many of the interviewed persons named the term creativity as an important factor contributing to a positive experience. Regarding how old the children were, it is visible that there is a difference between age groups: For smaller children, who were not older than 12 years, they relied on their parents' creativity in order to enjoy a good moment. Due to the process of normalisation, parents were forced to adapt their life to the given conditions and their life was interrupted by the war (Maček, 2007: 50). In order to provide their children with toys or play equipment they had to be creative and build them by themselves.

In comparison, adolescents were creative and innovative by themselves. For them, a good experience was a party with good music. They created their environment to have a good time by themselves, by, for example, using a dynamo of a bicycle to gain electricity.

The second contributing factor was the relationship to neighbours. Solidarity was displayed through the exchange of items, taking care of each other, which offered children the opportunity to enjoy a good experience.

As argued in the analysis, the process of normalisation influenced the children's perspective of the world which contributed to the positive experiences. Children perceived
certain moments or events as positive while adults did not. Children did not know any better, they organised their life around that what they knew and what they were familiar with. For instance, to eat certain foods was for adults humiliating, because they could not afford something better, while children did not know about the existence of better food and really liked it. Therefore, children have positive memories on certain things, which was only possible through their individual perspective.

For many children, good and bad was sometimes intertwined. Some memories of having a positive experience by being happy, actually became horrible memories. As elaborated previously, by having a positive feeling about the Dad being wounded, because children thought that this is something to be proud of, is based on shifted perspectives on children, or on the shift of the constructed reality. Therefore, a positive moment in war childhood is not necessarily combined with something positive. In this case, the contributing factor is the shift of reality.

Children adapted the dark Sarajevo humour from their parents, not only to deal with the daily life, but also to have some positive moments. However, humour is combined with laughing and therefore a contributing factor to positive moments.

A bit more complex is the relation of positivity and the resistance of children. By pursuing the activities they liked, even during the war, they resisted to be victimised and kept their dignity. According to the Cambridge Dictionary (2019), positivity is defined as "...giving cause for hope and confidence". To resist the conditions by continuing their individual life contributed to have positive moments. Maybe without knowing, they had their personal way of resisting the war, resisting the victimisation, which made them resilient survivors.
8 Conclusion:

The overall research question was:
How do children who grew up during the siege of Sarajevo perceived positivity when they think back to experiences of their war childhood?

In the introduction, the term positivity was defined as being a subjective impression, but also to be full of hope and confidence. I can state now, that children did have positive experiences, but also that every person perceives it differently. After the analysis, we can even identify six main contributing factors which created positive experiences. These can be explained by the theoretical concepts. In particular, by looking at the positive experiences through the lens of the concepts normalisation and memorisation offered the opportunity to elaborate on the construction of such experiences.

Generally, it is important to mention that children are able to find a positive meaning in an event, due to many individual reasons, because they are able to react positive, even in the worst conditions (Kirschman quoted in Paksuniemi et al., 2015: 123). Therefore, I can conclude that, in Sarajevo, children had positive experiences during their war childhood, but perceived it in different ways as explained in the analysis.

I will conclude this section with a statement of one participant which explains the importance and need of research and memory of a war childhood:

"One should talk about what happened, but that’s my life, that’s part of my life and my memories, and I always remember it with a feeling of nostalgia and with a smile on my face." (A., 1978)

8.1 Future Research

This research contributes to the understanding of the complexity of a war childhood in Sarajevo. I have two main suggestions for research in this field. First, this is a qualitative research approach regarding positive experiences in a war childhood. I suggest for the future
to investigate in a quantitative research with a representative sample how many children actually do have positive memories of their war childhood.

Second, in qualitative terms, the resistance of children to war by the attempt to live an ordinary life can be further investigated in the case of Sarajevo.
9 References


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