CLINICAL SOCIOLOGY: RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

BOSNIAN REFUGEES IN AMERICA

New Communities, New Cultures

Reed Coughlan
Judith Owens-Manley

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Research and Practice

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Bosnian Refugees in America
New Communities, New Cultures

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Preface

In April of 1992, war began in Bosnia. Sarajevo, site of the 1984 Winter Olympics, and, we were told, one of the most beautiful cities in the world, became a city under siege. For all of the people of Bosnia, life shifted in unimaginable ways in a matter of hours, days, or weeks. An immediate exodus began from Bosnia, and people who had never anticipated leaving their country became refugees, dependent upon a world system of resettlement for displaced persons.

This book relates the experiences of a hundred Bosnian families who came to Utica, a town in upstate New York. Bosnians in Utica came here as refugees beginning in 1993, having fled from the wars of succession in the former Yugoslavia. Our study evolved over several years as a result of our interests in the war in Bosnia and the massive flow of refugees that it precipitated. We began work on the project in the late 1990s as we set out to learn about the war and to explore refugee experiences of displacement, transit, and resettlement. Our intent is to portray the experience of Bosnian refugees in one American city and to capture, in their words, in as much detail as possible their adjustment to a new community and a new culture.

The community that serves as host to these Bosnian families is unique in several respects. It is a small city with a relatively large population of refugees who have been resettled here by the Mohawk Valley Resource Center for Refugees (hereinafter, MVRCR). MVRCR was established in 1979 with a mission to resettle refugees and to aid them in becoming self-sufficient. Since its inception, MVRCR has assisted nearly 11,000 refugees from more than twenty different countries. Approximately 5,000 of these refugees are from Bosnia.

In addition to the interviews with one hundred families and the review of literature on the war and the refugee experience, information about the resettlement experience of Bosnians was gathered from a number of other sources. Owens-Manley has served on the Board of Directors of MVRCR for eight years and is currently the Board president. Both authors are also well acquainted with many current and past staff members at MVRCR who have been generous with their time and information. Also, through our many informal contacts within the Bosnian community, we have been apprised of news, events, and rumors that shaped the Bosnian experience in upstate New York.

This project was a continuous learning experience for us, and even our considerable access to and familiarity with parts of the Bosnian community were not enough at some junctures. At one point about three quarters of the way through our interviews, we were told that there was a rumor afloat that we might be working for the United States Central Intelligence Agency (C.I.A.) or the Federal Bureau of Investigation (F.B.I.) and that we were trying to catch people working "under the table." We immediately halted our interviews and planned a large picnic in a town park for the seventy-five families whom we had interviewed. A Bosnian caterer prepared six whole lambs, barbequed on the spit, in Bosnian style, and we hired a Bosnian band to provide music for folk dancing at the picnic. The picnic was a great success. It helped to dispel the rumor and allowed us to complete the interviews in the ensuing weeks and months.

This project would not have been possible without the support of and funding from Empire State College, State University of New York (SUNY) and Hamilton College. The initial research and interviews in 1999–2000 were supported by a year-long research grant awarded to Coughlan by the SUNY Empire State College Arthur Imperatore Community Fellowship. Empire State College later provided a half-year sabbatical that made the completion of the manuscript possible. In October 2003, a travel grant awarded by Empire State College made it possible for Coughlan to travel to Croatia and Bosnia, where he visited several families whose relatives we had interviewed in Utica. This visit helped to corroborate some of the information we discuss in the book. The Arthur Levitt Public Affairs Center at Hamilton College supported the project extensively through the funding of student research assistants, equipment and supplies, library resources, and funding for completion of the manuscript.

We express special thanks to the following individuals, without whom we could not have finished our project and our book: our colleagues Linda Sallett, Kris Paap, Linda Weber, and Hal Goldman for reading and providing invaluable comments on drafts of our work; librarian Jacquelyn Coughlan, Institute of Technology at Utica-Rome, SUNY, for her considerable assistance in locating resources for us and the reference librarians at Hamilton College for their assistance in finding maps for this volume and for obtaining the necessary copyright permissions; Karen Raybeck and Sally Carman for assisting in the preparation of the final manuscript; Colin Owens for the graphic design of the illustrations; and Hamilton College student research assistants from the beginning of the project—Timothy Palmer, Tonya Bloomer, and Amela Porca.

Our interpreters Mirha Osijan and Denis Mistric traversed a language barrier for us that we would never have been able to cross. Denis became more than our interpreter and was truly a collaborator with us in the research project, as well as a friend. We are also grateful to our friends from Bosnia, now American citizens, who graciously agreed to read the manuscript and provide feedback on short notice: Berislav and Lily Vidovic, Denis Mistric, Suvada Veiz, and Mirha Osijan.

We are, of course, primarily indebted to all of the families who consented to share their stories with us. Nearly every family we interviewed invited us back to talk, to have coffee, and to share a meal. They were generous in their conversation, anxious to describe their experiences, and sometimes frustrated with the language barrier themselves. We had approached our initial interviews with a little trepidation about sensitive topics; we wished first and foremost to do no harm. But our overwhelming experience confirmed what Stevan Weine reported about his work with Bosnian refugees in Chicago. As he puts it, "testimony functions in both the private and the public realms, as a means for individual recovery and as a means of bearing witness to historical and social realities related to political violence" (Weine *et al.*, 1998, p. 1720). We were not engaged in psychotherapeutic work, but our visits and conversations with families who had experienced ethnic cleansing bore witness to their lived experience; these families often thanked us for caring enough to ask and to listen. Now it is our turn, once again, to thank them.

Contents

1

Community Research and Practice with Refugees: An Overview

> Creating narratives that are filled with our life experiences may be the only way we can know and understand our journey through this world (Stone, 1996, p. 42).

During the last century, the world has become more connected than ever before. Improvements in transportation and modifications in immigration law have meant increasingly diverse populations for many countries to a degree that would not have been possible a century ago. Today, persons displaced from their countries of origin by wars and civil strife constitute much of the foreign-born population in countries around the world. Disagreement over who has the responsibility to respond to the world's problems and what the response should be is a critical issue as we begin the twenty-first century. This chapter presents an overview of refugee resettlement in the global arena, as well as the more specific policies and procedures in the United States, in order to set the context for resettlement services for refugees in local communities.

The story of global resettlement provides an important context for this volume, which tells the tale of Bosnian refugees who have relocated to one community in central New York, in the United States. Policies developed by each of the world's countries impact where displaced persons are able to relocate and how restricted their choices are. Policies also influence the provision of local services as displaced persons adapt to new communities. Finally, policies create the distinctions between a refugee, an immigrant, or an asylee and determine the ways in which individual countries respond to each population.

Foreign-born residents in the United States may arrive as refugees, immigrants, or asylum seekers. According to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, "a refugee is an alien outside the United States who is unable or unwilling to return to his or her country of nationality because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution" (United Nations, 1951). Immigrants typically emigrate for better economic opportunities, pulled to a new life, while refugees are pushed out and forced to accept a change for political reasons, often under tragic and violent circumstances (Kunz, 1973). The departure of refugees from

their home country may be precipitous or involuntary, and can incur great personal loss. Asylum seekers may enter the United States illegally and then seek to remain, for reasons similar to refugees but without that official designation (Sinnerbrink *et al*., 1997).

Global Refugee Resettlement

The rapid expansion of the world's refugee population has presented the international community with "practical challenges and ethical dilemmas" that have changed considerably over the last several decades (UNHCR, 1995, p. 11), and the burden of supporting the world's growing refugee population now falls most heavily on those who can least afford it. Hein (1993, p. 45) estimates that "the third world shelters 96 percent of the world's 17.5 million refugees". Refugee flows have changed in nature, with increasingly violent and prolonged civil wars displacing millions of persons worldwide. These issues have precipitated considerable discussion about how communities and nations should respond (UNHCR, 2000).

The United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that at the end of 2003, refugees around the globe numbered 9.7 million persons. This represents a reduction of one-fifth in the global refugee population over a period of two years, largely due to the increase in "durable solutions"—the ability of refugees to successfully repatriate to their own country (UNHCR, 2004, p. 3). Refugees are given opportunities to integrate into the labor and housing markets in local communities by some host countries, while in others they are confined to camps and given local or international assistance. UNHCR estimates the total number of internally displaced persons at 23.6 million, and refugees who are warehoused for ten years or more number 7.35 million (USCR, 2004, p. 1).

The major countries of origin for refugees by 2004 were Afghanistan, Sudan, Burundi, DR Congo, Palestine, Somalia, Iraq, Vietnam, Liberia, and Angola. Table 1.1 shows the point of origin of the world's refugees in 2003, as well as the relative changes in the numbers of refugees brought about by durable solutions during that year. The greatest increases occurred in Liberia and Sudan, while the largest decreases happened in Angola, Afghanistan, and Iraq (UNHCR, 2004, p. 3).

The main countries in which refugees were resettled under UNHCR-auspices in 2003 were the United States (54 percent); Canada (17 percent); Australia (15 percent); Norway (5 percent); and Sweden (3 percent). Refugee resettlement including, but not limited to, UNHCR-sponsored resettlement included 28,400 refugees for the United States, 11,900 for Australia, and 10,700 for Canada. However, when all countries of first asylum are included, the main countries of asylum are Pakistan,

Table 1.1. Main Points of Origins of the World's Refugees in 2003.

Origin	Begin 2003	End 2003	Annual change
Afghanistan	2,510,300	2,136,000	−14.9%
Sudan	508,200	606,200	+19.3%
Burundi	574,700	531,600	−7.5%
DR Congo	424,900	453,400	+6.7%
Palestine	428,800	427,800	−0.2%
Somalia	432,200	402,200	−6.9%
Iraq	422,100	368,400	−12.7%
Vietnam	373,700	363,200	−2.8%
Liberia	275,600	353,300	+28.2%
Angola	429,400	323,600	−24.6%

Source: UNHCR, 2004. About half of the world's refugees are female (49 percent), and 43 percent are children under eighteen years of age.

Islamic Republic of Iran, Germany, and the Republic of Tanzania (UNHCR, 2004). Displacement of people who are resettling around the globe is viewed from two main perspectives.

Perspectives on Displacement

There are two broad approaches to the discourse on displaced people: the realist perspective, characterized by distinct refugee and immigrant categories, and the world system perspective. The realist perspective encompasses the push–pull theory of international migration popularized by Kunz (1973, 1981) and distinguishes refugees from immigrants as distinct categories. A world system perspective, by contrast, emphasizes the shared experiences of refugees and immigrants and the close relationship that exists between deteriorating economic conditions and political conflict (Hein, 1993). Hein (1993, p. 44) notes that these two perspectives "lead an uneasy coexistence within the field".[1]

The Realist Perspective

The realist perspective is captured by the description of refugee movements as those which have different motives than those of voluntary migrants.

[1] This literature review does not purport to cover all scholarship relating to refugees worldwide but focuses on authors who address the transition and adaptation experiences of refugees arriving in advanced industrialized societies. We acknowledge the important and substantial body of work on forced migration (Harrell-Bond and Monahan, 1988; Harrell-Bond, 1986; *Forced Migration Review*), and on refugees in other parts of the world (Ager, 1999; Adelman and Sorenson, 1994; Ferris, 1993) but chose to limit our discussion for purposes of parsimony.

Migration is depicted as a dichotomy in which refugees are pushed, forcibly displaced from their country of origin, while immigrants are voluntarily impelled by a pull from another country to take flight. It is, in fact, "the reluctance to uproot oneself, and the absence of positive original motivations to settle elsewhere, which characterizes all refugee decisions and distinguishes the refugee from the voluntary migrants" (Kunz, 1973, p. 130). Kunz (1973) acknowledges that the distinction between refugee and non-refugee immigrants is less clear in resettlement but proposes that the compulsory displacement of refugees creates unique factors in outcomes and is the reason to keep the categories distinct.

Refugee movements from the home country may be anticipatory or acute; the anticipatory refugee leaves in a more prepared fashion pushed by what he or she senses are impending changes. Acute refugee movements are pushed by armies or massive political changes in either mass flight, or individual or group escapes (Kunz, 1973). Kunz points out, however, that "the fact that some anticipatory refugee moves superficially resemble voluntary migrations should not deter us from classifying these as refugee movements. To correctly identify these movements, knowledge of the historical background becomes indispensable" (Kunz, 1973, p. 132). If one feels *pushed,* the choice of a resettlement country is based on "Who will have me?," rather than a *pull* to migrate voluntarily to a country one desires.

The World System Perspective

The world system perspective takes the view that migration of refugees and immigrants over the last decades has included a mix of economic and political motives. Economic conditions around the globe may cause political unrest, and political conditions may spur migration due to a deteriorating economy, making the typology a "problematic distinction" (Hein, 1993, p. 45). Furthermore, the first waves of refugees resettling in a host country help their friends and relatives to migrate and join them. The evidence on internal migration suggests that the dichotomy of migration forms is not as distinct as it is perceived to be by the realist perspective (Hein, 1993).

Hein (1993) acknowledges, nevertheless, differences in refugee and immigrant networks and proposes a modified realist perspective. Refugees often cannot return to their homes, depending upon changes in political conditions, while immigrants may freely visit. Refugees are uprooted in waves of migration, with grouped departure dates and similar social characteristics. The type of migration may also affect social identity, as refugees become exiled. Research studies have supported a realist interpretation of refugees as distinct from immigrants, since "the state remains a factor in the social organization of migration and the creation of migration identities" (Hein, 1993, p. 46).

History of Global Migration

Throughout the history of the world, people have been forced to flee their homes as a result of invasion or civil strife. The two World Wars provoked discussion of refugees as an international problem, but it was not until 1951 that the UNHCR was created and the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees was adopted (UNHCR, 2002). In its infancy, UNHCR resettled 400,000 persons left homeless after the Second World War, but by 1996, UNHCR was addressing the needs of twenty-six million people. Hein (1993) points out that until the Convention was amended in 1967, it only covered refugees in European nations. From the initial focus on Western Europe, attention shifted to refugee flows that result from strife in other parts of the world, especially in Africa, India, and parts of South East Asia.

Civil strife fomented by superpower confrontations in the 1980s in the Horn of Africa, in Asia, and in South America created new populations of displaced people. Forced migrations in the 1990s came about primarily as a result of the breakup of the Soviet Union and civil wars in the Americas, Africa, Asia, and, of course, the Balkans (UNHCR, 2000). Mass population movements after the Cold War often involved civil strife and included mass internal displacements as well as cross-border refugees, who had been forced from their homelands. So, the emphasis of the United Nations has evolved from the more traditional approach of long-term resettlement of refugee populations to one that seeks to modify or reduce the threats that force people from their homes (UNHCR, 1995). Nevertheless, in the recent war in Bosnia, UNHCR was virtually rendered helpless in its efforts to stem the tide of ethnic cleansing when hundreds of thousands of Bosnians were forced from their homes (Burg & Shoup, 1999). Today, the most significant population movements are occurring in African countries. However, the war in the Balkans resulted in the most recent large-scale refugee resettlement effort to date in the United States.

Refugee Resettlement in the United States

Foreign-born residents in the United States increased from 9.6 million in 1970 to 28.4 million in 2000. Historically, America is a land of immigrants, although the number and proportion of foreign-born in the population has fluctuated over time. As a percentage of the total population of the United States, those born outside of the country more than doubled in that thirty-year period, expanding from 4.7 percent in 1970 to 10.4 percent in 2000. While most of this upsurge was the result of immigration from Latin America and Asia, 15 percent originated from Europe. This included more than 100,000 Bosnians who fled from conflicts in the Balkans in the 1990s (UNHCR, 2000).

During the first century of expansion following the formation of the United States, "open-door immigration policies made no distinction between immigrants-persons fleeing economic hardship or otherwise seeking a better life—and refugees—persons fleeing persecution" (Holman, 1996, p. 3). The United States did not begin to regulate immigration until the 1880s, and numerical restrictions were not set until the 1920s. Initially, refugee status was not considered as a special category. The first legislation specific to refugees was the Displaced Persons Act of 1948, a law that limited the number of Jewish displaced persons who could emigrate to the United States. This legislation was largely in response to the displacement of eleven million people in World War II (WWII) (Holman, 1996).

The Displaced Persons Act of 1948 was followed by the Refugee Relief Act of 1953, which approved the admission of another 200,000 refugees to the United States from countries in Europe torn by war and from Communist countries (Holman, 1996). This act was implemented to ". . . encourage defection of all USSR nations and key personnel from the satellite countries in order to inflict a psychological blow on communism and . . . material loss to the Soviet Union" (Zolberg, 1995, pp. 123–124). Resettlement policies after WWII principally reflected an emphasis on assisting those fleeing from Communist regimes.

Subsequent legislation provided special consideration for Cuban refugees and for refugees from Indochina following the collapse of American-supported governments there. These were substantial resettlement efforts that admitted millions of refugees to the United States. For the first time these resettlement efforts involved the provision of significant social and educational services beyond travel and relocation assistance. The FY 1979 Foreign Operations Appropriations Act allowed for the resettlement of refugees not covered by any other federal programs. This opened the possibility of assistance regardless of national origin (Holman, 1996).

Recent Refugee Admissions

More recently, The Federal Refugee Act of 1980 (Public Law 96-212, 94 Statute 102) determined the legal basis for refugee admissions. This Act redefined refugee status by removing the requirement that a refugee be leaving a Communist country. It allowed for an annual refugee flow determined by the president of the United States with congressional consultation and also dealt with the issue of asylum seekers, those who reach U.S. shores unofficially. Holman (1996) notes that The Refugee Act of 1980 anticipated an annual flow of refugees into the United States of not more than 50,000, but that actual admissions had always been higher.Numbers of refugee admissions to the United States and their point of origin from 1999 through 2003 are shown in Table 1.2.

Refugee admissions decreased significantly over a five-year period, from a high of 85,076 in 1999 to lows of 26,839 and 28,306 in the years 2002 and

Table 1.2. Refugee Admissions to the United States for Fiscal Years 1999–2003 from Major Points of Origin.

Point of origin	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
All	85,076	72,143	68,925	26,839	28,306
Europe	55,877	37,664	31,526	15,408	11,269
Asia	14,041	13,622	15,356	6,949	5,864
Africa	13,048	17,624	19,070	2,545	10,721

Source: 2003 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics; http://uscis.gov/graphics/shared/aboutus/statistics/RA2003yrbk/RA2003list.htm

2003 (2003 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, 2004). This followed the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, which severely impacted the flow of refugees who were allowed entrance to the United States. Refugee admissions for the first nine months of 2002 numbered only 17,439 out of the 70,000 refugee admissions that had been allowed that year by presidential determination (Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, 2002). Nearly two-thirds of refugee admissions in 1999 came from Europe, and of those, about two-thirds were from Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia-Montenegro. Refugees from Asia constituted 16.5 percent of the total refugee arrivals, and just over two-thirds (68 percent) of those were from Vietnam. Other significant refugee arrivals were from Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Burma. African countries were responsible for 15 percent of refugee admissions in 1999, and that increased to 38 percent of admissions in 2003. In 2003, refugees from Africa came primarily from Liberia, Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, and Sierra Leone (2003 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, 2004).

The United States admitted 52,875 refugees of forty different nationalities during fiscal year 2004, representing an 85 percent increase over refugees admitted in fiscal year 2003 (Refugee Admissions, 2004). Up to 70,000 refugees are once again authorized for U.S. entry in 2005, with the priorities shown in Table 1.3. For humanitarian reasons, Africa continues to be a focus of attention at 20,000 refugees, with lesser numbers projected for East Asia, Europe and Central Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Near East and South Asia. In addition, 20,000 slots for refugee admissions are left unallocated so that resources may be shifted as troubled spots emerge around the world (Presidential Determination No. 2004-53, 2004).

Refugee Admissions Process

Refugees who wish to resettle in the United States must pass through several steps to ensure that they are not a security risk to the country, a process that is overseen by the Department of Homeland Security (See Appendix A). The Immigration and Naturalization Service in the Department of Justice determines the eligibility

Table 1.3. Refugee Admissions Projected for 2005 by Presidential Determination.

20,000	Africa
13,000	East Asia
9,500	Europe and Central Asia
5,000	Latin America/Caribbean
2,500	Near East/South Asia
20,000	Unallocated reserve to be allocated to regional ceilings as needed

Source: Presidential Determination No. 2004-53. http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/Archive/2004/Oct/01-754111.html

of those applying for refugee status. Once refugees are approved for admission to the United States, they are under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration in the State Department. The State Department makes available per capita funding for reception and initial resettlement and provides for English language training and cultural orientation which takes place in refugee camps or processing centers overseas. The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) within the Department of Health and Human Services builds programs around the initial State Department funding to ensure the system of domestic assistance and services once refugees arrive in the United States (Holman, 1996). Broadly speaking, the responsibility for refugee resettlement in the United States, prior to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, rested with three federal departments: the State Department, the Department of Justice, and the Department of Health and Human Services.

There have been several changes in the administrative structures for refugee resettlement in the United States since the September 11 attacks. On November 25, 2002, the president signed into law the Homeland Security Act of 2002, establishing the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). DHS now oversees the Bureau of Citizenship & Immigration Services (BCIS), formerly known as Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) under the Department of Justice. The Homeland Security Act transferred INS functions to the Department of Homeland Security, placing immigration enforcement under the Directorate of Border and Transportation Security, and immigration services into a separate U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. Other previous INS functions were transferred to the Under Secretary for Management and the Director of Shared Services. Additional changes made by DHS Secretary Tom Ridge created two new bureaus under the Border and Transportation Security Directorate: (1) The U.S. Customs and Border Protection now includes the Border Patrol, INS, Customs, and Agricultural Quarantine Inspectors, while (2) U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement includes enforcement and investigation components of INS, Customs, and the Federal Protective Services (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2004).

The national Refugee Resettlement Program for the United States was initially fashioned from The Refugee Act of 1980. It formed a network of private resettlement agencies and public agencies. The Act established the Office of Refugee

Resettlement within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) for funding and delivering domestic assistance and services to refugees. The Department of State contracts with ten national voluntary agencies (VOLAGS) to place refugees in host communities. Each state participating in the national program is represented by a State Refugee Coordinator. For example, in New York State, the site of our research, The Bureau of Refugee and Immigration Affairs (BRIA) supports the work of the State Refugee Coordinator, primarily through contracts with service providers in local communities. BRIA administers two main programs: the Refugee Social Services Program (RSSP), which provides job training and placement services, and Targeted Assistance (TAG), which provides employment services to refugees, such as assistance due to layoffs, assistance to secure job upgrades, or enhanced support to individuals with multiple barriers to employment (OTDA, 2004).

Refugee Resettlement in Local Communities in New York State

According to the U.S. Department of State, approximately 107,000 Bosnian refugees had arrived in the United States by the year 2000. Bosnians fled their country of origin following the war that tore apart the former Federation of Yugoslavia. New York State is now home to more than 12,000 of these refugees who are spread across thirty-nine counties. In order to understand the context in which Bosnians arrived, adapted, and moved forward, it is important to consider the resettlement process at the local level.

Local resettlement services include the provision of initial housing, food, and clothing, orientation to American culture and the community, health screenings, and referrals for other social and educational services. These initial services are complemented by the all-important classes in English as a second language (ESL) and by employment training and placement. Refugees are expected to go to work within six months of arrival in the United States. Although there is no specific requirement that they be employed within six months, the funding to cover basic living expenses rarely extends beyond six months. The actual legislative language does not give a specific time frame but says repeatedly that refugees "should" be self-sufficient as quickly as possible (Steven Forester, personal communication, IRSA-USCR, July 28, 2004). A refugee may change his or her legal status to a legal permanent resident after one year, and after five years, refugees may apply for citizenship (Mamgain & Collins, 2003).

The first year is a critical period for all refugees, and the results of this transition may have a substantial impact on long-term adjustment (Waxman, 1998). The needs of refugees who resettle in communities in the United States may range from things that are relatively inconsequential ("How do I tune in a radio station?") to something potentially life threatening ("How can I explain that I have pain in my chest to someone who does not speak my language?") (Le-Doux & Stephens,

1992). Refugees often arrive in the host country with little cash and few possessions. Under the provisions of refugee policy, airfare to the United States is paid by the sponsoring national organization and must be repaid by the refugee family.

The trauma of displacement often results in adjustment problems, but these may not be manifest in the initial reception period or even during the first six to eight months when refugees are served by a "resettlement agency." Some needs are not met because services are not appropriate to the refugee's experience and culture, because the emphasis of federal funds is on employment and self-sufficiency in the short term, or because resources, such as mental health services, are limited. The likelihood that appropriate services will be provided is maximized by the availability of competent, culturally sensitive staff at the direct service level, with appropriate language skills, formal training in social service delivery, and adequate financial rewards and job security (Le-Doux & Stephens, 1992). Conversely, in the absence of these conditions, there may be gaps in culturally competent care at the direct service level in the wider community.

Refugee Resettlement and Community-Based Research

This book is an in-depth study of one cohort of this wave of refugees from Bosnia. Research on refugee resettlement in the United States has focused primarily on the adjustment and adaptation of the Indochinese (Beiser *et al.*, 1989; Matsuoka & Ryujin, 1989–90; Mollica *et al.*, 1987b, 1992; Montgomery, 1991; Nicholson & Walters, 1997; Pernice & Brook, 1996). Research on Bosnian refugees is more recent; much of it focuses on the horrific experiences of the Bosnian Muslims during and after the war (Dizdarevic, 1993; Donia & Fine, 1994; McCarthy, 2000; Sudetic, 1998; Weine, 1999). Our research portrays a diverse group of families. They came from both urban and rural areas and from all walks of life. They worked in occupations that included subsistence farmers, miners, factory workers, skilled machinists, office managers, and lawyers. We explore the abrupt and traumatic transition from an environment rich in resources and long in tradition to a forced migration that was neither sought nor easily accepted.

We approached this project as research with an intervention focus. Our readings about the war and about the resettlement experience, combined with what we knew about the refugees whom we had already met, suggested an initial practitioner-interventionist approach. We were concerned about the impact of war involving personal betrayals of neighbors and friends; the experience of displacement and the loss of home, community, and country that it entailed; and adjustment to a new culture with all of the subsequent demands of adaptation. Even with the refugees' substantial contact with the local resource center for refugees during the first few months, little was known about their experiences with adjustment, particularly after the initial period of contact with the resource center had come to an end. We were confident that anything we could learn would add to current

knowledge, but we also wanted our interviews to benefit the refugees themselves. We therefore approached our research as a project in which we would be prepared to give information and to make referrals to agencies or organizations in the community as seemed appropriate. Bertrand (2000, p. 93) substantiates the ethical obligation to interviewees, believing "the researcher owes the informant help, and if available, should refer the person for appropriate medical or psychological help".

The following chapters describe a community-based research project undertaken to better understand the circumstances and adjustments of a sample of Bosnian families in one community in upstate New York. Chapter 2 outlines the conceptual framework we developed to understand refugee resettlement and adaptation. Chapter 3 describes the Bosnian community in Utica, New York, and clarifies our research design and the questions that informed our approach. Part II includes Chapters 4 through 6. Chapter 4 describes the rhythms of life in Bosnia before the war, and it surveys a variety of explanations for the outbreak of the war. In Chapter 5, following a historical explanation of the course of the war, we use Bosnian narratives to depict their experiences of war as told to us by those who lived through it. Chapter 6 provides an introduction to traumatic stress and the period of limbo during displacement and transit. Chapters 7 through 9 make up Part III of the book, in which we discuss economic, sociocultural and psychological adaptation in resettlement. Chapter 10 continues a discussion and analysis of refugee resettlement in the aftermath of war. We also consider the plight of the family members of our respondents still in Bosnia. Chapter 11 concludes with practice and policy implications and recommendations.

The foundation of the research project rests on interviews with one hundred Bosnian families. At the heart of the story are the Bosnian people; their history and culture, the energy and resilience they brought with them, and the steps they have taken to adjust, transform their lives, and contribute to a new community and a new culture.

2

A Conceptual Framework for Research and Practice

> Some changes in our lives were created by our own decisions, but others were forced upon us by the impersonal circumstances of life. (Ira Progoff, 1975, p. 134)

The lives of refugees, like others, are constructed in broad and multiple contexts. For refugees, these contexts include the family, neighborhood, and community in the part of the world from which they immigrated and those same broad groupings in the new host society. The experiences and perceptions of refugees are shaped by the opportunities, limitations, possibilities, and constraints that are naturally available in all of these milieus. Our conceptual framework for the study of Bosnian refugees draws on a number of models. These include an ecosystems perspective for refugee populations, a framework that lays out the stages of refugee experience, and an acculturation model for refugee adaptation. We also discuss the resettlement experience as the product of the interaction of the human and social capital that refugees bring to a new culture with the characteristics of the host society. We propose an ecosystems model of refugee resettlement as our theoretical framework for this volume.

Conceptual Framework Models of Resettlement

Bosnian lives changed dramatically, beginning in April of 1992, and these changes were largely beyond the control of the common man. Lives were lost because people were identified as Muslim. Others were killed, especially men and boys, because they lived in a town such as Srebrenica, where "cameras rolled . . . as Serbs entered a UN 'safe haven' and led thousands of Muslim men to their death while Dutch troops stood by and did nothing" (H. Goldman, personal communication, August 2004). Still others escaped death or injury by chance, as a result of either an early escape over the border to another country, or, as we shall see later, a momentary distraction that altered an intent to murder. Factors that impact the outcome such as the network of family and other social relationships, roles held and status achieved, first in the original and then in the new culture, and

the experiences of exodus, transit and resettlement all make up the refugee's life story (Hein, 1993). The historical context of the refugee experience includes the patterns of life prior to the war, events during the war itself, and the progression through displacement and resettlement. The models that follow provide a context for listening to refugee stories and for understanding the ways in which the stories unfolded.

The Ecosystems Perspective

The ecosystems perspective "was developed to arrange, integrate, and systematize knowledge about the interrelationships of people with each other and with their environments" (Pillari, 2002, p. 7) Sociological and social work practices have long focused on the dynamic interactions suggested by systems theory between individuals, families, groups, organizations, and their environments. Such a focus is effective in mitigating harmful social conditions and in bringing about a change for improved psychosocial functioning (Morales & Sheafor, 2002). The ecosystems perspective combines the principles of ecology (the study of the relationship between organisms and their environment) and general systems theory (all organisms are entities with boundaries and subsystems) in working with people.

An ecosystems perspective (Figure 2.1) that illustrates critical layers of refugee lives and their environments is adapted from Morales and Sheafor (2002) and based on Brofenbrenner's work in ecological models (1977).

At an individual level, there are *biopsychosocial* factors that affect a refugee's interactions within the rest of the system. Biopsychosocial factors acknowledge the contributions of an individual's natural endowments (human biology) together with psychosocial factors (the person-in-situation). Biopsychosocial factors comprise a cluster of individual characteristics, such as personality and temperament, lifestyle, skills and abilities, a personal world view, and customary responses to stress and problems arising from interaction with the other levels of the system (Morales & Sheafor, 2002, p. 9). People are affected by stress within themselves and also from aspects of the environment which press upon them (Payne, 1991, p. 83).

Inside the family context, individuals are influenced by the lifestyle of, and interactions with, family members, including one's spouse, children, and extended family members. The organization of family roles and the negotiation of authority, gender, and emotion reflect values and beliefs held within the family. The family also has a capacity for interacting internally, *within* the system, to deal with the interactive dynamics between individual members. It also reacts to external factors originating in other levels of the system, in the culture, or the environment, for example.

Cultural values and belief systems are important features of the ecosystems perspective because of the way in which they are embedded in individual and family level characteristics. Cultures have unique value and belief systems that shape our

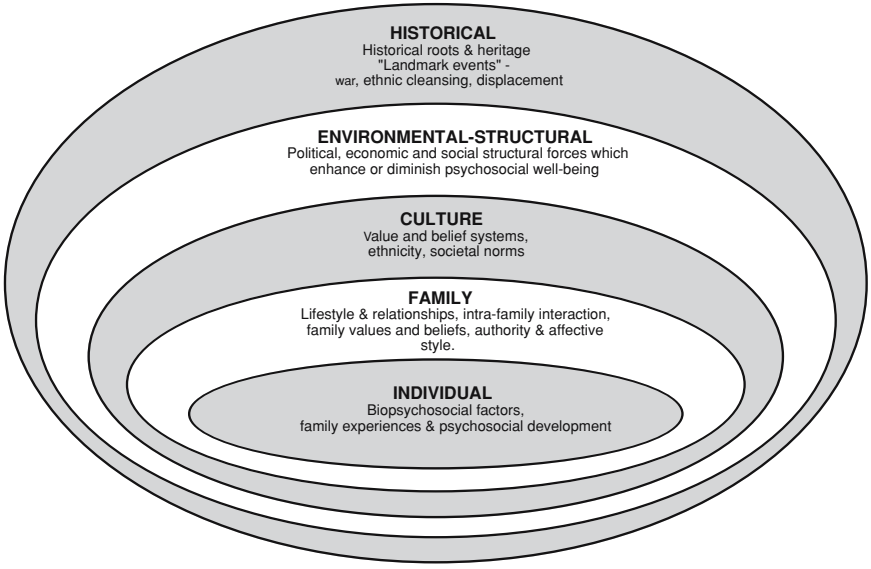

Figure 2.1. An ecosystems perspective for refugee populations. Source: Adapted from Morales and Sheafor (2002, p. 10).

response to stressors and to social problems (Morales & Sheafor, 2002; Kirmayer *et al.*, 2003). Culture develops over time in interaction with environmental and historical factors and incorporates specific structures in the process: language, food, ethnic identification, gender roles, kinship styles, religion, customs, and styles of communication (Morales & Sheafor, 2002, p. 10). These aspects of a refugee's culture of origin may be quite different from those encountered in the culture of resettlement.

Environmental factors include political, economic, and social structures. Morales and Sheafor (2002) suggest that many problems affecting special populations such as refugees are caused by these structural arrangements. We address the structures of education, welfare, health and mental health, and public safety later in the book in terms of the challenges they present in the process of adaptation. Social structures can support or enhance adaptive efforts in resettlement, or they can be the source of psychosocial problems for special populations.

Morales and Sheafor (2002, p. 10) acknowledge the importance of the historical experience of special populations and emphasize the potential impact of "landmark events" such as war, ethnic cleansing, and displacement. It is critical to assess the duration of experiences, and the age when they were experienced, and to be aware of both the contribution of historical influences and their interaction with each of the other levels of the system.

Habitat and Niche

Two concepts drawn from ecological theory, *habitat and niche*, are especially relevant to explore in order to understand adaptation to a changing environment (Hepworth *et al.*, 1997). *Habitats* are the physical and social settings where individuals and families live, set within cultural contexts. Physical and social settings may be either rich or deficient in resources vital to human growth and development. Furthermore, such wealth or deficiency may be interpreted in ways that are specific to that cultural context. For instance, a westerner may look upon a third-world village with no indoor plumbing or electricity as terribly impoverished, but a family within that village owning animals, growing crops that provide more than sufficient food for the family, and having healthy children may view its environment as very rich in resources for the well-being of the family.

Niches can be thought of as roles held by members of a community, roles that are representative in a particular stage of life, or as a task of human maturation (Hepworth *et al.*, 1997). For instance, the roles and status one holds as a young child in a family evolve over time to that of student, young adult, worker, spouse, and elder. Roles and niches are shaped by family and social relationships and cultural norms as we mature. For example, elders are more highly respected in some cultures than others, and the roles and status of women differ considerably between cultures. Hepworth and colleagues also note that opportunities to find one's niche, thereby "achieving self-respect and a stable sense of identity" are unequally distributed in modern society (Hepworth *et al.*, 1997, p. 17).

The ecosystems perspective places individuals in the niche and habitat of their social and physical environment. Refugee lives are notable for the habitats and niches that they have lost. In order to appreciate what refugees have left behind, it is critical to understand the resources that existed in the old way of life, in the former environment. Refugees also often witness the destruction of those resources before they are able to leave. Decisions to flee may be triggered by "the disintegration of long-standing family and community resources . . . the uprooted realize that there is little to keep them in their home villages or towns, because everything of importance has already been destroyed" (Martin, 2004, p. 14). Having made the decision to leave the old environment, refugees are confronted with a new environment, with its unknown resources and deficiencies, where they will discover a new habitat and carve out a new niche.

Next, we explore the stages of refugee experience as a temporal framework, which we find useful for evaluating resettlement outcomes. Major disruptions occur in the natural evolution of the ecosystem during times of war and displacement. The types of disruption and their particular effects on the ecosystem vary as the following "stages" will illustrate.

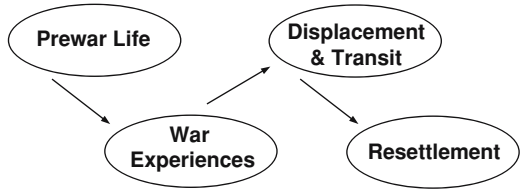

Figure 2.2. Stages of migration.

Stages of Migration

In order to understand the resettlement and adaptation of refugees in a host society, it is critical to examine all aspects of a refugee's migration path. Drachman (1992) advocates conceptualizing a process of flight and recovery for refugees as comprising three stages: premigration and departure, transit, and resettlement. For our purposes, we find it more useful to conceive of four stages of refugee life: life before the war, experiences during the war, displacement and transit, and resettlement in a new community (Figure 2.2).

The literature on refugee resettlement, in our view, pays too little attention to the first stages, that is, pre-war, war, and transit. An exception is the work of Weine and colleagues (Weine, 1999; Weine *et al.*, 1995b, 1998; Weine & Kuc, 2001), who primarily focus on experiences in war and the impact of war trauma on mental health. Miller, Muzurovic, Worthington, Tipping, & Goldman (2002, p. 342) also draw attention to prewar life as an important context for refugees to define their current lives, noting, "life prior to exile becomes a central reference point among refugees for the evaluation of their present life circumstances."

Because it can serve as an ongoing frame of reference for evaluating and comparing their current experience in the host society, a consideration of refugees' lives before the war is important (Owens-Manley & Coughlan, 2002). Refugees' experiences during the war and in transit are also important to understand because refugees do not finally begin to relax and attempt to regain a sense of normalcy until they have arrived in the host country. The experiences of transit do not allow refugees to feel that they have arrived at their journey's end. For Bosnians especially, transit may have involved a significant period of time in a country of first asylum where they felt their lives were in limbo (Mertus & Teanovic, 1997). Many Bosnians were settled temporarily in countries of first asylum such as Germany, Turkey, or Pakistan before they were granted asylum in the country of final resettlement. Miller and colleagues (2002, p. 341) provide a broad view of the "stressors of exile" in the last stage of resettlement, documenting significant sources of postmigration distress such as lack of adequate income, language barriers, and social isolation.

And finally, models of refugee adaptation suggest different strategies that refugees may adopt to cope with a new community and new culture. Characteristics of both the individual and the host society may influence the choice of strategy that refugees make (Berry, 2001).

Model of Acculturation

Berry has argued that the importance attached to the maintenance of one's culture and the degree and amount of contact with members of the host society will be reflected in the kind of acculturation strategy an individual adopts—assimilation, integration, separation, or marginalization (Berry, 1992). An adapted model of Berry's work is presented in Figure 2.3. In this particular conceptualization, assimilation involves giving up one's attachment to the culture of origin and committing to the host culture; integration allows for maintaining a commitment to the old culture while simultaneously accepting the values of the new society; separation suggests a strategy by which one remains committed to the old ways and involves little or no interactions with members of the host society; and marginalization results in a lack of connection to both the culture of origin and to the host culture (Berry, 1986).

Berry's work demonstrates that refugees experience the least stress when there is cultural similarity between the old and the new society, when they have extensive interaction with members of the host society, and when individuals are in favor of integrating the various features of the two cultures (Berry, 2001).

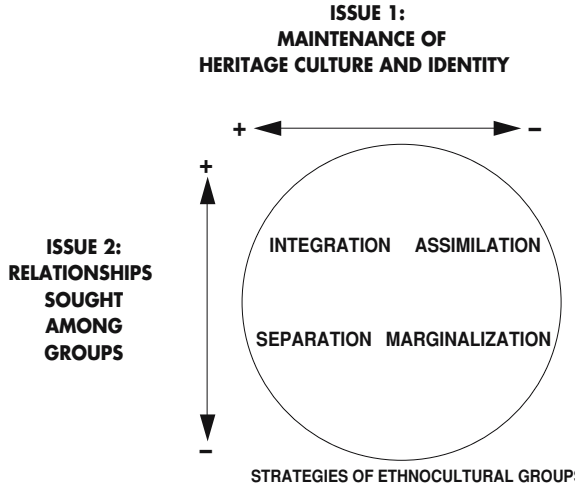

Figure 2.3. Adaptive options for refugee groups during acculturation. Source: Berry (2001).

Refugee and Host Society Interaction

Refinements to the acculturation model proposed by Berry (1986) come from researchers who argue that the choice of adaptation strategy is the outcome of the interaction of refugee characteristics and characteristics of the host society (Berry, 2001; Berry *et al*., 2003; Colic-Peisker & Walker, 2003). Refugee characteristics include the human and social capital they bring with them to the host society. *Human capital* includes education and skills, English language ability, and cultural sophistication; *social capital* refers to the network of relationships that a refugee has with others and the systems of social support available to him or her (Portes, 1995). The visibility of refugees and their cultural similarity or dissimilarity to the dominant group in the host society will also have a bearing on their acculturation experience (Berry *et al*., 2003).

Relevant features of the host society include receptivity to newcomers, especially refugees, and its resettlement policies and services. How receptive a host society is to newcomers is reflected in the degree to which the society welcomes cultural diversity and the extent to which refugees can choose to engage with natives, without constraints from the dominant group in a process of *mutual accommodation* (Berry, 2001, p. 619). Integration is the preferred goal of refugee resettlement (Berry, 2001; Valtonen, 2004) and is defined as "the ability to participate fully in economic, social, cultural and political activities, without having to relinquish one's own distinct ethnocultural identity and culture" (Valtonen, 2004, p. 74). The ability to participate fully in the host society may be impeded by prejudice and discrimination. Discrimination, which is usually based on racial and ethnic prejudice and stereotypes, can effectively constrict opportunities in areas such as housing and employment. Constraints on full participation in a new society can also be greatly influenced by refugee policies and services.

Refugee policies and services, where they exist, vary tremendously in countries around the world, and as Berry (2001) points out, policy development is rarely informed by research findings. Colic-Peisker and Tilbury (2003) juxtapose two resettlement paradigms: the medical model and the social inclusion model. The medical model emphasizes a mental health perspective and assumes that refugees suffer from trauma and require counseling and medical intervention, first and foremost. The social inclusion paradigm, in contrast, emphasizes labor market integration designed to promote independence through employment for adults and school for children as soon as possible after arrival. Australia's resettlement services generally emphasize mental health needs, whereas policies and services in the United States are oriented toward early labor market integration (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2003).

Some have argued that resettlement in the twenty-first century has moved toward a social rights orientation for immigrants and refugees which considers "duties of the community" toward newcomers (van der Veen, 1993, p. 78) and emphasizes full participation and integration in society (Breton, 1992; Bottomore,

1992; Kallen, 1995). Other researchers, however, have shown that well intentioned and benevolent resettlement programs can be dysfunctional (Harrell-Bond, 1999). Even, or perhaps, especially, highly developed and extensive refugee resettlement services and programs can inadvertently foster dependency and undermine autonomy (Harrel-Bond, 1999). For example, according to Korac (2003), the resettlement paradigm in the Netherlands, Germany, Sweden, and Denmark results in systems of reception and settlement that disable ". . . individual initiative, hence undermining self esteem or as limiting basic rights" (Korac, 2003, pp. 407–408). Valtonen (2004) focuses on the "societal and institutional context of settlement" (p. 70) in Finland and examines how the status of being a refugee relates to labor market participation, social relations within one's ethnic group and with the host society, encounters with the new culture, and involvement in the political or civil spheres of society (p. 75).

The interaction of these two sets of considerations—refugee characteristics and characteristics of the host society—will affect both the adaptation strategy that refugees adopt and resettlement outcomes. Colic-Peisker and Walker (2003, p. 349) point out that the refugee's choice of strategies is made following:

> . . . a more or less conscious self-assessment of one's resources based on sex, age, urban and cultural skills, formal education and skills, language proficiency, family situation, social networks, as well as physical and mental well-being.

In Chapters 7 and 8, we describe this process of self-assessment among the Bosnians we interviewed and we discuss why the outcomes differed for various groups in the sample.

Three frameworks have been described: ecosystems that constitute the layered contexts of a refugee's life experience; the temporal stages of that lived experience; and individual strategies and mutual accommodation in the process of acculturation. They are presented together in an ecosystems model of refugee resettlement that integrates the theoretical perspectives with which we framed our final understandings of what our respondents told us.

An Ecosystems Model of Refugee Resettlement

The ecosystems model in Figure 2.4 illustrates the changes that occur as refugees proceed through the stages of refugee experience, moving from pre-war life to experiences in war, to the events of transition in a country of first asylum or a refugee camp, and to arrival in a new country as a place to start over. There is no single refugee experience for, as Malki (1995, p. 496) points out:

> It would seem that the term refugee has analytical usefulness not as a label for a special, generalizable 'kind' or 'type' of person or situation, but only as a broad legal or descriptive rubric that includes within it a world of different socioeconomic statuses, personal histories, and psychological or spiritual situations.

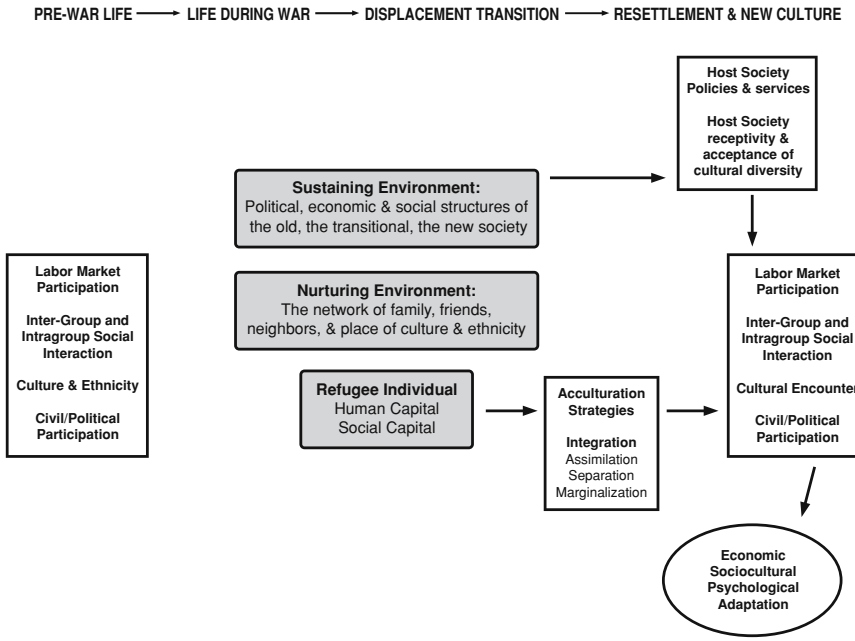

Figure 2.4. Ecosystems model of refugee resettlement.

Nonetheless, we believe that it is possible and helpful to identify the social and psychological processes and structures that typify the experiences of flight and resettlement.

The *nurturing* environment surrounding an individual prior to emigration typically includes family, friends, and close neighbors in familiar surroundings (Sheafor *et al*., 2000). Ways of communicating, buying goods, visiting, and all aspects of one's culture and customs are well known and integrated as a part of self.[1] During times of war and displacement, the familiar ways of doing things are lost, family and friends may be separated or killed, and transitional living and final resettlement in host countries present demands for adaptation.

The *sustaining* environment includes the economic, social, cultural, and political structures of society (Valtonen, 2004; Sheafor *et al*., 2000). A refugee's sustaining environment provides access to participation in the labor market, the educational system, social welfare institutions, and the health and public safety systems. It might include neighborhood, religious institutions, and social or recreational

[1] Phibbs Witmer and Culver (2001) criticize the literature on trauma and resilience in Bosnian refugees for the lack of emphasis on knowing the Muslim and Bosnian cultures in order to better understand refugee adaptation and functioning for Bosnians. Bringa (1995, 1996) provides an excellent ethnography of village life in Bosnia prior to the war in both written and documentary forms.

groups. A refugee's sustaining environment undergoes significant changes as he or she moves through stages of the life experience. The structures of even the pre-war culture often begin to demonstrate discrimination and barriers to employment, education, and other forms of participation for a minority group, as the existing culture moves toward disintegration.

The experience of arriving in a host community is influenced by a variety of factors and circumstances in the nurturing and sustaining communities. The nurturing community in the new society will vary in its development prior to this new arrival, depending on the strength and size of the ethnic group, how many family members and friends came before them, and who is there to welcome them and assist with adjustment. It is also true that ". . . refugees may have their community of significant others dispersed in many parts of the world and their well-being may be intimately tied to events and relations in far-off places" (Eastmond, 2000, p. 76). The sustaining community may vary in the range and depth of resettlement services and programs offered by the local system of refugee resettlement and in the attitudes and behaviors of the host community toward newcomers.

Refugee Identity and the Return to a Normal Life

"Refugee" is a social category to which few aspire. It is an unwelcome mantle that is to be shed as soon as possible. It is a stigmatized and negative identity. It also suggests that important aspects of one's former identity have been overshadowed by this major life trauma of being displaced and forced to seek refuge far from home. Social identities are anchored in the niches and habitats that are embedded in the communities we inhabit. Forced displacement shatters those connections. As refugees move along the temporal continuum through war, displacement, transition, and resettlement, refuge implies opportunities to reconstruct, or construct newly, roles and statuses that constitute a social identity. A new community, in the form of the host society, as well as a reconstructed ethnic community need to be put in place to both nurture and sustain that identity. The process of reconstructing identity and community is at the heart of the acculturation effort (Colic-Peisker, 2002). This is what refugees mean when they say that they want to return to normal. They want to stop being refugees and to resume a normal life.

Conflicts in the Nurturing and Sustaining Environments

There may have been significant losses of family members or friends who were killed or left behind in the refugee family's nurturing environment. But there is also high potential for family conflicts within the family that resettled together. Conflicts may occur across generations, although children often serve as "the force for socializing their elders to a new culture" (Martin, 2004, p. 16). Women's roles change, and they may become heads of households, without husbands or older

children to help. Men may experience the frustrations of role loss and may lack employment or the ability to support their families (Jalali, 1988; Martin, 2004).

As family members "acculturate" at different speeds, family and social relationships may be disrupted or modified. Such potential conflicts for refugee groups may include changes in status of aged family members who are slower to adapt and become increasingly isolated; marital conflicts arising from an uneven adaptation of spouses or changing gender roles; challenges of adolescent children in their need for autonomy and differentiation that may be complicated and magnified by the refugee experience; and, for the youngest refugee children, the loss of their native culture, as they are most apt to assimilate easily and acquire new language skills and habits (Jalali, 1988).

Similarly, variables that have implications for the sustaining environment exert a positive influence on the adjustment of refugees. These may include a positive attitude among the members of the host society and the presence of other members of the same ethnic group (Brislin, 1981). These positive influences may be enhanced if incoming refugees possess marketable skills and are familiar with the host culture, especially the host language. On the other hand, discrimination experienced by refugees has a negative effect on their mental health (Pernice & Brook, 1996), whereas psychosocial wellness is bolstered in communities where there is a critical mass of co-ethnics. Refugees often experience a loss of status in occupation and find that skills, especially university credentials, licenses, or certifications, are not transferable (Haines, 1996). English language skills are highly correlated with positive adaptation, and there is considerable variation in the acquisition of language skills among even a single group of refugees.

Adaptation Strategies and Outcomes in Resettlement

Refugees choose adaptation strategies along the defined parameters of maintaining the old culture and investing in the new. The options diagrammed by Berry include the decision to assimilate the new culture and throw off the old; to separate from the new culture and maintain the old; to remain marginalized from either; or to integrate important aspects of each (Berry, 1986). But the dominant group can exercise considerable influence over whether refugee groups may be allowed to integrate. If assimilation is desired, pressure may be exerted to "become American" to the exclusion of maintaining native cultural characteristics. If the dominant group seeks to keep refugees separate, segregation will be the likely result. When refugees are marginalized, they are excluded. The preferred strategy of integration is best realized as an individual strategy when the dominant group embraces cultural diversity or "multiculturalism" (Berry, 2001).

Overall adjustment to the new society may be measured along three dimensions: economic adaptation, socio-cultural adaptation, and psychological adaptation. Together they constitute three equally important measures of successful

adjustment in a new host country. Economic adaptation refers to how well refugees integrate into the economy and the labor market of the host community. Sociocultural adaptation reflects the day-to-day ability to function in the community. Psychological adaptation encompasses the physical and mental health of a refugee family (Aycan & Berry, 1996). The various strategies for adaptation lead to different experiences in labor market participation, in social group interactions, both with the host society and the ethnic group, and in participation in civil or political activities. An integrationist will play a much more active role within these spheres than if the intention is to remain separated, or than if one is pushed out and marginalized by both groups. A refugee's participation in these areas determines his or her perceptions of health and well-being, adaptation to new cultural demands, and success in the labor market.

"Culture shock" may be experienced, and the experiences that occur postmigration in the host society can be just as stressful and damaging as the trauma of war. Western psychologists in particular may minimize the difficulties of cultural adjustment and the challenges of mediating the demands of a new society, especially if the host society is not receptive to refugees (Kanaaneh, 2000; Bracken *et al*., 1997; Eastmond, 1998; Masic, 2000; Miller *et al*., 2002). Chapter 7 provides a more expansive discussion of culture shock in describing the first year adjustments of Bosnian refugees in Utica.

The language barrier for refugees and the need to understand a new and different social system pose initial hardships but can also cause stress and anxiety for an indeterminate period of time. Newcomers will need to learn to negotiate transportation, medical aid, food distribution, and a multitude of common practices that are culturally and socially specific. If we do not include social systems and culture in our analysis, we cannot effectively understand or report on the refugee experience nor can we help with the aftermath. In the following chapters, we tell the stories that were so generously shared with us by Bosnian families in Utica, using the framework that we have described in this chapter.

Summary

The purpose of our research was to understand the experiences of these Bosnian families in their lives prior to the war, the experiences and disruptions of war, and their current lives here in the United States. As we shall explore throughout the book, the physical and social settings in which the Bosnians lived before the war were blown apart by war and displacement. The ecosystems perspective places individuals in the niche and habitat of their social and physical surroundings as layers of refugee lives that either support or diminish their experience. It is critical to understand the importance of those layers of the ecosystem in terms of what the refugees left behind. It is also crucial to examine the new environment presented by a receiving society in all of its resources and deficiencies.

A framework that lays out the stages of refugee experience and an acculturation model developed by Berry and refined by others provide additional helpful models for understanding refugee narratives. The temporal experience of refugees requires that they adapt to changing environments as they move from a pre-migratory phase (in the case of Bosnians, a pre-war phase and then a "during war" phase) to displacement and transition and finally to a resettlement country. Refugees adopt different strategies of adaptation, and the optimal strategy for individuals and receiving societies is one of integration. Societies that value cultural diversity are most supportive of newcomers integrating into the community, and participation in key structures of society has the most positive impact on adaptation outcomes, economic, socio-cultural, and psychological.

3

Bosnians in Utica: A Community Context

As we park the car and cross the street to the Mohawk Valley Resource Center for Refugees, we become a part of a colorful group coming through the doors: two Sudanese young men, coming for their English as a second language classes upstairs; an older gentleman originally from Cambodia checking on employment opportunities this week; a Russian woman with two towheaded children under her arms; and several young adults from Somalia, their vividly patterned native clothing mixing with heavy woolens probably insufficient protection against these upstate New York winters. Sights and sounds in the community have changed over the last decade or so, and today, these are a part of the inner city's experiences. This is the process of acculturation at work—two or more groups whose contact experiences result in cultural changes for each—or a transformative process of *mutual* change (Berry, 2001, p. 616).

While waiting in line to check out at a local department store, we note the wide Slavic cheekbones and the noticeable accent of our cashier. The same occurs with the clerk at the grocery store, with the young man helping us in the home improvement store, and at the auto mechanic's. In our factories, nursing homes, hospitals, and, increasingly, in customer service positions throughout the city, former refugees take their place next to long-time members of the community. Restaurant choices have expanded beyond what used to be traditional ethnic food; East Utica Italian and West Utica Polish and Lebanese establishments have made room for a Vietnamese eatery, Bosnian restaurants and nightclubs, and Oriental groceries. Local grocery stores have larger sections that stock specialties for newcomer populations, and the daily newspaper has a once-a-week special section published in Bosnian. The community is alive with difference. One long-time resident in the city says to us, "In a one-block area where I live, I have Russian neighbors, Vietnamese, Bosnian, African-American and Latino; we all live together" (G. Allen, personal communication, April, 2004).

Utica: An Immigrant Community

Utica became an immigrant community very early in the history of the colonies, with Dutch and German settlers arriving along the Mohawk River, a major transportation route west, even prior to the settlement of strong immigrant Welsh and English communities. Before any European arrivals, the land was a main trail—a crossroads—connecting all Five Nations of The Iroquois Federation (Clarke, 1952). When the original settlement, Old Fort Schuyler, was incorporated as a village in 1798, it was renamed *Utica,* after the port of ancient Carthage. Transportation was a major business for Utica and contributed to its growth as a village; Utica received its charter as a city in 1832, with a population of 8,323. Work on the Erie Canal in the 1830s was carried out by the first wave of Irish immigrants to Utica (Clarke, 1952). Large numbers of German refugees, fleeing the Revolution of 1848, made the city's investment in textile mills a resounding success in the 1840s. Utica became known as the "knit-goods center of the world" (Clarke, 1952, p. 51).

Significant immigration continued to Utica throughout the nineteenth century. There were few Italian families until 1883, when the West Shore Railroad was built with the labor of large numbers of Italians. In 1882 there were eight Italian families in Utica. By 1900 there were more than 6,000 Italian residents in the city and by 1940 the Italian population had grown to 35,000 (Clarke, 1952). German and Polish Jews began arriving in small numbers in the 1840s, but the 1860s brought a larger Jewish immigration to America and to Utica. Hundreds of Poles immigrated to Utica in the 1870s, and by 1890, the population of Polish-born residents reached 54,000 (Walsh, 1982).

In April of 1912, the Municipal League of Utica held a series of four "town hall meetings." Interestingly, the League scheduled two of these meetings to focus on "The Foreigner and the Community" with presentations on "Utica's Immigrants, a Liability and An Asset" (Clarke, 1952, p. 106). The same conversation is taking place nearly one hundred years later in the same city! A recent assessment of the economic effect of refugees on the community concluded that after some initial cost in public services, refugee resettlement has had a positive fiscal impact on the Mohawk Valley (Hagstrom, 2000).

Bosnian Refugees in Utica

Our research was conducted in this upstate New York community to which approximately 5,000 Bosnians have been drawn since 1993. Over the past two decades the Mohawk Valley Resource Center for Refugees (MVRCR), an affiliate of the Lutheran Immigration Refugee Services (LIRS), has helped to resettle more than 10,000 refugees from more than twenty countries (Table 3.1). Refugees constitute about 12 percent of Utica's population of 60,651, the fourth highest per capita refugee population in the country (Coughlan & Owens-Manley, 2002). Only

Table 3.1. Refugee Resettlement in Utica, New York by Country of Origin (1979–2002).

Afghanistan	36
Amerasian (Vietnam)	1,281
Vietnam	774
Bosnia	4,427
Bulgaria	25
Cambodia	365
China	9
Congo (Zaire)	13
Cuba	63
Czechoslovakia	80
Ethiopia	8
Former Soviet Union	2,163
Haiti	89
Hungary	29
Iran	35
Iraq	164
Kosovo	77
Laos	266
Liberia	4
Libya	6
Myanmar (Burma)	84
Poland	146
Romania	28
Sierra Leone	17
Somalia	15
Sudan	102
Yugoslavia	5
Totals	10,311

Source: Mohawk Valley Resource Center for Refugees, Utica, NY, 2002.

Phoenix, Chicago, and St. Louis have a higher refugee density (Hassett, 1999). Refugees from the former Soviet Union, Vietnam (including Amerasians), and Bosnia constitute 85 percent of the refugee population, and Bosnians alone make up over 40 percent of the total.

The influx of Bosnian refugees to this community in the 1990s was only part of a significant shift in the demographic and ethnic character of the city. In the decade following the census of 1990, there was a precipitous decline in the overall population of the city and especially in the non-Hispanic white population (see Table 3.2).

Actual changes are more substantial if we examine the variations within the non-Hispanic white population. We know from information provided by MVRCR, for example, that in the decade 1990—2000, more than 7,000 refugees from twenty-five countries arrived in this area. Some part of that number will have been counted in the Asian, Hispanic, and non-Hispanic black categories of the census. However,

Table 3.2. Census Changes in the SMA[a] Including Utica, New York.

Census	Total population	Non-Hispanic white	Non-Hispanic black	Hispanic	Asian
1990	112,987	97,022	10,307	3,947	1,211
2000	95,601	76,261	10,886	5,158	2,024

Source: US Census Bureau, Census 1990 and Census 2000 data.

[a] The SMA includes residents in a larger geographical boundary than the city under consideration. However, we use the data for the SMA because the census categories are much clearer with respect to the trends we wished to illustrate.

approximately 4,000 Bosnians and 2,000 Russians will have been counted in the non-Hispanic white population. Accordingly, we can say that the original non-Hispanic white population has actually changed more than the census indicates. The 97,022 non-Hispanic white population actually declined by an additional 6,000 residents; these were replaced by Russians and Bosnians who arrived in the city during that time period and were counted in the SMA. That means that the area lost more than 27 percent of the original 97,022 non-Hispanic white population in just ten years.

The first wave of Bosnians arrived in this community in 1993 when 79 individuals were processed through the local refugee center. Arrivals peaked in 1997 with more than eleven hundred Bosnians arriving in Utica (See Table 3.3). By September of 2001, 4,316 Bosnian refugees had resettled in the city through a "primary" resettlement process—that is, through official channels. Bosnians who may have again relocated since their initial resettlement in Utica have been replaced with individuals and families who are attracted to the available inexpensive housing, to available employment and to a strong center for refugee support. Thus, Bosnians in Utica are estimated to number at least 5,000 (MVRCR). After September 11, 2001, the number of incoming refugees slowed as immigration restrictions tightened for family reunification. The family reunification program for Bosnians has now closed.

Bosnian families are repopulating the city and the city's schools. Nearly a quarter (24.7%) of the Bosnian refugees were of public school age, ages five to seventeen, at the time of their arrival, and another 450 children were under the age of five. The differences between the Bosnians and city residents as a whole are striking in all age groups (see Table 3.4). The under eighteen population comprises more than one-third (35.1%) of the Bosnians, but less than a quarter (24.1%) of the

Table 3.3. Bosnian Arrivals Annually Through MVRCR from 1993 to 2000.

1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
79	104	232	808	1145	604	501	466

Source: Mohawk Valley Resource Center for Refugees.

Table 3.4. Age Distribution of Bosnian Refugees and Total City Residents in Numbers and (Percentages) of Total Population in Each Category.[a]

Age distribution	Age < 5	Age 5–17	Age 18–24	Age 25–49	Age 50–64	Age > 65
Bosnian refugees (from refugee agency records)	450 (10.4%)	1,068 (24.7%)	723 (16.7%)	1,876 (43.5%)	146 (3.4%)	53 (1.2%)
Total population for city of Utica (from Census 2000 data)	4,087 (6.7%)	10,533 (17.4%)	6,058 (10%)	19,997 (33%)	8,555 (14.1%)	11,421 (18.8%)

Source: MVRCR for Bosnian refugee data and U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 for Utica City data.
[a] Bosnians $n = 4{,}316$; city residents $n = 60{,}651$.

total city resident population, and if we include young adults between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four, the percentages are over one-half (51.8%) and just over one-third (34.1%) respectively. More than 40 percent of Bosnians (43.5%) and 33 percent of total city residents are in the prime working years between twenty-five and forty-nine. Perhaps most telling is the aging population of the city in general—nearly 40 percent are fifty years of age and older, compared to only 4.6 percent of the Bosnians at the time of their arrival.

Community Services for Refugees

The MVRCR, the initial source of refugee assistance in Utica, is most active in the lives of refugees in the first six months, providing English language instruction and necessary resources, and preparing refugees for employment. These services are supported by federal and state refugee policies and funding streams. Once refugees go to work, MVRCR may have no further contact with them. For that reason, prior to our study, little was known locally about how the Bosnians fared after they started work. We were interested in learning how Bosnian families adapted to life in this community after the first year.

The high proportion of refugees in the city's population creates unique multicultural opportunities for the community, but it also places initial demands on services in public welfare, education, and employment. Less apparent, but equally important, are the demands for medical services and medical interpretation for both emergency and routine preventative care in hospitals, clinics, private doctor and dentist's offices, and in mental health services. Public safety officers—Utica city police and Utica city firemen—also experience the strains of responding to and dealing with non-English language speakers and unfamiliar customs and practices.

Understanding the demographics of the community and the composition of the refugee population also suggests roles for social work practice. The three

major service organizations with significant refugee involvement from the point of entry into the community are the Department of Social Services for initial assistance with rent and food; the Utica City School District for education of refugee children; and the New York State Health Department for tuberculosis screenings and immunizations (MVRCR, 2004). However, there are numerous other human service organizations in the community, many with resources to offer refugee families, just as they contribute to the well-being of nonrefugee families. These might include agencies offering parent training or parent support groups, alcohol and substance abuse services, domestic violence services, home health aides and visiting nurses, psychotherapy and family counseling.

A year or so prior to our interviews with Bosnian families, we surveyed human service agencies in Utica and conducted focus groups to ascertain a provider's current involvement with and knowledge of refugee groups. Most agencies were aware of the existence of refugee groups in Utica, particularly Bosnian refugees, but few had provided services to substantial numbers of refugees. A significant number of refugees had been served by a local food pantry, and others had availed themselves of a variety of outreach services offered by a neighborhood center. Still others had enrolled their children in after-school programs, in the Girl Scouts, and in a teen group for socialization and skill-building. Two agencies were providing mental health treatment to significant numbers of refugees with post-traumatic stress disorder, but without sufficient resources in the clients' native languages. The American Red Cross in 1999 reported helping families to locate family members separated by war and facilitated communication between local residents and family members still living in war-torn areas abroad.

Focus group participants noted that the refugees had been welcomed, and they expressed concern for what the refugees had experienced. They spoke of a need for more training and education regarding the refugees' cultures and a need to feel more culturally competent. Many spoke of the necessity for interpretation services, and of the difficulties posed by language barriers. They also noted that service agencies might profit from meeting together and providing support to each other; these included providers of health and mental health services, for those who were vicariously exposed to traumatic experiences of prison camps, torture and maltreatment, and death and injury that occurred as a part of the refugee experience.

Emergence of the Research Design

This book is an in-depth study of representatives of a new wave of immigration to the United States—hundred Bosnian families who resettled in Utica, New York. The state of refugees in the United States, and more specifically in our community in upstate New York, was something each of us had some awareness of and a growing interest in during the late 1990s. We followed events of the war in Bosnia,

both in the media and in books that came out in the 1990s about the horrific and genocidal aspects of the war. We had become increasingly interested in the refugees' experiences and what they brought to this country by way of their history and life stories. We were also interested in how the interaction with their new environment altered the interpretive experience and life narrative of refugees.

Our interest in collaboration on this project emerged from what each brought to the table. Reed Coughlan is a sociologist whose scholarly research and writing has dealt with theories of ethnic conflict as well as the history of conflict in Northern Ireland, Cyprus, and Bosnia. Judith Owens-Manley is a social worker and family therapist with expertise in the human response to emotional and physical trauma. From our initial review of the literature on refugee adaptation, we knew that both premigratory and postmigratory factors were important for the subsequent adjustment of refugees in a new country. We reviewed literature on the history of Yugoslavia and the accustomed way of life prior to war, literature concerning the war and its outcomes for Bosnian families, and literature concerning the resettlement of refugees, especially Bosnian refugees.

In order to understand the war, as much as it is possible to do so, we needed more than a map of the former Yugoslavia and a list of wartime events. We wanted to understand something of the Bosnian people and their history leading up to the war. Bringa (1995, 1996) provided excellent ethnographic material about life in prewar Bosnia, supplemented by Sekulic *et al*. (1994). Banac (1996) and Sudetic (1998) drew our attention to the connections between the conflicts in the 1990s and the ethnic conflict involved in the fighting during World War II. Resentments concerning ethnic atrocities committed during World War II were, they believe, rekindled during the recent war in Bosnia (Banac, 1996; Sudetic, 1998). Donia and Fine (1994) described how the ethnic nationalist leadership cynically manipulated those memories and fears to mobilize their followers in war. Woodward (1995) and Zimmerman (1996) drew our attention to the critical role of the changing geopolitical contexts, which made the disintegration of Yugoslavia possible.

The literature concerning the war itself helped to describe in horrific terms just what these families had been through prior to resettlement. Men often served in one, two, or possibly even three armies. Ethnic cleansing, forced displacements, and betrayal by close friends and neighbors became commonplace experiences. Readings that were particularly enlightening about the extent and impact of war experiences included Burg and Shoup (1999); Maass (1996); Sudetic (1998); and Weine (1999).

And finally, reading about resettlement of refugees worldwide gave us a basis for understanding the political processes that define how refugees are dealt with in their *displacement* and subsequent *placement* in a host country, such as the United States, the programs and services that are provided in resettlement, and the experiences of particular groups of refugees in their host countries. Readings that were helpful in providing an overview of worldwide refugee resettlement and

resettlement in the United States were those published by the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (1995, 2000) and others (Hein, 1993; Holman, 1996; Leibowitz, 1983). The literature on refugee experiences as they make cross-cultural transitions is lengthy and will be described in each section of the book that follows.

Research Questions

Our initial research and discussions led us to the following questions or hypotheses:

1. There was a particular way in which ethnic conflict emerged in this war that comprised a unique betrayal of relationships, of trust, and of an accepted, intermixed, way of life. What has been the experience of Bosnian refugees regarding ethnic identity and tensions prior to the war and ethnic cleansing during the war?
2. Refugees have typically had economic downturns in resettlement including unemployment and underemployment. How do refugees from Bosnia view their employment experiences, and how consonant are they with prewar vocational experiences?
3. Family has been an important unit in Bosnian society and has typically provided strong social support. How have families reconstituted themselves and dealt with the separations and losses caused by the war?
4. Trauma is a significant factor in the refugee experience of war and resettlement and has an impact on successful adaptation. What degree of trauma have refugees experienced, and what are the types and levels of symptoms?

Borden (1992) writes of normative and non-normative events in the life history. The refugee experience is a non-normative event or series of events. Refugee experiences create displacement, unexpected turns in the road, and demands for adapting to new circumstances. We were interested in determining salient demographic factors among the refugee population that interact with experiences both before and after migration to shape adaptation strategies and their prospects of success. Under U.S. refugee policy, resettlement services are provided to refugees by contract during the first eight months in the United States. We wondered how useful these services were in the process of adapting to a new country and community and whether there were areas of service provision that were inadequate?

We were also very interested in learning about the refugees' perceptions of the war and their role in the conflict. Were they engaged in a conflict that they regarded as ethnically or nationally motivated? Was there some connection between these wars and the wars or conflicts of an earlier time? Was this a case of ancient ethnic hatreds, as some have proposed? Who was the enemy, and what was the nature of the threat? Further, could we expect that our respondents would willingly and

openly discuss with us their antagonisms and chauvinisms? We were initially unsure how receptive the refugees would be to us, to our questions, and to the purpose or nature of our research.

Questions of Method

Our study evolved in stages and fits and starts. It was not a smooth evolution, but one that proceeded through errors in judgment, adjustments for unanticipated difficulties, and concessions to the availability of resources and time. In other words, it proceeded as many research projects do! This one in particular, though, ran into some barriers because of the subject we had chosen to study. Researchers have reported on methodological issues with refugee populations such as obtaining a sample, having access to the refugee population, and translating instruments into native languages for cross-cultural research (Aycan & Berry, 1996; Bloch, 1999). A fuller description of the process of our research is included in the Coda at the end of this volume.

We opted for a semistructured interview, with a more formal questionnaire than we might have otherwise selected, in order to offset difficulties posed by the language barrier. This gave more structure to an interview in which elaboration of stories was sometimes limited by language. We depended upon summaries of written notes for our analysis and elected not to record interviews, which might have allowed more extensive narratives. Because it was an unfamiliar population, we wanted to reach a relatively large number of families, which turned out to be one hundred in all. Due to the number of families, it was also our intention to meet with each only once; we then selected a smaller number of families whom we interviewed a second time in more depth.

Respondents: Refugees, Citizens, and Homeowners

Our sample was drawn from those Bosnian families who had achieved some success in adjustment and adaptation in this community. We defined success as either having achieved citizenship or having bought a home. This list consisted of approximately 300 people, primarily heads of households, about 25 of whom had become citizens. There were also several families who were accessed initially through a snowball method adopted to get the research project started; we had immediate access to employees of the local refugee center, many of whom are refugees themselves. The list itself was provided by the local refugee center, which had complete records of refugees who resettled in the area. One hundred Bosnian families agreed to be interviewed. We contacted 300 families altogether in order to complete our sample.

Out of the hundred Bosnian heads of household interviewed, eighty-two are homeowners. The average age of our head of household was thirty-eight, while

50 percent were younger than thirty-six. Only four of our respondents were over sixty years of age. Over 90 percent of the households had children. The average number of children per household was 1.75. In addition, the children of Bosnian families were relatively young. About a third of the families had children between the ages of seven and twelve, and 45 percent had one or more children under the age of six. Twenty-seven percent of families had children between the ages of thirteen and eighteen, and 18 percent had children between the ages of nineteen and twenty-five.

Language is one of the biggest barriers to integration for Bosnians. The average number of months of English as a second language (ESL) training for Bosnian refugees was 3.10, while three-quarters of the sample had less than four months of English training. By the interviewer's estimation, 36 percent of the sample were at a beginner level of English skill, 30 percent were at an intermediate level, and 34 percent were at an advanced level.

Measures

Survey questionnaires were personally administered during in-home interviews, often with other family members, friends, or neighbors in attendance. In most of the interviews a paid interpreter was used. Questionnaires were completed by the researchers during the interview and provided quantitative data in addition to the qualitative material that emerged from more open-ended questions. In addition to demographic information, we included sections on the family's economic situation, job-related information for the primary wage earner, resettlement experiences, and premigratory experiences. The two-page Hopkins-25 Symptom Checklist was given in the native language (Mollica *et al.*, 1987a). Although we did not audiotape interviews, we took copious notes.

Many people whom we interviewed spontaneously supplemented their accounts of their lives prior to or during the war in Bosnia with photographs or videotapes. These visual materials might show their towns or villages or landmarks they were proud of, but were as likely to illustrate signs of destruction or mass graves, or the exodus from those towns or from prison camps. Interviews took approximately 1 to 1½ hours. We were deeply interested in learning what it was like to grow up in Bosnia, what life was like before the war, or "*prije rata*," as we came to learn it was said in the native language, as well as what happened afterwards.

As we used the Hopkins-25 Symptom Checklist, some disturbing results began to emerge. Since some respondents were rating themselves as highly symptomatic, we felt that we simply had to respond to the apparent needs of individuals. In addition, in many cases, we did not believe it could wait, so second interviews proceeded simultaneously with the completion of the first round of interviews. The second interviews were typically much longer than the first and included

both researchers, particularly because Owens-Manley provided the assessment of trauma symptoms and the identified need for intervention. Some of the interviews lasted up to three hours and typically explored, in more depth, experiences both during and after the war. In addition, another instrument from the Harvard Trauma Questionnaire was included that asks about specific trauma experiences. This opened the door for extensive sharing about experiences in the war, in refugee and concentration camps, and in resettlement.

Come in, Have Coffee, Come Back

Our sample of 100 families was compiled by Bosnian research assistants working from our original list of 300 families. Our interpreters, drawn from the Bosnian refugee population in Utica, made phone calls with a prepared script that had been translated into the native language. The interpreters explained the nature of the study as an inquiry about how Bosnians have adjusted to life in America, how satisfactory services were, what jobs they have obtained, and so forth. Often, the conversations on the telephone included questions about who the researchers were and who would read this report when it was completed. Included in the conversations were assurances of confidentiality, a factor that was understandably important for people who had lost so much trust during the war.

It was not an easy task to schedule interviews. There were many wrong numbers or disconnected phones because, in their search for better housing, refugees moved frequently in the first few years. Several families protested that they were too busy or weren't interested, or said that they would get back to us, which then failed to occur. There were interviews scheduled for which no one was at home when we appeared, even though the time had been confirmed the day before! There was hesitancy initially, but our experience was that once we were in the door, we were able to establish good trust and rapport. None of the twenty families selected turned us down for a second interview, and we were welcomed with true Bosnian hospitality—good, strong, coffee, "sweets," and willing conversation.

Many families that we interviewed invited us back to talk, to have coffee, or to share a meal. They were generous in their conversation; anxious to explain and sometimes frustrated with the language barrier themselves, grasping for just the right word or phrase. Conversations often took place in a combination of English and Bosnian as respondents switched back and forth for ease of expression. We had approached our initial interviews with some trepidation about sensitive topics; we wished first and foremost to do no harm. But our overwhelming experience confirmed what Stevan Weine learned as a result of his work with Bosnian refugees in Chicago, namely that our visits and conversations with families who had experienced ethnic cleansing served to bear witness to their lived experience. The overall effect seemed to be therapeutic. Many families expressed their appreciation of our interest in them and their lives.

We began our study acutely aware of recent postmodern critiques of the life history approach and of ethnographic methodology. As Tierney (2000, p. 540) reminds us, "The purpose of the text, the truth of the text, and the author of the text come into question at the end of the twentieth century in ways that did not concern the life historian a century ago." However, we propose that it is possible to erect a healthy sense of skepticism as we listen to our respondents reflect on their experience of war and flight, realizing that theirs is an imperfect account of their own subjective experience and ours is an imperfect audience! As recommended by Denzin (2000) and others, we tried to be aware of how class, race, gender, and ethnicity shaped our inquiry. Yet the imperatives of inquiry dictated that we override the postmodern tendencies to nihilism and proceed with our work regardless of its limitations.

Analysis of the Interviews

Our approach to data analysis was informed by the grounded theory method. This method of data analysis recommends establishing codes as categories or tools to deal with large amounts of raw data; conceptualizing and classifying pieces of data; and making comparisons for both identifying patterns and determining variations of the patterns in the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). As we proceeded to code the initial interviews, we also relied on a technique recommended by Miles and Huberman (1994), namely "focusing and bounding the data." Miles and Huberman suggest drawing an intentional map that combines our thinking about the general areas we perceive to be important with what seems to be produced from an initial reading of the data. We had created a similar exercise of our own, after doing some exploratory reading, in order to focus our questionnaire. We proposed the intersection of biography, or the life story, and history as a time map that led from prewar life to war as a life-changing experience and on to experiences of life in a new country, leading to various adaptation outcomes.

Our analysis of the data began with the very first interviews, as we tried to make sense of what we were hearing. This is consistent with Strauss and Corbin (1998, p. 33), who suggest that "the design, like the concepts, must be allowed to emerge during the research process." Further, the initial research experiences can help to inform subsequent data gathering efforts. Our experience confirms the validity of this advice. For instance, we had assumed that since we were interviewing homeowners, respondents would have been in the United States for longer periods of time and would have adequate English skills for the interviews. We found that many homeowners had been here for only two years or less. It was necessary to incorporate an interpreter into many of our interviews. Upon inquiry, we discovered that respondents had owned their own homes in Bosnia and that home ownership appeared to be a very strong value and motivating force in the United States. Also, strategies used to achieve home ownership emerged

after we began to explore how they had managed, in a relatively short period of time, to purchase homes. Such early discoveries led to shifts in method and opened additional lines of inquiry.

Interview summaries were prepared and loaded into the QSR NUD*IST N5 software program N5 with key attribute variables, such as age at time of arrival, size of hometown, type of employment pre- and postwar, wages, English language competency, and others. We had a small provisional "start list" of codes generated by the focusing and bounding of the data, and from there we chose to let the data inductively emerge into categories.

Bosnian refugees have become a part of the fabric of everyday life in Utica, New York. They form a substantial minority group in the city and have begun participating in many, if not all, of the political, economic, and social structures of this host society. As an ethnic group, they are visibly integrating and adapting. Individuals and families have great variation in adaptation outcomes, and both individual and host society factors have influenced that variation.

Part II of the book begins to address the question, "Who are Utica's Bosnians?" and perhaps "Why are they here?" In keeping with our conceptual framework that underscores the importance of understanding the Bosnian Muslim culture, we take up the story with a discussion of what life was like in the towns, villages, and cities of Bosnia in the years leading up to war. We leave Utica, New York, for the moment, but we'll return to it later in our book, both for a description of the lives of the Bosnian families here and for an update on the state of the community and its ability to nurture and sustain these Bosnian refugee families.

Summary

The population of the City of Utica has changed significantly, with more than 10,000 refugees resettled in Utica over the past twenty-five years. Changes between the 1990 and 2000 Censuses noted a significant decrease in the white, non-Hispanic population, even with the large numbers of Bosnian and Russian refugees who arrived and who were counted in that total. Refugees constitute at least 12 percent of the population of the city; the three main refugee populations are Bosnian, Russian, and Vietnamese. Refugees have repopulated a city of dwindling numbers, and on average, Bosnian families are much younger than city residents as a whole.

Refugees have been a part of the city for about twenty years, but the Refugee Center itself kept a low profile, and the number of refugees who had resettled in the city was small enough initially to keep refugee resettlement out of public discussion or debate. The arrival of Bosnian refugees in larger numbers increased public discussion around the burdens placed on the educational system, the public welfare system, and public health concerns. Traditional human service agencies began to look for ways to respond to the needs of refugees and to serve multicultural

populations. They expressed a need for more skills, more cross-cultural education, and better access to interpretation services.

The research design of this project included survey questionnaires and open-ended questions with hundred Bosnian households. An additional twenty interviews were scheduled with those individuals who rated themselves as symptomatic on a depression and anxiety scale. Methods of inquiry and analysis emerged from grounded theory as developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and later expanded by Strauss (1987) and Strauss and Corbin (1998), as well as methods recommended by Miles and Huberman (1994). Interviews were summarized and coded, and codes were further abstracted, compared, and conceptualized for analysis using the QSR NUD*IST N5 software program. The results of our inquiries and the refugees narratives tell the story in the chapters of this book.

4

"The Beautiful Life" and the Run Up to War

Life in prewar Bosnia was shaped by the rhythm and character of everyday experience at the local level as well as by the larger historical forces that formed group identities in the region. As we will see, daily experience was different for those who lived in rural towns and villages than it was for those who lived in one of the large cities of Bosnia. We explore the nature of everyday life before the war largely because one's past provides a framework for evaluating and comparing current experience. This is especially true for refugees who have been forcibly removed from their former lives (Miller *et al.*, 2002). This chapter introduces the texture of everyday life as revealed through the voices of Bosnians themselves. The chapter also reviews, very briefly, the forces that shaped group identity in the region as a prelude to a discussion of the historical origins of the war itself.

The Yugoslav Federation and its Demise

Before the war in the 1990s, Bosnia-Herzegovina, more commonly known as Bosnia, was one of six republics constituting the Federation of Yugoslavia. Moreover, the population of Bosnia reflected the multiethnic composition of the larger region. This was because in an earlier era, the region that was to be named Yugoslavia in the twentieth century straddled the border between the Roman (Catholic) and Byzantine (Orthodox) Empires. As the map in Figure 4.1 indicates, Bosnia is sandwiched between Croatia to the north and west and Serbia to the east. While Serbia was firmly anchored in the Orthodox tradition and Croatia was clearly Catholic, Bosnia was a contested territory. Consequently, when Bosnia was conquered by the Ottoman Empire in the fifteenth century, many Bosnian Christians gradually converted to Islam in order to escape taxes or to retain social positions as nobility (Malcolm, 1994; Stiglmayer, 1994).

The composition of towns and villages in Bosnia reflected the three religious traditions, Catholic, Orthodox, and Muslim, that had left their distinctive imprint in earlier times. The nature of these local identities, however, underwent significant changes in the nineteenth century when nationalist ideologies spread

Figure 4.1. "The Break-up of Yugoslavia from 1991." Source: Cussans (1994).

through the region. The emergence of nationalism in both Serbia and Croatia had an important impact on ethnic identities in Bosnia. The growth of nationalism in its neighbors encouraged Catholic and Orthodox Bosnians to identify themselves increasingly with those nationalist projects and to assume nationalist labels. Catholics in Bosnia would then call themselves Bosnian Croats and Orthodox Bosnians would call themselves Bosnian Serbs. The Muslims of Bosnia did not have a corresponding national affiliation and referred to themselves as Bosnian

Muslims. While historians of Bosnia tell us that there is no truth to the claims of ancient ethnic hatreds, or even of conflict between the three ethnic groups that constitute the population of Bosnia (Bennett, 1995; Malcolm, 1996), as we will see, there is a record of intergroup competition and conflict in the wider region, especially between the six republics that made up the Federation of Yugoslavia during and after World War II.

Looking at the national composition of Yugoslavia, we notice that while Serbs are not a majority (42% in 1961), they are a much larger group than the others, and their relative influence in the federation would prove to be a recurrent problem. For example, political struggles in the period between the two World Wars revolved around the fact that the participants had very different ideas about how the federation should be run. Croatia and Slovenia[1] wanted a federation in which they enjoyed an equal partnership, but the Serbs wanted and expected the leading role. This competition was especially heated in the 1980s, and it led to intensified nationalist feelings (Sekulic *et al.*, 1994). Nationalist politicians used the media to remind their constituents of the victimization they had experienced at the hands of the "other" during World War II and easily inflamed these feelings.

World War II and its Aftermath

World War II is often referred to as Yugoslavia's Apocalypse (Donia & Fine, 1994, p. 136). Yugoslavia endured invasion and occupation by Italy and Germany and also experienced internecine warfare on a variety of fronts. More than a million Yugoslavs died, about half of whom were killed by other Yugoslavs. Bosnia was annexed to Croatia during the war when it was ruled by a Nazi puppet government led by militant Croat nationalists called Ustashe. The Ustashe carried out expulsions and massacres of Serbs in Croatia in which hundreds of thousands died. In the process, the Ustashe tried with some success to implicate Muslims in anti-Serb violence (Banac, 1996).

In other parts of Yugoslavia, Chetniks, Royalists who favored a greater Serbia, mounted an underground movement against the Nazi occupation. But the Chetniks soon began to target both Croats and Muslims in retaliation for the massacres of Serbs by the Ustashe. The Allies initially backed the Chetnik resistance movement but they soon shifted support to another resistance movement led by Josip Broz Tito. Tito's Partisans had a broad base of support because of their firm discipline and their appeals to national liberation under the banner of "Unity and Brotherhood." When the war ended, however, the Partisans consolidated their power and demonstrated a capacity for ruthlessness and brutality to rival that of the Ustashe and the Chetniks. For example, the British internment camp at Bleiburg held approximately 150,000

[1] Croatia and Slovenia had been part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire while Serbia, Bosnia, Macedonia, and Montenegro were under Ottoman control.

Croats and 10,000 Slovenes who had served in the home defense force on the German side during the war. When these prisoners of war were handed over by the British, they were slaughtered by the Partisan Forces (Parin, 1994, p. 37).[2]

World War II was a disaster for Yugoslavia. The butchery of Serbs by Croat Ustashe, the massacres of Muslims and Croats by Serb Chetniks, and the ruthless violence used by Tito's victorious Partisans to consolidate power left a store of nationalist recrimination which the new regime was determined to leave in the past. In the years immediately after the war Tito banned nationalist movements and made every effort to suppress memories of the recent past. Yet, in spite of his efforts to contain nationalism in Yugoslavia, several of his policies actually exacerbated those tendencies.

Serb domination of Yugoslavia, for example, continued to be both a pervasive concern and a political reality, especially in the early years after World War II. The disproportionate number of Serbs at all levels of state administration, in the army, and especially in the Yugoslav secret police, engendered widespread resentments that, in turn, spawned nationalist reactions across the federation. For example, while Serbs made up 42 percent of the Yugoslav population in 1961, they held 84 percent of the high federal offices, and constituted 70 percent of the officer corps in the Yugoslav army (Stiglmayer, 1994, p. 31).

Nationalism and Economic Decline

The popular notion that Tito's charismatic leadership, together with the tight reign imposed by a communist dictatorship, held the lid on Balkan nationalism (Kaplan, 1994) does not hold up to scrutiny. A review of the last decade of Tito's rule yields quite a different picture. In an effort to deal with and appease the outbreak of nationalism in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Tito initiated a set of reforms embodied in a new constitution enacted in 1974. The new constitution gave unprecedented powers to the six republics as well as to the two autonomous provinces, Vojvodina and Kosovo. In this new arrangement each republic and province had its own central bank, its own educational and judicial systems, and its own police force. These reforms led to a progressively weakened and fragmented federal structure. The constitution of 1974 also put into place an eight-person federal presidency made up of representatives from each of the six republics and the two autonomous provinces, with the office of federal president rotating annually. This arrangement amounted to radical decentralization and fragmentation of political power. As authority devolved to the republics, competition among them increased.

[2] Stiglmayer (1994, pp. 11–12) also discusses these slaughters but his figures are different. He says that 30,000 Slovenes and Croats were murdered at Bleiburg and that later, another 30,000 Chetnik troops were killed by Partisan troops. We may never know what the exact number of casualties was, but we do know that these slaughters were carried out and that they were widely known to have occurred.

National rivalry between the republics was aggravated by economic decline, since now they were competing for pieces of an ever-shrinking federal pie. Yugoslavia's economic decline began before Tito's death in 1980 and got much worse before the end of the decade. As Donia and Fine (1994, p. 180) put it, "... since all the republics except Bosnia were dominated by a single nationality, the distribution of funds became a national issue, and the national leadership of each republic lobbied for a disproportionate share of federal funds". The rivalries between the six republics and the enthusiasm of Croatia and Slovenia for independence reflected the very uneven levels of economic development achieved by the various republics. Because Croatia and Slovenia had earlier been incorporated in the Hapsburg and, later, the Austrian empires, they had benefited from the economic prosperity of western Europe. The other parts of what was to become Yugoslavia were less fortunate in their affiliation with the economic underdevelopment of the Ottoman Empire (Bennett, 1995).

Serbs were especially susceptible to the appeals of nationalism because of the severe economic downturn Serbia experienced in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The appeals to Serb nationalist sentiment also focused on the plight of the Serb minority in Kosovo, the province many regard as the cradle of Serb civilization. The autonomy granted to the ethnic Albanians in Kosovo in 1974 allowed them free reign to run their own affairs. The Serb population in Kosovo had dwindled over the years (23.5% in 1961 down to 10% in 1991), and those who remained complained of ill treatment at the hands of the Albanian power structure (Silber & Little, 1995, pp. 34–35).

Tensions built throughout the late 1970s and came to a head in 1981 when Kosovar Albanians took to the streets to demand independence from Serbia. The uprising was put down, but not before the Serb media had launched an extensive propaganda campaign which accused the Albanians of planning genocide against the Serb population in Kosovo. Stories of Albanians raping Serb women, slaughtering livestock, and destroying Serb farms enraged the public in Serbia and laid the groundwork for a chauvinistic backlash (Stiglmayer, 1994, p. 14). The theme of Serb victimization became the backbone of a revitalized Serb nationalism in 1986 with the publication of the Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, a document authored by a group of Belgrade intellectuals which lamented the plight of the Serbian people who were threatened by enemies on every side (Silber & Little, 1996, p. 33). The memorandum had a huge effect, and Slobodan Milosevic, leader of Serbia's communist party at the time, was on hand to capitalize on the nationalist sentiment that it spawned.

On April 24, 1987, Milosevic went to Kosovo to try to appease the increasingly strident Serbs, who were agitating for protection from the alleged discrimination and harassment by the Albanian majority. In front of a crowd of thousands of Serbs, he uttered what was to become a Serb rallying cry: "No one should dare to beat you" (Silber & Little, 1996, p. 37). With that one sentence, which was

repeated on Belgrade television over and over, Milosevic began his rise to power as the champion of all Serbs.

Milosevic harnessed Serb nationalism and exploited the themes of Serb victimization in a campaign of repression in the province of Kosovo. Opposition to his Kosovo policies was vocal and persistent in the two most prosperous and westernized republics of Slovenia and Croatia. This opposition triggered a counteroffensive from Milosevic who branded Slovenes and Croats enemies of Serbia. In 1988 and 1989, he organized massive popular street demonstrations designed to force the resignations of political opposition in Vojvodina, Kosovo, and Montenegro and installed his own appointee as president in each republic. He thereby gained control of the Yugoslav presidency because he now had four of the eight votes necessary to influence decisions on the federal level (Silber & Little, 1996).

Even as Milosevic consolidated his control of the federation, the unraveling of the Yugoslav Communist Party created a political vacuum which was filled by other nationalists brought to power in the elections of 1990. These nationalists had no desire to remain in a Yugoslavia dominated by Milosevic and the specter of a greater Serbia. And, as the federation showed signs of coming apart, Milosevic became ever more determined that the Serbs outside the Serb Republic should support him in his attempt to grab territory in Croatia and Bosnia. The stage was set for the bids for independence that followed. While political events were unfolding around them, Bosnians were watching and waiting, but still enjoying a good life, until April of 1992, as we describe in the following.

Prewar Bosnia

Prior to the build-up of hostilities in the former Yugoslavia, Bosnians experienced a way of life that was solid and good. Life then was remembered nostalgically, as "*the beautiful life*" or "*the perfect life,*" one filled with family, close friends, travel, and a more relaxed lifestyle than they have found in America. The life of a typical youth in Bosnia is idealized in both rural and urban settings:

> We had such a nice life, a little farm. My father built a big house. He said, 'do something.' I liked to go out with friends after school, play handball, play billiards, play soccer, go on river.

> I had a beautiful childhood, playing outside and going to the sea sometimes. In high school and after, I played in a band and had a wonderful youth, vacationing without parents from the age of 16 or so with friends. We were able to travel cheaply, stay in homes on the Adriatic Sea.

Respondents described rich social networks and close family ties, in contrast to the family separation they have experienced since the war. About two-thirds of our respondents come from small towns and villages in rural areas of Bosnia. Many

report that they worked in other areas of the former Yugoslavia, or in countries in Europe such as Italy, Germany, and Austria. Even more told us that their fathers had worked abroad for extensive periods of time, usually in the construction industry, although a fair number mentioned employment in mines and forests. Tone Bringa observed a similar pattern in central Bosnia in the field research she undertook before the war. "Mixed households" derived their income from both subsistence farming and from wage labor (Bringa, 1995, p. 50). Six of the families in the village she studied actually relied exclusively on farming for their livelihood. Bringa (1995, p. 51) reported a switch from subsistence farming to wage labor had occurred over the last sixty to eighty years and that the introduction of factory work for men had led to the gradual feminization of agriculture.

Rural Life in Bosnia

Most families from rural areas describe how subsistence farming contributed to the household economy. In rural villages family and neighbors would help a young couple build their own home, and newly married couples often lived with the husband's family until they had saved enough money to do so. Families usually owned enough land for a small farm including orchards, gardens, and animals. Life in rural Bosnia is described by two respondents:

> We had enough money for ourselves, had good friends, good neighborhood, houses far but not too far, in village. Farmers were up at 5:00 a.m. I baked bread and had sheep. In May, we had shearing, and wool was dyed for me to weave rugs, very attractive. We also had a cow, horse, and grew all our own vegetables and canned for winter. Food was mostly meat, potatoes, beans, and I made different pitas.

> I had animals, orchards, vegetable garden. In summertime, I woke at 5:00 a.m., milked cow, take care of kids, go to garden. Raised mostly enough for us. Sometimes I take break from sun mid-day and go back and work in evening.

Younger respondents report that their parents had large properties on which they grew fruit trees and raised livestock and garden vegetables. Some say that the surplus produce was sold at the market or was used as barter, but most indicate that farming efforts were directed at feeding a large family. Some families had a cow or two for the production of milk and cheese. Some had sheep whose care was entrusted to the village shepherd.

> We had five dogs, cats, chickens and five cows. I (wife) was farmer, took care of farmstead. We hired labor in summer for harvest. Hard to watch sheep. Had to hire cousin as Shepherd.

> Life in Bosnia was nice, go out, be with friends. Usually had garden with flowers, big vegetable garden, clean house. Fruits, all vegetables for home, large corn & grain lots, wheat ground in nearby mill. Ducks, chickens, cow. I worked 7 years before war; worked on farm with rabbits for Agrokomerc.

Urban Life in Bosnia

About a third of our respondents had lived in large cities such as Sarajevo, Zenica, Banja Luka, or Mostar. Sarajevo is described in nostalgic terms as a beautiful European city with tree-lined avenues and classic architecture. Certainly, it was not long ago, in 1984, that the winter Olympics was staged there. Zenica was a large industrial center in Bosnia and was heavily polluted, but its inhabitants later miss their homes, nonetheless. Urban dwellers speak nostalgically about their customary strolls down tree-lined streets and in the parks of their city.[3]

> You couldn't believe [life in Bosnia]. It is what Americans could imagine. America is, only it isn't. Almost everyone was educated in my city. Had good jobs, usually worked 7-3 or 8-4, not working hard like here, we traveled everywhere in Europe.

Families from both urban and rural Bosnia speak about the ease with which children could wander the streets, villages, and neighborhoods while the parents had no worry for their safety and well-being.

> [Life in Bosnia] was always like fun, every house will have a party. Not so much child care, because children run free in village, everyone watches them, and there is no need

> Children played everywhere in safety without parents, with a key around their neck to get into home. Everyone watched all of the children. [In U.S.] it is very hard to be a parent. No one helps you, and you are responsible alone for everything.

A Multicultural Society

Bosnia is also described as a multicultural society in which no one cared if you were Croat, Serb, or Muslim:

> Before the war, we had that brotherhood unity and everything was good.

Nearly everyone reported that ethnic tensions did not exist in the multicultural Bosnia.

> No one asked about religion or ethnicity. It didn't happen and would have appeared as something wrong with questioner.

> Differences were there, but it was like in the United States, everyone celebrated all the holidays together. Before the war, no one really cared about the ethnic background of anyone else.

> I was only a little aware of the [ethnic] differences among friends and neighbors. It didn't really matter.

[3] Such evening strolls are known as "Korso" throughout the Mediterranean and provide an opportunity to socialize with neighbors and friends. It also served as a venue for potential marriage partners to interact, albeit under highly circumscribed and chaperoned conditions (Young, personal communication, 1999).

Responses are often nostalgic; their lives here in the United States are compared with the lives they were forced to leave behind in Bosnia.

> Before everyone was the same—everything is different now. It was a good, nice life. I don't know why. Everyone was like brother, sister, you go to work you like, building house and everyone comes. Not now, attitudes have changed, not friends. Now it is about money, changed because of war.

Abruptly, life changed, with the advent of war.

The Run up to War

One of our respondents worked for a humanitarian organization in Bosnia during the first year of the war. He is one of a few people we interviewed who reported having seen signs of impending trouble. As early as 1983 he was in Belgrade where he saw graffiti denigrating Muslims: "We fuck your Albanian and Turkish mothers." He remembers the fall of Communism in November 1989, and the emergence of a multiparty system. The economy was in shambles and he anticipated trouble.

> Problem started two to three years before war. Serbs in the news celebrating Serb holiday. Story of Milosevic in 1989 slowly got bigger.

Another man claims that the war was entirely predictable.

> Every 40 years Serbs do aggression against Bosnia. I would never go back to a rural area in Bosnia again. That's where the Serbs launch their attacks.

He knows about the regularity of Serb attacks because,

> In World War II my aunt and uncle and wife's aunt were killed by Serbs. They put them in the cellar of the house and then set it on fire.

The respondents from Bosnia's cities are especially emphatic in expressing their utter shock and dismay that war could have come to Bosnia. "Who could think that this could happen there?" Not only did people neither know nor care about another's ethnic background, but we are also told that intermarriage was very common in the city. A sociological study of social tolerance in Yugoslavia conducted before the war indicated that of the six republics and two autonomous provinces that made up the federation, Bosnia was both the most ethnically diverse and the most tolerant (Sekulic *et al.*, 1994). At the same time, although there is some debate over the issue (Allcock *et al.*, 1998; Botev, 1994), there is reason to believe that more than 30 percent of all marriages in Bosnian cities in the twenty-five-year period before the war were mixed marriages, that is, marriages between Bosnian Croats,

Bosnian Muslims, and Bosnian Serbs (Gagnon, 1994; Petrovic, 1986). This is an extremely high rate of intermarriage, indicating high social tolerance and cultural integration (Blau *et al.*, 1984). Although the incidence of mixed marriages in rural areas was lower, our interviews did not uncover evidence of ethnic antagonism in the countryside either.

We argue that the war is not best understood in the context of ancient hatreds but in light of other social, political, and economic realities. Certainly ethnic hatreds played a role in the war, but they were of recent origin. Either memories of atrocities in World War II continued to play a role in contemporary interactions or the political leadership succeeded in making people believe that they should. Also, once the war started, the violence directed at one ethnic group by another could quickly enflame hatreds on both sides.

On the other hand, the view of the war often encountered in the American press, and even espoused by American political leaders, was that the wars in the Balkans were based on "ancient ethnic hatreds."[4] This idea assumes that ethnic tensions were held in check by the rigid structures of Communism, and that once Tito left the scene, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia could no longer contain the simmering ethnic furies of the Balkans. For example, former Secretary of State Warren Christopher excused American inaction in Yugoslavia by saying that the violence in Bosnia was "... really a tragic problem. The hatred between the three groups is unbelievable. It's almost terrifying, and it's centuries old." (Friedman, 1993, p. 116). On the eve of the American presidential elections in 1992, the Bush administration told the State department to downplay the violence in Bosnia. George Kenny resigned in protest. Kenny said,

> The Bush administration pronouncements on the Yugoslav crisis between February and August exhibited the worst kind of hypocrisy. I know, I wrote them ... my job was to make it appear as though the U.S. was active and concerned about the situation and, at the same time, give no one the impression that the U.S. was actually going to do something about it (Glover, 1999, p. 139).

Once we had begun to talk with Bosnians in upstate New York about their experiences of the war, we quickly came to the view that the ancient ethnic hatreds thesis is flawed because *it mistakes the consequences of war for its cause*. Surely war in Bosnia traumatized its victims and generated hatred, but the wars did not erupt in the first place because of deep-seated ethnic antagonisms. As we saw above, when we asked, "Before the war, were you aware of the ethnic or religious background of friends, neighbors or fellow workers?" and "When you were in

[4] The ancient ethnic hatreds thesis is anchored in the notion that ethnic antipathies are "in the blood," and are primordial. Some versions of this perspective attribute ethnic hatreds to certain regions, e.g. the Balkans. This type of argument is fully elaborated in the work of Robert Kaplan, for example. For a critique of the primordialist viewpoint, see Eller and Coughlan (1993). Hardin (1995) does a nice job of demystifying the ethnic hatred thesis as it applies to Yugoslavia.

secondary school, were you aware of the ethnic background of fellow students?," we were told "*no*," or that the differences didn't matter.

Urban–Rural Differences

While ideal types, such as urban and rural, were adopted solely for heuristic purposes, the distinction is one that figured quite prominently in some of our discussions with Bosnians who had come from the larger cities such as Sarajevo and Zenica. These urban Bosnians tended to refer to themselves as Yugoslavs, or even as Europeans, and to disparage people who lived in villages as ignorant, backward, and easily influenced by appeals to chauvinistic nationalism. One man goes so far as to claim that social distinctions before the war were seldom drawn along national or ethnic lines. Rather, it was much more important to distinguish between city dwellers and rural people. Another respondent tells us that village folk are jokingly called "clovenfoot," in reference to the similarity they bear to the barnyard animals they tend.

> We had no awareness of ethnic backgrounds in school or after. In villages, those people thought about it.
>
> People from rural towns listened uncritically to leadership. Rural people were easily led into nationalism.
>
> Many uneducated people were talked into fighting. People in villages and countryside did not enjoy good standard of living. Rural villagers were thought of as outcasts. Villages are in remote areas and hills. Those people were acting wild, for example, Karadzic was born in Montenegro, most remote area, like a jungle guy.
>
> Villagers are easily manipulated. The war started in villages with the illiterate and uneducated. Most villages were isolated.

While our respondents do not explicitly say this, the subtext of references to the backwardness of village folks are couched in terms of "a whole set of ideas associated with other sociological oppositions such as town versus village, educated versus uneducated, poor versus rich, modern and western versus backward and Balkan" (Bringa, 1995, p. 58). These disparaging remarks come from a variety of respondents but more frequently are directed by urban dwellers at people from west Bosnia as a way to explain their having been led into a civil war by businessman Fikret Abdic against the Sarajevo-based government of Izetbegovic.

> In Bosnia villagers are primitive with no education. It is hard to comprehend differences between city and village. Bosnian cities are like European cities but couple of miles out of town no electricity in villages, live very primitive life. This is the first time in my life I have seen this kind of people. Some of them never saw a picture of a car and now they are driving one. So big a difference for them it's unbelievable. So big a difference you can imagine between a village and city. Like Florida and Haiti, not far away, but big difference in how they live.

And where were these rural villagers likely to be found?

> That northwest corner. Most primitive people in our country are in that part. 50 or 60 years ago, that was one of most educated parts: doctors, lawyers. But all schools, and colleges were destroyed during WWII by Serbs in particular. Serbs eliminated educated people and put all the junk factories in Bosnia. They didn't want the dirty air in Croatia or Serbia. Didn't want people to be educated—then who will work in factories?
>
> [Abdic] was a god for rural people. Abdic supporters were rural people, uneducated.

Some people claim to have been confused by the war and say that they could not understand how it could have happened. But the more prevalent explanation is that it was a war carried out by political leaders intent on pursuing their own interests.

Politics and Politicians

Milosevic (former leader of Serbia) and Tudjman (late leader of Croatia) are specifically named as politicians who are blamed for the war in Bosnia, although some of our respondents also include in their indictments Izetbegovic (erstwhile head of the Muslim-led government of Bosnia-Herzegovina) and Abdic (former political leader and businessman in mostly Muslim northwest Bosnia). A woman who spent the war in Zenica expresses frustration with self-interested politicians.

> Politicians only came to Bosnia to advance their own interests. They could have stopped war. Why did they let so many die? Nobody feels responsible even now for what happened. European nationalists didn't want Muslims in Europe, so that's why we are here in America.

The view from Bosnia's large cities seems to have been fairly consistent. Politicians are to blame for the war. A third urban dweller ascribes the advent of war to Croatian expansionism and to Serbian efforts to eradicate Bosnian Muslims:

> Tudjman sent Croat soldiers against Muslims in Bosnia. He promised Croats a separate country. Aljia [Izetbegovic] wanted democratic secular country, not to exclude others. Most think he's Muslim leader but Serbs used mass propaganda, said it was religious war but it wasn't. War happened because of greater Serbia. Before war political parties emerged. War criminal Karadzic said if Bosnia gets independence via referendum then we will have to get rid of all Muslims from Bosnia. When Europe gave independence recognition Serbs started the slaughter. Serbs tried to erase every Muslim cultural monument.

Two more city men give us these summary accounts:

> Before war, Serbs already had a plan: own house, own people, own country. This was not civil war. War was planned for 20 years by Serbs.
>
> War between Croatia and Bosnia was between Croatian politician Tudjman, a fascist man and Bosnian army, not between people or religions. Only politics. Between people? No.

As Woodward (1995) reminds us, the war would not have been possible were it not for a unique geopolitical conjuncture. The story of the Yugoslav conflict began a decade before the fall of the Berlin wall when austerity measures and reforms required by the foreign debt crisis triggered the slide toward political disintegration. This crisis had developed as a function of Yugoslavia's strategic significance in the cold war, which provided access to foreign credits and capital markets. The economic and structural weaknesses of the country rendered the federation vulnerable just as the cold war came to an end, and the strategic significance of Yugoslavia suddenly vanished.

The international community also played a role by allowing nationalist leaders to believe that the break-up of the Yugoslav Federation would be tolerated. In *Origins of a Catastrophe*, the last American ambassador to Yugoslavia, Zimmerman (1999, p. 7) observes,

> Yugoslavia's position between hostile Eastern and Western camps made its unity a major Western concern. As long as the cold war continued, Yugoslavia was a protected and sometimes pampered child of American and Western diplomacy.

Once the Soviet Union no longer posed a threat, the geopolitical significance of Yugoslavia evaporated. When Zimmerman arrived in Belgrade, he was instructed to deliver a new message. The new message was interpreted by the nationalist leaders of the Yugoslav Republics as a green light for the break-up of the federation.

Supporters of the federation and those who agitated for independence received mixed messages from the West. When Secretary of State Baker visited Belgrade in June 1991, and reiterated American support for the Yugoslav Federation, the Yugoslav army thought that this meant that they could go ahead with military action against Croat and Slovene secessionists. But when Slovenia and Croatia actually declared independence later that month, the European Community concluded that the federation was in the process of dissolution and announced that the European Community would entertain applications for independence and international recognition from the remaining Yugoslav republics. As Woodward (1995, p. 198) concludes, by recognizing the newly elected nationalist leaders within the republics as leaders of nations struggling for independence, the EC and the UN deprived the Federation of Yugoslavia of any hope of survival.

A Weakened Economy

Several of our respondents identify the frailty of the Yugoslav economy as a cause of popular vulnerability to nationalism. As noted by Susan Woodward and others (Burg & Shoup, 1999; Sibler & Little, 1996), inflation was particularly egregious during the period 1989–1990. Indeed, several respondents point to inflation and say that it was partly responsible for the conditions that led to war.

> We had good jobs and we were satisfied, but big inflation. Living standards okay, but no savings, even with two salaries. Had car, two weeks vacation. Could get rich before, but with inflation, my generation couldn't.
>
> Inflation and Economy was the big reason. When hungry, it is easy to blame others.
>
> Couldn't buy clothes because of inflation. Imagine what a nice ground for politicians, first get used to nice comfortable life, then suddenly no jobs and no income to buy shoes. Inflation makes people vulnerable. If no food, scapegoating is easily mobilized. First hunger, then ripe for political and ethnic tensions.
>
> When the economy is good, nobody asks your religion. Full stomach, lots of money. When economy decreased, nationalism increased.

Although many respondents described prewar Bosnia in glowing terms, these depictions gloss over the realities of high inflation and a crumbling economy in the 1980s. A few interviews elicited graphic descriptions of a distressed economy and indications that hardships had permeated everyday life.

> The job market in Yugoslavia, especially in Bosnia, was in pretty bad shape; there was high rate of unemployment . . . the economy was almost on its knees. In the last three years before the war, we would have little choice in food. It got very expensive . . . it was normal to have an empty refrigerator every day . . . we to run to the store early in the morning to wait for hours in a long row, until bread and milk arrived. Around 7:00 a.m. the lucky ones would be bringing some home.

This was borne out indirectly in other interviews when many respondents referred to the need to work outside of Bosnia in Germany, Austria, Croatia, and elsewhere because of the scarcity of jobs at home. In fact, ten of the one hundred families we interviewed were "abroad," in Slovenia, Croatia, or Austria when the war broke out. They did not return to Bosnia, but came directly to the United States as refugees.

The Media Influence

The war in Bosnia was unusual in several respects. In what some commentators have dubbed "the television wars," all sides made intentional use of visual imagery as a weapon of propaganda (Gow *et al.*, 1996). The television wars were extremely effective. As some of our respondents say:

> Television was all nationally oriented. Everybody lied.
>
> Media began in Sarajevo, Zagreb and Belgrade to show same footage, but with a different story depending on the site.
>
> Media started everything. News everyday held influence of media, started before the war.
>
> On television there would be three different stories. Who is guilty, who is victim changes according to who tells story, before Serbs took over relays.

Another respondent recalls that in 1989 a "documentary" on television showed what the commentator said were mass graves of Serbs who had been killed by Muslims in World War II. The next day there were mass demonstrations over these massacres.

An Assault on Urban Culture

A related theme in the literature on the wars in Yugoslavia suggests that these have been wars directed at "civilization" as it is represented by the city (Bogdanovic, 1993; Poulton, 1993, pp. 212–213).[5] The apparently senseless destruction of cities such as Mostar, Sarajevo, and Vukovar is seen as the product of hatred for everything urban. Certainly the cities of Bosnia were the sites of tolerance and multiculturalism. As one observer put it, "Ignorance and urbanity have gone to war, and urbanity has been the instant loser in Yugoslavia" (Hardin, 1995, p. 162).

Others have argued that "it may have been appalling or criminal, but little that happened in the war was senseless" (H. Goldman, personal communication, 2004). The destruction of the bridge in Mostar, for example, was carried out as an "intentional act of great political symbolism" (H. Goldman, personal communication, 2004).

The Break-Up of Yugoslavia

Slovenia and Croatia declared independence on June 25, 1991. War broke out immediately as the Serb-dominated Yugoslav army backed Milosevic in his effort to prevent secession. Ten days later, Slovenia was allowed to exit Yugoslavia because there were no significant minorities there. Croatia was another matter entirely. The Serbs in Croatia, who made up about 12 percent of the population, had already declared their intention to unite with Serbia. These Serbs were the descendants of the Serbs who had moved into the region in the fifteenth century after the Ottomans had pushed them out of their homelands. The Croat Serbs were now intent on breaking free from Croatia and appealed to Serbia to support them in that effort. As Sibler and Little (1996, p. 103) point out, while there was no evidence in August of 1990 that the JNA overtly supported such a movement, it was clear that a "... program of covert arming had taken place; and that individuals in the JNA were engaged in arms-smuggling with tacit official approval". The Yugoslav army transferred arms to the Croat Serbs who quickly took over about a third of Croatia's territory.

[5] This theme shows up in Donia and Fine (1994, p. 87). Bennett (1995, p. 49) argues that these antipathies repeated those in evidence after World War II: "Throughout the country imposition of Communist rule was brutal, not least because the Partisan victory was at the same time a victory of the countryside over the city."

A Bosnian Muslim with whom we spoke, was serving in the JNA at the time and recalls his participation in these events:

> I was initially conscripted into the JNA-Yugoslav army where I trained to become a tank driver. I was deployed in the war against Slovenia and then later, against Croatia. My unit was stationed for three weeks on the Serb side of the river, then we were ordered across the river. I was told that Croatia had to be stopped in its bid for independence because that would destroy Yugoslavia. I could easily see the logic of that. Further, the first casualty of the war was the General who led the troops into battle on that first day. He was also my Battalion commander. Now it seemed personal, and I and my cohort were motivated to kick ass. Croats were no match for the Yugoslav army.

During the war and in the years that followed Milosevic repeatedly denied his involvement in the dismemberment of Bosnia. However, in 1995, Borislav Jovic, Milosevic's closest political colleague and confidant, published his memoirs, and they flatly contradicted Milosevic's claims of innocence (Perlez, 1995). Jovic claimed that Milosevic was actively and deliberately engaged in bringing war to Yugoslavia. Milosevic's efforts were directed toward promoting Greater Serbia, a project designed to bring areas of Bosnia and Croatia populated by Serbs under the control of an expanded Serbian state (Pulez, 1995).

Of course, Milosevic was not alone in his ultranationalist scheme. Franjo Tudjman, a radical nationalist who had been elected President of Croatia in 1990, had similar designs on western Bosnia, where significant numbers of Croats could claim territory in the name of the Croat nation. Both leaders had planned to dismember and partition Bosnia between Croatia and Serbia and actually met in 1991 to discuss how it would be done. Their collusion in the division of Bosnia, even when Tudjman knew perfectly well that Milosevic had designs on Croatia, is a measure of the cynicism embedded in their ambitions.

In the conflict between Croatia and Serbia, Milosevic and Tudjman actively promoted the fear that each ethnic group was intent on destroying the other. Milosevic engineered the media coverage of the exhumation of mass graves from World War II from which Serb remains were identified as victims of Ustashe terror. Franjo Tudjman helped to fuel these fears. After Tudjman's electoral victory, thousands of Serbs were fired from state-run enterprises. His regime promoted public displays of the red and white checkerboard flag which had been widely associated with the Ustashe reign of terror. He then introduced a new constitution demoting the Serbs from a constituent people to minority status (Burg & Shoup, 1999).

In March 1992, following a European Community mandated referendum which the Bosnian Serbs boycotted, Bosnia declared independence. International recognition followed shortly thereafter and so did war. Milosevic's former political confidant revealed in his memoirs the scheme by which 90,000 Serbian soldiers were brought under the command of Bosnian Serbs in the service of creating a Greater Serbia (Perlez, 1995). Jovic and Milosevic conspired to gather all Bosnian

Serbs currently serving in the Yugoslav army and to press them into service in Bosnia against the Muslim led Bosnian army.

In Chapter 5, we consider the actual experiences of war as related to us in the narratives of our respondents. The stories of war were emotional and complicated. Taken together, these stories do not offer a portrait of the war in Bosnia, but only a portrait of the war as experienced by these families, half of whom lived through the war in the northwest corner of Bosnia where Fikret Abdic tried to carve out an autonomous statelet.

5

The Violence of War

> The facts of contemporary history are also facts about the success and failure of individual men and women. When a society is industrialized, a peasant becomes a worker; a feudal lord is liquidated or becomes a businessman. When classes rise and fall, a man is employed or unemployed; when the rate of investment goes up or down, a man takes new heart or goes broke. When wars happen, an insurance salesman becomes a rocket launcher; a store clerk, a radar man; a wife lives alone; a child grows up without a father. (Mills, 1959, p. 4)

During March of 1992, preparations were made for war, following the declaration of independence of Bosnia-Herzegovina on March 3. Burg and Shoup (1999, p. 119) characterize the startup of the conflicts:

> This first phase of the struggle was characterized by the breakdown of law and order, the takeover of power throughout the republic by the national parties . . . and local confrontations, mostly between Serbs and Croats, in anticipation of major battles to come.

A confrontation between the Muslim Patriotic League and local Serb units erupted on April 2 and 3, and the paramilitary Serbian Guard intervened, killing Muslims in the first massacre of the war. When the European Community and the United States granted recognition to Bosnia-Herzegovina a few days later, the Serbs invaded eastern Bosnia and began an all-out attack on Muslim cities and towns (Burg & Shoup, 1999).

The actual conduct and course of the conflict were no less complicated than the historical and institutional antecedents of the war in Bosnia. Units of the former Yugoslav army (JNA), comprising Serb forces primarily, along with Bosnian Serb paramilitary units, met little effective resistance from the unprepared and ill-equipped Bosnian army. At the same time the high command structure of the rest of the Yugoslav army was purged of all of those whose support for the greater Serbia project was thought to be in question. This process was started in 1991 and was completed in 1993 when the last 43 generals of a total 101 high-ranking officers were forced to retire (Donia & Fine, 1994, p. 222).

The assault on the cities took various forms. Bosnian Serb forces besieged Sarajevo and subjected it to unrelenting artillery bombardment and sniper fire; Bosnian Croats destroyed large parts of Eastern Mostar as they besieged the Muslims in that part of the city (Milivojevic, 1998, p. 183). Zenica's supply of

food and electricity were cut off. The population of Zenica, for example, was also swollen with the victims of ethnic cleansing, people who had been forced from their homes and fled to shelter in the city. The insidious psychological scars of ethnic cleansing compound the physical impact of being forced from one's home. Ethnic cleansing involves a deliberate effort to shatter the self and its connections to its human and physical environment (Weine & Laub, 1995).[1]

War Comes to Bosnia

Ethnic cleansing is almost synonymous with the war in Bosnia. One aspect of that phenomenon involves the destruction of the material culture of people, its monuments, churches or mosques, libraries, and public buildings. Malcolm (1996, p. 246) describes the objective of ethnic cleansing in this war as:

> The political project which the war was intended to achieve, namely the creation of homogenous Serb areas which could eventually be joined to other Serb areas, including Serbia itself, to create a greater Serbian state.

Ethnic cleansing is a nasty and brutal tool of war, but it also must be understood as a form of political calculus. In the run up to war in Bosnia, referendums were used to establish the political will of the people in a given territory no less than five times. The referendums were held to justify the secession of Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia from Yugoslavia. Thereafter Serbs held referendums in Croatia and Bosnia to document their desires for autonomy or annexation to Serbia. All these referendums contributed to the use of ethnic cleansing by making it an expedient tool of war. It would do no good to conquer an area of Bosnia in war if, after the war, a referendum were held which ended up returning that territory to its original occupants. Rather, it would be politically expedient and logical to ensure the desired outcome of any future referendum by clearing the land of other ethnic groups and then resettling it with co-nationals, thereby creating ethnically homogeneous regions that could be annexed later into Serbia or Croatia (Burg & Shoup, 1999, p. 171).[2] Figure 5.1 depicts the flow of refugees and displaced persons who were forced from their homes between 1991 and 1995 as a result of ethnic cleansing and the violence of war.

The next several years of war in Bosnia witnessed the formation of various alliances. At first the Croats were aligned with the Muslims against the Bosnian

[1] The psychological damage inflicted by ethnic cleansing is also discussed in Weine and colleagues' various analyses (1995, 1998, 1999).

[2] The conflicting reports on ethnic cleansing during the war are discussed in Burg and Shoup (1999, pp. 171–181). They eschew the "moral equivalence" approach which attributes equal blame to all sides. We tend to agree with their conclusion: "The Muslims was the aggrieved party; fighting for its survival as a political community, if not its very existence. But, at the same time, the evidence . . . makes it clear that all three parties—including the Muslims—were behaving in ways that undermined any claim to moral superiority" (p. 181)

Figure 5.1. Map of refugee flows from the former Yugoslavia: 1991–1999. Source: O'Brien (1999, p. 265).

Serbs, but, as it became clear that Bosnian Croats were intent on maintaining control of the territory they held in western Herzegovina, tensions with their Muslim allies escalated and then broke into outright war. The Muslim led Bosnian army was badly outmatched in terms of men, munitions, and equipment. Their disadvantages were compounded by the arms embargo imposed on Yugoslavia by the United Nations. Bosnia had limited access to arms trade, "... whereas Croatia and Serbia could easily circumvent these restrictions because of their extensive coastal and land borders" (Donia & Fine, 1994, p. 240). By 1993, Serb territorial war aims had been achieved, including the capture of the eastern and northwestern regions of Bosnia and a corridor linking up the two areas with the Serbs in Croatia. Similarly, the Croat objectives had been met when Croatian forces joined

up with Bosnian Croats and secured a swath of territory in western Bosnia. By the end of 1993 Bosnian Serbs controlled more than two-thirds of the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina (See Figure 5.2).

The Outbreak of War: Shock and Disbelief

The first impression one gets of the personal response to the outbreak of war was a sense of disbelief that Bosnia could have come to this end. War is described as happening almost overnight. When asked how the conflict developed, many of our respondents recall a sense of bewilderment at the disintegration of order, stability, and normalcy. Many left their homes in a rush, not taking very much in the way of clothing or belongings, believing:

> We'll be back in a few days or weeks after the trouble subsides. It was the end of normal life and beginning for hell from first day.
>
> It was unbelievably sudden. We knew there was fighting in Croatia, but we never thought it would come to us. April was a funny month in Sarajevo in '92. The war had started, but you could still travel around the city. Just needed papers and you would be checked.
>
> When the war started, it just cut off my youth. It was unbelievably sudden. We knew there was fighting in Croatia, but we never thought it would come to us . . . I left with a suitcase with summer t-shirts. I thought I'd be back in two months.

The wife of the latter respondent, a girlfriend at the time the war broke out, agrees with his assessment:

> When everything fell apart, it happened over night. So, I didn't take it for real . . . My father came to me when I was studying and said leave your books, you have to go. I packed basic stuff for one month, thought I would be back when fighting calmed down.

Although many were aware of the troubles sparked by the declarations of independence in Slovenia and Croatia the year before, there was a conviction that nothing could happen to tear apart the multiethnic fabric of Bosnia. The suddenness and uncompromising nature of the demand that they leave their homes was shocking to many. The explicit threat of imminent death left no room for argument or discussion:

> On January 31, 1993, Serb soldiers came to door. 'Leave or we will kill you.'

Ethnic Cleansing: Homes and Lives Destroyed, Looting by Serbs

Ethnic cleansing by Serbs was an intentional strategy. One man who spent the war years in Zenica explains:

> They couldn't do too much damage to this city as they wanted this one. 80,000 was original number, and in 1993 there were 300,000. As the Serbs cleared another city, they sent refugees to Zenica. They set numbers before they went, kill x percent, send y percent to prison camps, another percent to Zenica.

Figure 5.2. Map: "Balkan Peninsula 2001." Source: Facts on File, I. (2002, no. 4.41).

Serbs bombed the town of Foca. One woman with whom we spoke was confined to the basement of her house for two days. Eventually she joined a group of forty others from her town and hiked for seven days through the mountains. They trekked about half way from Foca to Sarajevo in April 1992 before being loaded onto buses when they joined up with the Bosnian army. She recounted:

> Old people were breaking bones; there were ladies with young babies. I don't know how we survived that. Two days before we left a Serb friend came to say, 'you'd better to go away.'

Her house was subsequently burned by the Serbs.

A forty-seven-year-old amputee from before the war provides another account of ethnic cleansing by Serbs:

> We left Bosnia in September 1992 after the war started. Fifteen Serbs had been killed in Bihac and Serbs were killing Muslims in the city for revenge. We were holed up in our house for several days, terrified about when the Serbs would come for us. Serbs were also laying off the Muslims and they didn't want to sell food to the Muslims. Then all Muslims were loaded onto trucks and buses and were sent to Central Bosnia. The Serbs proceeded to open fire on the convoy. My family was safe because we were seated next to the Serb driver. In Central Bosnia there was much fighting. After the cease-fire I had to walk seven to eight miles with a makeshift crutch. We were on the front-line between Serbs and Croats. The Serbs robbed us of all our jewels, money and valuables.

One couple describes the cleansing of their town by Serbs, a project that was remarkably well organized and brutal in its efficiency. Serbs occupied the town and then organized bus convoys to transport Muslim women and children out of town and to Bugojno.

> Serbs were already in town and heavily armed, left path for Muslims to escape. They organized buses for women and kids. Men had to get out on their own. I left five days after family left. I hid and then escaped through woods. Men were being taken to concentration camps. Some older men were exchanged for Serbs from another town. Others were killed. My son was 12 years old at the time they were taken on bus and he was very scared. Local Serbs were checking for weapons, my wife's best friends wore masks too. The day we left our houses were looted. Huge robbery by Serbs from Serbia, not by local Serbs. Taken by truck. Serb neighbors showed foreign Serbs where they could find best things. Robberies were done in cycles, and they even took toilet seats, then sold them in markets in Serbia. War criminals got rich that way.

Another man from the northeast area of Bosnia was forced to work for Serbs without pay.

> I was an electrician in my town for twelve years but then the Serbs forced me from work. When they forced us to work, they were beating us and some of us died from wounds. Serbs were killing my friends and cousins to scare us and make us admit and say lies for instance Muslims were killing Serbs. Me personally have never seen that Muslims had chance to kill Serbs because we did not have any weapons or guns. Serbs had all types of weapons and guns and air force and they were without remorse with

> help from Muslim traitors killing all others who did not support Serbs. After they forced me from work, I was scared, stayed in house, could not go outside. Serbs outside house everyday. People from a town in Serbia came and killed my friends at work. December 10 Serbs made us leave our house.

Victims of ethnic cleansing always remember the date they were forced from their homes. For them it is the day the world changed.

Another man who was taken to a concentration camp describes the cleansing of his village of only 300. All houses in his village were destroyed except his. He had had a woodworking business in his home. He shows us a photograph of his home at the end of the war. The structure is still standing, but the roof is damaged; his woodworking equipment is gone; all windows and doors have been stripped from the house. It is a shell. He summarizes the Serb project of ethnic cleansing,

> Serbs wanted to expel Muslims and have only Serbs there. Many were killed, houses destroyed and burned. All mosques were destroyed.

The experiences of ethnic cleansing are clearly painful to recall and uncomfortable to talk about because these memories evoke such a palpable sense of insecurity and angst.

> I pine for my country. Serbs are in my house since eight years ago. December 10, 1992 I left my house in Bosnia. Serbs came in night and told us we have be out at 9 AM. Serbs took places where we worked and houses. They forced us to work for no pay or food. They killed some people in schools, Serbs murdered several employees just to scare others.

Toward the end of our interview with this man it is clear that he is quite nervous and agitated about something. Finally, he asks if there is any truth to the rumor they have heard that the local refugee center has been encouraging Serb families to come to Utica. The rumor is that 50,000 are coming to Utica. His memories of ethnic cleansing continue to haunt him.

Life was precarious in Sarajevo, too, divided along ethnic lines. A respondent whose parents were in a mixed marriage (her father is a Muslim; her deceased mother was a Serb) tells of the circumstances surrounding her mother's experience with ethnic violence:

> My mother was a telecommunications planner, so there were maps in the house. Muslim neighbors came and beat her and robbed her because they said she was spying for the Serbs. They said she left laundry on balcony as signal to Serbs. My uncle was shot in the head by snipers and Muslims were happy for that. 'You will be dead too' they told my mother.

During the war the media portrayed ethnic cleansing as a tool of war carried out by Serbs primarily. But all sides in the war practiced intimidation strategies. The woman quoted above, living in a Muslim neighborhood of Sarajevo, recounts the intimidation that led to her departure from the city:

> Then my parents told me that they were receiving the phone calls and threats that I will be raped and then burned by "somebody that I know very well". Well, that was enough to convince me. Mom said that my sister and I should take just a bag full of clothes, since we did not have the time to pack. I packed few things.

Indirect Violence of War: Family Separation, Deprivation, and Loss

Families suffered from deprivation, separations, and painful experiences, including significant losses due to deaths of family members and friends. Men describe to us, often with their wives interjecting, the struggle to survive during war. They tell how they were often separated from their wives and children, or from their parents and siblings, for a year or more during wartime. Family networks that had been so important were shattered from the first day of war, both from losses and from circumstances particular to that war. Men were conscripted into armies, and boys and men were separated from women and children and could then be imprisoned or murdered. During the war families were separated for long periods of time. Many of our respondents speak of the anguish they experienced when they were separated from loved ones and had no knowledge of their fates.

> In August 1995 I left Kladusa but my wife and two kids were left behind advancing Fifth Corps lines. For one month I did not know what happened to them. Then my sister, who had been living in Croatia returned to Kladusa and got word to me in Kuplensko that they were all right.
>
> My father got worried about my sister and took her to another city. He was getting threatening calls to kill his daughters. They got stuck there for two years or more when Zenica was cut off from the rest.
>
> I had to do everything while my husband was a soldier—son helped. We would see each other once in a while. Grenades and bombarding were common. The garden was a little far, and I made a home in the tool shed. I stayed there off and on. It was dangerous, but we were lucky. No one was hurt. My cousin was killed in the war.
>
> I came to U.S. May 7, 1996. Wife and children came November 20, 1996. Separated from wife and children August 1995 until November 1996. Wife was pregnant first time I was captured. She and children went to Cazin in August 1995. I saw my daughter for first time when they arrived in U.S. in November 1996.

When the war broke out one of our respondents stayed in Bosnia while his wife and two children went to Croatia. For the next year he assisted with the delivery of food convoys dispatched by various humanitarian organizations. In 1993 he had gone over to Croatia to join another convoy just before hostilities broke out between Bosnian Muslims and Croats and was fortunate to be on the Croatian side of the border when it closed. He joined his wife and family in refugee housing in Split shortly before they were given twenty-four hours notice to leave the country. He explained that the Bosnian Ambassador to Croatia arranged for him and his family to join 400 other Bosnian refugees to be flown to a camp in Pakistan on June

18, 1993. Although this family suffered the mental anguish of family separation, the major and substantial damage done to them by the war was inflicted on their extended families. While they had no direct contact with the violence, as he puts it,

> I lost my whole family for that country . . . I lost ten family members. When Serbs occupied my city they killed some and sent some to concentration camp. I was on list to be killed. My father and two brothers and my wife's father trusted Serbs. They stayed in city but Serbs took them. Nobody ever heard from them again.

His other brother was killed in combat between the Bosnian and Croat armies. While he does not have specific information about the fate of his brothers, father or father in law at the hands of the Serbs, there is enough known about the vicious treatment and torture of Muslims in the concentration camp where they were taken for him to fear the worst. Still, he says that he may return to Bosnia some day:

> I love my country, my people. I want to raise my kids like good Bosnian kids.

One woman who spent most of the war in Germany summed up the feelings of many who had left before experiencing any physical harm:

> I was emotionally hurt. While I was in Germany I thought about the war all the time.

Physical Hardships in Besieged Cities and Rural Areas

Often, even for those not in the direct line of fire, deprivation was severe. The contrast with the way neighbors had lived together before was extreme. During the four years of war the residents of Zenica had barely enough food to survive; they had no access to potable water and no electricity. Conditions of life during the war are described in detail:

> We survived without food, it's hard to imagine, we ate grass, cockroaches, vegetables in wild if you could find them. We drank water from river, dirty water, lots of people got sick with hepatitis. It was hard to imagine, seeing three to four times a day people jumping from buildings. Doctors, engineers, searching garbage cans for food. Babies and elderly died from malnutrition, miscarriages. Two miles to river to carry water to drink or flush toilet. Even if you live on 5th floor, you have to carry water up.

Although he is now on disability and in obvious pain from a back injury, this is a healthy young man, five foot, ten inches tall, weighing about 200 lbs. During the war, lack of adequate nutrition and caloric intake reduced his body weight to 110 lbs. He tells us that he was arrested many times. The Bosnian army tried to recruit him, but he had doctor's excuses that he had paid for and was able to evade the draft.

> They tried to put me in Bosnian army—I bought papers from doctor for disability. That was hard time. No food. Starving. No electricity, no water. Road closed, no food could come in. One gold ring sold for three lb of flour. Three eggs cost a gold ring. I paid $70,000 for my woodworking equipment. I sold it for twenty pounds of flour during the war.

Conditions in rural areas were no better. One woman describes her experience:

> Food was getting scarce, roads were closed, stores closed down. We were stuck there—nobody could get in or out. The Serbs had us stuck there. We had flour—couldn't get sugar, salt, oil, detergent for two years. Kids started getting sick, two children died of starvation. People who didn't store ahead and didn't have farms were very bad off. No money—nothing could be sent.

Ethnic Loyalties and Mixed Marriages

Some of our respondents are themselves in mixed marriages and several more are children born to parents of different ethnicities. Those who are in mixed marriages tell us that they could not stay in Bosnia. The children of mixed marriages say that it was very difficult for their parents when war broke out. Before the war, their parents experienced no difficulties associated with their choice of partner, but once hostilities broke out everything changed very suddenly. For example, both sets of parents of a husband and wife in one family broke up as a result of differing ethnic loyalties during the war. The husband's father had gone to Zenica when fighting broke out in Sarajevo in April 1992. When his mother and father were reunited three years later,

> Their relationship was never the same. My parents would argue about who was responsible for atrocities during the war. My father would criticize the Serbs, he called them 'destroyers' and my mother would defend them.

This man's mother and sister came to the United States to join the extended family when the war was over. His father stayed behind and refused to come. Similarly, his wife tells us,

> At the start of war my mother left Sarajevo and went to Belgrade. My father is Croat and could not go. He hated her for that. After the war my parents arranged to meet in Hungary for two days. They had a terrible and violent fight. That was the last time they saw each other. The next year my mother died of brain cancer. She was a second hand victim of war. She was very depressed and didn't want to live.

Another subject recalls that his sister, who now lives in Serbia and is married to a Serb, has a son who is Muslim by her first marriage. For his safety he went to Holland when war broke out.

At the outset of war, people were shocked at how quickly former friends and neighbors turned their backs on members of other ethnic groups. One woman describes her experience of rejection. She lived with her parents in an apartment building in Sarajevo that was populated with Muslims. Her mother was a Serb, and the shelling was coming from Serb artillery emplaced in the mountains around Sarajevo.

> When bombing got more frequent, we heard all our neighbors running and shouting through the building. They were heading to the cellar; the kids were screaming; I heard

> the sound of the body that fall and hit the floor. I covered my ears and sang loud, just so I wouldn't hear what was happening. My father grabbed my sister and me, and pushed us through the door. We ran out of the apartment as fast as we could and made it to the cellar in a heartbeat. Two tough guys with shotguns, who used to go to school with me, were standing on the doorway. They got in our way. 'Hey! Where are you going? It is your people that are shooting at us! They don't care if they shoot you too! You cannot hide! You have no right to hide!' The rest of the neighbors peeked through the guns pointed at us and mumbled in agreement. We went back home, hugging each other, and we hid under the kitchen table. Now we knew that the danger is even bigger. It is in the eyes of every neighbor that we partied, cried, and laughed with for nineteen years of my life. Our home will never be full again, and our house door will be locked from that day on.

Concentration Camps: Brutality and Maltreatment

One man from Foca recounts his experience as a prisoner in a Serb concentration camp for three years. Foca is a town of about 40,000 and was occupied by Serb paramilitary forces very early in the war—April 1992 (Allcock et al., 1998, p. 96). Our respondent reports that one morning in May, shortly after the Serb occupation,

> I woke up at eight o'clock and wife was making coffee. Three soldiers took me in car with no explanation. They grabbed me from house with no chance to even say goodbye. They told me that police commander wanted to talk, but he didn't. We went directly to camp. The soldiers who took me into custody were from Serbia, I can tell from how they talk, and I didn't recognize them. For first $1\frac{1}{2}$ years no one knew anything. I not know about family and family not know about me. Word came from Red Cross. The first $1\frac{1}{2}$ years were hardest time in life. I was beaten so often and starved. They beat me because I am Muslim. I spent three months in cell by myself. There was dripping water and it was cold. I had to sleep in water. I lost 60 lbs in that time. After first $1\frac{1}{2}$ years Red Cross came and things got better. Not everyone was beaten and people were not beaten so often.

His family was sent to a refugee camp in Turkey while he was being held in the concentration camp. The camp was near Foca and was lodged in an old prison building. After three years in the camp he was exchanged for Serb prisoners, but there was one more year of separation from his family because he had no passport or papers. They had been separated for four years by the time the war was finally over. Yet, in spite of his horrendous experiences, this man does not dwell on his pain. He expresses sorrow at the fate of the town where he grew up.

> Foca was a very nice city. Clean. Now all burned out, all destroyed. I feel very sorry about that city. I miss it.

Another victim of Serb aggression who landed in a concentration camp stayed there for two months before he was also freed in a prisoner exchange. Arkan, a well-known and vicious leader of the Serbian paramilitary unit operating

throughout Bosnia during the war, captured this man's unit and summarily executed his commanding officer. Our respondent spent two months in a concentration camp and two months in hospital after his release recovering from his injuries and deprivations.

> I lost 45 pounds. They beat me every day. One meal a day, soup and bread. Every single day they beat us.

Another man described how he had been at home reading a newspaper on June 26, 1992, when Serbs dragged him off to the Manjaca concentration camp.

> When I was picked up, I was beaten by four soldiers—broke two ribs. In camp we had to work every day cutting firewood. First two months we were given a slice of bread and cup of tea in the morning. I was in camp six months, my brother for seven months. We stayed in cow barn with no floor. Every night ten people were taken out and beaten. Not me or brother.

A Multifaceted War, Multiple Armies

The war in Bosnia was multifaceted and involved several different factions. For example, as Allcock et al. (1998, p. 17) note, the Bihac pocket in the northwest of Bosnia, "... was contested by no fewer than five armies—the Bosnian army, the Bosnian Serb Army, Serb forces from the Krajina, units loyal to dissident Muslim leader Fikret Abdic, and the Croatian Council of Defense". Our earlier discussion of the nature and causes of the war in Bosnia emphasized the weaknesses of political and economic structures of the Yugoslav Federation and the role of the political leaders in fomenting reactive nationalism. The principle motivation underpinning ethnic cleansing, the major defining characteristic of the war, was to expand the territory under Serbian and Croatian control. The vast majority of the two million Bosnians displaced by war were victims of these dynamics.

A War within the War

Our sample is not representative of the larger population of Bosnian Muslims because about half of the families were supporters of dissident Muslim leader Fikret Abdic. They fought against the Fifth Corps of the Bosnian army representing the forces of Alija Izetbegovic. The complex and shifting web of conflicts and alliances in the Bosnian war was made even more difficult to decipher when a civil war erupted between these two Muslim factions. In the fall of 1993, Fikret Abdic, the director of Agrokomerc, a large agricultural conglomerate, declared an autonomous province of Western Bosnia.

Two different perspectives explain how Abdic was able to secure the loyalty of his constituents.

> He paved roads, opened big factories. They believed in him. The Western sector was cut off by the Serbs under siege for 1000 days. Bihac was cut off. Abdic was interested in war profits and smuggling. Abdic told his people, 'Sarajevo doesn't care.' The motive for Abdic was money.
>
> Abdic was able to negotiate with both Croat and Serbs so that food was, at last, able to get through. These successes not only gained him huge popularity among his supporters, if Abdic didn't sign confederation then blockade would have been total.

These successful negotiations over the importation of foodstuffs into a corner of Bosnia cut off from Muslim support by a Bosnian Serb blockade also led to hubris that was to have tragic consequences. As one of Bosnia's pre-eminent historians put it, "This experience seems to have given [Abdic] the feeling that he could negotiate satisfactorily with the Serbs over the larger political issue too" (Malcolm, 1996, p. 255).

On September 27, 1993, Abdic forged an alliance with the Serbs who surrounded the Bihac pocket in the northwest corner and announced his determination to opt out of the war by declaring autonomy for his province. The importance of the province lay in the main roads and rail lines that linked the Serb controlled areas of Northwestern Bosnia with the Krajina area of Southern Croatia held by the rebellious Croatian Serbs (Malcolm, 1996, p. 255). Izetbegovic, president of the Sarajevo-based, Muslim-led government, could [Author: Is Izetbegovic still the president. If not, could this be rephrased to 'Izetbegovic, the then president of the Sarajevo-based, Muslim-led government']not tolerate this betrayal and sent the Fifth Corps of the Bosnian army against Abdic and his supporters. Over the next year and a half, a civil war was fought between these two factions of Bosnian Muslims. Abdic's army was defeated in August 1994 and retreated across the Croatian border where they received shelter from Croatian Serbs.[3]

The following December, Abdic's fighters received new armaments from the Croatian Serbs and were sent back to take up the fight against the Fifth Corps. However, in August 1995, they lost the support of the Croatian Serb artillery through Operation Storm, a major military initiative undertaken by the Croatian army to reclaim the territory the Serbs had taken earlier and cleanse Croatia of 250,000 Serbs whose ancestors had lived there for centuries. As a result Abdic's army could no longer hold out against the military superiority of the Fifth Corps and were finally defeated. Between 20,000 and 30,000 Abdic supporters crossed the border to Croatia where they spent many months in refugee camps before being granted asylum in a third country or returning home to Bosnia. At the same time, an alliance of Croat and Muslim forces in other parts of Bosnia was able to bring about a significant reversal of Serb advances. These Serb reversals set the scene for the negotiations that eventually led to the Dayton Peace accords in November 1995.

[3] This account of the war within a war is based on information provided during our interviews with combatants on both sides. The conflicts are also discussed in Burg and Shoup (1999) and de Normann (1996).

The war experience for those caught up in the Muslim versus Muslim civil war in the northwest corner is difficult for all to describe and difficult for us to understand. The boundaries of identity and of constructed "enemy" were blurred and easily crossed. Our respondents offered various interpretations and explanations of this civil war. Those who had been Abdic loyalists were sympathetic. Respondents from east Bosnia were not. Some affirm that Abdic merely wanted to be able to continue running his operations under Agrokomerc and that he wanted to continue his trading partnerships with the Serbs. Others attribute to Abdic a determined commitment to a multicultural and secular Bosnian polity. Two accounts support that interpretation:

> Abdic advocated multi-ethnic society, Izebegovic didn't want it. UN tries now to do exactly what Abdic wanted. Abdic sent food to Bihac and other areas of NW corner controlled by V corps but that didn't work. Fifth Corps still wanted to destroy autonomy. Izebegovic is the reason for war. He wanted to create Muslim country in Europe.

> Illija is referred to as Grandfather, grandpa's guys, he and his supporters were mostly Islamic fundamentalists. Abdic's people are secular and more modern/western. Islamic radicals put Bosnia back in the Ottoman Empire. Women must now wear the veil in Bosnia.

Another view is that Abdic wanted peace but that was not a choice.

> We wanted peace but Sarajevo said, no dice. Serbs surrounded us, but we had a good neighborly relation, so we could have peace. We didn't want to fight. We were surrounded and it would make no sense to fight. Srebrenica's fate would be our's. Abdic had power to make peace.

Bosnian Muslims who were not involved in this civil war have no sympathy for the Abdic autonomy movement.

> Abdic was put in prison by Serbs for selling bonds with no backing. Later he was reinstalled as head of Agrokomerc. Abdic was put in power to mislead people that he was responsible for creating this wealth. He was put in position of power so he can manipulate people—even turn them against Muslims. Serbs installed this puppet to have him be able to turn his people against Muslims. Even after Bosnia was independent Abdic wanted autonomy because Serbs told Abdic to do this. Abdic produced by Serbs.

A different account, one that emphasizes urban–rural differences, is offered by a woman from one of Bosnia's large cities.

> Abdic people had no education there. They need someone to tell them what to do. People who can't do anything without supervision. They had no education. Abdic like a God to them, someone to help them. He promised them lots of things, better future. Don't blame that people. They lost everything like I did. Maybe they lost more. Lot of people here from Sarajevo blame them. They don't feel good here because lot of people blame them for what they did. Sure, now they feel sorry for that but they can't change nothing now. What Abdic did same thing did Karadzic, Milosevic.

This little known conflict toward the end of the war in Bosnia did not involve ethnicity. There was little to differentiate soldiers from one side or the other. It was difficult to tell whose side an individual had taken. Several of our respondents tell us that they had served in the Bosnian army prior to Abdic's attempt to create an autonomous province. When Abdic made that declaration, several units of the Bosnian army were dissolved. Some soldiers opted to join Abdic's army; some joined the Fifth Corps. We are told that it was an individual choice. One man says that he chose to join the Fifth Corps, but when they came to his town, they did not believe his claim of loyalty to them.

> I wasn't in Fikret's army, and I didn't want to leave my home. I was a Fifth Corps soldier and wanted to go back to that army. I waited for the Fifth Corps, and they took me prisoner instead. I was beaten until unconscious and woke up in the hospital with eyes swollen shut. I was taken to military police station and kept for ten days. I escaped one day getting firewood and went to Croatia. First I was taken to prison, then let go to family. Later the military police came and got me and then I was in Abdic's army. In prison we were forced to fight each other with batons for the jailer's amusement.

Serving in Multiple Armies: No Choice, No Control

The principal theme that emerged from the stories of war told during these interviews was the lack of control men and women felt. This was true for many who fought in the Abdic militia as well as those who served in the Fifth Corps. One man expresses a feeling that was typical of many:

> I never wanted to go to war but had no choice because someone tries to kill me and I have to save my life if possible.

Many respondents assure us that they had no control over their circumstances, over whose army they should join, or whether they should fight at all. Then, once they have been conscripted, they run the risk of capture by the enemy, and if that should occur, who knew what might happen. One man tells us that he was the fortunate beneficiary of a prisoner exchange program. The negotiation of these exchanges was made more difficult by the stipulation established by the Serbs, in this case, namely "no condition guarantee," meaning that there was no guarantee what condition the prisoners were in.

> There was heavy fighting in the city. My brother and I were captured by Serbs. Thirteen of us were singled out for special questioning and beating. That night was full of pain. One man died from the beatings we got. Some days later we were released in prisoner exchange between Serb and Croat armies. Brother was all bruised up.

Many of our respondents tell us that they had no choice when it came to serving in a particular army. Conscription was forced. Others claim to have made a deliberate choice to enlist in this army or that because they believed in the cause.

One man, not at all atypical, describes circumstances that forced him to change sides in the war not once, but twice.

> I was in three different armies. My family was in [city] the whole time. I was hurt during the war and saw many people killed. Too many friends and cousins were hurt or killed. I spent 70 days in jail after being captured by Fifth Corps. I spent the first 20 days in bed because I was beaten so badly. The Red Cross came and they moved me because they didn't want Red Cross to see they had beaten me. Then I was sent to work for army. I signed the amnesty and rejoined the Fifth Corps. Then I was captured again, by Abdic's army. I was in jail two weeks, but I was just questioned instead of being beaten. I joined Abdic army because I was afraid of getting beaten again. It was easiest way to get out of jail.

A seventy-year-old grandfather, who came here with his extended family, tells us that his hometown of Sturlic was split over the Abdic–Izebegovic conflict. Before the conflict broke out most of the villagers supported Abdic in the elections, but once fighting erupted, many people changed sides and supported the Fifth Corps. That was when the Fifth Corps supporters came to his house and ransacked it.

> They stripped my house and what they didn't take, they destroyed.

One man claims that the Muslim civil war involving Abdic loyalists against the Fifth Corps was more acrimonious than the ethnic conflict between Muslims and Serbs.

> Fight with Muslims worse than with Serbs. They hated us and we hated them.

One Man's Story

One man's story is especially poignant because he talks about several of the most traumatic experiences associated with war. This includes his wife and two children being left behind enemy lines, his capture and experience as a prisoner of war, his being forced to sign an amnesty and then serving in the enemy army, and his escape and then being forced to return to fight for Abdic's army against his erstwhile captors. Zlatko, we'll call him, had served for two years with the Fifth Corps before Abdic declared autonomy. His brigade aligned itself with Abdic and the autonomy movement. His combat experience against the Fifth Corps was extensive and ended when his entire brigade found itself surrounded in his hometown of Pecigrad.

> 1200 were under siege for10 days, with no food or water, springs were outside of town, we were on top of hill with no medicine. Amputations were done by hand saw. The commander of the brigade was killed. The Fifth Corps called on us to surrender: 'Surrender, don't make us kill you.' Junior officers said, 'Let's surrender together, then they won't kill all 1200 of us.'

The Fifth Corps collected their weapons and corralled them into a soccer stadium where they were publicly humiliated. One of our subjects allowed us

to view a videotape which showed Fifth Corps General Dudakovic issuing the surrender ultimatum to the besieged Abdic forces that were huddled in an old Ottoman fort on a hill in the center of Pecigrad. The tape also shows the Abdic militia after their surrender receiving a lecture from Dudakovic in a soccer stadium. During this lecture Dudakovic referred to the Abdic soldiers before him as "banana eaters" and berated them as traitors to Islam. The prisoners had been stripped of their weapons and their uniforms and boots; in some cases they are bare-chested and visibly emaciated. They were then force-marched to Cazin:

> Two by two. They put us in large truck garage. Every night 10-20 of us taken out for beatings. Everyday said, 'We won't hurt them.' Took away uniforms, boots, jewelry, almost naked for two weeks. Small piece of bread, two spoons of rice for whole day. Not enough water. People passed out from not enough water. Yelled to guards for water. Guards said, 'Eh, let them die'.

Finally UNPROFOR intervened and ensured proper treatment of prisoners of war thereafter. Zlatko recalled seeing his companions pass out from hunger and dehydration. In the summer of 1994, shortly after the UNPROFOR intervened on behalf of these prisoners of war in Pecigrad, Abdic and his supporters in and around Kladusa were defeated in battle and retreated en masse to refugee camps in Croatia.

Six days later, the remnants of the 4th Brigade under Abdic's militia (it had originally been one of the brigades under the Fifth Corps before autonomy was declared) were transported to Kladusa where they were subjected to "brainwashing." The governor of the Bihac Canton was brought in to join the mayor of Kladusa, who supervised efforts to convince these wayward Muslims the error of their ways. "You're not Chetniks anymore," they were told, "Forget about your past mistakes." Speaking of his brigade comrades captured in Pecigrad, this man explains,

> Fifth Corps offered amnesty for anyone who wanted to join Fifth Corps. Those who refused were separated and given no food and water. Most signed. I signed and got out of jail. I was In jail 22 days.

After they had been subjected to the requisite ideological cleansing they were reassigned to regular units of the Fifth Corps on the front lines where they fought against Serb forces for five days without a break. The commander of their new unit decided to give them a short leave and they were told to cut their beards and shave like regular soldiers. "Only Chetniks wear beards," they were told. Zlatko was allowed to return to Kladusa and he immediately took advantage of his freedom and escaped over the Croatian boarder to join his family in the Abdic refugee camp. In the camp Zlatko learned that his brother had been killed on August 1. His brother's battalion had been fighting the Fifth Corps in an effort to lift the siege of Pecigrad.

But Zlatko's nightmare was not over. He had escaped from enemy territory and joined his family in Croatia in November 1994. The next month Abdic rallied his supporters, reissued armaments, and returned to recapture his headquarters at Velika Kladusa. In the interview we express astonishment that he would return to

combat after all he had been through. Surely he must have known that if the Fifth Corps captured him a second time, they would not offer him an amnesty. Their treatment of him would be a good deal harsher. He replies,

> Nobody asked us did we want to go. Only kids and women stayed. Some tried to say they were sick, but it didn't work.

Zlatko followed orders to return to Kladusa, where Abdic forces once again took up arms against his former captors. His wife and two children accompanied him back to town, much to their subsequent regret. During the following August 1995, Abdic and his supporters were once again overrun by Fifth Corps fighters. This time Zlatko escaped, but his family did not. His wife recounts the horror she and her two children experienced when she was left behind as the enemy advanced and the battle lines closed in front of her. Her husband had sent his brother to tell her to pack up and get ready to leave and so she was waiting for him, but the Fifth Corps advanced too quickly and he could not return to rescue her. She says,

> I could not sleep for 8 days I was so scared. You had to be there to experience that fear.

She was able to leave Kladusa and return to her hometown of Pecigrad where she awaited word from her husband. They were separated for three months and were reunited when Zlatko returned to Pecigrad shortly after the Dayton Accords ended the war.

Capture by the Enemy

Stories of capture by the enemy are told by combatants who fought for the Bosnian army and were imprisoned by the Serbs, by soldiers who fought for the Fifth Corps and were captured by Abdic forces, and by Abdic supporters captured by Fifth Corps fighters. An Abdic loyalist tells of his treatment by his Fifth Corps captors.

> I was kept in an old army barracks for a prison when I captured, for 4 $^1/_2$ months. I signed amnesty to get out. I had duties to pick up dead bodies and bury in graves, also pick up wounded people that were screaming to take to hospitals.

This man returned to fight Fifth Corps forces after having been imprisoned and then released by them. When Abdic forces were again defeated he escaped over the border to Croatia, but his wife was left behind. She says,

> In August 95, again running. This time, he ran, I got caught and couldn't get out of Kladusa. Fifth Corps took 65 of us to clear road—two weeks of work, then got papers to leave.

Another man who joined the Abdic militia, Muhamed we'll call him, told the familiar story of having served in the Fifth Corps before autonomy was announced

and having defected to the Abdic army in the late fall/early winter of 1993–1994. Like Zlatko, the Fifth Corps had captured him in August 1994, when the Abdic controlled territory had been overrun the first time.

> I was beaten so badly by the Fifth Corps that I was in bed for 20 days. I was hit in head and they gave me six stitches. A Serb in the Fifth Corps military police beat me with shotgun and knocked out three teeth. When the Red Cross visited camp they hid me so they don't see me and my beating. They lined us against wall and to execute me . . .

When asked why he was treated this way, he tells us that his captors called him a Chetnik because Abdic's fighters had been aligned with Serbs and that he had fought on the wrong side, and they were swearing about his Muslim mother. After he was released from the hospital, he was in jail for another month and a half. His captivity under the Fifth Corps, though, was made almost unbearable by Fifth Corps fighters who told him that his wife, who had stayed behind with her mother and two children when Abdic and his supporters fled to Croatia, had been raped and was now living with a Fifth Corps soldier. He didn't want to believe that but he just didn't know what to think.

> I had a really hard time because of that.

Eventually he signed the amnesty, and, like Zlatko, rejoined the Fifth Corps. Muhamed then explains that he was captured a second time, this time by fighters in Abdic's army. He was jailed for two weeks for questioning, although this time there were no beatings. He rejoined Abdic's army because it was the easiest way to get out of jail and he was afraid of getting beaten up again.

As difficult and deeply traumatizing as these experiences were for Zlatko and Mohamed, their treatment in the hands of their Fifth Corps captors was relatively benign when compared to an account of the experience of the youngest son of Safet, whom we interviewed about half way through the project. Safet, aged seventy-two, lives with his wife, and their oldest son and his wife and three children. Safet and his older son were present during the interview. About half way through our conversation Safet tells us that he lost his youngest son in the war**.** The enemy had captured him shortly after he completed his 2 A.M. duty watch, and they killed him. The focus of our conversation wanders in a different direction but Safet later returns to the topic when we inquire about whether he and his family might consider returning to Velika Kladuca. The vehemence of his response catches us off guard.

> No, I could never return to live among those people, what they did to my son, I wouldn't do to a dog. When he was returned to me I saw that he had been tortured to death. I could have accepted it if he had been shot in war and had died from his injuries. But they had cut off his nose, they had cut off his ears, they had cut off his penis, there were cigarette burns on his arms and legs and they had cut open his stomach.

Not surprisingly, he is moved to tears as he recounts this humiliating brutalization of his youngest son. His son's widow and her three children live here in Utica. They remind him everyday of his loss.

As we shall see, the simmering anger and resentments that this man continues to experience helps to explain why groups of Bosnians with different loyalties occasionally engage in brawls and disputes. As one man says,

> The antagonism between Abdic supporters and Izetbegovic supporters is based on memories of relatives killed.

Later we discuss this interview with our interpreter and ask why the Muslims of the Fifth Corps would have treated a fellow Muslim in this way. Our interpreter had served in Abdic's army and was less surprised than we were at the brutality of this man's murder.

> Well, the Imams in the rest of Bosnia taught the Fifth Corps fighters that we had betrayed the Faith, that we were no longer true Muslims, and that if any Fifth Corps soldier was wounded he must refuse to accept help from us on pain of eternal damnation. I saw it myself, a soldier who was wounded in battle and was left behind by his comrades, refused our help and died of his wounds.

Our interpreter tells us that one specific Fifth Corps Brigade whose fighters were known among Abdic's people as "jihad fanatics" were said to be unafraid to die because they all had "keys to paradise." They were rumored to habitually take ears and fingers as souvenirs of battle.

Returning to the interview with Safet and his son, we are told by Safet that a month after his youngest son was killed, the Fifth Corps killed his wife's brother in a group execution. Safet describes the circumstances of the execution and how he learned about them.

> First they took shoes, uniforms, almost naked. One in group was shot in shoulder, others piled on top and he later escaped to tell about it. That's how we found out about it.

We Waited and No One Came

The United Nations and NATO proved to be unwilling or unable to intercede in Bosnia until the summer of 1995. The massacre of Muslim men in Srebrenica, in spite of the UN presence, and the unrelenting bombardment of the Gorazde "safe area" are just two of the best-known examples of the inaction of the international community. The psychological impact of this inaction was devastating. One couple we interviewed spent the war in Gorazde, and continue now, ten years later, to suffer the emotional distress induced by the hardships of war. He looks about ten years older than his chronological age; she is weeping throughout the interview. Their description of the experience of war is terse and barely adequate to convey the agony and despair they must have endured.

> Lot of people died, everything was destroyed, and people didn't have food. Four years, there was no contact with other countries and not enough food.

Many share a belief that other countries should have provided more assistance both during the war and afterwards. Although not all of the respondents discuss this, the ones who do express both bitterness and ambivalence**.** Some give credit to the United States for providing opportunities to start over. This is especially true when compared with Germany, which did not give Bosnians access to permanent residency or to citizenship. However, several men are pointed in their criticism of the United States and other countries for not intervening earlier in the war. This middle-aged respondent's words are both typical and fervent:

> We were all just victims, nothing else. The world didn't intervene when we died. 100,000 people were taken to concentration camps in the first two months. When we started winning, the U.S. and Europe intervened. They didn't want a Muslim country.

Another man turns the blame for war on the depravity of humankind.

> Human beings are junk. No one is guilty. I am one of them, I watch people starving in Africa, dying of starvation, I am almost in the same position. I don't see Milosevic guilty for that or any leader. Guilty is Europe, United States, all people who could do something and don't. It was a cartoon for them. Human beings are beasts, including me, because now I too sit and watch what happens in Africa. How did it end? I ask. There is no end, no justice, no way of bringing closure. No chance to make justice for genocide.

This man's wife adds,

> You don't expect army to kill innocent children and old people. Army killing in front of millions on TV. Guilty is U.S., Europe for just watching.

Their sense of having been abandoned and betrayed by their own naiveté is palpable.

We conclude this discussion by returning to one of the principal themes we encountered, namely the futility men felt when they were coerced to engage in forced, unpaid labor. The following account illustrates this lack of control over one's life as well as the precariousness of the peace following the formal end of the war:

> In spring of 1996 I was forced to work for the Fifth Corps cutting wood and destroying and looting houses that had been owned by Serbs in the town of Sanski Most where the Fifth Corps had beaten back Serb forces. We stole whatever we could take away and load on trucks over a period of about 12 days. This was after the American bombing and after Dayton. Looted Serb houses that had been deserted. This was about five to ten miles from the Republika Srpska border. At that time nobody trusted Dayton to last so the Fifth Corps was getting what they could from Serb property. After about a month of forced labor for Fifth Corps I met some people in Red Cross and told them I wanted to escape from country.

Summary

Out of a population of four million, two million Bosnians were displaced in the war and more than 100,000 were killed. The Dayton accords that brought hostilities to an end divided the country into a Serb republic known as Republika Srpska, and a Bosnian Federation that comprised Croats and Muslims. This chapter has described the impact of the war on the lives of Bosnians who resettled in Utica, N.Y., beginning in 1993.

As we have seen the wars in Bosnia were complex and multifaceted. We have described ethnic conflict, ethnic cleansing, civil war, and international conflict. We wanted to provide a thorough analysis of these complexities to help the reader appreciate the many and varied experiences that shaped the lives of the men, women and children who make up the families in our interview sample. Men and women from urban areas tended to blame the war on political leaders, especially Milosevic and Tujdman. Similarly, some respondents also blamed the civil war in the northwest corner on the political leadership. But our account of the wars and of the historical and institutional antecedents of the conflicts suggests that they were more complicated than that.

A dominant theme in the accounts of the wars by people who lived through them was the sense that events were not under anyone's control. This was most clear in the stories we were told by men who had served in multiple armies. It did not seem that the people we spoke with were particularly motivated to fight. Some did express enthusiasm for one cause or another, but in most cases it seemed that armies comprised conscripts who would have preferred to be allowed to return to their families to live their lives in peace. Both men and women who had experienced ethnic cleansing felt victimized by it, but the sense of victimization was more broadly felt by almost all of our respondents as they described for us how their lives had been turned upside down by war and its consequences. When we spoke with families who had come to upstate New York they expressed great sadness, mental anguish, but also outright relief to be here as they looked back on their experiences of war.

6

Displacement and Transit: Traumatic Stress in the Lives of Refugees

> The impact of an event is measured more by its interpretation than its consequence. (Zinner & Williams, 1999, p. 239)

Understanding trauma and helping refugees to cope with its impact is "... one of the most critical clinical, societal and research challenges facing the health communities" in the new millennium (Miller, 1996, p. xxii). To be human is to be exposed to harmful, as well as to positive, life events, and we saw in Chapters 4 and 5 that Bosnian refugees often experienced extremely negative events in the course of war. In this chapter we discuss trauma and its effects on the lives of refugees, and we consider the proper *place* of trauma in understanding Bosnian families in resettlement. This is followed by a discussion of the experiences of Bosnian refugees, who shared with us their stories of escape and life in refugee camps prior to arrival in the United States. War and resulting displacement can be a major source of trauma for refugees, but traumatic stress is created through resettlement activities as well.

The impact of negative life events is often felt years after the initial traumatic occurrence (Erikson, 1994; Herman, 1992; Kahana & Kahana, 2001; Miller, 1996). For refugees in particular, experiences in their countries of origin, as well as their migratory transitions and resettlement, are known to affect economic, social, and psychological adaptation far into the future (Basoglu *et al.*, 2001; Kahana & Kahana, 2001; Pernice & Brook, 1994). Studies of traumatic stress have noted variations in vulnerability to stress (Kahana & Kahana, 2001), variation in the types and duration of the stressors (Herman, 1992; van der Kolk, 1987), and the mediating effects of environmental circumstances (Eastmond, 2000; McFarlane & Yehuda, 1996; Miller *et al.*, 2002). In the following discussion we explore the phenomenon of trauma and its consequences before we consider the lived experience of the Bosnian families in our sample.

Trauma and its Sequelae

Trauma is defined as "... events involving threats to life or bodily integrity or a close personal encounter with violence and death, which evoke feelings of intense fear, helplessness, loss of control, and threat of annihilation" (Herman, 1992, p. 33). In summarizing what has been learned about groups of survivors of trauma, Rando (1999, p. xviii) proposes a broader definition of trauma to encompass:

> any experience generating intense anxiety too powerful to be assimilated or dealt with in typical fashion, overwhelming the individual or group and engendering feelings of loss of control, helplessness, and other flooding effects ... accompanied by the shattering of fundamental assumptions on which life has been predicated

An Ecosystem Model of Trauma

Trauma has far-reaching effects on the bio-psycho-social functioning of an individual. The interaction of the person with his or her ecosystem and its mediating effects are illustrated in Figure 6.1. Etiological factors such as biological traits, personality, support networks, and past experiences determine to what extent individuals experience intrusive memories of the trauma. Coping style, additional life events, family history, individual personality, and one's environment mediate the path along which one may develop a psychological disorder, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Intrusive memories are often experienced by those who experience trauma, and "the individual's response at each step of this process will be influenced by a complex matrix of biological, social, temperamental, and experiential issues" (McFarlane & Yehuda, 1996, p. 157).

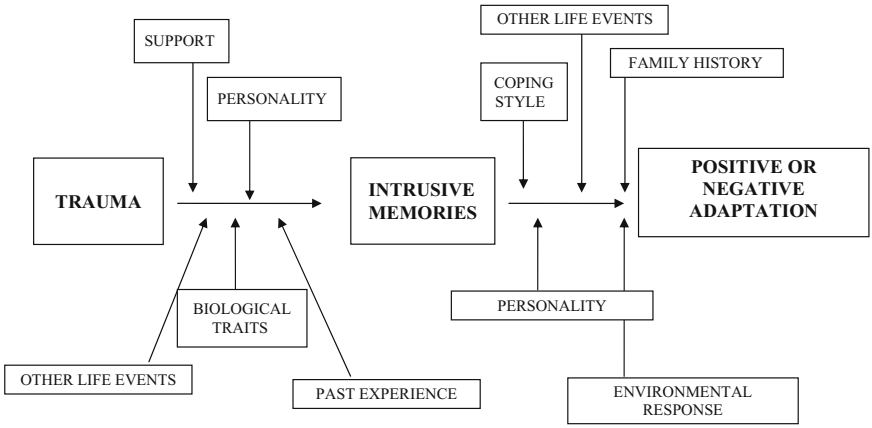

Figure 6.1. Ecosystem factors influencing the path of traumatic stress. Source: adapted from McFarlane and Yehuda (1996, p. 157).

Some ecosystem factors will increase the probability of illness or disorder and are generally considered "vulnerability" factors, such as having a family history of mental illness. Others, such as good use of a social network, are considered *resilience* factors and aid in the path to recovery or protection of wellness (McFarlane & Yehuda, 1996).

Following a traumatic event, acute responses, chronic patterns, and recovery phases are unique to each individual, although trauma often has long-term effects.[1] People deal with events that are painful and incorporate them as a part of their life experience, over time, to make a healthy adjustment. Reactions to trauma may include irritability and rage, lack of intimacy and trust, problems with memory and concentration, and nightmares and insomnia (Basoglu *et al.*, 2001, Miller *et al*., 2002). Somatic complaints may endure for decades after the trauma and seem to be related to the relative severity of the trauma that was experienced. Half a century after the Holocaust, for instance, one study of survivors found that nearly all had severe headaches, over half experienced dizziness on a regular basis, and about one-third reported gastrointestinal problems (Kahana & Kahana, 2001, p. 147). Traumatic events often have the effect of shattering the taken-for-granted assumptions that govern our understanding of everyday life (Janoff-Bulman, 1992; Saleebey, 1996). Van der Kolk (1987, p. 31) suggests that:

> the essence of psychological trauma is the loss of faith that there is order and continuity in life . . . a state of helplessness; a feeling that one's actions have no bearing on the outcome of one's life.

Post-traumatic stress disorder, as well as depression and anxiety disorders, are commonly found in refugee populations (Mollica, 1994; Mollica *et al*., 2001; Weine *et al*., 1998).

Single-event trauma can be further differentiated from those experiences that occur as multiple events. Single-event traumas occur in the form of natural disasters (earthquakes, floods) as well as man-made events, such as rapes or terrorist attacks and the school-based assaults of recent years. Multiple-event traumas have more recently been variously described as *cumulative, chronic,* or *complex* trauma. While one traumatic event may occur in a variety of circumstances, ". . . prolonged, repeated trauma, . . . occurs only in circumstances of captivity" (Herman, 1992, p. 74). Herman (1992, p. 86) describes the difference between single-event trauma and chronic trauma as follows:

> While the victim of a single acute trauma may feel after the event that she is 'not herself', the victim of chronic trauma may feel herself to be changed irrevocably, or she may lose the sense that she has any self at all.

[1] It is not possible in this volume to have sufficient presentation of biopsychosocial factors and traumatic stress. The reader is referred to van der Kolk, McFarlane, & Weisaeth, (eds.), 1996 for a fuller discussion.

Those who have been subjected to chronic forms of trauma, such as imprisonment, torture, rape, and other such threatening experiences, are more likely to experience somatic symptoms. The continuing impact of the trauma on all aspects of life is described by Herman (1992, p. 87) as a:

> . . . numbing or constriction that was essential to adapt or keep going over a prolonged period of time. [There is a] narrowing that applies to every aspect of life—to relationships, activities, thoughts, memories, emotions, and even sensations.

The challenge for human beings is to integrate the negative traumatic events into the life narrative.

Trauma in a Temporal Context

The effects of premigratory events on refugees during war and transit are well documented (Uba & Chung, 1990; Weine *et al*., 1995b). The war in Bosnia included a sudden and extreme disruption of a way of life that had been experienced as predictable and solid. In addition, refugees were exposed to numerous potentially traumatizing events, such as deaths of family and friends, exposure to sniper fire and bombardments, deprivation and harsh living circumstances, imprisonment (including rape and torture), and acts of ethnic cleansing aimed principally at Bosnian Muslims. Much has been written about the particular experience of the Bosnian Muslims in this war in which their captors and tormentors were former friends, neighbors, or business associates with whom they had lived and worked side by side in all aspects of everyday life (Weine, 1999).

Secure attachments in relationships are the basis for human development (Herman, 1992; Janoff-Bulman, 1992; Mooren & Kleber, 2001; Weine, 1999). The betrayal of important relationships violates that trust and therefore impacts the way in which we understand the world (Herman, 1992). Weine (1999, p. 166), in his extensive work with Bosnian refugees, observes that ". . . the shattering of trust, so common in traumatized individuals, families, and communities, is pervasive in Bosnians." The most basic assumption in life is a foundation of trust, a belief that we can trust others around us (Herman, 1992).

Knowing that one has a place in the world may be a fundamental requirement for security and identity. The experiences of displacement and exile are traumatic events in themselves (Fullilove, 1996; Miller, 1996; Silove, 1999). Fullilove (1996) describes the experience of displacement as one in which a sense of belonging is disrupted. Human beings have a personal "sense of place" and a need for belonging that arise from three psychological processes: familiarity, attachment, and place of identity, all of which are disrupted by displacement. Home represents ". . . the accumulation of many relationships and much history", and the loss of that material and relational world can be devastating (Fullilove, 1996, p. 1519). Dislocation is one of the primary sources of poor mental health, and research has suggested that

refugees are at risk for depression and anxiety over a long period of adjustment (Fullilove, 1996; Kahana *et al*., 1989; Pernice & Brook, 1996).

After displacement, and before resettlement in a final destination, many refugees experience a sense of being in limbo in countries of first asylum. The period of limbo is also of critical importance in considering the prospects of recovery from trauma because these refugees in transition are "forced into passivity" (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2003, p. 73). In the following analysis we present stories that refugee families related to us about their escape from war, their experiences in refugee camps, and their lives in countries of first asylum.

Stories of Escape, Displacement, and Transit

As the war began in April of 1992, families watched events unfold and made decisions. Decisions had consequences that could not always be anticipated, because they had to be made in the moment, with little information. People were caught unaware and had little ability to influence the outcome of the unfolding events for their families.

Refugee stories are stories that Stone (1996, p. 51) might refer to as "unjust hurts." Stories can have great power in our lives. Stone (1996, p. 52) suggests that the events of injury need to be put together in such a way that one can attribute meaning to the experiences as they are woven together, and he writes:

> To weave together the slender threads of a torn life into a firm pattern of meaning can give even the most pernicious emotional and physical injuries a role of honor in our experience. This is the power of a story.

Escape

In the stories told to us, escape was often arbitrary, dangerous, and costly. An escape might occur from Sarajevo or a town or village under bombardment early in 1992, or from a concentration camp or prison later during the war. Many Bosnians left their homes in a rush with little time to prepare for their departure. Their haste was a direct consequence of the immediacy of the threat posed by the enemy to their lives.

> We were in such a rush to get out of house my son left his shoes behind. He did not have shoes for months.

> We first left Bosnia April 6, 1992. We grabbed our bags and left.

One man described his escape from the advancing Serb army and asked,

> What can you take from your house when you are running?

A mass exodus at the very start of the war was soon cut off when Serb forces closed the main road linking Bosnia and Croatia. Before that occurred however, a few fortunate families packed their cars and set off for Croatia in a desperate attempt to get out before it was too late. They describe a journey with lengthy delays at roadblocks set up by Serb paramilitary.

> We drove for three days, like prisoners. Serbs blocked the way, usually for hours at a time. There were thousands of cars with people fleeing.

One father of two grown men says that his sons had been sent to Hungary after the Austrian border police had arrested them. He paid 20,000 Deutsche Marks to get them released to his custody in Germany. Others tell us that they knew that they could secure the release of their loved ones if they had had the resources, but they did not.

> We were separated in war for two years. I went to Croatia and husband was in camp. We would have to pay $2,000 -$4000 to get him out.

In addition to stories of bribery and corruption involving escape from refugee camps, several explain that they had purchased doctor's notes that allowed them to avoid conscription.

> My husband was not in war. He had papers that say he's disabled. He paid for that paper.

> My mother then got worried about me being forced into the army to fight and obtained a medical release for me to go to a hospital in Belgrade for asthma. The trip itself was very scary and much longer than normal as there were many barricades and stops where soldiers came on board bus. They yelled at me that I should be fighting and were angry when they saw my papers.

One young man tells us that he hid in the cellar of his father's house for eight months to avoid recruiters. Another says that he was able to avoid conscription because his mother had a job that allowed him to duck the draft. She was subsequently fired from her job and he was forced to flee the country. Apparently it was possible to buy your way out of almost any situation if you had enough money. One man recalls that two days before he was scheduled to be released from his mandatory military service in the Yugoslav army in December 1991, he was imprisoned for his political views. As he puts it:

> Those were the three most difficult months of my life. In March 1992 I paid $20,000 to arrange my escape.

One man who was working in a construction job in Germany when the war broke out tells us that his wife and children left Bosnia in December 1993. Abdic had made a deal and had arranged for buses to get civilians out of the area that was surrounded and under siege by Serb forces. Abdic had arranged that women and children would not be hurt. This man's wife tells us,

> We were scared, can't just go over other people's land, but we made it. He let out women and children. It had been closed before and then opened.

One of our respondents had spent much of the war in Zenica and describes dreadful conditions of near starvation in the city because food supplies could not get through after the main road from Croatia into Bosnia had been closed. There was no electricity and no running water. Muslim refugees had swelled the population of the city from 80,000 before the war to 300,000 in 1993. His description of his escape depicts a tale of terror.

> I decided to leave. It was my chance to survive.

He boarded a bus full of Croats whom he referred to as the enemy, even though, at that time, February 1995, they were aligned in a federation against the Serbs.

> I had fake papers with no photo. I had nothing to lose. It was too dangerous to take wife. I told her if I survive, I will send for you. She stayed behind. I thought: one chance in a million to survive the trip. They stopped me at the border and I ran, escaped and stopped a car with two drunken paramilitary soldiers with uniforms and long knives. Day or week before one guy like me was killed there. He died very hard. In car the music was loud and that disguised my accent, which is different from Croat. I was dropped off, then I was in bus station and police who were looking for me were three yards away. I caught another bus to Split. In Zagreb they arrested me where I spent 15 days in prison. I gained 10-15 lbs. I called wife and told her 'I have food, electricity, good place!' I asked if I could stay longer but they threw me out (laughing), and my wife was able to come two days later with money and help from cousin, aunt, grandmother.

Most of those in the northwest corner of Bosnia did not leave Bosnia early and spent at least part of the war in refugee camps.

Life in Refugee Camps

Many of our respondents had lived in the northwest corner of Bosnia and had served in the army organized by Fikret Abdic. In Chapter 5, we described how Abdic forces were defeated in battle twice and twice were forced to abandon their homes and to cross the border with their families into Croatia. At that time, the Croatian border area was populated, as it had been since the fifteenth century, by Croatian Serbs. Croatian Serbs were in alliance with Abdic forces in conflict with the Fifth Corps. In August 1994, when the Abdic militia retreated across the border and sought refuge in Croatia, it was among allies, though living conditions were extremely uncomfortable. The shelters available to them were former chicken coops owned by Agrokomerc, as we were told:

> The first time out it was very hard. We lived in chicken coops. We lived like ducks.

The Abdic militia had been rearmed in November and December 1994, and had returned to Kladusa to resume the fight against Fifth Corps. They were defeated

the second time in August 1995, when the Croat army had launched Operation Storm, which cleansed the Krajina region of Croatian Serbs in a matter of days. Abdic and his militia suddenly lost the artillery support, which the Croatian Serbs had been providing, and they were again forced to retreat across the border in the face of Fifth Corps advances. So, when Abdic retreated across the border a second time they were surrounded by Croat police, enemy of their former allies, the Croatian Serbs, thus by implication if not in fact, unfriendly to them. One of our respondents showed us a video-taped recording that depicted the mass exodus on August 7, 1995. Thousands of Abdic loyalists are shown leaving Velika Kladusa on horse-drawn carts, tractors, trucks, and even ambulances. Spirits are high; people are singing as this motley, rag-tag caravan crosses the Croatian boarder.

The second exodus did not actually end in a refugee camp. Rather, the Abdic militia and its civilian supporters were moving north along a modest two-lane country road, when the road was blocked by the Croat police in front of them. Abdic loyalists simply set up makeshift encampments on either side of the road. Some families took over small houses that had been abandoned by retreating Croat Serbs. The rest were left to devise whatever shelter they could from available material. It was late summer, so some assembled makeshift tents and lean-tos from cornstalks growing in nearby fields.

Daily life in this encampment, like life in other refugee camps, while secure from combat danger, was nonetheless extremely uncomfortable and unhealthy. The uncertainty of the refugee predicament was compounded by the boredom and lack of privacy associated with prison life. One family describes living in a room, fifteen feet by fifteen feet, with twenty other refugees. Physical arrangements required that they sleep side by side with strangers. Twenty foam mattresses would be stacked in the corner at daybreak and each individual would be assigned chores for the day. One would be dispatched to wait in line for water, one for food. Others would wander about engaged in endless speculation over their futures. Where could they go if the war ended and how could they get there? What choices would they have? Could they return to their homes in and around Velika Kladusa? If they were allowed to return, what would life be like living among their erstwhile enemies, enemies who considered them to be traitors to the faith and turncoats in war?

The camp was surrounded by Croatian police who prevented freedom of movement. Long days were spent playing cards, speculating about their options.[2]

> In refugee camp there was nothing to do. Police surrounded the place. We played cards, talked about Bosnia. Go home or wait? What to do? Thinking how could we live if we went back. No jobs, can't work the land with no money, walking around, nothing to do.

[2] While the camps in Bosnia and Croatia may have had their own unique horrors, life in refugee camps elsewhere probably shares some of the qualities described by our informants, namely boredom, ennui, and alienation. One refugee, for example, told Huseby-Darvas of her experience in a camp in Hungary: "... there are days when I just go crazy. Here we are just pacing, walking up and down several times a day, eating, sleeping a bit, and talking. We are talking so much." (1995)

A woman describes her tragic loss in a refugee camp when she accompanied Abdic loyalists in the first exodus from Kladusa:

> We were in one place 4 1/2 months, then a year in a refugee center. Had no money. Food in refugee center for dogs. Bread was okay, but other food smelled. My baby died here when she was four months old. I had no food for five days and had been breast-feeding my daughter. She was sick, diarrhea and vomiting. I took her to hospital, left her there to return to care for son. Two days later they told me she had died and was buried.

When the war was over, it was time to go. But where? The Abdic people were not welcomed back into the area of Bosnia that they had left because it was now controlled by the Fifth Corps. And, to be considered a refugee, one had to be outside of one's country of origin.

Leaving Croatia and the Refugee Camps

People did whatever they had to do to reach safety. Some lied about where they were living in order to be treated as refugees.

> We entered the U.S. directly from Kladusa. Three years ago we went to Croatia and lied about being refugee, there we got the necessary papers. We left Bosnia to make a better life.

> Family was in Cazin during war. I came to U.S. first. They faked their papers and came in 1996.

Apparently the process of "faking papers" was more difficult for some than for others.

> We planned to go to Germany, but my wife could not get a visa. This was the same situation with Croatia. Eventually there was an opening to go to America. This took 1 1/2 years to finish paperwork and it was harder because it was late. We had to collect bills, receipts for food and doctors to prove how long we had been in Croatia. The police were meanwhile pushing us back to Bosnia, but we stayed in Croatia. It was especially difficult because we needed certificate of marriage, but we couldn't go back into Bosnia without fearing that we wouldn't get out again. My brother ended up posing as me to get the papers.

Some people engaged in other forms of deception. Certain categories of refugees were given priority status because they were especially vulnerable to persecution. For example, we were told that some people lied and said they were "Abdic guys" to get to the United States. American Embassy and immigration officials were aware of the persecution and discrimination former Abdic loyalists faced. "Abdic guys" gained admission to the United States more easily for that reason.

A number of other people say that they paid large sums of money to get out of refugee camps or to escape across the border. They explain that in most border areas there were people who were "well connected" and who, for a given sum of money, could arrange safe passage out of the war zone.

> We left Bosnia on August 20, 1994 and stayed in chicken coops in Croatia for six months. I paid 2500 German Marks to get over the border.
>
> I escaped from Kuplensko with five friends and we walked for five days and five nights to reach Slovenia, but we were arrested when we go there and were returned to the camp because of agreement that army aged men had to be returned. My father who was working in Austria came and paid a lot to get me out.
>
> We arrived here in 1997. We got to Germany in 1995. We paid 21,000 Deutch Marks to get out of Kuplensko.
>
> We left Bosnia in December 1994 and were in Croatia until the following May. I paid $4,000 to get from Bosnia.

Some refugees went directly from Bosnia to a host society; others spent an interim period in refugees camps or a country of first asylum before gaining access to a host society that would allow them to begin the process of adaptation and resettlement.

Countries of First Asylum

We discuss this period of transit, together with other forms of disruption, because it is not until after refugees eventually arrive in their host society that they can finally go about the process of reconstructing "normal" lives. Others have identified the importance of considering the disruptive effects of the years lost in countries of first asylum (Mertus and Teanovic, 1997). As Colic-Peisker and Tilbury (2003, p. 82) put it, in this period refugees "... may have depleted their emotional coping resources."

Many of the Bosnian families in Utica had come here by way of Croatia. Others had spent several years in a country of first asylum, fully aware that they would be unable to stay after the war ended. Fifteen of the one hundred families in our sample were in Germany for at least two years, some for as long as six years, before they were forced to choose between returning to Bosnia and applying for asylum elsewhere. One family reported spending two years in Denmark; two families took refuge in Serbia, two families spent time with about 400 other Bosnian Muslims in a refugee camp in Pakistan, and another couple of families spent time in a refugee camp in Turkey before entering the United States.

A few families were able to flee to a country of first asylum shortly after the war began. Some had connections through relatives or friends in another country that they were able to access. Others were employed in a country outside of Bosnia, but their families were caught in Bosnia. One woman explained her family's situation:

> My husband left to go to Germany before the war to work construction. He knew it was coming. He was in Germany two years while family was in Bosnia. We (mother and two children) left 12/93 to Croatia and waited three months to get papers in order.

Two families who escaped over the border to Croatia and were given passage to a refugee camp in Pakistan found that, apparently, the Croatian government was unwilling to commit resources to support Bosnian refugees.

> At some point Croatians wanted all Muslims out. We were told we could go to Gasinci refugee camp in another part of Croatia. We had heard stories that men would be separated from their families and made to fight in Croatian army, so we went to Pakistan instead. Germany, Austria, and Switzerland were closed to refugees by that time. The Pakistani camp was located on outskirts of Islamabad. We were scared of diseases that existed in those parts of world. That was part of reason we wanted to cook our own food. Good hospitality though—'you're our guests.'
>
> All of us lost 20 lbs each in Croatia, only eating rice and beans, no money and no food in the whole city. Only Red Cross food. We were pushed from city in Croatia. Tudjman decided no food and can't keep Muslims. We were on the Adriatic Sea in homes that were empty because they were vacation homes. Friends gave us our own apartment there. It was a very small village with 400-500 refugees. We opened a Bosnian school, had own mosque. Mayor may have asked that we be moved. We went to Pakistan, all family together. Only Pakistan was available. My brother was killed by Croats while we were in Pakistan.

Although they were grateful for the respite from war that Pakistan afforded and for the goodwill extended by fellow Muslims, Bosnian refugees experienced a sense of lost time and ennui. They also related their sense of difference from the Pakistani Muslims, since Bosnian Muslims were largely secular, especially those from urban areas.

> We didn't like Pakistan from moment we arrived. It was far too hot during most of year to go outside at all. They took us in as fellow Muslims, but culturally they were very different, strange to us. Two years there were very boring, because we couldn't do anything, nowhere to go, couldn't work. We were in our own compound, plenty to eat, we all got fat again in the time there.

One woman, born to a Bosnian Croat father and Bosnian Serb mother, had left Bosnia to seek asylum in Serbia with her mother's relatives. The discomfort of transience was compounded by the hostility of the local population toward refugees, even refugees of the same ethnicity.

> During that time our accent was our enemy and we were very quiet. One day on the bus a lady noticed my Bosnian accent and spit on me. 'Yeah, you all had to come over here to the city, and take over our jobs, spoil our streets, get free food from the church! Why none of you damn refugees did not go to the farms and work hard for your given freedom to breathe
>
> Serbian air!!!' I still remember my sister's shocked and proud look when I told the lady that Serbia was what brought me to her lousy city and into all my misery, and that I hope that poverty and deprivation moves into her home just like it moved into mine. I was ashamed, sad, and angry.

One family told us that they were displaced twice, once when they left their home in central Bosnia and took refuge in Croatia, and again when they were sent to a refugee camp in Turkey. They spent two and a half years in Croatia and another two years in Turkey before finally settling in the United States. He says,

> In Bosnia I was richest man in the village. I owned ten houses there. We spent two years in Turkey. Not a good life there.

In spite of all that this man has lost, he says that his life is beautiful, "*like a dream come true*."

Waiting in Germany

After several uncomfortable months in Serbia, one young woman was able to gain passage to Germany where she spent four years. Regarding the time she spent in Germany she says simply,

> Germany gave me the shelter, America gave me a home.

Some Bosnians had positive experiences in Germany with employment and housing, and others viewed their years spent in Germany as empty, devoid of meaning or purpose. Some respondents remarked that they were very aware of the temporary nature of their status. The temporary nature of their status as refugees meant that Bosnians who spent time in Germany could not go to school, could not buy a home, and could not move forward with their lives.

> In Germany we lost four years of our lives. We are anxious to get college out of the way and make up for lost time.
>
> We felt especially welcomed when we came to Utica. Germans don't want refugees there.
>
> It is like a dream [in U.S.], got own apartment, own kitchen. In Germany we had to share quarters.

A woman who had spent six and a half years in Germany expresses anger and frustration at the discrimination she experienced while there.

> I do not experience discrimination [in U.S.], but did in Germany. Many of us did. I was very angry about this; they told me directly, 'You're a foreigner.'
>
> In Germany there were no jobs for us. Just watched kids for two years.

Another man says that he felt constrained in what he could say while living in Germany, and another complained of the lack of help and lack of power.

> In Germany you can't say what you want.
>
> [The U.S.] is still a million times more help than Germany which provided no help at all. I felt like a baby there, very helpless.

Employment in Germany was an option if one chose not to receive social assistance, and those refugees who arrived early in the out-migration were luckier than the latecomers. One young Bosnian went to Germany shortly after the war broke out. He explains,

> In July I went to Germany. I was twenty years old, I couldn't speak a word of German, and I was alone. I've been asked by Immigration Office to choose between two options: either to live only from social assistance and not be allowed to work, or to work and not be allowed to obtain any social assistance. I chose the second option. I started to look for a job. After thirty days of constant looking and incredible luck I found job in my field. I was hired by Surveying Office, even though I didn't speak a word of German language. We communicated in English. I was lucky to look for a job in that office not knowing that they've been looking for surveyors and that they have been expanding. So I started in August of '92. My boss accepted me even though I had visa for only six months.

Bosnian refugees were required to renew their visas every six months and they knew that as soon as the war was over, they would be required to leave. When the war ended they could return to Bosnia or they could apply for asylum in a third country. None of their choices were appealing to them. They had already been through the stress and anxiety of learning a new language and culture. The decision making process is described as follows:

> In 1995 it was officially announced that war in Bosnia was over. Three leading parties from Bosnia agreed to peace in Dayton, Ohio, under the U.S. sponsored meeting. So Germany announced that refugees should leave their country. Since we knew that the war could not be over that easy, and that hate is too big to disappear just like that, we had to find some other solution. We decided that we would apply for the third country. We knew that people in Bosnia would not like our comeback because we were in Germany when they suffered during the war. Also, there was no prospect and promising future for a long, long period of time. So, we applied to immigrate to Australia, Canada, New Zealand and USA. USA was the one country that accepted us.

They knew little about life in America and didn't know what to expect. They had already been through the trauma of settling in a new and strange society where they had to learn a new language and a new culture. Although they were grateful for a chance to start again, the process of adapting to a new environment continues to be stressful.

Traumatic Stress in the Final Destination

> We went through a long process. It took us a year and half to come to America. In that year we didn't know what to expect. We knew America only through movies, newspapers and music videos. On one hand we admired richness and glory that some people enjoy, we feared of homelessness and criminal on the other. We expected completely different way of living than people live in Europe. We were afraid of poverty. Will it wait for us? We thought that we wouldn't be able to step out on street because of drugs, murders and similar things. We were afraid that there was no health insurance similar to what we had. We were really scared for our daughter. But, everything looked better than going back to Bosnia with no future at all.

The couple expressing the fears above had two children and had already had to adjust once to a life in Germany. Now fluent in German and Bosnian, they were

faced with making yet another adjustment, and their portrayal of their fears is eloquent. Will they be able to step out in the street? What will it be like? Will they regret the choices they made? What will this mean for the future of their children?

Our next chapters will focus on the resettlement process for refugees. Postmigratory stressors are more recently recognized as potentially traumatic experiences in the host community (Masic, 2000; Miller *et al.*, 2002; Pernice & Brook, 1996). For refugees such as those from Bosnia who have come from war, conditions in the host society can facilitate or hinder a positive adaptation. Pernice and Brook (1996) studied postmigration factors in refugees and immigrants to New Zealand, finding that those factors were more important than individual characteristics in predicting symptoms of depression and anxiety. Psychological distress was correlated with the experience of discrimination in the host country, not having close friends, being unemployed, and spending most of the time with one's own ethnic group (Pernice & Brook, 1996). Discrimination was the most critical factor predicting high symptoms of anxiety and depression. These researchers conclude that, "... the social conditions in the host country ... have a powerful influence on mental health" (Pernice & Brook, 1996, p. 512). Sinnerbrink et al. (1997) observed severe stress stemming from fear of repatriation among asylum seekers in Australia, including refugees from the former Yugoslavia. Stress was also engendered by barriers to work and social services and by separation from family members. Miller and colleagues (2002) identified additional stressors while in exile such as social isolation, the loss of life projects, a lack of proficiency in a new setting, and the loss of accustomed social roles, in addition to the lack of sufficient income for basic needs.

Refugees from the former Yugoslavia suffered multiple and sustained traumas throughout the war and the transitions that followed (Weine, 1999). The question in refugee communities remains, "How do people 'heal and right themselves'?" (Saleebey, 1996, p. 303) In spite of the less than optimistic picture presented by the experience of chronic trauma, survivors of a wide variety of experiences have noted positive changes that include new possibilities, an awareness of personal strengths, and an enhanced appreciation of life (Powell *et al.*, 2003). We return to this question in Chapter 9 when we talk about psychological adaptation in resettlement and in the latter part of the book.

Summary

Trauma is experienced in a life context. In a report produced by the National Alliance for Multicultural Mental Health, Fabri and Boskailo point out:

> There is no single experience of the refugees from Bosnia. One may have left shortly after the war began, but lost everything—family and home in one day. Someone else may have remained in the country for the entire war, surviving the many horrifying events occurring around them, and finally leaving with their family intact. There is no

> way to quantify the pain or the trauma an individual may have suffered (Lessons from the field, 1999, p. 74).

Individuals use their personal traits and life experiences to respond to a stressful event, and those etiological factors influence how likely they will develop symptoms of anxiety or depression or post-traumatic stress disorder over time (McFarlane & Yehuda, 1996; Zinner and Williams, 1999).

Most of the Bosnian families whom we interviewed experienced traumatic events. The particular experiences of war and ethnic cleansing, however, varied considerably. We have attempted to recount these traumatic experiences, but in the context of their both prewar and postwar lives, including a period of some sort of limbo in transition between the two. All illustrate stories of both individual and group survivorship, but they are much more than that. As much as there were commonalities, the very individual narrative interpretations about each refugee experience are critical to understanding refugee lives and the changes that have taken place. Our approach is similar to the approach adopted by Eastmond (2000, p. 77), who says,

> I listen to the stories people tell me and each other of their lived experience, of life when it was 'normal', of disruptions and dramatic changes, and of life in exile and the ways in which they make sense of these changes.

The stories of displacement in countries of first asylum are often truncated and empty. It was a time of dependence and passivity for many. As we will see, all of this changed very rapidly when these Bosnians arrived in the United States. Their accounts of resettlement typically include an initial period of panic and confusion, but within three to four months most of our respondents found employment and began to reconstruct their sense of autonomy and independence.

7

Resettlement: The First Year

> JFK Airport was a big shock to us after glossy airport in Frankfurt, Germany. Everything was so old and dirty. Everything looked like a big joke. This was America?!? Through the mass of people I went outside the building to light up my cigarette. An old van was parked in front of the entrance. Its body was rusted, dirty with lots of holes on it. What is this? Where are the big buildings? Where are people in suits and ties? Where are limousines? This cannot be America! My wife was crying. We were all sweaty. The heat was incredible. What are we doing here?

This young man was in his late twenties when he arrived in Utica in 1996 with his wife and young child. His family was one of a large group of Bosnian families who resettled in Utica during the "middle years" of Bosnian resettlement—1996–1997.

The following discussion reports on the experiences of our respondents in their first year of resettlement in the United States. Their first impressions depended on their prior expectations as well as their perceptions of how well they were received by their ethnic community and by the larger host society. They experienced a range of emotional responses associated with culture shock in the initial weeks and months in Utica.

The young family mentioned above had left Bosnia at the outset of the war and had spent five years in Germany. At the time of their arrival in the United States, they were fluent in German as well as their native language. He spoke English to an extent; his wife did not. They had applied for asylum in several different countries, but the United States was the only country that accepted them. There was a long application process, and during the year and a half that they waited they didn't know what to expect. Their bewilderment at the airport in New York City was compounded by their dismay at the dilapidated housing they found when they arrived in Utica:

> That day they sent us to Utica. Our apartment was its own story. If it weren't sad, we would have laughed about it. But it was sad. Sad and scary. Out on the street was loud. Some people were screaming. Glass was breaking somewhere. Three houses across the street were burned almost to the ground. Is there maybe a civil war in America that we didn't know about?

First Impressions

Bosnians who came in the early years, in 1993, 1994, and 1995, describe the burned out houses and urban decay that they found in East Utica before later Bosnian arrivals began to rehabilitate that part of the city. Bosnians who arrived in the middle years, in 1996 and 1997, complained that there were too few resources to assist the more numerous newcomers during that period. Later arrivals, from 1998 onward, found an established Bosnian community in Utica. Many of them had family members or friends to assist in their initial orientation and in the acquisition of housing and needed goods. On the other hand, many of these later arrivals were from the northwest corner of Bosnia and they reported that they felt unwelcome at the refugee center because the Bosnians who worked there were from East Bosnia and were unfriendly toward them because these newcomers had been loyal to Abdic and his autonomy movement.

Expectations and Reality

Initial impressions were shaped, in part, by the timing of arrival and, in part, by expectations that had been developed prior to departure from Bosnia. The social origins of recent arrivals also affected their perceptions of Utica. Middle class city dwellers reported disappointments, especially if they had left early with their memories of prewar Bosnia intact. Working class Bosnians from rural areas, on the other hand, typically had endured years of war and deprivation and were relieved just to leave the war behind. They were among the late arrivals and were quite satisfied with the resettlement services and the conditions of life they encountered in the city.

Early arrivals may have had a particularly difficult time adjusting to conditions because there were few Bosnians working in the local refugee center and few Bosnian families in Utica to ease the adjustment. One couple in their thirties, who came in the early 1990s, tells us:

> It was really bad to start with. When we were first here we both wanted to go back immediately. Our expectations of America were totally different. It was terrible when first here . . . I never thought I would be living in Hollywood, but I never expected it to be as bad as it was to start with.

Another young woman, now married, came to Utica with her mother and sister in March 1994. There were only twelve Bosnian families here at the time and one Bosnian interpreter. She tells us what a tough, cold winter it was that year and explains that weather conditions were made to seem worse by the condition of the apartment and furniture they were given.

> We had to clean up the mess in the apartment. We had poor quality stuff, dirty sheets. The furniture was bad and sofa full of cat fur. I was allergic to cats. I had to go stay with someone else.

Others expressed similar dissatisfaction with the living conditions they encountered in Utica as compared to those that they had enjoyed in Bosnia. An urban couple in their sixties expresses their dissatisfaction:

> The first couple of months were very difficult. Utica was empty city, people moving out. Utica was not looking good until Bosnians gave it new life . . . We carried a sofa from street a mile away. It was difficult for us because we had everything in Bosnia and here we had nothing. We expected more, furnished apartments, but no, we had to get furniture from streets.

Those who came in the middle years when the largest group of Bosnians arrived tell us that the refugee center was stretched to the limit and that the furniture they were given was of very poor quality. They tell us that it was extremely difficult and express little satisfaction with the help they received. Both of the families quoted here arrived in 1996.

> We were given some furniture and household goods, but it was junk. Maybe they didn't know about Bosnians. We needed more help.

> We were given furniture, but we threw it away, put it on curb.

Still, many were grateful from the start for the chance to begin a new life. One man in his thirties came to Utica after working for seven years in Croatia; his wife is a refugee from a village in Bosnia that had been cleansed by Serbs. The economy was in very bad shape in Croatia, as well as in Bosnia during the war, and he could barely survive on the paltry wages he was occasionally paid. He is on disability now after a work-related injury, but his attitude toward resettlement in the United States is very positive:

> My wife's cousin was in Utica and called and invited us. Permission to come was like being born again. Lots wanted to come and couldn't. They cried.

Most of the Bosnians with whom we spoke tell us that resettlement in the first year required a series of personal adjustments.

Culture Shock

The term *culture shock* was first coined by Oberg (1960). When associated with migration, culture shock refers to "the potentially confusing and disorienting experience when one enters a new culture" (Churchman & Mirtani, 1997, p. 67). The shock and anxiety associated with entrance to a foreign culture engenders ". . . lack of direction, the feeling of not knowing what to do or how to do things in a new environment, and not knowing what is appropriate or inappropriate" (Guanipa, 1998). Culture shock is also described as *acculturation stress*, and may be viewed as a normal and dynamic process of "stress-adaptation-growth interplay" in intercultural transitions (Kim, 1988, p. 57).

Research on culture shock attests to the diversity of human response to change (Furnham & Bochner, 1986). Berry and colleagues (1988) suggest that the stress comes less from cultural differences *per se*, than from the inability to communicate in the dominant culture's language. We found that the initial resettlement experience is difficult for nearly everyone, and the difficulty is expressed in a range of feelings: loss, grief, fear, and confusion, even anger. Yet most of our respondents, while expressing numerous emotions upon first arrival, talked about their experience of culture shock as a relatively brief period of adjustment. They describe an especially intense time in which life was upended; many cried, became disoriented, and felt helpless in the new environment.

One young man in his thirties describes the shock and confusion that many experienced of being torn from the familiar rhythms and patterns of life.

> At first, I was lost. I was totally confused. The hardest thing in first coming here was not to be able to go anywhere or to know anyone.

His wife adds:

> I had never left my parents or family before. I was pregnant. Everything was confusing—the first eight days were spent only crying.

For some, emotional confusion was accompanied by fear, disorientation, a sense of helplessness, and discouragement at starting all over.

> Everything was difficult when we first came. The language, the airport, not knowing what any of the signs mean or where to go . . . I was crying all of the time when I first got here—it was so hard to understand.

These feelings were compounded by deep frustration for those who had spent years in a country of first asylum and who now have to start all over again.

> The first year . . . the apartment had bugs, a man with blood trailing down his arm came into house and police came. I couldn't understand a word, was very scared, not what I expected. I called the German Embassy and cried to go back. I did not like Germany, but I was afraid and it was hard to start again here.

The feeling of being emotionally overwhelmed sometimes expresses itself in somatic symptoms, as with this woman in her early thirties from a small village.

> It was the first time very difficult. I had never been out of country. First 2–3 months I was scared,heavy heart, couldn't breathe. I was crying all the time here.

After an initial period of adjustment, life began to return to normal. In retrospect, the panic associated with culture shock and basic survival challenges seem a thing of the past. One man says that, in the first year, if he could have returned, he would have done so immediately, but his impressions now are much more positive.

> I came alone and the first year was expensive. The taxes were higher and if I could have gotten money for a ticket to return I would have gone back. It could have been better in

> Bosnia. I was lonely and had no money. That first year, I received a monthly check of $200 and my rent was $250. My landlord gave me problems and there was no money for anything else. I had to buy a car and it was hard to pay bills. I worked under the table when I was on [social services]. Things got much better after I got married. Now I think I was crazy and don't want to return.

First impressions were also shaped by how they felt about the welcome they received in the host society.

Receptivity of the Host Community

Receptivity comprises the resettlement policies and services of the host society and the attitudes of its members toward the arrival of these specific refugees (Berry *et al*., 2003; Portes & Rumbaut, 1996). We discuss policies and services of receiving countries later in this chapter. The reception of the host society may vary with how culturally and visibly different refugees appear to be and with the degree to which the host society embraces a multicultural ideology (Berry, 2001). Stepick (1998) suggests that the resettlement experience is more difficult for refugees and immigrants of color. For Haitian immigrants to southern Florida, for instance, willingness to work hard is insufficient, since jobs may be scarce and employer discrimination may compound these difficulties (Stepick, 1998). Holtzman (2000) argues that even in the relatively liberal state of Minnesota, racism was an issue. Members of the Nuer tribe from the Sudan, another group of refugees who are visibly and culturally different, were regarded by their Minnesotan hosts as "exotic, tribal Africans; they were refugees; they were black" (Holtzman, 2000, p. 112). The behaviors of the Nuer were sometimes interpreted and feared in racist ways. Bosnians in Utica did not have to contend with these problems.

Perceptions of Similarity and Competition

Bosnian refugees are not visibly distinctive nor do their European origins make them very culturally different. The Bosnians did not stand out in Utica in the ways that the Nuer did in Minnesota or even the Haitians in Florida. They are industrious and dependable, attributes prized in American society. Although the language barrier is a major challenge for many Bosnians, they have experienced a relatively smooth adaptation. Bosnian families, for the most part, felt welcomed to Utica, but they also believe that some native Uticans resent their success.

> Some [people] here think that Bosnians get too much help, and they resent us for being successful.

Resentments among local residents are anchored in worries about competition in the labor market. This is a common source of antipathy toward immigrants and refugees (Berry, 2001, p. 624). Our respondents tell us:

> We felt welcomed, but those who don't want to work complain that we took jobs. There are lots of resentments towards Bosnians in the workplace because we are such hard workers.

Native Uticans mistakenly think that refugees receive handouts from the government. Bosnians must be especially privileged. How else can we explain their success? Such claims are seen periodically in letters to the editor of the local newspaper, and are heard, with some regularity, in casual conversations and in focus group discussions. Our respondents tell us in frustration:

> Ideas in community are that refugees get a free ride and don't pay taxes. Americans think that we don't pay taxes, get big boost for $10,000 from government. Americans think we get everything for free.

Many, however, describe very positive, even close, relationships with the Americans whom they have met. Bosnians have moved into East Utica, an area of the city that had been settled by Italian immigrants in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Some of the Bosnian families we interviewed live next door to, or rent apartments from, elderly Italian-Americans, themselves first generation immigrants, who obviously empathize with them. They share a Mediterranean culture and the experience of being newcomers to America.

> They accepted us. We have nice neighbors. Our last landlord was like a grandma to us. No problems or conflicts.
>
> If I have a problem, I can get help from the woman who sold me my house. She's like a mother to me.
>
> We were very welcome here. Our neighbors are most welcoming and good with our kids.

A Culturally Diverse Community

The introduction of more than 10,000 refugees to this city of 60,000 people over a period of two decades changed the cultural complexion of the city, making it a good deal more diverse. But that Bosnians should say that they feel welcomed to Utica should come as no surprise. Like many cities in upstate New York, Utica experienced wave after wave of immigrants over the last century and a half, as we described in Chapter 3. In the year 2001, the Ethnic Heritage Center at Utica College published the second edition of a volume entitled *Ethnic Utica.* The twelve chapters chronicle the history of as many ethnic groups, and their arrival and adaptation to life in this region. For example, English, Welsh, German, Irish, Lebanese, Polish, and Italians[1] arrived in different waves and went to work, clearing the land, building canals and railroads, or were recruited off the boats in New York

[1] Other groups included African-Americans, Jews, and Ukranians.

City to work in the mills and factories that once gave the surrounding towns their names: New York Mills, Clarks Mills, and Washington Mills.

Not all of these ethnic groups were welcomed with open arms when they came. Further, immigrants of decades past, and even their descendants, are sometimes hostile to recent arrivals, forgetting that they themselves were once "just off the boat." The expanding populations of immigrants and refugees in the United States and Western Europe have given rise to growing concerns about the consequences and the perception of immigration as a social problem (Merton, 1995). Locally, the negativity expressed toward Bosnian refugees has come from both the African American[2] residents of Utica and from the much smaller Latino population. The local newspaper has reported some violence in and around Utica's schools between Bosnian and Puerto Rican youths. Nonetheless, the area does have a long history of absorbing groups of immigrants, and The Mohawk Valley Resource Center for Refugees (MVRCR) has been tasked specifically with easing the transition of incoming groups that have included Amer-Asians, Cambodians, Laotians, Russians and Bosnians and, more recently, Sudanese, Somalis, and Liberians. (MVRCR, 2004).

Receptivity in the Bosnian Community

The first Bosnian families in Utica were from Eastern Bosnia; families from the northwest corner did not begin to arrive until late summer or early fall of 1995. In addition to the usual challenges of adapting to the host community, the Bosnians from the northwest corner did not always feel welcomed by the existing Bosnian community. One man from east Bosnia told us that Abdic was a friend of the Serbs and that more than half of the Bosnians in Utica are Abdic loyalists. He explains that the use of the nickname "Babo" or "Fikret" is in reference to Abdic and tells us that the Bosnians from the northwest corner are "different":

> There's a war here between the two groups. At school there are stickers on cars and drawings on blackboards: 'Babo.' Too much trouble between kids. Abdic people drink too much. Muslims don't drink. Too many Abdic people like to fight. They have problems with family, get divorced.

Since east Bosnians were the first Bosnians employed by the Mohawk Valley Resource Center for Refugees, the Center was experienced as a hostile

[2] African Americans were first brought to Utica as slaves and were few in number until a more substantial migration of African Americans into the community after 1940, largely as a movement across America into the cities from the rural South. African Americans have struggled in Utica for equal rights since the end of slavery in the city in the 1820s, and DeAmicis (2002, p. 31) notes that although black Uticans are employed in all sectors of the economy and hold important positions recognized as citizens and leaders, "prejudice has not disappeared . . . the memory and perception of racism, nurtured by generations of poverty have weakened the spirits of many."

environment by many of those who had allied themselves with Abdic. Others note tensions in the workplace. One woman described her experience with harassment at work:

> I quit my job. Two women from East Bosnia complained that I smell bad. It hurt me. Three days I didn't eat or sleep. Before I was strong, not now. I am a little ashamed I can't stand up for myself. I can if heart is happy. For Bosnians it is shame to have no job, so when they ask, I say I have job.

The daughter of one of our respondents tells us that these tensions are also evident in Utica's schools.

> Kids act unkindly, they don't want to know. Some kids from east Bosnia say Fikret is bad. People in Germany during war didn't go through anything. They mostly say things.

We are told that, periodically, there are serious conflicts at worksites and in bars and local nightclubs. These hostilities complicated resettlement for this newer group from the northwest corner of Bosnia.

Starting Over

The employment experience of Bosnians who came to Utica in the 1990s is an important factor that shaped their resettlement. As Colic-Peisker (2003, p. 17) says, "labour market integration of refugees . . . seems to be the single most important aspect of successful resettlement and social inclusion in general." While other human capital factors are also important, age and knowledge of English have a significant bearing on resettlement outcomes. Finally, the local refugee resettlement center plays a positive role for many, while a few respondents have sharp criticism for the Bosnian staff who work there.

Employment in the New Society

Colic-Peisker and Tilbury (2003, p. 65) describe the U.S. approach to refugee resettlement as a social inclusion model, because it emphasizes refugees' human and social capital and because it fosters social adaptation and labor market integration. This approach highlights the importance of conditions in the local community, namely, the availability of jobs, conditions in the local labor market, and the policies of the receiving government (Berry, 2001; Portes & Rumbaut, 1996). Potocky-Tripodi (2002, p. 373) describes the labor force participation for immigrants and refugees in three sectors or markets: the primary market, which includes legal employment in the host society; the secondary, unofficial market where wages are paid "under the table"; and the enclave sector which refers to immigrant or refugee employees who work for co-ethnic entrepreneurs.

Immigrants and refugees constitute 20 percent of the new entrants into the labor force (Grantmakers, 2004). The two most common occupational groups for all immigrants and refugees are operators/laborers/fabricators and service workers (Fix & Passel, 1994). Refugees with little or no English language skills are able to gain employment, but they are typically paid low wages and face little opportunity for advancement (GCIR, 2000; ORR, 1998).

Human Capital

Human capital is a key determinant of a refugee's economic success in a new community (Fix & Passel, 1994; Meisenheimer, 1992; Potocky-Tripodi, 2002; Stepick, 1998). Human capital characteristics that support immigrant and refugee economic well-being include education, work skills, work experience, English language proficiency, and familiarity with employment and business practices (Potocky-Tripodi, 2002, p. 377). Although education is the strongest predictor of economic well-being (Potocky-Tripodi, 2002), studies of Bosnians' efforts to secure employment in the United States, Canada, and Australia confirm that English language skills are crucial to advancement in the workplace (Lamba, 2003; Mamgain & Collins, 2003; Waxman, 2001).

However, the human capital that refugees bring with them may not be relevant to the opportunities initially available to them in the host society (Stepick, 1998). Skills and educational credentials acquired in the country of origin may not be transferable and/or documentation may not be accessible (Aycan & Berry, 1996; Potocky-Tripodi, 2002). Refugee status may initially be a leveling experience; downward economic mobility is not unusual for refugees and immigrants (Aycan & Berry, 1996; Berry et al., 1988; Colic-Peisker, 2003; Lamba, 2003). Several studies of Bosnian refugees report on resettlement experiences in societies where the unemployment rate among refugees is quite high relative to the rate in the host society (Colic-Peisker, 2003; Eastmond, 1998; Korac, 2003; Waxman, 2001); underemployment is also a problem (Aycan & Berry, 1996; Potocky-Tripodi, 2002). Unemployment and underemployment are associated with dependency and undermine social adaptation and integration (Harrell-Bond, 1999).

Low-Wage Labor Market

Refugees from Bosnia entered a local economy in the 1990s that had experienced a significant decline in manufacturing and an increased reliance on service sector jobs, which increased by 38 percent from 1980 to 1998 (Hagstrom, 2000). Bosnians found work in many low-wage sectors of the city's economy. The average starting hourly wage for Bosnians who had entered the labor market in the period

Table 7.1. Ten Most Common Refugee Job Titles.

Job title refugee	Number of refugee jobs	Percent of all workers placed	Average 1999 wages for refugee workers
Assembler	798	26.7%	$6.50
Sewer	445	14.9%	$6.25
Production worker	206	6.9%	$7.25
Machine operator	166	5.5%	$7.50
Presser	114	3.8%	$6.82
Nurse's aide	100	3.3%	$7.25
Greenhouse worker	98	3.3%	$5.54
Folder	96	3.2%	$6.00
Meat Cutter	91	3.0%	$6.50*
Laborer	87	2.9%	$6.80*
Total	2201	73.7%	

* 1998 data.
2,986 jobs recorded. Source: Hagstrom (2000, p. 21).

1993–1999 was $6.36. Table 7.1 is drawn from a study of refugees in Utica conducted in 1999–2000 and illustrates the types of jobs and rates of pay evident at the time we conducted our interviews.

As Hagstrom (2000, p. 22) notes, "it should come as little surprise that the wage rates for these initial jobs is relatively low." These jobs require no prior experience and minimal training. Yet the average wage at the time of our interviews early in 2000 had risen to $8.13 per hour, suggesting that these Bosnians had made some progress in the few years they had been in the labor market. Anecdotal evidence that has surfaced in the four years since these interviews were completed suggests that they have continued to make gains in income.

Tensions and Competition with Other Ethnic Groups

Natives of Utica, often with little education or training, compete for the same jobs that have been filled by Bosnian newcomers. The city population includes significant numbers of other minority groups, particularly African Americans and Latinos. There are African American residents in the city who believe that they are denied jobs that are given to Bosnians instead and that employment services provided for Bosnians are superior to the ones available to them. Only 25.8 percent of black males over 16 and 28 percent of Latino males are employed full-time, year round, compared to 47.5 percent of white males. Fully 44 percent of black males and 51.6 percent of Latino males make less than $25,000 annually, compared to 30 percent of white males (Malone et al., 2003). These inequities tend to

contribute to tensions associated with the infusion of Bosnians in the local labor market.

English Language Skills

Language is one of the biggest barriers to integration for Bosnians. Therefore, English as a second language instruction is a critical aspect of resettlement. Our respondents spent an average of three months in ESL classes, and 75 percent had less than four months of English language training. Just over a third of our respondents (36%) are classified as beginners; they need an interpreter for most interactions outside of the sphere of work and family. Another 32 percent are thought to be at the intermediate level; they can get along pretty well, with occasional assistance. And 32 percent are advanced English speakers; they are fluent and are almost always understood.

Our respondents express conflicting emotions over the issue of English language instruction. Refugees want to improve their language skills but the inclination to stay out of the labor market and continue with ESL classes conflicts with the desire to become productive as soon as possible to provide for family members both here and abroad. As we talked with these Bosnians about their first months here in the city, another common refrain was the articulated desire to go to work as soon as possible.

> My English is ok, I need help only sometimes. I studied English one month at Refugee Center. I wanted to work and not get social assistance.

Some respondents blamed the Refugee Center and government policies that rushed them prematurely into the labor market and therefore gave them inadequate preparation with English language skills.

> The Refugee Center pulled me out of school and forced me to take a job instead, claiming that I would not get another job like it in years. I was scared by them and my English was not good enough for job, which it wasn't, especially for the computer.

A fifty-two-year-old father of two echoes this complaint with his objection that the length of time allowed for English instruction was inadequate.

> Why couldn't we have been allowed to stay in school? Why isn't there weekend schooling at the refugee center? There are too many people through the refugee center. Length of schooling allowed depended on how many refugees at center.

Some complain that their English skills are inadequate even while they admit that the choice to go to work right away had been their own, an acknowledgment of the inherent conflict in these competing demands. The choice between studying English and going to work is difficult. Although evening classes are offered after

work, many people tell us that family obligations prevent them from attending these classes.

A Central Resource for Assistance

In the first year, the MVRCR is responsible for helping refugees with employment and other forms of assistance. MVRCR links refugees with necessary resources for food, housing, and children's schooling upon arrival. Within a few weeks refugees are participating in English language classes that are designed to prepare students to speak English in the workplace. The majority of our respondents indicate that they are satisfied with the resettlement services they received from the Refugee Center, a vocal minority have complaints of bias and prejudice on the part of the Center staff.

We heard two types of complaints. Some spoke of corruption and bribes, and others complained of bias. One man wrote a letter to the Bosnian community newsletter accusing staff in the employment unit of taking bribes to allocate favorable employment opportunities. Some accused the Bosnian employees at the Refugee Center of bias against Bosnians from the northwest corner who had been aligned with Abdic and his autonomy movement.

> We didn't feel welcomed, [the Bosnian staff] only help their own people. It would be better if Refugee Center employed only Americans, because they don't care who we are. That made me go to work fast because I didn't want to be at the Center.
>
> I didn't feel accepted at first. I saw in their faces that I was not welcome. People at Refugee Center are for the "other side" and they did not welcome our arrival.

One woman had lost a kidney in a bomb explosion during the war and is unable to do any lifting or strenuous work. She accuses the Refugee Center of being one-sided:

> Almost all of refugee center is from East Bosnia.[3] Husbands, wives, sister, brother, cousins at refugee center. Nobody from Kladusa (west Bosnia) works there. People afraid to talk about refugee center. Why can't people who can't work in factory, work at refugee center? Nepotism says who works there.

Many respondents nonetheless attribute the welcome that they experienced in coming to Utica to the competent practices of the staff of the Refugee Center.

> Help from Refugee Center gave us good jump start.
>
> My uncle sponsored us and Refugee Center helped for the first six months. Refugee center did great job providing transportation and translation.

[3] Bosnians from Eastern and Central Bosnia were the first to arrive in Utica. As a result, they were the first to be employed at the Refugee Center. Bosnians from northwest corner were employed at the center later on.

The general mood of our respondents varied considerably. As Colic-Peisker (2003) suggests, the feeling of having regained some measure of control over one's life is an important predictor of optimism. We also found that age is a critical variable. Younger respondents exhibited more energy, enthusiasm, and optimism, although some middle aged subjects often demonstrated determination to overcome life's obstacles. For example, a forty-year-old man tells us that he "pines for his country." He and his wife both have symptoms of anxiety and depression. Yet, in spite of the trauma they experienced during the war, he is optimistic:

> I work and get the same chances as Americans. U.S. is the land of opportunity.

Similarly, a thirty-eight-year-old man has overcome obstacles of poor health due to war injuries, difficulties with employment, and worry for relatives back home, but he concludes:

> Every new life is hard. If you tell yourself you can do it, you can.

We were intrigued by people we met who asked us to repeat each word they didn't understand and took the time to look it up, using dictionaries, computers, or hand-held interpretation devices. We were impressed by those who taught themselves remarkably good English even though they were kept at home and out of classes by young children or other care taking responsibilities. We admired those who spoke of the conditions of their lives in very positive terms, even as they related stories of losing everything that they had worked for all their lives. For others, however, the focus was very much on what had been lost, on how impossible the task of learning passable English seemed, on the injustice of being asked to make do with an unacceptable job, in second-rate housing, and in circumstances that were seen as beyond their sphere of control.

The range of human emotions that are expressed here are influenced by psychological, socio-cultural, and economic factors as refugees adjust to the dramatic change in circumstances and the demands of adaptation in a new country. In Chapter 8, we deal with each of these aspects of adaptation more fully in order to understand the differences in the refugee experience and the process of acculturation.

Summary

In the first year Bosnians had to deal with initial negative impressions and many had to adjust to the reality of American society that did not measure up to expectations that had been based on what they had seen in movies or on television. For others, it was a relief and a haven from the refugee camps in postwar Croatia or Bosnia where their prospects were bleak. Following an initial period of culture shock, our respondents reported a myriad of emotions: confusion, disappointment,

fear, despair, frustration, but also hope, excitement, and determination. Most felt that Utica had welcomed them, and warm relationships soon developed with friends and neighbors. But others remained isolated in that first year, and there were tensions within the ethnic community associated with the Muslim civil war that had been fought in the northwest corner of Bosnia.

Some in the host community may wrongly believe that Bosnians received benefits from the government that they themselves didn't get. Also, some of our respondents believed that there are those in the community who feel that Bosnians have taken jobs away and threaten the labor market for those who were here first. We are reminded that Bosnians are just the latest newcomers to Utica, a city that, in earlier times, welcomed immigrants from Wales, England, Poland, Italy, Germany, the Ukraine, and Lebanon prior to the refugee resettlement of the last two decades.

For some refugees, resettlement involves a loss of status and downward occupational mobility. Human capital is underutilized, a common finding in the refugee and immigration literature. English language skills remain crucial for upward mobility in employment and for general satisfaction in adapting to a new culture. The Mohawk Valley Resource Center for Refugees has been a central and positive source of assistance for most even though some complained of inadequate assistance and of bias against Abdic loyalists. In spite of everything, resettlement is seen as one more challenge that served to demonstrate the Bosnian strength of character, as is expressed here:

> Utica was bad [when we arrived]... neighborhoods were scary. Now everything is normal. Wherever we go we can make good changes. We're the kind of people who make something of nothing.

In the next chapters, we explore the economic, socio-cultural, and psychological adaptation that refugees have made in the community as they sought to achieve a sense that life is back to normal.

8

Learning the Ropes

Acculturation is a complex process of adaptation between two cultures (Potocky-Tripodi, 2002) and is further defined as "the extent to which ethnic-cultural minorities participate in the cultural traditions, values, and beliefs of their own culture versus those of the dominant . . . society" (Landrine & Klonoff, 1996). This chapter considers acculturation outcomes for our respondents from the standpoint of economic and socio-cultural forms of adaptation to the dominant culture of the host society after the initial period of adjustment. Psychological adaptation is discussed in Chapter 9.

Our group of respondents demonstrates relatively successful acculturation outcomes, particularly in regard to labor market integration. The high rates of employment discovered in this sample of one hundred families contrast with the results reported by others who have studied Bosnian communities both in the United States and elsewhere. The sample of Bosnian refugees that Miller, Muzurovic, Worthington, Tipping, and Goldman studied in Chicago, for example, included many who were unemployed and who complained of poverty and associated stressors (Miller *et al*., 2002).

Some of the service providers interviewed by Colic-Peisker and Walker (2003) also described significant unemployment, dole dependence and isolation among Bosnians in Australia. Very few of these Bosnians have been able to find work in Australia comparable to the jobs they had had in Bosnia, and, these researchers were told, "people are status driven and do not want to take manual work" (Colic-Peisker & Walker, 2003, p. 347). Waxman (2001, p. 473), who also studied Bosnians in the Australian labor market, tells us that "newly arrived male refugees in Australia had a probability of unemployment almost 20 percentage points higher than the next most unemployment prone group." Similarly, Korac (2003) reports that, while the overall unemployment rate in the Netherlands was only 3 percent in 2003, 35 percent of working age refugees were unemployed that year.

Positive adaptation outcomes are common but not universal for our respondents. The process of adaptation includes significant stressors for families such as language and employment problems, difficulties accessing various service systems, especially the health care system, and for the elderly, social isolation. Our

respondents were quickly free of dependency on welfare programs and were able to purchase homes in a matter of a few years, even though some complained of downward occupational mobility and many were only able to find unskilled, low-wage employment.

Positive outcomes are largely due to the interaction of two sets of factors: the characteristics of the Bosnian refugees themselves, that is, their cultural and visual similarity to the host society and their human capital on one hand, and on the other, the features of the receiving society which include opportunities for employment, affordable housing, and a centralized and accessible service delivery system. Salient refugee characteristics include their social capital, their education, skills and aptitudes, their age on entry to the host society, and their knowledge of, or ability to learn, the new language (Berry, 2001; Portes & Rumbaut, 1996).

Acculturation and Adaptation

Economic adaptation, socio-cultural adaptation, and psychological adaptation are three equally important measures of acculturation in a new host country (Aycan & Berry, 1996). Acculturation occurs at the level of *individuals*, where thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are influenced, whereas *structural* acculturation takes place at a group level, as ethnic groups occupy various socio-economic and political positions in relation to the dominant group (Potocky-Tripodi, 2002). Generally it is anticipated that newcomers, as the minority group, will adapt to expectations in the new culture (Potocky-Tripodi, 2002; Berry, 2001). Balgopal (2000, pp. 220–221) suggests that the host society has a responsibility to monitor resettlement processes for refugees:

> Once refugees have entered the resettlement country, adjusting to it is seen solely as their responsibility, without recognizing that the host country also must be willing to accommodate them . . . What jobs are available? Do they match the refugee's qualifications? How do the wages, salaries, and so forth compare with those of similar jobs held by the majority culture and other ethnic groups? What are the policies regarding welfare and medical benefits, housing, family reunification, and immigration of family members? What economic opportunities . . . should be considered and concurrent interventions required?

Adaptation can also be considered as an individual level process suggested by learning theory and cognitive theory; behaviors and cognitions at an interpersonal level can be *adaptive*, helping us to function well in a particular environment, or *maladaptive*, meaning that they appear as abnormal, or not successful, in a particular environment (Payne, 1991). The majority culture largely determines what constitutes adaptation and calls for a set of behaviors that constitute a "fit" with *its* values and beliefs. As we discuss the process of adaptation for refugees, we recall again the diagram (Fig. 2.1) presented in Chapter 2 in which refugees are nested

within a social environment—an environment that was made up of one set of resources and expectations prior to war and displacement and a new environment with an entirely different set of resources and cultural expectations after the war.

Economic Adaptation

Economic adaptation refers to how well refugees integrate into the labor market of the host community (Aycan & Berry, 1996). Economic well-being may include, in addition to employment, consideration of the refugee family's income, occupation, home ownership, and use of welfare programs (Potocky-Tripodi, 2002). In the previous chapter, we saw that the United States emphasizes early employment as a critical goal of refugee resettlement. The human capital supplied by refugees themselves (such as English language skills, prior work skills, and education) and the community context variables such as availability of jobs and conditions in the local labor market are each important, not just for the initial adjustment period, but for long-term adaptation outcomes as well.

Refugees in our sample were primarily homeowners, and nearly all were independent of public welfare within a few months of arriving in the United States. Most of the one hundred heads of household, as well as their wives for those who were married, were employed full time when we interviewed them; teenage children often worked part-time. There were some on disability and unemployment, and those who were unable to work were on disability as a result of accidents, employment-related injuries, or war wounds, both emotional and physical. These are discussed later in the book.

Going to work and retrieving a modicum of dignity and independence is directly linked to the perception of successful resettlement. As Colic-Peisker (2003, p. 13) says "a generally positive outlook . . . depended . . . on how much control over their own life [refugees] felt they regained following displacement." It is important to recognize that, in addition to gaining independence and a measure of control through employment, getting a job allowed Bosnians to begin saving money to buy a house and thereby to achieve a treasured objective. Many chose to accept early employment rather than to stay in English language classes, advancing their language proficiency. For them, employment and eventual home ownership were more important life goals than learning English. While this choice may allow Bosnians to buy a house and furnish it their accustomed style, their lack of English skills may mean that they will have difficulty moving up and out of the unskilled, low-wage jobs they were willing to take when they first arrived.

It is important to emphasize that this study of refugee resettlement in Utica found that the labor market was able to absorb both English speakers *and* those with virtually no ability to speak English, with the result that there was almost full employment in the Bosnian community. That is one of the explanations we

offer for the relatively successful economic adaptation of this group of Bosnians in upstate New York.

Employment Status and Job Satisfaction

Some refugees experience "status inconsistency . . . having a job that is below one's level of education or abilities" (Potocky-Tripodi, 2002, p. 375). Attitudes toward work among our Bosnian respondents varied considerably according to the type of employment they had in their country of origin. We encountered two types of complaints about downward mobility. Several men who had held professional positions complained that now they are consigned to low-wage, unskilled factory work. Other told us that, before the war they held skilled positions as machine operators or automobile mechanics but that here they have only found unskilled positions. The first, more precipitous, form of downward mobility from professional to unskilled blue collar work is especially depressing for those with a university education, who see no prospects of regaining the status they enjoyed in Bosnia. These individuals express dismay at having to work as laborers for low wages when they first arrive. This is especially true for those who are over forty; younger professionals express more optimism. The first two men quoted here are in their early fifties, and the third is a sixty-eight-year-old man who worked as an assembler in a local factory when he first arrived in Utica. He had retired by the time we interviewed him.

> We are not satisfied with our current jobs, but we have to work, no choice. We have jobs as assemblers. In Bosnia my wife was a bookkeeper, I was a psychologist.[1] Life is hard now. We spent three years here, we need a car and have lots of bills.
>
> Life here is different than in Bosnia because I worked less as a teacher, five hours a day not eight. Work here requires physical strain. Daily life is not organized on the same basis.
>
> I was professional person in Bosnia. I never worked in a factory. It made me depressed.

In the following quote, a former physical education teacher tells us that his descent from a middle class professional to working class laborer was experienced as an extremely sharp decline in both class and social status.

> It was difficult for us because we had everything in Bosnia and here we have nothing. Many of us have college degrees and many work in simple jobs—low-paying and not in areas for which we prepared. Physical education teacher, for ninth to twelfth grades known as "professor". Could you picture yourself, lose all, start from scratch? We do very simple work here and have a very low income. You lose position, your rank in society, low income. I used to be middle class. Now is a different feeling. I used to work

[1] Tragically, this man died of a heart attack a month after we interviewed him. His widow and two teenage children struggle to survive. Their teenage daughter works part time in a video store to help the family make ends meet.

> in office, in profession, required very specialized skills. Now I work with people with very little education.

The second complaint of downward mobility involved moving from skilled blue-collar work to unskilled, low-wage labor. One middle-aged man had spent twenty-five years working as an automobile mechanic in Slovenia. He is now employed as a laundry machine operator.

> I am not satisfied with job. I want to be auto mechanic. It is what I was trained to do.

An automobile mechanic is a skilled employee who is constantly required to update certifications and competencies, especially with the increasing computerization of the automobile. A mechanic has a good deal of autonomy and control in the workplace. A laundry machine operator does not. He is unskilled and works at a pace determined by the laundry cycle and in conditions that are described as extremely hot and uncomfortable, even in winter.

Another fifty-one-year-old man says that he is not satisfied with the factory job that he has. He is an assembler here, but in Bosnia he was a skilled machine operator, and he also worked in that capacity in Germany and Iraq.

> I only work there because there is no other job for me.

Here he is engaged in simple repetitive assembly work. He can be easily replaced on the assembly line. In Bosnia, Germany, and Iraq his knowledge and skills were in demand and he was paid accordingly.

Others are more tempered in their attitudes toward the work they have found here. In general, more youthful and energetic respondents tend to exhibit more optimism. A young husband and wife (ages thirty-one and twenty-six) tell us:

> We like to work and we like to have everything—we're in a hurry.

Age seems to be the most significant variable affecting outlook on life. Older respondents who had enjoyed professional work in Bosnia do not envision regaining the status they had lost. Many exhibit a sense of resignation if not despondence. Younger respondents are more optimistic about their futures.

One young, professional couple seemed to embody youthful enthusiasm. She is a thirty-five-year-old designer who owned a clothing boutique with six employees in Bosnia. He is thirty-seven years old and worked for a year and a half after college as a minerals engineer. She is now employed as a dress designer, and he is a shift supervisor in a food distribution facility. Although they regret the loss of position that they had worked for, they and others are pleased with the material progress they have achieved in Utica.

> Before the war we were pretty rich. Most of the family had a good education and positions. We were advancing month by month. We are satisfied though because we have been able to buy two cars, house and furniture in a short time.

Employment Opportunities and English Language Skills

Many of our respondents went to work very soon after coming to Utica, some because they felt pushed into the workforce and others because they wanted to begin their new lives, start earning money, and feel as though they were working toward life goals. Like Colic-Peisker's (2003) respondents, many of our subjects seem to have developed a realistic understanding of the limits that their English language abilities impose on their occupational choices. For example, one professional couple experienced a moderate setback in their transition to the United States. Although they were able to secure administrative positions here, these positions do not carry as much responsibility as the positions they had held in Bosnia. The woman of the household acknowledges,

> In Bosnia I worked in a financial department at higher level and with more creativity, but here I have English limitations. I could not write at level required for more high-level position.

In our sample those respondents who had some English ability at the outset were at a tremendous advantage because the refugee employment specialists could send them to work in settings where they could readily interact with American coworkers, customers, or clients, so as to continue to improve their English skills. Those who had poor English language skills were sent to work in places where there were already many Bosnians employed. They could cope in that environment because fellow Bosnians could help them to learn the requirements of the job, but, at the same time, there was no pressure on them to improve their language skills.

Economic Well-Being of Bosnian Families in Utica

The long-term picture of economic adjustment suggests that income for immigrants and refugees gradually rises to equal or surpass native Americans as a group (Fix & Passel, 1994). Our respondents reported a downward turn in economic well-being for some, and an easier life for others. They described how they were able to live better lives with the money they had in Bosnia. Families often told us that their overall economic well-being before the war was more comfortable than their lives in Utica. It seems that for some, life was easier there:

> Life is good here but not as good as Bosnia. We made easier money there. Made same money there as here, more easily and could do more with money there.

> There was a better life in Bosnia before the war than here. We worked less there and could do more with money.

Our respondents recall not having to work as hard there as they do here. As one of the interpreters interviewed for a study of Bosnians in Australia put it, "... no

more meetings while sipping coffee and discussing where we are going after work . . . just work." (Colic-Peisker & Walker, 2003, p. 344). For some, the feeling was that they were better off in Bosnia. A lifestyle was lost along with all material possessions

> In Velika Kladusa I owned two houses which I built myself. We lost everything. I came with empty hands. Here nobody helps.
>
> We owned two houses there. We were rich.
>
> I don't have the important things I want in life yet. Before the war I already had the "good life," two homes and wanted education for kids.

A forty-year-old man who worked in retail sales before the war reports that he is really satisfied and very respected in his current job but explains,

> In Bosnia we had two houses. We had a good life, a little better than now.

Several people explain that they owned two homes. Some clearly referred to a main residence and a second vacation home in the mountains or by the sea. But for others, it seems that they were making reference to their own home and that of their parents. When we inquired about this practice of owning two homes we were told that it was common for a man to help his son to build a house soon after his son married, and that his son and his son's wife would then move into their new home. His son would then be able to claim that he had two homes, since his father's house was still available to him.

For those who are unable to work and are on disability, the words of another young man may be particularly poignant:

> This is a hard country to live in if you can't work and don't have money.

For others, the contrast is made sharper by their current financial obligations to family left overseas. One man whose brother was killed during the war must now support his brother's four children. He tells us,

> I was rich over there. I had three apartment houses, a house and a mountain house. I took lots of vacations. I spent lots of time in restaurants instead of working. [Now] I work like an animal. I have animal life. Lot of work, no time for see wife, two to three hours a day. In Bosnia I played soccer, different sports. Here I have to earn money for four kids of my brother who died in war. Two are in Bosnia, two are in Austria.

For others, material lives in upstate New York are judged similar to or better than the living standards achieved in Bosnia. For example, a thirty-six-year-old man from Kladusa tells us that he and his wife are both satisfied with their jobs; she is "super satisfied" because she doesn't need to ask anybody for help. She works at a laundry, he is employed in a local factory. They say that their conditions are excellent. Others agree.

> We have never lived better than now.
>
> Before I worked from sun-up to sundown and had nothing. Now I work less hours and we have enough.
>
> It's a hard life in Bosnia. Now I am satisfied with life.

For those respondents who came from rural Bosnia, the perceptions of being better off are mixed. Some talked about the comfort of a way of life that included subsistence agriculture. As one man explained, "I didn't spend paycheck on food." This suggests that wages earned through employment could be used for nonessential expenditures, because the home was bought and paid for, and the nutritional needs of the family were met by the products of subsistence farming. For others, rural life in Bosnia involved a lifestyle wherein women, especially, had to work from sunup to sundown, while men were engaged in wage-labor, often out of town or even out of the country, returning home on weekends or even less frequently.

Strategies for Success

In *The Material World*, Menzel (1994) explores the well-being of statistically average families in thirty countries around the world by giving us visual representations of their material lives. Each family is photographed for the "big picture" with all of their material possessions in front of their home. If the one hundred families we interviewed were to assemble their material possessions, the "big pictures" would be remarkably similar. Most of the families we visited had recently purchased an overstuffed three- or four-piece living room suite, an entertainment center with a large TV, a stereo, a VCR, new appliances in the kitchen, and a dining room suite in dark tones. There would also be two late-model cars in the picture.

These families seemed proud of their conspicuous consumption. These common patterns of consumption reflect a determination to acquire a set of material goods in a very short time. The acquisition of a home and these furnishings and appliances seemed to constitute the principal short-term goal of most of the families in the sample.

Potocky-Tripodi (2002, p. 378) cites barriers to buying a home such as "lack of a bank account, which may be due to unfamiliarity with or distrust of financial institutions; poor understanding of America's 'credit culture'; and lack of knowledge of financing and purchasing practices". Yet our families had purchased homes after only a year or two in the United States. Information networks formed within ethnic communities yield immigrant social capital that has a positive effect on buying homes (Cheney & Cheney, 1997; Johnston *et al*., 1997). Our respondents made use of these networks. We were told that, even before they came to Utica, families had heard from relatives and friends that housing was available and affordable here. It was one of the main attractions of the area.

We asked these families about strategies used to achieve material success. Explanations included self-reliance and working hard, finding ways to invest in home ownership and other real estate, teamwork and social cooperation, and supplementing income through entrepreneurship and secondary labor markets. Overtime was also frequently mentioned.

Working Hard and Building for the Future

Many families emphasized the extra effort they were making in order to rebuild their lives. They were sometimes critical of Americans in their comparisons. In their view, Americans spend their money on fast food and live their lives on too much credit. We were asked quite frequently, "why are Americans so fat?"

One man explained that hard work is the secret to success.

> It is nothing like a gift. Sometimes you have to be careful with your money. After losing everything in war, I was pushed to make something of my life. I had to buy furniture or this and that and had to work hard. A few times I worked 25 hours in row, not constantly but sometimes. I worked to gain goals. I could do overtime because factory didn't have enough workers.

Others talked about the importance of monitoring, managing, and planning for specific goals. Expenditures are thought out in relation to needs, and food is cooked at home.

> We came here in November 1994, went with the flow, have the drive to be independent. We build our own future, have pride, don't be dependent. First, pay bills, after money for food, no handouts. Do for myself and be grateful. It is a land of opportunities.
>
> We manage lives by working overtime and watching every cent. Try to save money. We're very satisfied with what we did.
>
> We are here four years. Just hard work makes us successful and saving money to buy something. We think about it in relation to what else we might buy.
>
> We cook at home to save money, she cooks for me, for my lunch. Others buy from machines. I take soda from home. Sunday I check coupons for store sales and cheaper prices.

Most Bosnians insist that they pay their bills and eschew credit cards. One exception to this generalization is a gentleman who owns three apartments that he rents out. He explains:

> The United States is all about credit cards and loans. Because we are not scared to take out loans I now own two new cars, a house, stereo , TV and furniture. My son, my wife and I work to pay for these.

Investment in Home Ownership and Other Real Estate

Bosnians bought houses in a remarkably short time after arriving in Utica, and a few of them tell us that they carry no mortgage. Some had bought their houses

from the city for back taxes or from the city's urban renewal program, and they had gone to work restoring the home to make it livable. Others had bought houses inexpensively, had taken short-term private mortgages, and had worked extensive overtime to pay them off quickly. Few were dependent upon the more traditional bank mortgages that Americans typically use. Also, some say that they intend to pay off their existing mortgage quickly and buy a second house. A common strategy involves purchasing a duplex or an apartment building and renting to relatives. One family explains:

> We pay $500 a month for our mortgage. In five months it will be paid off and we will buy second house. We rent the downstairs apartment to our nephew.

For others, real estate is the key to financial advancement and is used as a vehicle for investment and capital accumulation.

> We started with nothing and now I own three houses. One building with six apartments, I paid $8000; one house with three apartments, I paid $3000. I worked with friends and kids to fix up. One house I bought for $5000 in back taxes. I worked on it for three years. Now, all together I rent out nine apartments. I hope to buy a house in a nicer area, outside of Utica, with land and animals. [My wife] makes all food at home, I work on apartments. For five years we have worked hard.

In the long run, he hopes to own thirty apartments and to make his living as a landlord.

Living Together, Pooling Resources

A common strategy noted in the literature is for several wage earners to live together in a large household (Fix & Passel, 1994), a pattern we noticed in the households that we visited. Teamwork and social cooperation are important strategies for most refugees and immigrants. One family illustrates this pattern. The household consists of ten individuals: a man and wife, both aged forty-seven, their two grown sons, the sons' two wives, and two small children. The man's eighty-year-old mother and father also live in the home, preparing the meals, doing the laundry, watching the young children, and attending to other chores that allow the six wage earners to support the extended family with a combined income of about $80,000, excluding overtime. They own two other houses that they rent out and four cars. Similarly, a seventy-year-old man describes his extended family and says,

> We own five two-family houses altogether. We make our own bread, collect empty bottles and cans, we buy used clothes. Wherever we land we will survive and thrive. We are honest. I worked all my life as a farmer. All families over there are farmers. I worked from sun up to sun down.

Another typical response emphasized pulling together.

> We [believe we] should join resources together communally—we can't do everything by ourselves, only by joining together.

These patterns of social cooperation were pervasive in the sample of families we visited. Seventy-nine of the one hundred families reported that they have extended family members in Utica. Twenty of these families told us that the parents of one or another of the adults in the household live in Utica but not in their home. Seven more families actually have one or more parents living in the home, helping with children and preparing meals, and doing laundry and other household chores. So, more than a quarter of the families we interviewed enjoy the support of their parents nearby to help with care of the children and other forms of parental assistance.

Accessing the Secondary Labor Market

Several families said that they "worked under the table" to supplement their incomes, both while they were on welfare and sometimes afterwards. One man had a smokehouse in his backyard where he cured meats and sausages. Some people had second jobs that involved painting houses, doing carpentry, cleaning houses, jobs where generally, as Potocky-Tripodi (2002, p. 373) says, "labor laws regarding such things as minimum wage, working hours, and taxes are ignored."

Several of our respondents have opened their own businesses. Two operate successful construction companies; several operate café-bars; one is attached to a grocery store; and another is associated with a bakery. Many Bosnians mentioned the importance of working overtime as a strategy for accumulating extra income. One couple claimed that they both work double shifts as a matter of course. They arrived in February 1998 completely broke. Since then they have worked very hard, seventy hours a week.

> Last year wife and I logged the most hours in factory of all employees. We pay for everything with cash, except for house.

Socio-Cultural Adaptation

Socio-cultural adaptation reflects the day-to-day ability to function (Aycan & Berry, 1996). The socio-cultural dimensions of adaptation refer to those which make it possible for refugees to become fully participating members of society and to function well in day-to-day social situations. Do they know where to buy a loaf of bread, how to navigate public transportation, and how to use the telephone? Have they been able to get a job, make friends, and participate in meaningful activities? Do they participate with members of their cultural group and those of their host society? The inability to function comfortably on a daily basis can be enormously frustrating and is a major source of acculturative stress (Williams & Berry, 1991).

Changing Family Roles in Resettlement

We suggest that socio-cultural adaptation for these Bosnian families involves conflicts in values between the old ways and the new; a "special status" accorded to men in Bosnia no longer holds true in the United States, gender roles are not as clearly delineated, and the authority of parents is experienced as diminished. Marital and intergenerational conflicts for refugees after resettlement are reported extensively in the literature (Ben-David & Lavee, 1994; Egli, 1991; Jalali, 1988, Ying, 1999). Prewar family patterns and structures may be radically altered from the anthropological accounts of prewar Bosnia that emphasized the significance of extended families and neighbors (Bringa, 1995).

Refugees commonly come from cultures in which men are dominant and hold much of the power, with clearly defined gender roles. A typical source of conflict in refugee marriages during resettlement is the modification or reversal of some of those roles (Potocky-Tripodi, 2002; Jalali, 1988). In Bosnia, "typically women were responsible for both outside and inside work, while men remained responsible for outside work only" (Potocky-Tripodi, 2002, p. 311). In the United States, gender roles may undergo change. Al-Ani (2002, p. 255) found that some Bosnian couples might find their relationship strengthened through the hardships, but many more spoke of separations and divorces and "new tensions and conflicts . . . that put considerable strain on the respective couple and their children."

As family members "acculturate" at different speeds or in different ways, family and social relationships and the ways in which they were organized are disrupted or modified (Jalali, 1988; Matsuoka, 1990). Other changes in family relationships that are common to refugee families include the loss in status of aged family members as the aged are slower to adapt and become increasingly isolated, and for the youngest children of refugees, the loss of their native culture, as they are most apt to assimilate easily and acquire new language skills and habits (Jalali, 1988). Finally, the need for autonomy and differentiation among adolescent children may be complicated and magnified by the refugee experience.

In reflecting on differences between his current situation and the lifestyle he enjoyed in Bosnia, one man, who had held a government position in one of Bosnia's largest cities, says that he thinks that life is much the same for women here as in Bosnia, but for men it's different: "Over there men are something special." Another male respondent from a rural village in Bosnia agrees that women did not enjoy equality in Bosnia.

> My wife doesn't drive car, not in Bosnia either. Women didn't usually drive in rural Bosnia, we didn't have so many cars anyway. We made much more use of buses, and usually only some men drove.

A young wife, also from rural Bosnia tells us that education was not a priority for women as it was for men and explains the low educational levels for some women from very isolated villages:

> High school was too far from home. Transportation was a problem. Father says, 'don't let girl go to school too far from house.' I was at home, then married. Most women stayed home, worked in yard. I had to care for cows, sheep, chickens, horses, cats, dogs.

She comments on the relative improvement of her life now in the United States compared to her life in Bosnia:

> Women are boss [in U.S.]. I like it here.

Another man tells us that in Bosnia, men made the rules in the household, and he is affronted that in the United States a woman tells her husband that he cannot smoke in the house.

> I saw a man smoking on his porch. I ask him why he is outside. He says his wife told him not to smoke in house. In my country this does not happen. Wife is always younger than husband—not age but husband always tells her what to do.

A father of a 3½-year-old talks about the changed role of the husband and father in the Bosnian household. He was so angry about the laws governing child abuse that he would not have come to the United States if he had known about our legal system. He claims to have the right to hit his children in order to teach them the right way to behave, as his parents did to him, and says that Bosnians were surprised to learn that physical discipline is not allowed in this country. He expresses his frustration:

> I would have stayed as refugee in Croatia and waited to go someplace else. Life too short and you never know what will happen. When I came here I thought America was something beautiful and I found out that was only a dream. I would have stayed in war even if one day I die. My mother and father taught me how to grow up, be polite, honest. Parents beat me to teach me—nobody in neighborhood—police—no one will come to say, 'don't have right to hit kids.' I have right to teach kids not to steal, kill, drugs. I have to scare kids to teach—here you can't. Big surprise to Bosnians—kids go to school, teacher says, 'Father can't beat you—call police.' How can someone who is not Father know what is good for kids?—this gives me very big pains.

Intergenerational Conflicts and Isolation for the Elderly

Intergenerational conflicts arise between grandparents and grandchildren, and between parents and their adult children as they "try to maintain the ways of the old culture". In the new society, elders' experience and wisdom may be discounted (Gusovsky, 1995; Yee, 1992), and they may become very dependent upon other family members because they lack language proficiency and cultural competence (Carlin, 1990). Traditional family values and obligations accord a status to the elderly members of the family that are not always observed in the new country (Ben-Porath, 1991; Carlin, 1990), and adult children may abandon the obligation to care for elderly family members (Sakauye, 1992; Tsai & Lopez, 1997). In addition to tales of adolescents not respecting their grandparents or parents, very young children lose the ability to communicate in their native language with grandparents

who have not learned English. One young father explains traditional responsibility for the elderly in a Bosnian family:

> In Bosnia, the father is responsible for his child until age 21. The father then helps his child build his house. I heard a story of an old [American] father whose daughter and son live elsewhere. The old man is alone and sick. I don't understand how they can leave him alone.

The war and its aftermath have been particularly difficult for the Bosnian elderly. Many people had to leave their parents behind in Bosnia because their parents did not want to come. Those elderly parents who did make the journey have an especially hard time adapting to conditions here. They typically have great difficulty in learning the language. Many from rural areas may not have learned to drive and are place-bound or dependent on their children for transportation. An older gentleman says,

> The first year felt like a fish out of water, felt like innocent prisoners. We are very depressed and very homesick. We are old people. War changed our life, lost everything, can't forget.

This couple feels especially alienated and isolated. They have no car and they say that they have no friends here, so they have no place to go anyway. The elderly are especially isolated because their social networks have been shattered and they find it difficult to re-establish friendships beyond the extended family.

> My-mother-in law has no friends here and complains. She has no [Bosnian] newspapers to read. There is a big difference between young and old. The social life is disrupted.

For older people, language is very difficult to master. One woman explains that her mother-in-law apparently could not handle the difficulties. When they went to visit Bosnia in May 2000:

> He came back in July, she did not. It was difficult for her here."

While elderly refugees are generally less prepared than other age groups to negotiate the social system of the new culture, we observed several extended family households where the grandparents had settled into accustomed roles in caring for the grandchildren while parents worked, preparing meals, doing the laundry, and generally providing assistance that their grown children required.

Understanding the System

Although most of our respondents tell us that they understand "the system" well enough after the first year, there seemed to be continuing confusion for many who lack familiarity with culturally bound systems and practices such as retirement, real estate assessment, taxes, and credit systems. These difficulties are compounded by limited English language skills. Potocky-Tripodi (2002, p. 150)

notes that the "organizations themselves are culture-bound . . . all reflect the cultural norms of the dominant culture that created the organization . . . [and] often serve as barriers to culturally different clients."

Respondents negotiated unfamiliar systems by relying on their children and more culturally knowledgeable friends or relatives for information. They asked questions of anyone whom they felt they could trust, including us during our interviews. They longed for a "rule book" that could tell them what to do, how to do it, and when. They explained their difficulties with negotiating various systems:

> Retirement is a mystery. Disability, nobody explains the system. Refugee center does not inform.
>
> I wish I knew the laws and rules of this country.
>
> My English is not that good and I feel uneducated about the laws of this country and the rules of society. I wish there was a book that listed rules, regulations and taxes.

We were surprised and amused at another tack we discovered, one of strategic helplessness. When we asked one gentleman about any confusion he might have over how things are done here, we were told:

> I have no difficulty with the system because I don't speak English, so everyone helps me.

As is common among newly arrived refugees with older children, some rely on their children to assist them in interpreting in a variety of settings.

One respondent explained to us that he could not pinpoint any one thing that was difficult to negotiate. He said,

> Anything that you do in one day . . . go to the bank, go to the grocery store, go out to use a bus . . . it is all different . . . it is all a mystery, how you do it.

People complained of unresponsive bureaucracies, deaf and blind to their situations, but sought out and found individuals who could and did offer assistance. A forty-year-old man expressed frustration with the bureaucracy, specifically with his inability to establish a credit history, with the caveat that neighbors have helped him instead. He insists that some families have returned to Bosnia, because of their inability to negotiate the different cultural systems.

> Bureaucracy gets in way, doesn't help, but neighbors do. I asked for a loan to fix house and got turned down. I could not get car loan, I don't have credit history. Why can't we get credit? I have a private mortgage, so no credit history. Why is it so hard to open door? No one wants to take a risk on us. I know of ten families that returned to Bosnia because they couldn't make it.[2]

Our respondents related various complaints about "the system" but also used the opportunity to ask questions and gain further information about their rights

[2] We had not heard this from anyone else whom we interviewed and were unable to verify whether this was true or an exaggeration.

as residents of the city, about agencies, and "how things work." One homeowner had specific complaints that he had taken directly to the mayor of the city. He had made improvements to his home and his assessment had been increased. His taxes jumped from $1,900 to $2,800. He is upset at the injustice of it: "I am being punished for improving my house!" Cultural competence can be acquired over time. A last respondent tells us that he has no problems with systems now, but he had several past encounters with the legal system, deriving from his lack of familiarity with the law. The rules of the road in driving, having car insurance, and responding to an "officer of the law" were learned painfully!

> I got four tickets for not stopping for school bus, no insurance, arguing with cop. I went to Court and they wanted to give eight points on my license.

Accessing Health Care

Potocky-Tripodi (2002, p. 184) cites three main factors that interfere with health care access for refugees: "structural barriers, financial barriers, and personal and cultural barriers." Structural barriers are those related to the location or configuration of systems; financial barriers inhibit an individual's ability to pay for medical services, and personal and cultural barriers refer to beliefs, expectations, or practices that may be at odds with the new health care system (Potocky-Tripodi, 2002). The American Medical Student Association lists other personal and cultural factors influencing health care access as historical distrust of health care providers, cultural interpretations of disability, and the incompatibility of explanatory models, among others (AMSA, 2004).

Difficulty in understanding the health care system, including health insurance, doctors, hospitals, and both disability and workmen's compensation, presents huge challenges for newcomers who speak little English. Our respondents described several difficulties to us: they didn't understand how employment-related benefits such as state-administered Workmen's Compensation, payable when injuries occur at work, interfaced with health care. They were also upset over the process of paying for health insurance and then having to pay for medical care too! The approval system for accessing needed services through one's health insurance company brought unnecessary delays. And lastly, there were complaints about treatment within the health care system. Although most of these are common complaints in the general population, the frustrations are compounded by cultural misunderstandings and by the fact that, before the war, health care was free in the former Yugoslavia. One young man and his wife who were introduced earlier in the book both suffered recent disabling injuries. He tells us:

> The difficulty in understanding the system came when I hurt my back. I didn't know about workers' compensation and no one told me. My sister eventually found out with help from her American husband.

Several of our respondents are dismayed and angry over their experience with the health care system. They cannot understand why they pay health insurance premiums and yet still have a bill at the provider's office. One woman's indignation was typical:

> I am very angry about health insurance here in U.S. I pay premium and still I am not covered fully.

An elderly couple also complains about the required co-pay for medical office visits. He is retired and receives Supplemental Security Income (SSI).[3] She had been employed in a local factory but became disabled with repetitive stress syndrome. She was denied disability and they have virtually no income except the $451 a month he receives. She tells us with considerable agitation that she lost Medicaid coverage when she was denied disability. Another older gentleman complains of the wait to have a medical procedure approved:

> The health care system is one of biggest problems. We had to wait one year almost for my wife to have MRI approved. She was receiving physical therapy and was not even clear what her spinal injury is. That's wrong.

A female medical interpreter explains that she believes both she and her clients are not treated fairly in local hospitals; she tells us that they face discrimination in the order in which they are taken care of, primarily because of their accents:

> Sometimes I feel discriminated against. People hear an accent and think we're stupid. Clients in hospital are sometimes sidestepped.

The older woman described above, disabled now and impoverished, sums up her experience as a non-person in an unresponsive health care system: "You go to hospital, you feel like a thing."

A Hectic Pace of Life

It was not uncommon for people to remark on the different pace of life here in the United States when compared to the more leisurely lifestyle they enjoyed in Bosnia before the war. Comments about the pace of life also express concern that the quality and depth of friendships that they had known in Bosnia were not possible or perhaps not desired by Americans. Our respondents described a time when people visited each other's homes and came together in fellowship.

> We had a house in town and in village. We enjoyed living in the town and the people were different from those here—they were more hospitable, people visited each other and

[3] Supplemental Security Income is a program under the Social Security Act to provide income for those who are found to qualify with a permanent disability but who have not worked sufficient quarters in their lifetimes to qualify for Social Security Disability.

> spent more time together. They all worked together and helped each other, no charge. Everything here is paid for by money.
>
> We felt welcomed to Utica, but no one knows how to help. Everybody is too busy to help.

One young man who works a split shift with his wife so that they can take care of their two-year-old son complains of the change in his life circumstances; he feels lost, and says that he doesn't have time for his family.

> Life here is different than in Bosnia. Here life is faster, I feel lost and I don't have time for baby.

Others agree. Even in countries of first asylum, such as Germany, life wasn't as hectic as in America:

> Life is good, but it is too fast here. I worked in Germany and it was not so fast there.
>
> One guy came here and had to go back. It was too fast—couldn't adapt. Too nostalgic—it was driving him crazy thinking about Bosnia.

Not only is the pace different in the United States, but Americans also set different priorities. They privilege work over leisure and they don't separate their work from their home lives. Americans are compared unfavorably with Europeans:

> Americans live for the weekend, take job home. Europeans appreciate leisure; Americans run even on an escalator. Europeans have a slower pace.

The lack of vacation time was a frequent complaint, although the vacation benefits in Germany were better.

> In Germany and U.S., jobs come first. In Bosnia, family is first, job is second. I would like more free time, not enough vacation time. In Germany, I had six weeks off. I can't make plans, because I have no vacation time.

One young couple, though they report that the conditions of their lives are excellent, still expresses the wish for a more relaxed pace of life.

> We would like more time to go around. Bosnia, life there is different, we take it easy. Here it's stressful, no time.

One man, only in the country for nine months, complained that it is different in the United States. He laments the loss of friends that cannot be replaced in a short time. In addition to life being "too fast," it is hard to make friends because people don't seem to want to make time to socialize.

> The quality of life here is different. In Bosnia we go out after work. I don't have friends here, need a lifetime to make friends. I can't make a friend in two months.
>
> My friends are not as close here because life is too fast.

These expressions of cultural differences reflect a wistfulness about returning to what was once taken for granted as a normal life.

Longing for "A Normal Life"

When talking about the future, Bosnians use a phrase, "a normal life." A surprising number of our respondents spontaneously talked about "trying to have a normal life," making comparisons with the life that they had in the past, and projecting a future for themselves. Normality was couched in terms of returning to a way of life that was familiar, re-establishing a career, or looking forward to the things that one used to have as goals and expectations. Another common expression was to wish to be not rich nor poor, just "normal."

> *I* want to have normal life. Don't want to be rich. Rich is too bad. Poor is too bad.
>
> We are trying to live a normal life and are working to get by instead of working to get rich.
>
> I want to live normal life, not too rich, not too poor.

We wondered how to interpret this emphasis on not wanting to be rich or poor. We speculate that the traumas of war and forced migration may have induced a deep-seated yearning to avoid any further disruptions. These Bosnians may wish to steer clear of any behavior that might put a normal life at risk. When asked about this issue, our interpreter tells us,

> Being rich means being involved in politics. People don't want to be hooked up with politics. In Bosnia you couldn't be rich unless you were connected with politics.

We would like to return to this discussion of a normal life for a future research question. At what point did our respondents begin to feel their life began to be normal again? What were the cues or the orienting features of normality as life fell back into place? And were there people, services, or situations that helped or hindered the goal of achieving a normal life?

Summary

Acculturation is a complex process of adaptation between cultures. Economic adaptation, socio-cultural adaptation, and psychological adaptation are important measures of successful adjustment in a new country. Acculturation outcomes for refugees are influenced by the interaction of the characteristics of the refugees themselves and the features of the host society.

Our findings are somewhat inconsistent with studies of refugee communities elsewhere in as much as our sample seems to have experienced successful labor market integration. Some experienced downward occupational mobility, but they

were employed nonetheless. Some families also report that they were better off financially in Bosnia. English language skills are critical for job advancement, although this group apparently found employment regardless of their ability to speak English. For some, the desire to work competes with the need for language skills, and others feel that they are pushed into the workforce too soon. Strategies for success utilized by Bosnians include working hard and saving for the future, investing in home ownership, living together and pooling resources, and accessing the secondary labor market.

The socio-cultural adaptation of Bosnian refugees includes changing family roles in resettlement, intergenerational conflicts and isolation for the elderly, learning to navigate the various service systems, laws and civil regulations inherent in the new society, and accessing the health system, in particular. Bemoaning the hectic pace of life and longing for a return to a normal life were dominant themes. While not without frustrations and challenges, the experiences of this group of Bosnians have led to positive acculturation outcomes. In the next chapter we consider the complexities of psychological adaptation.

9

Challenges to Psychosocial Wellness

An evaluation of the psychological adaptation of our respondents takes into account the traditional measures of physical health, mental health, and life satisfaction. The theoretical frameworks described in Chapter 2 provide the context for this assessment. The ecosystems perspective elucidates the interrelationships of people with their environments; the stages of migration framework describes the temporal phases of prewar life, war experiences, displacement and transit, and resettlement; and the acculturation model tells us that refugees and host societies interact to influence strategies used by refugees in adapting to new environments. Our respondents' states of well-being are influenced by their prewar and postwar ecosystems and by factors encountered in various phases of migration. The psychological well-being of refugee families is also influenced by the degree of acculturative stress experienced in a new culture.

A holistic approach to health or wellness encompasses not only the physical and psychological dimensions of well-being, but also social, vocational, intellectual, and spiritual dimensions of experience.[1] *Psychosocial wellness* is a framework that embodies such a holistic approach to health and "highlights the perspective of strengths, resilience, and independence" (Ahearn, 2000, p. xvi). We endorse an emphasis on psychosocial wellness for refugees recommended by others over a focus on pathology and illness (Ahearn, 2000; Phibbs-Witmer & Culver, 2001). This chapter describes the psychological adaptation, and discusses the psychosocial wellness, of the respondents in our study.

Psychological Adaptation

Psychological adaptation is the final dimension of adaptation outcomes that also include economic and socio-cultural adaptation (Aycan & Berry, 1996).

[1] See the definition of mental health proposed by the National Alliance for Multicultural Mental Health in Lessons from the Field: Issues and Resources in Refugee Mental Health. They also credited the World Health Organization (WHO) for their definition of health.

Psychological adaptation is a sense of well-being, including *health* and *mental health*, and *satisfaction with life* (Aycan & Berry, 1996; Searle & Ward, 1990). Overall most of our respondents assessed their physical health as good, but health problems were noted in a dozen families. Mental health status proved difficult to assess with our quantitative measures, but narratives suggested the overall distress levels to be high for a discrete group. Many respondents gave a very positive response to the question about life satisfaction, but this varied by the age of refugees. Their level of satisfaction also depended on their frame of reference. Some of our respondents compared their current circumstances with an idealized recollection of life before the war; others with recent experiences in the war; and a third group compared their lives with what life would be like for them if they had remained in Bosnia. We argue that the narrative responses are most effective in helping us to determine which of these frames of reference informed respondents' judgments as to the current level of life satisfaction (Coughlan & Owens-Manley, 2005; Miller *et al*., 2002).

Premigratory and Postmigratory Traumas

Psychological well-being has been found to be related to premigratory traumas (Chow & Yuen, 2000; Mollica *et al*., 2001; Momartin *et al*., 2003; Mooren & Kleber, 2001; Papadapoulos, 2002; Silove & Ekblad, 2002; Weine *et al*., 1995c; Weine & Kuc, 2001; Weine *et al*., 1998) and to postmigratory conditions in the host society (Aycan & Berry, 1996; Miller *et al*., 2002; Pernice & Brook, 1996; Searle & Ward, 1990; Uba & Chung, 1990; Young & Evans, 1997). Criticisms of Western helping approaches include the beliefs that the effects of premigratory traumas may be overemphasized and that too little attention has been paid to the stresses that occur after migration in the host community (Kanaaneh, 2000; Masic, 2000).

Conditions in the host country can facilitate or hinder wellness. Depression and anxiety are common among refugees as they cope with cultural losses and figure out how to live within a new cultural world (Berry *et al*., 2003). Newcomers may experience psychological distress that is correlated with changes in their environment such as loss of social networks and unemployment (Pernice & Brook, 1996; Searle & Ward, 1990; Young & Evans, 1997; Uba & Chung, 1990; Aycan & Berry, 1996). Discrimination is a significant factor predicting high symptoms of anxiety and depression (Pernice & Brook, 1996). Miller and colleagues also report on significant "stressors of exile" for Bosnian refugees (2002, p. 341) and argue that the effects of war trauma are significantly compounded by sources of postmigration distress, such as lack of adequate income, language barriers, and social isolation.

Acculturative Stress

Acculturation involves a process of communication between two cultures, with implications for group level changes among refugees and in the host society

as a result of their interaction (Berry, 2001). Similarly, acculturation takes place at an individual level as refugees, who are in contact with a new culture, experience psychological changes. The interface of persons with the unfamiliar cultural environments (and consequently unfamiliar experiences) may produce *acculturative stress* (Berry, 2001). From the standpoint of psychological well-being, acculturative stress can produce positive adaptation outcomes such as new opportunities and experiences, or negative adaptation outcomes, such as restrictions on experiences that formerly gave meaning to life (Berry *et al*., 2003).

Assessing Psychological Adaptation

Psychological adaptation was assessed with quantitative and qualitative measures. Physical health and life satisfaction were self-assessed on a Likert scale; the Hopkins-25 Symptom Checklist (Mollica *et al*., 1987a) was administered in the native language to assess mental health. In addition, open-ended responses to prompts about health problems, satisfaction with life in the United States, and perceptions of well-being were recorded. The physical health of refugees is fairly easy to assess in an interview, but mental health is far more difficult to evaluate for reasons explored below.

Physical Health

A significant portion of our sample reported somatic symptoms expressed as physical health problems such as headaches, gastrointestinal disorders, and sleep problems. In nine families, either the husband or wife, or both, had surgeries of various types, either in the country of first asylum or since they have been in the United States. Surgeries had been performed for problems such as hernias, cancer, back injuries, cysts and hysterectomies, and damaged kidneys. Physical health problems were difficult to separate from mental health symptoms, as the same respondents often reported trembling, nervousness, crying, or spells of panic on the Hopkins-25 Checklist. Five respondents in their thirties had back injuries serious enough to be out of work and on disability; four occurred at work and one injury resulted from a car accident. Two women and one man in their fifties were unemployed and trying to qualify for Supplemental Security Income (SSI), and one young man in his thirties was on temporary disability for an injury to his hand but he planned to return to work soon. Several men were on medication that had been prescribed for "nerves" and symptoms probably related to post-traumatic stress disorder.

Mental Health

In our study, fifty-five of one hundred households completed the Hopkins-25 Checklist to measure depression, anxiety, and "total distress" (Mollica *et al*.,

1987a). Of the fifty-five checklists completed, 45 percent indicated they were positive for both a depression score and the combined anxiety and depression score, which is indicative of significant emotional distress ($n = 25$). In use with other populations, the depression score from the Hopkins-25 Symptom Checklist is highly correlated with a diagnosis of major depression, and a positive total score was correlated with "severe emotional distress of unspecified diagnosis" (Harvard Trauma Manual, 1999, p. 7). These indicators, together with the narratives presented in the next section on psychosocial wellness, suggest a small group of refugees with significant distress.

A subgroup of twenty families completed the trauma events questionnaire when we returned for second interviews (Mollica *et al.*, 1992).[2] The trauma events questionnaire was completed by twelve of the twenty men whom we interviewed. They reported experiencing a range of eight to thirty traumatic events out of a possible forty-six. This is an excellent example of the limitations of a purely quantitative study. How can this number express the stories behind such events as brainwashing, being forced to find and bury bodies, being forced to physically harm or betray someone, or having a family member disappear? One woman told us, "I never would have thought to tell you about any of these on the first page. These happened to all of us." Her responses on the questionnaire indicated that she had experienced lack of shelter, lack of food or water, ill health without access to medical care, and confiscation or destruction of personal property. She had experienced a combat situation. She had been used as a human shield, and exposed to frequent and unrelenting sniper fire, and she had been forced to evacuate under dangerous conditions (Harvard Trauma Questionnaire, Part I. Trauma Events).

Life Satisfaction

Satisfaction with life was measured with one global question asking respondents to rate the quality of their lives as "poor," "fair," "good," or "excellent." Nearly three-quarters of our respondents (72%) agreed that life here is "good" or "excellent." Seventeen consider conditions to be fair. Five respondents say that their life conditions here are "poor." Narrative prompts for life satisfaction included asking if they would change anything about their lives. Some respondents used this question as an opportunity to express dissatisfaction with other aspects of their lives, such as jobs, separation from family members, or initial resettlement help that they received. Their words were sometimes at odds with the ratings they had given in response to the life satisfaction question. Qualitative results are reported in the next section under the expanded concept of psychosocial well-being.

[2] Both instruments are included in the Harvard Trauma Questionnaire, Harvard Trauma Manual, Harvard Program in Refugee Trauma, Harvard Medical School. The manual provides Bosnian translations.

Psychosocial Wellness for Bosnian Families in Utica

Psychosocial wellness for refugees consists of "the ability, independence, and freedom to act and the possession of the requisite goods and services to be psychologically content" (Ahearn, 2000, p. 4). Psychosocial wellness is achieved in the ongoing interaction between the person and his or her environment. An assessment of well-being requires an emphasis on the ability of the refugee to function well in his or her environment as well as an understanding of the context in which the current environment is evaluated. We must also respect the influence of culture and diversity on attributions and perceptions and understand acculturative stress as it affects psychosocial wellness for individuals. For Bosnian refugees, experiences during war, transition, and resettlement wrought dramatic changes in their lives and often significant changes in their health and well-being.

For our respondents, family separation is a significant strain, but contact is maintained through telephone, email, and international visits. The traumatic stresses of both war and resettlement have had long-term effects on physical and mental health for some, but life satisfaction is relatively high. Younger couples, those with less direct involvement in war experiences, and those with greater work satisfaction appear to fare better. However, the number of Bosnians with work injuries, illnesses, and disabilities seems very high for these one hundred families. The years of war, combined with low-wage work environments, may increase injuries and decrease psychosocial well-being. Continuing political tensions in the aftermath of resettlement both in Utica and in Bosnia also contribute to anxiety and stress. Our respondents make explicit, and sometimes nostalgic, comparisons with the conditions of life before the war. They are also often painfully aware of the economic, social, and political conditions in Bosnia today. Many tell us that their relatives in Bosnia depend on remittances from the United States and elsewhere to survive.

Family Separation Is an Ongoing Source of Stress

It would be difficult to discuss the well-being of Bosnian families in Utica without considering the well-being of family members in Bosnia. The ability to be happy and well is impacted by anxiety over family members now separated by countries and continents. Our respondents maintain frequent contact by telephone and sometimes over the Internet with relatives and friends in Bosnia and other countries that served as host societies for Bosnian refugees: Canada, Australia, Norway, Britain, Denmark, and Sweden. Nearly every family sends substantial amounts of money from their limited earnings to help support family members in Bosnia.

Family separation, and the frustration, pain, and anxiety it causes, was a nearly universal theme in interviews with these Bosnian families. Many families left relatives behind in Bosnia, and others report that relatives fled to other parts of

Europe and to other continents. Their worry about their families is palpable, and with substantial reason, especially for relatives in Bosnia. Communities throughout Bosnia are rife with unemployment and continuing political and ethnic tensions that threaten to disrupt an uneasy peace.

Thousands of Bosnians have entered the United States annually since 1993, and the family reunification program for Bosnian refugees enabled Bosnians who came under priority one or priority two (see Appendix A) to sponsor family members in coming to the United States. The door was kept open longest for spouses, unmarried children of any age, and parents of refugees. They came under priority three until June 1, 2000. Grandparents, grandchildren, married sons and daughters and siblings were limited under priority four after November 1, 1999. The broadest category of relatives, including uncles, aunts, nieces, nephews, and first cousins, was established under priority five for Bosnian Muslims only, for a short period of time ending March 31, 1997.

Although many family members took advantage of these programs, others chose to stay in Bosnia or abroad, or decided to come but too late, or were caught in processing problems that could not be satisfactorily resolved. Many of our respondents speak poignantly about their relationship to now distant relatives, as does this young man:

> I have eight brother and sisters. My mother, five sisters and a brother are in Bosnia. I am trying to bring my mother and brother over here. Nobody there is working. How much I worry about myself, I worry about them.

Separation from family members inhibits psychosocial wellness for Bosnian refugees in Utica. Current issues include worry about older family members and *their* health; concern for maintaining the sense of family unity with members scattered around the globe; regrets about missed chances at reunification, and regrets for what they cannot provide for family members at a distance—they send what they can, a few dollars, but they cannot send themselves.

"We're neither Here nor There"

A woman in her thirties expresses the feelings of many when she speaks about her aging parents in Bosnia, while she is here and unable to be with them when they need her. It was her parents' choice to stay in Bosnia, and she feels torn about her own choice to be here.

> My parents are in Bosnia and are old and sick. I wish I could be with them, but they don't want to come. I feel I'm not here nor there.

A young widow, whose husband was killed in the war, explains that she is the youngest of ten children. Her father died ten years ago and her mother is seventy-seven years old and in poor health. She has a family that is typical for Bosnians today, in that siblings are scattered far and wide. She has a brother in

Utica, a sister in California, two sisters in Austria, a brother in Slovenia, a brother in Croatia, and a brother and two sisters in Bosnia. She would like to bring her mother here, but her mother is not well enough to make the journey. For some of our respondents, it is the parents, separated from their grown children, who experience the frustration of separation and worry about their children.

> My daughters in Bosnia have no jobs, in a hard situation. My relatives there are very poor. I would like to bring them here but I can't.

"We Missed Our Chance"

Many families came to Utica and then urged other relatives to join them under the family reunification act. Initially some of these relatives in Bosnia or Croatia balked at making the transition. Some lived to regret their hesitation because the rules governing who was eligible to enter the United States under this program became much more restrictive over time. Some of these relatives later decided that they would like to emigrate but found that now, they could not. Others tried to get their relatives out, but the processing rules were complicated, and if relatives returned to Bosnia, even to check on their homes or to retrieve possessions, they lost their refugee status.

> My parents are in Bosnia. I and my brother and sister in Chicago send them money. I want them to come here. They didn't want to come before, but now they do and it is too late.
>
> None of my relatives in Bosnia work except one brother who has part-time work in Croatia. I worry about my relatives and haven't seen them for four to six years. I tried to bring my single sister, but now it's too late. One relative is really poor—they didn't want to come before, but now they regret that they didn't. We send $200 each month.
>
> I have father, two brothers and their families and sister and her family in Bosnia. Wife has four sisters and three brothers there two. Not too worried because I have two more brothers and a sister in Austria. We all send money. I was trying to get them here, sent papers. They were at refugee camp, then returned to Bosnia, so now they are not refugees.

Illness and Death Compounded by Separation

The pain of separation from close relatives is made more acute by illness and death. One young woman speaks very expressively of her mother who died of brain cancer at the age of forty-six and the connection of her mother's death to the war. Her mother was asking for her on her deathbed in the former Yugoslavia.

> My sister was telling [my mother] that I was not in Germany anymore, that I had to go to America and that I was not allowed to travel. She did not believe her. My mother died at the age of forty-six and I was not there. She died disappointed and convinced that I had left her behind. On that day I was on the other end of the world. I felt all the distance between us, the distance in thousands of kilometers and thousands of hours that

> we were apart. I was at her funeral all by my self in my tired mind, and I was thinking how far was I now, but close enough to feel the war under my skin. I was not killed in it, I was not hungry too long, and I was not watching my family die in the front of my eyes. Too distant from the war was not possible; I knew that all along, because no matter how far away I was going, the war was always following me. It tore my family apart. It took my youth away from me, and taught me how to survive the hard way. It killed my friends and made others hate me for the blood that flows through my veins.

Another man had been trying to bring his parents here, but his mother contracted breast cancer and was unable to make the journey.

> I sent them papers to come, but she is sick. Every month we send them $300.

Some of our respondents are clear that their relatives would not come even if they could. Families with large numbers of relatives already here may find it easier to accept the decisions of other relatives to stay abroad.

> Although we have extended family here, brothers and sisters here, I have many relatives still in Bosnia who are unemployed. There are economic problems and corruption is huge. I am not trying to bring them here because they would not like to come. They prefer to stay in Bosnia in spite of the conditions.

The presence or absence of close relatives can make a tremendous difference in one's commitment to the new host society. For Bosnians who chose to come to Utica, a few are ambivalent about staying, in part because of the pining for absent relatives. One gentleman with a good command of the English language, although clearly committed to staying in the United States, may not. His wife does not speak English, and he says that she is not interested in learning it. Her family is in Bosnia, and so too is her heart.

Conditions of Life for Family in Bosnia

Although life is good for many in Utica, there is continued worry about relatives in Bosnia. Family and community are being reconstituted and re-formed in new and different ways through the use of the new mediums of cell phones and the Internet. Families here send substantial sums of money when they can. They contemplate visits but often delay going back to Bosnia until they are citizens of the United States. Although many are anxious about the economic circumstances and lack of opportunity in all of Bosnia, particular worries center upon the continuing political tensions in the northwest corner between Abdic supporters and those who fought against them in the Fifth Corps.

Bosnia Is not the Same

Some younger families who had left at the outset of the war, and consequently had not directly experienced the effects of war, went back to visit family and

friends and were horrified by what they saw. One couple from Mostar, which is now ethnically divided, says,

> We can't believe it. It was always one city. Now it's like Berlin.

Families in all of Bosnia suffer from the lack of economic infrastructure, high unemployment, continued deprivation, and for many, the inability to "go home" into now Serb-occupied territory. For relatives of Utica's Bosnians who are left behind in Bosnia, access to employment and other opportunities is cut off if one is not a member of the dominant group. In one case dominance is defined by membership in a political party, and in another, it is defined by membership in an ethnic group. For Abdic supporters this means being excluded from opportunities in areas controlled by the SDA, the political party affiliated with Izetbegovic and the Fifth Corps. For others, it means being excluded from opportunities in areas controlled by the dominant ethnic group. So, politically or ethnically dominant groups in Bosnia exercise exclusionary tactics to the disadvantage of the minority groups in the region.

Sending Money Home

Purchases and expenditures in the United States or spending money on airline tickets to visit relatives are weighed against the necessity to send any surplus funds to relatives in Bosnia who depend on remittances to live.

> I have many relatives in Kladusa, Bosnia. I take care of them. If I didn't send them money, they'd be dead. I send $350 a month.

Many of the families tell us that they send substantial sums of money to relatives in Bosnia. The average household sends $216 a month. Among both refugees and immigrants this is not an unusual finding (Massey & Basem, 1992; Menjivar *et al*., 1998). One of the principal sources of emotional harm identified by Erikson (1994) in his study of the Haitian migrant labor community that had been victimized by employer theft was the pervasive guilt that these people felt as a result of being unable to send money back to relatives in the homeland. One of Erikson's informants says,

> In Haiti, we come from poor families. You know when you leave that you leave at least fifty or maybe a hundred people who are suffering, hungry, with not enough food. That is why when you come here, the money you make you cannot keep. (Erikson, 1994, p. 74).

Waiting to Visit but not to Return

Many of the Bosnians we interviewed had either visited Bosnia recently or planned to do so in the near future. Those who had future plans often stipulated that they would only consider a visit after they had become American citizens.

They had concerns for their own safety if they visited with only a "green card" and for the future of Bosnia as a good place to live. Those who had visited were glad to be reunited with relatives and friends, if only briefly, but many experience conflicting emotions.

> Yes to visit family because baby is born. It's his country too, but afraid it could start again. I feel war gonna be again. I feel safe here.
>
> I returned home last summer and it was very hard. I was scared when I went to Sarajevo, the houses were destroyed.

Some express an interest in visiting but on the matter of returning to live:

> No, all Bosnians have suffered there. So we won't want to return.
>
> I'd kill myself before I'd go back. Not even for a visit.
>
> No plans to visit Bosnia. Now there are no jobs. Could take gifts and money for friends and relatives but it's better not to go. Can't watch how poor they are over there. No jobs, no money, no nothing. Is still a crisis.
>
> It is more difficult for those who supported Abdic. We went to visit relatives. No jobs in Bosnia. House is destroyed. Some people hungry. Some have a lot, others nothing. In Yugoslavia there is corruption.

Others did speak of retaining rights to their property and possibly retiring in Bosnia or some place on the Adriatic Coast. The profound ambivalence of some Bosnians is aptly captured by one young woman:

> I hope one day to buy a house near to my country but not in it. I want two rooms and a kitchen, with a nice yard . . . a nice house for me and my husband.

Reality of Life in the Northwest Corner

Stress for families here in Utica who were Abdic loyalists is compounded by the stark realities faced by their relatives in and around Kladusa, former headquarters for Abdic in the northwest corner of Bosnia. Bosnians in and around Kladusa today are confronted with unemployment, lack of pensions or social services, and a hostile social and political environment. In addition to the traumas incurred by the war and by the immediate aftermaths of the conflict, our respondents tell about anxieties and stress induced by continuing political conflicts both here in Utica and in the northwest corner of Bosnia between those who had supported Abdic and those who had opposed his autonomy movement. They worry about relatives in west Bosnia because of the discrimination they experience:

> In west Bosnia there are no jobs. We support relatives there with hard living conditions. They say, 'you're very lucky, college graduates have no jobs here.' In west Bosnia there is still conflict. The Bosnian Government is hostile to west Bosnia. If you don't support Alija, then you don't get job. Alija supports Muslim religion and narrow-minded

> government, Abdic tried to help people make a living. He said, 'Forget war, it doesn't matter what your background.'
>
> Guys from Abdic's army can't get loans for a business, they were just in the wrong army. My brother-in-law, no job. Even those who get jobs get minimal wages. It's not worth it to work. No-one there to help you. Even if you want to cultivate your land, can't afford gas, fertilizer, seeds etc. Just use money from U.S. to live day by day.

Finally, when asked about three things he thinks about for the future, this man's demeanor sags as he says,

> I would like to be in my house in Sturlic and die there, but I know it can't happen. I'd like to go there to fix my house so I could give it to my kids. I am praying to Allah to be alive and healthy.

Health and Vitality

The aftermath of war and resettlement has brought health problems and changes in perceptions of health for many Bosnians. Health problems and disabilities experienced by our respondents were influenced by age, as well as by premigratory and postmigratory factors in their family and community environments. As we spent time with Bosnians in their homes, we were struck by the number of men and women who had been injured on the job . . . or in car accidents . . . or who had surgeries or health problems of one kind or another. This is a relatively young group of people. We did not know whether to attribute this injury rate to the fact that Bosnians tend to work in factories, settings where injuries are perhaps more prevalent, to poor health care during the war years, or to the cumulative effects of stressful experiences of war and its aftermath. One couple in their forties has had two or three operations each between Germany and the United States, and he has had a bout with cancer. They explain, "With health problems and no language skills, our lives are very, very different than they were." He worries that his wife cries so much now and is so easily upset, and he expresses sadness and resignation:

> We lost everything we had. I have a feeling of emptiness inside. All of my life I tried to make something. I lost it all, and now hands are tied, I'm stuck.

Age and Wellness

Younger couples, although susceptible to work-related injuries, were more optimistic about their chances in life, looked forward to getting back to work and improving their lives, and expected a return to health. Although for one couple in their thirties, each disabled with a back injury, their wishes were to "get healthy and back to work again" and to "give the baby a good life." By contrast, a man in

his sixties told us:

> We try, but we're old people. We're very depressed. The war changed everything, we can't forget.

His wife, also in her sixties added, "You're just insecure anywhere you go, just fragile." A musician in his fifties, has had health problems since 1992, when the war started. Since then he has suffered stomach problems, headaches, and nerves. He tells us that "war is over, I'm a little older. I'm just living to survive." He says that his life is without pleasure, he is without interest in things. He sees himself as "not healthy."

War Trauma and Wellness

Most of our respondents experienced some degree of trauma during the war. Traumatic events may have included coming under sniper fire, evacuation, shelling and grenade attacks, confiscation of property, physical injuries, imprisonment, robbery, forced labor, or kidnappings (Traumatic Events Questionnaire, Mollica *et al*., 1992). Several of our respondents who were experiencing health problems had been drafted into several different armies, had been injured or imprisoned, or had experienced extreme deprivation. One woman in her forties had lost a kidney as a result of a bomb explosion. Her health is precarious, and this prevents her from being able to work full time. Several men are taking medication for nerves, including one young man, now in his thirties who saw many people killed, including friends and cousins. He was seriously hurt himself, badly beaten during imprisonment in the war. He describes himself as:

> Scared that I can't control myself sometimes . . . I'm going to explode . . . I'm still alive but who knows how good I will be. Before war, I had excellent memory, now I can't even remember my own phone number.

Another young man confides, "I can't clear from head pictures of the war." He works hard and likes his job, which he plans to go back to. Others saw many killed, sometimes family members, and feared for their own lives. They tend to report high numbers of depressive and anxious symptoms.

A fifty-year-old man told us of the massacre in which twenty of his relatives were killed in one day. He and his wife both have numerous physical and emotional complaints, and he tells us, "My life is past, don't see a good future for me—I ask God for good health." Although he has become a citizen and owns a home, he wants to go back to Bosnia: "I grew up in the village, I want to die in that village."

One young man speculates that Bosnian people may have so many injuries now because their style of life changed completely. For years Bosnians walked every place, "a healthy style of life, with strong muscles." In the United States it's different: "If I walk on the street, police stop and ask, 'What's wrong?' 'What

are you doing?' " Other couples note that "health problems have changed life expectations." We are told of physical injuries that are seemingly commonplace among the Bosnians:

> Bones join and are fixable, but not the brain . . . We don't die too easily . . . we used all of our energy to survive. When things get better, you collapse."

Mental Health Symptoms and Wellness

The results of the symptom checklists are a concern for several reasons. First, this was a sample population chosen because they were successful in adapting to the community by virtue of either having purchased a home or having achieved citizenship. It was anticipated that there would be some symptomatic people, given what we know of the premigratory history and the stress of starting over in a new culture. However, this was a significant finding in a sample that had been selected from the community at large rather than from a sample of help-seekers. Second, only two or three of the families we interviewed had sought help from mental health services on their own, but a larger number were seeing primary care physicians for symptoms that are often indicative of stress: headaches, back problems, gastrointestinal complaints, and difficulty in sleeping.

We also worried about respondents who refused to fill out the Hopkins-25 Checklist or who did so in a cursory manner. This was often accompanied by a laugh or a statement that was at odds with the claim that trauma is not an issue for them. For instance, several men reported they had "nothing to feel guilty about" or that they had "a clear conscience." Another made reference to the ability to control one's mind, implying that there were things to be controlled or kept at bay. One said he had "forgotten all about the war," and another, who did not fill it out, acknowledged he was an emotional, sensitive person, but that the war hadn't affected his emotional state. Others insisted "no problems," but the words were oddly juxtaposed to what they told us about their experiences in war. For example, one man told us, "I feel nothing." Yet, he showed us photographs depicting a mass funeral following a massacre in which many of his relatives had been killed by Serb paramilitary forces.

An employee at the local refugee center worries that "Bosnians are really not okay." She tells us:

> Often Bosnians go to the doctor or to the hospital with complaints of pain, headaches or stomach problems. After a medical exam, doctor find nothing. Now they feel even worse: 'They think I'm a pretender or crazy.'

Conditions of Life are Viewed as Good

The majority of our respondents report that the conditions of their life are "good" or "excellent." Some are unabashedly happy to be here. To the extent

respondents have been able to replace some of the basics in life—a house, a car, and a job—and have been able to hold on to their health and their families; they were more content. Other respondents were less sanguine about their current situation and future prospects. Those who were less satisfied tended to be from urban settings in Bosnia and to be more educated.

Life Is Good by Comparison

Those who expressed great satisfaction with their current conditions compared life to what they had before and often related satisfaction with what they have been able to acquire, a house, a car or two, home furnishings, although they mentioned health and family too. Younger couples tended to speak optimistically about the conditions of their lives, but several men around fifty years of age were equally energetic. One couple experienced the death of a child during the war, but nevertheless tells us:

> I would not go back for my life is better here.

Another young woman is excited about having her own living quarters once again, something that she did not have even in Germany, her country of first asylum.

> It is like a dream here. I got my own apartment, own kitchen. . It's not a refugee camp! Even in Germany, we had to share quarters.

Another man rates his life as "95% ideal," and tells us through an interpreter,

> Life is excellent. I am a hard worker.

For those who were most satisfied this response was typical:

> We never lived better than now.

The latter speaker works in a local factory that employs many Bosnians. He earns $6.52 an hour and says that he'd like to apply for a better paying job but can't because of his limited English language ability. His wife works in a laundry and earns $7 an hour. Yet they sum up their lives, saying:

> We are very satisfied. Life here is the best. We're just sorry that family is separated.

Some compared their current lives to a harder way of life in rural Bosnia, one that included both wage labor and subsistence farming. This combination made for hard work and long days. For them, life here seems quite easy. Others clearly compared current life conditions to *postwar* Bosnia in which everything was greatly changed and life is very difficult. These respondents also find that their lives here are comparatively easy. A couple in their thirties, among the later

arrivals to the United States, tells us,

> Yugoslavia was beautiful, but after war, everything was hard.

Another couple echoes that sentiment saying,

> Life was really difficult in Bosnia, so life here is pretty satisfactory.

There is another very different comparison made, one in which Bosnians here are better off than their former enemies (the Serbs) in Bosnia. A man who has had two operations for cancer since he has been in the United States tells us that he could not survive without the help of his son, who lives in the apartment upstairs and pays rent. This fifty-one-year-old man nevertheless assesses his life as "good" and tells us he is better off than the Serbs in Bosnia:

> Two Serb families live in the house they took from me. Mother had to move to village. Serbs thought they could have all of Yugoslavia. They had the army. They did not think the war would last so long. Serbs said on TV that Muslims and Croats should give up their land peacefully. Croats and Muslims lost a lot, but Serbs lost more. We are here and they are there. Plus, our extended family has family here to send them money. Serbs don't. They have no jobs, factories are shut down.

Life Is Good but . . .

A number of respondents tell us that life is satisfactory, but qualify the positive rating that they had given the conditions of their lives with statements of resignation:

> Some things you can't change . . . war forced us to leave and start over.
> We're healthy, it's okay.
> I am doing my best and trying to be satisfied with what I can afford.
> I am satisfied here, but my body is here, my heart is there.
> I'm satisfied, but life is a struggle still.
> Life is okay, but heavier . . . it needs more lightness and fun like before.

This was the largest group of respondents. The statements reflect a degree of acculturative stress, which prompts respondents to be reflective about changes in their lives, even as they rate the conditions of their lives as very satisfactory.

Life Is not Good

Five of our respondents disagreed with any statement of life satisfaction. All were from urban areas in Bosnia, and their ages ranged from thirties to fifties. One couple longed for their former lives, their home and their native language, while others commented on the changes that had not been welcomed.

> I would like to have my life and own house in Bosnia . . . I miss life there and my language. I had better job there.
>
> The quality of life is different . . . here not the best, Yugoslavia was the best.
>
> Don't want to live it over, once is enough, can't change it anyway.
>
> I think the U.S. is an over-romanticized ideal that falls short of reality.

Satisfaction was an elusive concept, and perhaps more so because it was responded to generally, rather than out of specific domains of satisfaction. For instance, there were those who were satisfied with their jobs, but not with their health status, or satisfied with their house and the possessions they were able to accumulate, but not with the family separations. Others have noted the unequal weight of individual life domains in the overall structure of life satisfaction (Campbell *et al*., 1976; Hsieh, 2003) and suggest that the relative importance of each domain that is individually determined will affect one's perspective on life satisfaction and overall well-being.

For better understanding what "satisfied" might mean with conditions of refugee life, domains might be separated. And lastly, within families there is considerable variation. One gentleman relates his happiness and commitment to being in the United States, but his wife remains very sad and preoccupied with the question: "Why did this have to happen to us?"

Nevertheless, satisfaction may increase with time. Several respondents spoke of conditions improving in their lives, through various strategies that are discussed in the next chapter. One young mother who was unhappy in the first month or so tells us now:

> People are friendly in this country . . . This is the place to be. Everything is free and open. Just take your chance and go . . . nothing is old and dirty, everything is almost perfect and shiny, depends only on angle from where you are observing. This is the place where I want to grow again.

Summary

An evaluation of the psychosocial well-being of families entails a more holistic approach to psychological adaptation and acknowledges all aspects of adaptation as important for well-being—psychological, socio-cultural, and economic adaptation. Psychological adaptation includes a sense of well-being, health and mental health. A holistic concept of psychosocial wellness also considers how a refugee feels about his or her place in the host society and about those left behind in the country of origin.

Family separation continues to be worrisome for Bosnians in the United States. Bosnians here are concerned for family members who are unable to emigrate under the now closed family reunification program. Continuing ethnic tensions

in Bosnia and continuing political tensions in Bosnia and Utica contribute to acculturative stress. However, life satisfaction is high for Bosnian refugees, in spite of premigratory and postmigratory stressors. After some initial discontent and adjustment issues, Bosnians are making a home in Utica and are planning to stay.

The last section of the book discusses our findings in comparison to work that has been done with Bosnians in other communities across this country and in other countries around the world. Our findings differ from several studies that have been completed in the emphasis on active strategies employed by refugees, high employment, and an elevated sense of satisfaction. Chapters 10 and 11 present those discussions and their implications for social work and sociological practice.

10

Acculturation: Bosnians in Utica

Our task in this chapter is to review what we have learned about the resettlement experience of these Bosnian families in light of what we know about the families themselves and in terms of the features of their host community—Utica, New York. Our research, and that of others (Colic-Peisker, 2003; Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2003; Colic-Peisker & Walker, 2003), suggests that the resettlement experience of refugees and their approach to acculturation are largely shaped by the interaction of two sets of variables, namely the characteristics of the refugees themselves and the conditions they encounter in the host society. The salient characteristics of the refugees include their social capital, that is, their education, skills and aptitudes, their age on arrival, and their ability to speak or to learn to speak English. Their age on arrival often determines their ability and willingness to learn the language. Finally, the resettlement experience can also be critically affected by the refugees' experiences in war and transit.

The social and cultural conditions in the host society that affect the resettlement experience include the dominant resettlement paradigm that determines the nature and extent of policy and services, and whether the society embraces multiculturalism, which in turn affects the general level of receptivity toward refugees and immigrants. Structural and institutional realities that have a bearing on the resettlement experience include the labor market and the housing market.

The Temporal Dimension of Resettlement

In addition to the interaction of the refugee characteristics and the features of the host society, we suggest that a temporal dimension be introduced. The timing issue is critical for several reasons. First, refugees typically leave a country in waves; those who leave first tend to be better educated and to have more resources upon which to draw. Those who leave the country months or years later live through events that the "early leavers" were able to avoid. Second, the arrival time in the host society yields different experiences for each wave of refugees. Experiences

upon arrival are influenced by the density of the existing support network and availability of resettlement services at the time. Lastly, the characteristics of the host community vary over time; resources may be very different for the next group of refugees in the same community at a later point in time. The overall state of the economy may have changed and the local labor market may be unable to absorb the surplus workers, or the housing market may have changed so that houses that were available and affordable at one time are no longer on the market or are no longer reasonably priced.

Exiting in Waves

The time of exit from the country of origin comes into play when we consider responses to questions about life satisfaction. We noticed that Bosnians who had left their country at the outset of the war tended to retain memories of life before the war. They idealized and romanticized their lives before the conflict and tended to compare their current conditions unfavorably with their memories of prewar Bosnia. Those who were unable to escape the war, and who fought in the war and experienced deprivations and trauma are less inclined to romanticize the past. Their recollections tend to include the war and all of its unpleasantness. Also, many of those in the latter group have recently returned to Bosnia to visit family and friends who were left behind. Conditions in Bosnia are abysmal. Few people have jobs and those who work are paid inadequate wages and their paychecks are often delayed for months. Bosnians here who have visited the homeland evaluate their conditions of life in favorable terms. They feel unjustified and ungrateful to complain. So, there are three temporal contexts that can affect one's evaluation of current life conditions. One can romanticize about an idealized memory of life before the war, one can reflect on awful experiences in war itself, or one can compare life in Utica with conditions of life for those who were left behind to suffer unemployment and impoverishment in Bosnia after the war was over.

Entering in Waves

Even within one group of refugees, the timing of arrival affects the resettlement experience. Early arrivals, between 1993 and1995, complained that services were poor and that there were few Bosnians here to make them feel welcome. The resettlement center, MVRCR, did not have Bosnian-speaking staff members at first, and it took some time to develop culturally appropriate services. Those who arrived in the middle years, in 1996 and 1997, arrived in such large numbers that the programs, services, and staff that had been put in place to resettle a few hundred refugees annually were unable to keep up with the demands of resettling the nearly 2,000 refugees who arrived in those two years. While services were improved for later arrivals, between 1998 and 2000, Abdic supporters said that they

experienced a hostile reception at the refugee center where most of the employees were from east Bosnia.

Changing Circumstances in Communities

The relatively successful resettlement of Bosnians reported in this research occurred, we believe, because of the fortuitous combination of the characteristics of these Bosnian refugees and the features of the receiving community. The Bosnians comprised a relatively young, energetic, hard-working population who valued home ownership. The community itself offered a set of well organized, centralized resettlement services, a labor market that could absorb Bosnians who did not speak English, and a housing market that could supply affordable homes. Staff at the Refugee Center, local realtors, and the New York State Department of Labor report more recent changes in local conditions in both the labor market and the housing market (D. Mistric, personal communication, August 10, 2004). The number of entry-level employment opportunities has declined, and the housing market for low-income apartments has virtually disappeared, especially for larger families.

The newest populations being resettled in Utica, Africans from the Sudan, Liberia, and Somalia, among others, therefore face a very different set of circumstances. In addition, the African refugees, unlike Bosnians, do not resemble those in the host society either physically or culturally. It remains to be seen what the outcome of their resettlement experience will be, but the changed labor and housing markets will make it difficult to provide the new refugee group with the same opportunities enjoyed by the Bosnians a decade ago. While the temporal dimension is not anything that we can control, it is nonetheless important to take into account in any effort to evaluate the resettlement experience of any group of refugees in Bosnia after the war was over.

Urban–Rural Patterns of the Bosnian Community

The Bosnian community is tightly clustered in and around the area of the city known as East Utica. This tendency is consistent with the observation in the United States census report that the foreign-born are much more likely to live in a central city than the native born population, reflecting the inclination of newly arrived immigrants to live in easily defined ethnic urban areas (Malone, Baluja, Costanzo & Davis 2003). The inclination to re-create a sense of neighborhood and community can be seen as both an effort to reclaim what was lost in war and also, part of what makes us human, the need to be social. As Fullilove (1996, p. 1520) reminds us,

> . . . the sense of belonging, which is necessary for psychological well-being, depends on strong well-developed relationships with nurturing places . . . Having a place is fundamental to one's sense of security and to one's identity.

Residential Spatial Patterns

It can be argued that Fullilove's observation tends to blur an important distinction within this refugee population. Our research and that of others (Colic-Peisker, 2003; Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2003; Colic-Peisker & Walker, 2003) suggest that an important determinant of adaptation strategy and resettlement style is whether a family had come from an urban or a rural area of Bosnia. Some researchers argue that the tendency to congregate in ethnic neighborhoods is more evident among Bosnian refugees who had come from rural areas than those who had lived in large cities (Colic-Peisker & Walker, 2003).

According to Colic-Peisker and Walker (2003), the proclivity of Bosnians of rural origin to reside in close proximity to co-ethnics derives from the collectivist tendencies of their more traditional lifestyles in Bosnia. "Community belonging that during the war and forced migration translated into 'ethnicity', is the central axis of their identity" (Colic-Peisker & Walker, 2003, p. 356). Indeed, Tone Bringa's description of rural Bosnian social mores included households with extended families and dependence on the support of neighbors and social networks (Bringa, 1995). The loss of this sense of belonging that derived from embeddedness in community is partly compensated in the new host society by strategies that seek to recreate the community life they had enjoyed before the war. Our sample of a hundred families included seventy-nine families that reported that they had extended family with them. As Colic-Peisker (2002, p. 9) put it, "These networks of familial and communal self-help are especially valuable to rural populations from lower socio-economic backgrounds with limited English." On the other hand, urban Bosnians in Australia tended to adopt more individualistic resettlement strategies and did not gravitate to ethnic neighborhoods (Colic-Peisker & Walker, 2003).

Individualists versus Collectivists, Integrationists versus Separatists

This is one of several distinctions these researchers identify along the rural–urban dichotomy. Bosnians from rural areas tend to have less education and therefore experience more difficulty with second language acquisition. They also tend to stick to the ethnic neighborhood for support. Urban dwellers are more educated, and are more likely to have been introduced to English before arrival. They are also more likely to be in ethnically mixed marriages or to be the children of ethnically mixed parents and hence are more likely to shy away from ethnic group membership and activities because they do not feel as strong an affinity with one or another ethnicity. Ethnic communities are also likely to engage in a form of socializing characteristic of working class culture that may seem alien to urban professionals (Colic-Peisker & Walker, 2003).

Taken together, these tendencies suggest that Bosnians from rural areas may be more inclined to adopt a collectivist, as opposed to an individualistic, strategy

of adaptation and a separationist versus an integrationist strategy of acculturation. Citing the work of Tajfel (1978), Colic-Peisker and Walker (2003) explain that the individual mobility path entails exiting the ethnic group by leaving the neighborhood and striking out on one's own in search of employment opportunities unconnected to the ethnic group. Berry's scheme of acculturation (Berry, 2001) suggests that a separation strategy involves clinging to one's culture of origin and rejecting, for the time being, the host culture. Integration involves retaining old values while also accepting the values of the host culture. Colic-Peisker & Walker (2003) argue that urban Bosnians tend to be integrationists and rural Bosnians exhibit tendencies of separationists.

Our data indicate some support for these distinctions. Rural Bosnians in our sample had less education and less advanced skills in English language competence. Our observation of Bosnian cultural events in upstate New York also supports the notion that socializing styles tend to be working class. Music and dancing tend to be traditional or folk, a style that urban professionals may eschew. Young urban professionals who are in mixed marriages or are children of mixed parents do exhibit some of the characteristics of individualistic strategies identified by Colic-Peisker and Walker (2003). They tend to socialize with one another rather than with Bosnians from rural areas. They tend to pursue employment opportunities unrelated to the work that other (rural) Bosnians typically find, and we noticed that they also tend to aggressively pursue educational opportunities that will allow them to achieve, and in some cases exceed, the professional aspirations that guided their efforts before the war.

Residential Clustering in Utica

One pattern is less evident in our sample, namely, the distinction regarding residential clustering, at least at the time that we conducted the interviews, four years ago. With a few notable exceptions, both urban and rural Bosnians are found in a tightly circumscribed neighborhood. The very large majority of our sample of a hundred families rented apartments or owned homes in East Utica, within a circumference of about two to three miles. This includes Bosnians from the country and from large cities, young and old, Abdic supporters, and respondents from East Bosnia. Our informal observations and more structured interviews confirmed the formation and maintenance of dense social networks in the Bosnian community. We did not explicitly explore reasons for this residential clustering in our formal interviews, but in informal conversations, in response to questions, "Why do you live here? Have you thought of moving?" we are told, "Well, I am comfortable here. I would not be comfortable in another part of town." Although most Bosnians from urban areas do live in this concentric zone, we did notice that a small cluster of four families from urban areas live in townhouses on the other side of the city, across the river. These people had been used to apartment living in cities in Bosnia and did not consider home ownership as a core value.

Four years after the initial interviews, we carried out a survey in order to determine whether these families were at the same address, and if not, to learn if they were still in town or had moved away. We used the phone book in most cases, but if the listing was not in the book, then we conducted other inquiries with employers, neighbors, and other informants to discover the whereabouts of all families in the sample. We were able to determine that all but one of the families from rural areas are still resident in Utica. We were unable to locate one family.

Evidence from this survey supports the notion that urban origins generate freedom from ethnic ties over a period of time. Several Bosnian families from urban areas did move away from the residentially clustered ethnic group. From our sample of one hundred families, of whom forty were from urban areas, one urban family had purchased a house ten miles from the city center, another young urban couple had moved to Boston, a third urban family had purchased a home in North Utica, well removed from the ethnic community, and a fourth man, from the Bosnian city of Zenica, had moved with his brother to Florida, and then on to Hawaii. Two of the original one hundred interviews included a single man and a single woman, both from urban areas of Bosnia. In the four years since the interviews, these two individuals married and had a child. They also moved to Syracuse, a city several times the size of Utica, forty miles away. They built a home in a city suburb. He has what he describes as a "dream" job, driving a truck for a nationwide chain of discount department stores. He makes $60,000 a year. As he says,

> Not Bad for a Guy who Has only Been in this Country for Six or Seven Years

At the time of the first interview, his future wife was just completing her undergraduate degree in chemistry at a local college. She is now enrolled at Syracuse University, has completed the coursework for her master's degree, and must complete her thesis in the fall semester. She is employed full time as a chemist in a civil and environmental engineering firm. While this is only anecdotal information, these urban families tend to support the notion that they have pursued individualistic paths to resettlement and an integrationist avenue to acculturation.

The six heads of household (five families) that have moved away from Utica and the individuals discussed above, who have been in pursuit of higher education, clearly suggest that there are some families who should be considered integrationist in their approaches to acculturation and who could be said to be engaged in individualistic strategies of resettlement, a reflection of their urban origins. But others, when they speak of their goals for the future, say that they want a "normal" life and they want their children to get an education and have a good life. By all indications, the main group of Bosnian families seems to have adopted an acculturation strategy of separation (Berry *et al.*, 1989) and a resettlement style that might be characterized as collectivist and oriented toward the establishment and maintenance of ties within the ethnic community (Colic-Peisker & Walker, 2003).

Strategies for Advancement

A further distinction between urban and rural respondents appears to be the avenue selected for upward mobility. Bosnians from urban areas tended to pursue higher education as a vehicle for advancement. Those from rural areas tended to look toward entrepreneurial opportunities as a method to achieve success. Contacts within the Bosnian community have confirmed the success of a bakery, several restaurants and café-bars, grocery stores, and construction companies. All of these businesses except the construction companies cater to the Bosnian community, so English language skills are not relevant. The construction companies all have American clientele and are operated by younger Bosnians who have mastered the language.

Additional evidence that supports the rural–urban distinction comes from information about the pursuit of higher education. While we were conducting these interviews we encountered several families whose children were attending local colleges. These parents were very proud of their children's accomplishments. A nineteen-year-old was studying banking and insurance, and his brother was majoring in international relations. Another young man was studying biology and had announced his intention to become a physician.

Some of the younger couples whom we interviewed were themselves pursuing college degrees, intent on completing educations that had been interrupted by war. In the four years since these interviews were begun, we learned that both young parents in one remarkable family had completed both bachelor's degrees and master's degrees. Both have effected impressive career changes. Another woman completed her associate's degree and served for a time on the City Council. Yet another young woman completed her bachelor of science degree and was recently promoted at work to a position formerly filled by an American man. A young Bosnian man completed his associate's degree and moved to New York City to pursue his interests in film studies. A young father of two recently completed his associate's degree and is currently enrolled in the Baccalaureate degree program. With one exception, all of these individuals lived in large cities in Bosnia before the war.

So, our findings are usefully evaluated in light of the integrationist and separationist strategies of acculturation and in light of the individualistic and collectivistic approaches to resettlement. The urban–rural distinctions were useful in predicting the type of acculturation and resettlement strategy individuals and families might adopt. This distinction also helps predict the upward mobility strategy one is likely to adopt. Bosnians are increasingly visible in supermarkets, workplaces, soccer fields, and in college classrooms. To the extent that our sample can be said to exhibit a separationist acculturation strategy, it would seem to be only a temporary approach, one adopted out of recognition of the limits that are imposed on their possibilities by their English language skills.

English Language Skills

The acquisition of adequate English language skills is a major preoccupation for our respondents. As we indicated in the last chapter, if any of our respondents had some knowledge of English when they came here, they were advantaged because they could be placed in workplaces where they could interact with others to quickly become more fluent in the language. We found that younger urban Bosnians fell in this category and they were often given jobs, after requisite training, as nurses' aides in area nursing homes. There they not only interacted with co-workers but also frequently engaged in conversation with the residents of the home. This appears to have been crucial in helping these people to quickly polish their English and eventually seek other, more lucrative and less physically demanding work. Many of our respondents tell us that the physical strain of lifting patients in this line of work is extremely demanding; some tell us that they hurt their backs and had to find other types of jobs.

We found that few rural Bosnians had much knowledge of English before their arrival, certainly not those over the age of forty. Some of the younger Bosnians did know English to an extent before they came here, because English began to be taught in Bosnian schools in the mid- to late-1980s, especially in urban areas. Many older refugees tell us that they are limited by their inability to speak English and that they are too old to learn it. We consulted the literature about age and second language acquisition and discovered that there is no scientific evidence to support the claim that it is more difficult to learn a second language in adulthood (Krashen *et al*., 1993). Nonetheless, it is what Bosnians believe about their ability to learn English that will guide their efforts in this regard, and many of our respondents say that it is simply too difficult.

For older Bosnians, lack of English had a compound negative effect. While they were offered training up to six months in English as a second language by the local refugee center, most reported that they went to work within about three months. Three months is not long enough to learn a great deal of English so, when they found employment, it was typically in a workplace where many Bosnians worked and it was not necessary that they learn more English to negotiate their job requirements.

The Future Is for the Children

For several families, the sense of looking to the future is for the children, more than for themselves.

> It's better for my children to be here. Bosnians are always thinking about children. My daughter is in National Honor Society . . . I wish to live because of the children.

The proud father of a 2½-year-old boy said,

> I hope my son's life will be excellent. We'll save money for him. I have a $100,000 life insurance policy for him and 401k all for my son.
>
> I was glad I came here and still today, I'm glad to be here. Didn't see any sense to live in Bosnia and any future for children. We lived life for children always, before the war too.
>
> I don't care what happens to me, only for him [young son].

The corollary to living life for one's children is, unfortunately, a lack of regard for one's own future. Americans tend to assume that they can reinvent themselves throughout their lives and think nothing of going back to school or training for a new job at almost any age. For many Bosnians over the age of about forty, those possibilities seem out of reach. A fifty-year-old man was asked about his life satisfaction. He says,

> My life is past. Don't see good future for me. Ask God for good health.

Several of our middle-aged respondents express similar attitudes about their age and their futures. It seems that Bosnians think that middle-age begins early and that life prospects thereafter are not good. Life, as they say, is for the children. The heavy investment that Bosnian parents make in their children gives them hope for the future but it also expresses itself in anxiety and fears that may be exacerbated by images of violence on television and other media. Some of our respondents express concern as they consider where and when they should allow their children to play without adult supervision or out of sight of an older sibling. Concern for the welfare of their children takes a number of forms. One man is worried about drug use.

> I worry about my kids and drugs. A co-worker's family is having problems with their kids and drugs. A Bosnian friend had to move to Iowa to escape from the drug problem here.

The owner/operator of the local Bosnian karate club, which has enjoyed considerable success in national competitions, told us that one of his motivating goals in life was to "divert as many kids as possible from drugs and crime through my club."

Others echo general worries about the well-being of their children.

> I'm afraid for this kid—he got part of us inside. Whatever I survived, he is part of it.
>
> It is ten times harder to raise him up than for people without problems. Hard to raise kids here, have to watch for sick people, very dangerous. [In Bosnia] kids can be out playing all day. Too many mentally sick people here. In Europe they are locked up, they can't be responsible.

Another concerned parent, worried that his ten-year-old son was having a hard time paying attention in school and doing his homework, explains, "Is because of war."

This attitude of "living for the children" emerges as a result of an evaluation of one's own social capital and an evaluation of the environment, including the labor market and the viability and transferability of one's credentials or skills. Recall, the man who had been trained as an electrician. He says good-naturedly, "With my [lack of] English skills, I would be dangerous."

Summary

These Bosnians have engaged in an assessment of their own skills and abilities, their human and social capital in light of what they believe about the opportunities that are available to them in the receiving society (Colic-Peisker & Walker, 2003). As a result of this assessment process they have come to a determination about how they will live their lives here in Utica. Some will have decided that their potential here in America is quite substantial and they will invest their life energies in an attempt to achieve success. Younger Bosnians from urban areas may go to school and work toward upward mobility that way or Bosnians from rural areas may invest in a business in the hope of achieving success and independence that way.

Others may decide that they have already lived their lives in Bosnia, where they achieved some measure of success, and that the host society does not recognize the credentials on which that success was based in Bosnia and, rather than invest additional family capital in a futile effort to regain personal success, they will fall back on the culturally acceptable claim to live one's life for the children. Few of the people we interviewed exhibited the kind of passivity or dependence reported by others (Miller *et al*., 2002; Colic-Peisker, 2003; Korac, 2003). Those who are not actively pursuing a future for themselves are still pursuing a future, but it is a future for their children. We found very few Bosnians in our sample who were not forward-looking, actively engaged in employment and achievement, for their children, if not for themselves.

These families engaged in a variety of strategies to achieve their life goals. These strategies included pursuit of higher education, multiple wage earners in the household, split shifts to avoid the cost of daycare, overtime at work, and careful budgeting and thrift in daily life. Their goals included living a normal life, owning a home, learning better English, and pursuing higher education. Since the vast majority of our respondents appear actively engaged in their resettlement efforts, and because we judge them to be quite successful in their adjustments—though English language remains a challenge for many, we conclude that the host society, its resettlement policies, and services and its receptivity provide a solid environment where it is possible to exercise agency and to pursue autonomy in the search for a new identity nested in a new community.

11

Sociological and Social Work Practice: Implications for Humanitarian Work with Refugees in Resettlement

> By virtue of becoming refugees, women, men and children are re-constituted as new kinds of people . . . it must remind us constantly of the tenuous relationships existing between persons, power and the sovereignty of nation states (Moussa, 1993, xiii–xiv).

As ethnocultural groups, refugees encounter host societies in mutual processes of accommodation (Balgopal, 2000; Berry, 2001). We have previously attested to the abrupt changes in refugee lives, the feeling of being unsettled in displacement and transition to new worlds and new demands, and the complexities of "*refugeeness*"[1] for individuals and families as they begin their lives anew. The interaction of refugee characteristics and features of the host society continues to be worthy of consideration as we ask the broad question, "What should the humanitarian response be once refugees are resettled in a community?" We suggest that current refugee policy is in itself an insufficient humanitarian response at the community level as refugees join and mix with the host society. Accommodations made by institutional structures of the community are important barometers of acceptance and integration of different cultural groups. Programs and services designed to assist resettlement efforts reflect the attitudes and beliefs of the host society toward newcomers.

A framework of mutual accommodation between refugees as individuals and the host society assumes three processes. First, refugees will utilize one or more personal strategies to acculturate (taking on features of the host group and/or maintaining features of their original cultural group to differing degrees). Second, the host society will have opinions about or reactions to the new minority group and the manner in which they acculturate (being willing to adapt institutional structures

[1] Term used by LaCroix (2004) describing a state of being and common experience that transcends country of origin and individual circumstances.

such as education, health, employment to meet needs of all groups). Third, the dominant group will vary in its accommodation of culturally different groups and will play a "powerful role" in determining the ways in which mutual accommodation will unfold (Berry, 2001, pp. 619–620). Societies vary in the degree to which they promote multiculturalism—that strategy of mutual accommodation that presents the conditions for *integration* of the minority group, "when cultural diversity is an objective of the larger society as a whole" (Berry, 2001, p. 620). Previous chapters considered the ways in which Bosnian refugees have adapted in the individual processes of acculturation. This chapter addresses the host society's accommodation of this new group of Bosnian refugees in structural accommodations and helping approaches.

Structural Accommodations in the Host Society

A study of the multicultural orientation of several countries worldwide placed the United States in a middle group as a host society for its acceptance and accommodations of culturally diverse groups; neither highest in its acceptance, nor lowest (Berry *et al*., 2003). Research with refugee groups has confirmed that multiculturalism is the best posture for public policy and that integration is the best acculturation strategy (Berry, 1997). Figure 11.1 illustrates the strategies that a receiving society might employ along a continuum for two issues for refugees and immigrants: (1) the maintenance of their original heritage, culture, and identity,

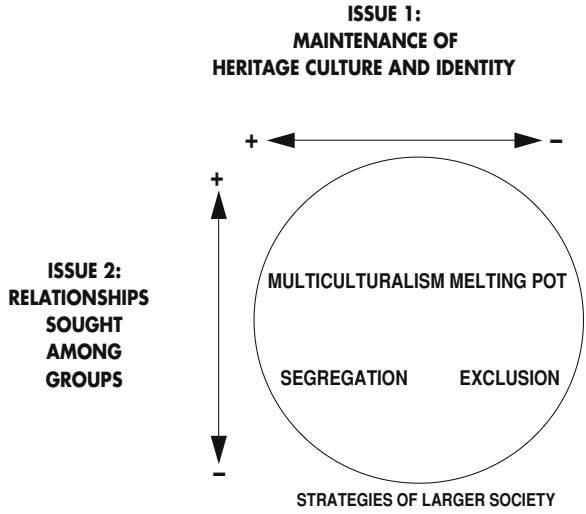

Figure 11.1. Host society strategies for acculturation. Source: Berry (2001).

and (2) the relatedness among the various groups represented in the larger society (Berry, 2001). Multiculturalism, from the standpoint of how the receiving society reacts, represents honoring the strict preservation of the original culture of refugees and immigrants and structuring the society so that activities are initiated for groups to be in relationship with each other. The "melting pot," on the other hand, once touted a "best practice" strategy in the United States, requires refugees and immigrants to leave behind much of the traditional identity in favor of becoming a part of the receiving society, thereby becoming "American." When segregation is practiced by the receiving society, strict preservation of the original culture is tolerated, and there is little access for relatedness to other groups in the new culture. Refugee and immigrant groups are excluded when maintenance of their heritage, culture, and identity is not tolerated by the new society and when there is little contact with the receiving groups (Berry, 2001).

Interviews held in 2003 and 2004 give some indication of the accommodations for refugees made by key representatives of education, health, mental health, labor, and public safety services. Service providers identified a common set of challenges that included language barriers, the timely need for interpreters and sufficient numbers of interpreters, and the ethical dilemmas posed by reliance on other family members for interpretation, especially children. These institutional representatives generally reported that Bosnians have strong family ties and have made positive adjustments and contribution to the community.

General Impressions

Respondents typically said that Bosnians have adjusted well; that they are hard workers, and that they take great care with their houses and with their children. There is an appreciation for what the Bosnians lost during the war and of the skills they brought to this country. Long-time Utica residents also compare the Bosnians in East Utica with the earlier Italian immigrants:

> [On certain streets], you walk in there and it's like you're in Bosnia. I think that the whole of East Utica is pretty much like that. And they are hard working. They have a good work ethic and when they buy houses—on the street where my mother lives, the Bosnians have all bought houses—they are really working to fix them up to make a difference and you really can see that in their houses and the care of their children . . .
>
> It's like nature is taking its course . . . like older times. Oh, it's just like when the old Italians came here. The buildings, the clubs, the renovations of the properties. They're buying properties that had absentee landlords and then just chewed up like a locust went through the neighborhood. Then all of a sudden you look and there's a brand new porch and a coat of paint, and they put the siding on the house, pouring concrete sidewalks, and you look, who did that? The Bosnians.
>
> If you go out to a lot of area restaurants, they are all working waiters. Whatever they can do to earn a dollar. But they still struggle because they are more entry-level jobs. I found a lot of professional people that will never regain what they've lost. They just are trying to find a new niche.

Respondents viewed Bosnians as motivated to achieve, and having strong family orientations:

> I don't know if it's because the American culture itself has become less family oriented but they seem to be very family oriented . . . the grandparents, the parents, and the children all live in the same home now. I don't know if that's for financial reasons or what. But they seem to still be family oriented whereas American culture has become a lot less.

> Bosnian families come here with some education and some will, motivation, and desire to really excel and achieve. People who are born and raised here are less motivated and they take things for granted. So, we do find [Bosnians] are very hard working, they're very sincere about having a better life and wanting the American Dream is what I see.

However, services for women and treatment of children are different in the United States. One worker observed that the child protection legislation has changed the nature of family dynamics for some.

> There is a change in family dynamics with 911 calls. 911 didn't exist in Bosnia, and there were no services for women as there are now. Spanking, how to treat kids is more tolerated in Bosnia.

Nearly everyone spoke of the attempts to make accommodations for language differences, but also of the limited resources available for the services that they were attempting to provide. One employer observed that the failure of many Bosnians to learn English puts pressure on other family members, including children.

> Language, after four or five years, they don't have a grasp. They don't seem to want to, they're dependent on children. We'll have an eight-year-old child come in for medical translation. They don't understand insurance—they had socialized medicine. We have an employee here, her whole extended family depends on her—she is their only English-speaking member . . . it's a shame that people rely on their children. It places stress on children, there are things they shouldn't be hearing.

Other agencies also mentioned the reliance on children for interpretation; some found it more problematic than others.

> It's great for us yes, because we actually look to the kids for help when we see a roadblock when it comes to some kind of language barrier. Kids always actually come out to help us first. They'll be the ones to tell us . . . They're the family representative which is great.

> Sometimes children have to translate. Fortunately, for me I haven't really been in a situation where something very traumatic has happened and I've had to ask a child certain questions. The other day I had a marital incident between the husband and wife where the husband just wants to end the relationship. He wants to seek a divorce. I really didn't understand what was going on for the longest time and then this child came out of the back room and explained the situation.

Ethical issues also arise when the language barrier makes it difficult for service providers or law enforcement officers to assess the situation and respond appropriately.

> I mean there were times when you get a call and it's like, well, you know, go to this address. Unknown trouble, because of the language barrier. Well, you don't know what you're getting into. I did have one home where you walk in and the house is trashed. Somebody threw something all over the place. So it's like, what are you getting yourself into? You know, you're trying to talk to someone and how do you know who's in the house when the person you're talking to doesn't know how to explain to you what happen.
>
> I think the interpretation problem is huge. I work as a healthcare provider, so I know how important it is to get the information across both ways, from the provider to the patient, and from the patient to the provider. I have seen success in the use of interpreters and I have seen the opposite. It's sort of a moral, ethical, medical dilemma. Ideally, you want to have a trained, medical interpreter so that you've got somebody that's not biased, somebody that the patient is comfortable with talking about very personal things, and then also have a certain amount of medical language training so they are able to interpret clearly. You figure it's hard enough . . . you know how difficult it is sometimes for you to understand what your doctor's telling you and you both, theoretically, speaking the language.
>
> I had a gentleman who was DWI and had to call for a translator. It took about an hour to get someone there and to read him his rights. Who knows if he fully understands but you still have to do it. Sometimes you don't know what the translator is saying to him, or if they understand.

The language barrier also affects the timeliness of the intervention. With the police department in particular, not having immediate access to the transaction between two parties makes the response to the call less effective.

> Besides the Bosnians, the Asians that are in the area—we don't get a lot of calls from them. That may have to do with the fact of the language barrier. I really think it might have a lot to do with that. There were a couple of times when I had to call a translator because we had no idea what was going on. I mean, we would get called, and it's like language trouble, and we'd have to call a translator. And by that time, everything's so settled down. It's like everything's over. It's like, okay, why are we here? Well, I had an argument with my wife, or, I had an argument with my husband, or my son. By that time it just doesn't seem as important. So, I don't know if that kind of keeps them from calling because at the time it's an emergency and by the time we get to know what's going on, things have settled down.
>
> They could be Bosnian, Vietnamese, Cambodians. Those are the contacts we've had and it's so difficult. I mean, if you call the Refugee Center, and they're very helpful, but by the time they get someone there it's half an hour, 45, an hour later.

Specific Responses by Department

In the course of resettlement, refugees come into contact with employees of several arms of the public sector, in addition to private sector employment. The basic responses of five of these institutions to refugee families are described below.

Health Department

The Oneida County Department of Public Health serves residents of the City of Utica and is responsible for refugee health assessment, which is scheduled within one week of arrival. The assessment includes an initial screening for gross health needs and a follow-up appointment for tuberculosis skin test, blood work, and health history and is facilitated by an interpreter from the Refugee Center. The Health Department works well with the Russian and Bosnian populations now because they have nurses on staff who are native language speakers. They also have Tuberculosis Outreach Workers who provide home visits for follow-up if there are concerns.

The Bosnians were the first population to challenge the provision of health care by the Health Department. As a result, the Health Department adapted their program by including more education and information about treatment recommendations, and they recruited Bosnian and Russian nurses to work for the Department.

> Our experience here has been with Russians and Vietnamese prior to the Bosnians. The Vietnamese especially appeared to be very compliant and agreeable to any recommendations to their health. The Bosnian people, for the first time, would say, no. And that was something that took some getting used to . . . You know, we were more used to the refugee who would say, 'Oh, okay.' We didn't always know if they did it or not but at least they were giving us the impression that they were. And the Bosnian people were much more outspoken and much more . . . You know, they would share with us their reasons why not but that took us some getting used to. So, we had to try and improve our education techniques a little bit to make sure that we were sure they were getting the right message from us. That improved our program but then also be willing to accept their, you know . . . If they wanted to say no they had that right.

Having a Bosnian nurse on staff has improved services to patients by helping to establish trust and by making it a more comfortable setting. In addition, the Bosnian nurse, out of her care for her compatriots, extends herself beyond the typical clinical model, a practice that they feel has improved their service provision to Bosnians.

> If they don't come for their appointment, [Bosnian nurse] is right on the phone and saying, "Get in here!" We see a lot of patients that have been here for three and four and five years, and I think they come back to our clinic because we have people with our immunization clinic or a pap test, or a letter they got in the mail, they know those staffs are here and I think for two reasons they speak their language and I also think they have confidence and trust in them. I think that's why they come back here. She is just very helpful and she doesn't mind helping out. I mean, even if it's not medical, she's always willing to help them.
>
> [The nurse] also has this huge caring aspect to her. Not that there aren't others that do the same thing but she will work through her lunch, and she will stay late at the end of the day, and she will give people her home phone number almost to the extreme where you have to remind her that she doesn't have to do those things. I think that word has gotten out when I say people continue to come here it's because of the experiences they've had with her and other staff.

Mental Health Services

The Mohawk Valley Resource Center for Refugees created the position of Mental Health Interpreter soon after the first Bosnian refugees arrived, when staff began to notice adjustment difficulties. They also signed a memorandum of understanding with a local mental health provider. This enabled them to make referrals quickly, and the availability of the mental health interpreter also minimized linguistic and cultural barriers to effective treatment. The director of the clinic was described as sensitive to the needs of refugees, and he educated his staff in a strength-based model of treatment. He adapted the usual mode of responding to mental health needs to what was appropriate to the interests of refugee clients.

> The director took a special interest in refugee clients. He saw many of the clients himself—he made a distinction between chronic mental illness of other clients and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder for these. He prompted staff to deal with them as healthy people, to aggressively treat and get them back on with their lives. (Personal communication with mental health staff member, July 8, 2003).

Mental health needs have been varied, but most presentations are clusters of symptoms for posttraumatic stress disorder. Individuals often have psychosomatic symptoms that include headaches, stomachaches, or sleeping disorders. The Mental Health Interpreter from the Refugee Center provides outreach to the Bosnian community and forms a close working relationship with the mental health provider.

> I know initially when they first started coming we were seeing signs of the need for mental health care. I think the woman especially. Some of them would actually verbalize the need for help and others, if you would just have some conversation with them, you could detect there was a problem. And usually they were accepting of the concept, you know, would you like to speak to someone or see mental health, a professional-type of thing and they would say, Oh, yeah. Sometimes it was just like well, I not sleeping or, I have terrible headaches, and you would pursue that a little bit. What we usually do is we make a need known to the Refugee Center and the Refugee Center makes the appointments and sets it up.

The mental health provider believes they are able to offer more counseling now, because individuals come in having been referred by their primary care physician who had already prescribed medication.[2] At one point, Bosnians made up about 10 percent of the clinic population. One staff member took special interest in getting background material and in responding specifically to them. Clinic staff believe that they have profited by the relationship with the Refugee Center, which has provided accurate information and a Mental Health Interpreter who can explain cultural relevance. The mental health staff also began working more closely with

[2] A primary care physician, in the United States, is a term coined by the health care insurance providers referring to a "gatekeeper" and "coordinator" of services. One's primary care physician is the source of referrals for specialized services, often unavailable to the individual until the PCP recommends such services.

primary care physicians but note a concern about the ability of primary care doctors to treat the refugee patient.

> Medical concerns trigger Mental Health concerns. The primary care doctor treats, but there is a complexity that is missed. The language barrier always comes up. If there is no Bosnian person available or an interpreter, it's not going to happen.

A Bosnian interpreter notes that people new to the system are developing symptoms that need to be addressed even now, five years or more after resettlement.

> Families are breaking up, kids are getting into trouble—teenager problems. Adults are getting laid off and having mortgage to pay. Kids live in American world, Internet and going out. Parents who don't speak English can't keep up.

Educational Institutions

The City School District has struggled to respond to the needs of refugee children, who come from many different countries representing twenty-two different languages. English as a second language classes are held in all elementary schools, two middle schools, and the single city-wide high school. Adult classes are held in several sites in the city, including employer-sponsored ESL classes during lunch hour or after work. Observations about Bosnian elementary-school children and high school students were strikingly different in that the younger children were viewed as polite and cooperative, whereas the older youth were portrayed as tougher and more challenging. The effects of war trauma and deaths in the family were observed to have an impact on education. There were also concerns about the ability of the educational system to respond to the unique needs of students who had been affected by the war.

Younger children were described as coming from families that are goal oriented and supportive of the school.

> The children are usually not discipline problems in school. They work to learn the language as fast as they can, for the most part. Their families are committed to school and education.

The school has a parent liaison assigned to do outreach with parents, a young African-American man. He describes his role with refugee parents as one in which he breaks down barriers of racial prejudice and provides a common ground for involvement with their children.

> I found that [parents'] perception towards people of color, to be changing based on what they see in me, and encountering other African Americans. Coming into this country with a stereotype and having that stereotype broken by interacting with people that they can actually invite to dinner in their home. So, their perception has changed in that respect in a very positive way. So, throughout our interacting we find usually friendship and a common ground.

Youth in the high school are portrayed as more difficult and outspoken.

> Daily attendance, in-house and out-of-school suspension-these things seem disproportionately high in Bosnians. They seem argumentative, loud, it may be cultural aspect? There are clashes with American cultural expectations to be quieter and follow rules.

Bosnian high school students may be challenged by the New York State Regents exams because of inadequate language skills and a lack of specialized services.

> New York State English Regents[3] is very tough. I'm noticing a group of kids that don't seem to be able to read—they insist they can read in Bosnian, but it's not working the way it has for other ESL kids. We're beating them up, I have to come back and teach at their level—then it works. But we won't get to the material that we need to cover. What does happen? A few will try repeatedly to pass—the rest get tired, drop out in the end, get a job. [The community college] has class (ESL) that pick some of them up. Failure rates—a lot of them are ESL kids. Not ample time when they come in as teenagers. The state is not realistic in not making exceptions for kids like this. How absurd and unfair to require kids to be in school like this when they are doomed to failure.
>
> We need more reading and vocabulary programs—they have to be credit-bearing within the school, because there isn't time for anything else. More specialized courses for ESL kids are needed that would support their academics.

Behaviors of refugee youth may have to be understood in the context of their refugee experiences, both premigratory and postmigratory, as we mentioned for adults earlier in the book. One teacher notes that little attention is paid to war experiences or acculturative stress for youth, and he describes an "accidental" but effective use of literature in the classroom to address those experiences.

> How much of the behavior is from war? More psychological testing or assessment might be needed—how much is stress? Not much of that gets done now at all—all refugee groups probably need it, but certainly the Bosnians.
>
> Things do come up. Literature brings things up for kids, can be therapeutic in some ways—I'm an English teacher. The class was reading a story in which a man had died and his dog waited faithfully by the grave until the dog died—then was buried next to the man. A girl in class raised her hand and asked the English word for 'mass grave.' She then volunteered that her father had been buried in one. More hands went up . . . my brother . . . my uncle . . . and so on. It was unbelievable. They wanted to talk about it. I'm never sure . . . you take your cues from them. Yes, if they want to talk, I listen. But I don't ever bring it up as a topic of discussion myself. It seemed to help them to say it out loud and to hear that other kids have also had the same experience.
>
> Kids in high school are looking . . . they don't know which way to go. Literature helps in that it gives them a character they can look to . . . what should I do? What did they do? It also helps them to identify feelings they are having that they don't have words for. All that feeling ends up as confusion—we use literature to talk about emotions, feelings, conflicts.

[3] The reference to "Regents" is an educational classification unique to New York State and refers to standards set by a regulating body, The New York State Board of Regents, for a high school diploma.

Employment

Employers expressed a great deal of satisfaction with their Bosnian employees and with the employment services provided by MVRCR. The relationship is well established, and the interviewees had a significant percentage of their employees with limited English proficiency. They were enthusiastic about the work ethic exhibited by the Bosnians and their willingness to adapt to conditions in the workplace, and expressed a belief that the Bosnians had enriched the workplace for their American co-workers. It is not unusual for co-workers to be integrated at break times or for meals, although language skills still inhibit cross-cultural communication for many. One employer cited the case of American workers learning Bosnian words to improve communication. Difficulties were found in areas related to understanding benefits and in the ability to be promoted, without progressing in English skills. These employers had invested time and money of their own in providing interpreters and language classes on-site, and some even paid their employees for their time in English classes.

One employer identified some difficulties with resettlement from his own immigrant roots.

> They always do have some. Myself, coming from overseas, you always get difficulties when you come from your own country, 'cause now this is my country. But it's a different way of living, quite different things. It's like when you move from an old house to a new house. You know, you always find difficulties. That's because it's a little more difficult coming from Bosnia, or Italy, or Germany, or wherever. New country, new laws, new way of doing things and they have difficulties all the time.

Public Safety

The Utica City Police Department finds itself responding to calls from people speaking several different languages. They had their first Bosnian recruit in 2003, and they note the changing face of the community in East Utica, where Italian immigrants first began to build homes and businesses in the late nineteenth century. Police officers describe the changes in the neighborhood they have been monitoring for years:

> I've seen this as a community member. I live right here in east Utica. I live in a neighborhood where all of the houses are owned by the same people for the last 45 years and now, either through deaths or going into nursing homes—the house next door to me was bought by a Bosnian family two months ago. So, I now have a neighbor who's a Bosnian. The melding process of assimilation where the mother, the father, the husband, the wife, we wave to each other and smile but there's not much talking because we don't understand each other. But the children speak English. The teenage daughter is the one who introduced her family.
>
> I go to the grocery store on Mohawk Street, and it's just like when I was a kid, and every kid in east Utica worked there at one time or another in a part-time job. Now, you still

> see every kid in east Utica working there but you can tell by their first names they're eastern European, or they're black or Hispanic. This is what I see different. I mean, four years ago, I know of two restaurants on Albany Street that were Italian restaurants. And they're now Bosnian. There's three buildings on Bleecker Street over at Bleecker and Mohawk which was the center of Little Italy of Utica. The two pastry shops are still there but there's the Vietnamese store, there's the Vietnamese Social Club, a Vietnamese restaurant. There's the Italian Republican Social Club. Right next door is this restaurant and right next door to that is the Bosnian Social Club.

Patrolmen in Utica identified a number of problems with Bosnians, including communication problems and an uncertainty about how patriarchy may play into domestic violence issues in the family. They also called for a more thorough orientation to the laws and regulations of the United States.

> Their culture stands out. It's very evident but I've also seen other individuals regardless of culture act the same way. It appears to be male dominated . . . regardless of country of origin. But in this particular case, my sense is, whatever response we have with a Bosnian or eastern European family or individual it's compounded by the language problem. That's the factor. Once I've gotten over the language you've got the same issues.
>
> A lot of the domestic calls are: 'My husband comes and goes as he pleases. He's not home.' Or, 'He doesn't like it that I was talking to another man. We were at a party or wedding and I was talking to someone else.' It's the same as American, you know, you get it a lot from the females. 'The man rules my life.'
>
> I take a lot of [domestic] calls. 'I want them out of the house!' 'Well you can't do that, you're married.' So sometimes they separate or I've made a couple of arrests where the man has hit the female but she is scared, she's nervous and doesn't want to press charges.

In a child abuse class taught by a police officer, a teacher's aide from Bosnia raised her hand and inquired as to how people would know about all of these rules and laws. Police officers believe that there needs to be a more thorough orientation.

> I looked at her with a look of, this is the problem we've always had with society. I mean, there's volumes and volumes of rules that govern their behavior but how does the individual member in society know? We don't teach it.

Vehicle and traffic violations are the most common infractions for Bosnian refugees.

> These people need to know the rules of the road, or they need to know the law. That's what they see it as. They're breaking it. They need to know you can't come over here and have a nice car and not respect the rules of the road. Like I said, there's a lot of different cultures on the east side, still. A lot of young children. And a lot of people get mad when they break the rules all the time.
>
> I know a lot of my encounters are the younger generation of Bosnians . . . A lot of my calls are 'Free America, I can do what I want.'

Service providers, educators, and public safety personnel in the community have welcomed the Bosnian refugees and have adapted their practices to some extent to accommodate a new group. However, the host society members and institutions continue to struggle with language barriers and to lack cultural understanding. As Utica became home to the Irish, Italian, German, and Polish immigrants of the 1800s and early 1900s, the concept of the "melting pot" was celebrated as the best model, one of assimilation. Current understanding of refugee resettlement and immigration practices have demonstrated that this concept is limiting and harmful to the populations that it purports to help and ethnocentric in its orientation.

The Mohawk Valley Resource Center for Refugees is key in promoting the necessary education for understanding and the openings for access and relatedness in the new society. MVRCR has formed strong partnerships with the agencies and organizations mentioned above, but the host society, the City of Utica, has a history of a melting pot approach and a limited appreciation for multiculturalism. Refugee groups, even the Bosnians, who have had fewer barriers to relationships with other groups, are not fully integrated. The newer African refugee groups are showing evidence of more difficulties. The mutual process of acculturation is ongoing, both with structural accommodations and helping approaches.

Helping Approaches in the Host Society

The tremendous variation in human lives makes the case for a continuum of services for refugees that is based on a *functioning* focus and one tailored to fit individuals' diverse needs and circumstances. A functioning focus refers to an assessment of wellness based on a refugee's ability to function on a daily basis, and is contrasted with a *pathology* focus that emphasizes internal processes and dysfunction (Phibbs Witmer & Culver, 2001). Theories of social work and sociological practice emphasize the importance of assessment and intervention with strength-based, not deficit-based, models, with more emphasis on family, community, and resiliency (Phibbs Witmer & Culver, 2001; Pillari, 2002).

The two general approaches to refugee resettlement—a medical approach and a social inclusion approach—outlined by Colic-Peisker (2003) are revisited here to examine specific humanitarian interventions at the community level. We suggest the development of a three-tiered approach to refugee resettlement that respects the strengths of both policy orientations and that creates a psychosocial wellness safety net for refugees (Figure 11.2). A psychosocial safety net acknowledges support in three parts of the environment: the refugee community; the host community; and a network of refugee-specific programs and services. The refugee community provides natural helping and healing networks; the host community can create a context for integration through its institutional structures, including employment, health, education, and public safety; and the Refugee Center, or network of providers, develops core services designed to facilitate resettlement.

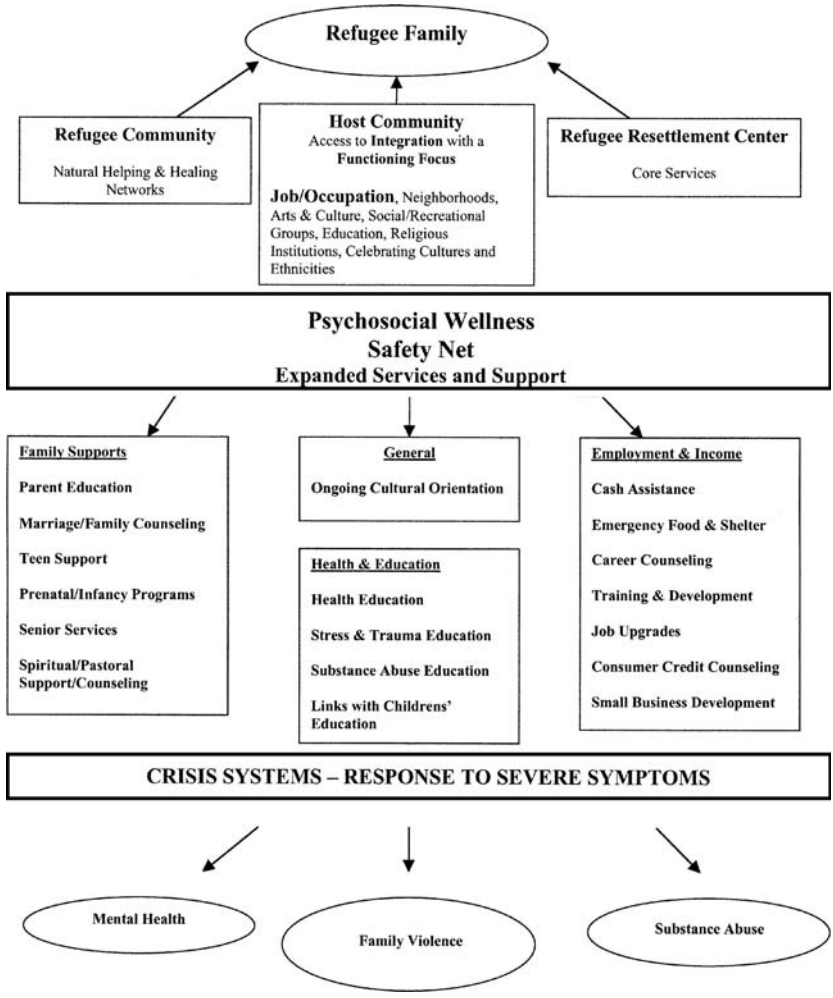

Figure 11.2. A psychosocial safety net for refugees.

The Australian approach focuses more heavily on a medical or clinical perspective which assumes that trauma is a critical part of the refugee experience. Policies developed in Australia allow for, and even expect, that the refugee experience will result in mental health issues that need to be addressed before social functioning will improve—holding jobs, making friends, and being integrated into society. Refugee policy in the United States exemplifies the social inclusion approach with its emphasis on timely labor market integration, and the expectation that refugees will go to work and decrease their dependence on public services as

quickly as possible (Colic-Peisker, 2003). A broader policy orientation is needed that acknowledges the benefits of helping individuals and families to get on with their lives, while providing appropriate therapeutic responses to those who need additional support.

A Model for Psychosocial Wellness

We recommend a three-tiered approach that creates first a solid base of community support, a second tier of culturally competent expanded programs and services, and a third tier of services designed to respond to symptoms of disturbance in refugee populations, such as domestic violence, substance abuse, and mental health issues. These three layers of services constitute a psychosocial safety net for refugees based on a public health model. The application of a public health model emphasizes *universal* interventions appropriate for the well-being of all families (first tier); *selective* interventions that are relevant for a population assumed to be at risk in some way, in this case, by virtue of being refugees (second tier); and *indicated* interventions for those who are symptomatic (third tier). A three-tiered model based on careful assessment is respectful of cultural differences, assumes a functioning or strengths-based focus, and allows for a fuller system of support in which fewer refugees develop symptoms that require intensive interventions.

Universal Interventions

The first tier of support in a new cultural setting for refugees provides basic life supports in three domains: the cluster of refugee families with a common culture, the host community, and the refugee-specific provider community. In this instance, we are speaking of Bosnian refugees in Utica, New York, with the Mohawk Valley Resource Center for Refugees as the central provider of refugee services. We suggest, however, that the model for psychosocial wellness can be used with other refugee groups and host communities.

Refugee communities form natural helping and healing networks. The human need to belong and to be connected to others for a sense of community is keenly felt by those who have experienced trauma (Bolton, 1999; Kahana & Kahana, 1989; Kalayjian, 1998; Pennebaker, 1990). In the Bosnian culture, family and community played a central role in the lives of individuals prior to the war (Bringa, 1995, 1996). Strong family ties, friendships, and social supports before, during, and after a trauma are critical environmental influences that nurture recovery (Kahana & Kahana, 2001). The dense residential concentration of Bosnian families in East Utica reflects their interest in rebuilding a sense of community. Elements that contribute to this sense of community also include a Bosnian radio program, a Bosnian newspaper, and a weekly column written in Bosnian in

the local newspaper. Political divisions, however, undermined efforts to develop a Bosnian Community Center.[4]

The United States, at the federal, state, and local levels, makes and implements policies for a *host community* that provides refugees employment, housing, a regular income, language skills, and citizenship: "inclusion into the economic and social structures of the host society" (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2003, p. 83). Basic welfare services are in place upon the refugee's arrival, though they are designed to be short-term supplements to independent income. Employers in Oneida County have welcomed refugees into low-wage jobs, and a number of Bosnians are beginning to improve those beginning positions. They are becoming more visible throughout the public institutions and private enterprises in the community, and Bosnian entrepreneurs have opened restaurants, beauty shops, construction businesses, and other enterprises to serve both the ethnic and general public. More than three-quarters of the Bosnians in our study were employed within four months of resettlement, and at the time we interviewed them most were employed full time. Access to home ownership was made possible by affordable housing.

A *provider network of refugee services* is a third source of base support for refugee families. One center in Utica, MVRCR, is responsible for resettlement of refugees and provides a strong resource in the first months of exile. A myriad of core services are organized under one roof, including the provision of initial food and housing, English language classes, a very strong employment service, interpreting services, and help with registering children for school, cultural orientation, advocacy, and citizenship classes. In microcosm, these centralized and coordinated resettlement services are consonant with the recommendations that emerge from the evaluations of resettlement policies and services in the United States and in Australia (Somach, 1995; Waxman, 1998). Although there were a few complaints about services, especially in 1997 when there was a large increase in the number of Bosnians moving to Utica (service demand exceeded capacity until the center caught up), overall, our respondents tell us that they appreciate the welcome they received and the services provided by the center. One of the most successful features of the MVRCR is the employment services department. The support services of the refugee center employment unit provide retention assistance in on-the-job coaching and consultation for employers.

Selective Interventions—the Second Tier

A middle range of programs and social services is more generally available to host society members and is not as accessible to refugees simply because they do

[4] The Bosnian Community Center was originally supported by a grant, but when funding was depleted, the effort was still focused on planning, not sufficiently developed, and with no physical location as a "Center." It no longer exists.

not know about them, though language and cultural barriers also impede access. We recommend that a range of family supports, health and educational services, and employment and income supports be developed, or that access to existing services be created as preventive measures for refugee families to thrive in the new society. Creating access to existing services will also require that service providers are *culturally competent.* Service providers must not only demonstrate awareness and understanding of cultural differences, they must also transcend difference in their communication and working relationships (Pillari, 2002).

Family support services may help new arrivals to cope with sources of stress that refugee family members experience in transition. As we saw in earlier chapters these sources of stress may include changes in parent–child relationships and marital dynamics, and the isolation and potential loss of status for elders. Outreach to family members across the lifespan may provide measures of prevention and early intervention before problems develop. Family support services might be needed to support marriages through the unfamiliar tensions and strains introduced by displacement and resettlement or the exacerbated tensions now created out of previously existing conflicts (Al-Ani, 2002). Older refugees, women, and children are specific subgroups identified within the refugee population as being at risk for mental health problems (Bemak *et al*., 2003). The needs of the elderly and their risk of isolation were discussed earlier.

Women are designated as an "at risk" group due to premigratory experiences of rape or bondage and violence during war, and their health and mental health may be compromised by lack of education, limited language skills, a lack of a support network, or limited access to resources in the community (Bemak *et al*., 2003; Martin, 2004). Martin (2004, p. 69) writes, "At a minimum, refugee and displaced women face emotional problems and difficulties in adjustment resulting from loss of family and community support." Potocky-Tripodi (2002) suggests that agencies planning services to refugee families include refugee women in the planning. The Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children even publish a checklist for agencies to be assessed in this regard.[5]

Refugee children and adolescents have also been affected by war and displacement, but the impact on their lives is less often the focus of attention. Studies of outcomes for refugee children and adolescents have been inconclusive and contradictory, and research with Bosnian children in particular is sparse. However, a few studies suggest that Bosnian children adjust well and are fairly resilient (Berman, 1999; Weine *et al*., 1995). Children and adolescents will profit from receiving attention specific to their particular needs through counseling, structured activities, and other forms of play and recreation that are particularly suited to children. Weine and colleagues (1995) attributed the resilience of youth in their

[5] This very cursory treatment of special issues for refugee women is addressed more fully by both Martin (2004) and Potocky-Tripodi (2002).

study to the relative normality of their lives prior to the war, brief exposure to war trauma, and the fact that most lived with their natural parents. Berman (1999), in his research with Bosnian children in Canada, found that problems subsided with time and that Bosnian children were not subjected to racist attitudes by the host society. Berman *et al*. (2001, p. 26) explain a key finding that fits with a focus on strength-based interventions and an emphasis on wellness: "While Bosnian children reported many painful memories associated with war, they also told of treasured moments before the war, as well as hopes and dreams for the future." One such intervention project using photographs to elicit children's perspectives of the events of their lives provided a way for the children to express "stories of pain and promise" (Berman *et al*., 2001, p. 38).

Health-related and educational interventions have the additional advantage of providing an ongoing cultural orientation, and creating information and access. Early intervention with groups that have experienced considerable trauma might be psychoeducational in nature and similar to the Critical Incident Stress Debriefing[6] that is done following a natural disaster or critical incident in a workplace or community setting. Helping people to understand what to expect in terms of stress and grief reactions can be enormously comforting. Groups can provide opportunities to realize that many others share similar feelings and reactions, and can allow room for expression that might be constricted at home.

Health and educational approaches may be designed to be "bottom up," meaning they are collective or social and emphasize family, friendships, and other social supports, as opposed to "top down," engaging the psychotherapists or medical doctors and other "expert" helping systems (Kahana & Kahana, 2001). Although cultures have different mechanisms, each has some process that allows people to share thoughts and feelings in safety. As Pennebaker (1990, p. 178) points out, "... forms of disclosure across very different cultures appear to serve similar mental- and physical-health functions." Nondisclosure, or not being free to discuss important experiences for a prolonged period of time, exacerbates health problems such as stress-related diseases associated with both natural and man-made disasters (Erikson, 1994; Pennebaker, 1990).

Access to health care may be improved by hiring staff of the same or similar cultural backgrounds, providing interpreters, and allowing for cultural differences in health care approaches. Health care approaches in other countries may not include preventive care or programs to promote awareness of early symptoms of health problems, such as breast cancer.[7]

[6] Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) is a specific technique used with both victims of violence or critical incidents and responders to incidents or disasters, such as police, fire safety personnel, counselors, etc.

[7] A recent newspaper article chronicled the story of a northern Bosnia refugee woman who had a mastectomy after having a lump in her breast for two years. She was unaware of the danger of the "tiny" lump she found and has now formed a network of contacts with other Bosnian refugees to

The initial transition in resettlement is a critical time for all refugees, with a potentially larger impact for long-term adjustment. U.S. Refugee Policy does not provide adequate mental health guidelines or fund mental health efforts to screen for and treat stress-related symptoms for refugees in that initial transition. In addition, a host society can buffer the stress of transition and recovery rather than present cultural or linguistic barriers that add to the experience of stress. Support systems could be strengthened so as to eliminate or minimize additional pressures of delayed services, insufficient interpreters, and inadequate access to health care, mental health care, or dental care.

Indicated Interventions: Crisis Responses to Extreme Symptoms

In refugee resettlement programs all around the country, more specialized services are being developed in the areas of substance abuse, domestic violence, and mental health. This was evident in presentations made at the National Alliance of Multicultural Mental Health annual conference in Atlanta, Georgia in June of 2002, the theme of which was "Psychosocial wellness in refugee resettlement: Attending to family well-being." Primary care physicians have the most direct contact with refugees, who continue to experience distress in a way that interferes with their ability to adapt psychologically and to create a satisfactory life here. Physicians and other medical providers need training to understand the refugee experience, and they need to acquire cross-cultural competence in providing medical services. They need access to and support in using screening tools for assessment and treatment. Immigration and Refugee Services of America (IRSA) formed the National Alliance of Multicultural Mental Health to serve as a resource for mental health needs of refugees and has created a Medical Case Management Program to provide technical assistance for organizations that resettle refugees with special health needs (IRSA, 2004). Yet, our impression in Utica is that both health and mental health providers have a limited understanding of their patients' experiences as refugees and that few have had access to or have availed themselves of refugee-specific training. It is possible that in Utica and other smaller communities, there are advantages such as a tighter community network, but also liabilities, such as the lack of a medical teaching center and other multicultural resources.

Recommendations/Conclusions

In 2004, refugees were integrated into many facets of the Greater Utica community to a greater degree than even a few years ago, particularly into the labor market. The Mohawk Valley Resource Center for Refugees kept a low profile in the

educate and support them (Observer Dispatch, MV Health insert, October 2004, Bosnian immigrants cope with health woes in new land, p. 4).

community for many years for fear of drawing too much negative attention to the more than twenty ethnic groups that were quietly repopulating the city. The more intentional strategy of the current Executive Director and Board of Directors is to increase visibility with a vision of "Many Cultures, One Community" (MVRCR, Strategic Plan, 2004). For a community to fear or resist the contributions of its multicultural population is limiting both for the in-migrating residents and for the longer term residents of the community.

We need to continue to increase our understanding of what will help refugees to overcome the negative experiences and disadvantages they have experienced, through attention to needed policy interventions at the national level and through the implementation of federal and state policies in local communities upon resettlement. An enhanced understanding of refugee experiences and service needs should inform our delivery of frontline services. Attention is currently too often reactive and given only when people are already symptomatic and in great distress.

Research designed to explore family and community supports that provide safety nets for individuals and families before they encounter difficulties would be a valuable addition to the literature. Gaps in the refugee literature include implementation studies at the community level and studies of refugee adjustment with nonclinical populations. Attention to what may be particular needs of subpopulations, such as women, the elderly, and children, in resettlement is lacking. We believe an inductive methodology that employs semistructured interviews and narrative accounts of refugee experiences may be well suited to elucidate the needs of the refugee community and hence to lead to the development of improved support services to refugee populations.

At the broader community level, efforts could be made to educate and prepare community members to understand the refugee groups and to dispel myths that create barriers to their acceptance in the host society. Since postmigratory factors have also been shown to interfere with healthy adaptation to the new community, advocacy in the host community for a positive reception and acceptance of multiculturalism will be helpful. A community with a focus on prevention will include refugees, invite them to tell their stories, and take steps to educate themselves about the lives of the newcomers. The host society's institutions can make structural accommodations promoting greater consciousness of cultural and linguistic barriers, and key institutional services can ensure their cultural competence for all residents, both citizen and noncitizen.

And finally, an emphasis on a strengths perspective in refugee services means using a lens for viewing people and their well-being in the context of their environment, an approach that is aligned with the notion of seeing people holistically. We have talked throughout this volume about our belief, and the belief of others, in the importance of the environments around refugee individuals and families to nurture and sustain them in negotiating new communities and new cultures. We agree with a strengths perspective in a new community that promotes empowerment,

resilience, and membership (Saleebey, 1996). In refugee resettlement, empowerment will mean enabling newcomers to negotiate a foreign culture while simultaneously recognizing and acknowledging all of the skills and resources they bring with them. Resilience emphasizes the strength of the human spirit, rather than its vulnerability, and acknowledges "the power of the self to heal and right itself with the help of the environment, and the need for an alliance with the hope that life might really be otherwise" (Saleebey, 1996, p. 303). To be valued as a member of a group or a community, membership is the universal human need and is evident in the efforts of newcomers to become part of a new community.[8] A holistic wellness perspective on refugee families, together with assessments and interventions from a strengths perspective, maximizes the use of resources embedded in the ecosystem surrounding refugee families.

[8] Enabling and entrapping niches are terms taken from an unpublished manuscript, *Poverty and Niches: A Systems View*, by J. Taylor, and used in Dennis Saleebey's depiction of the strengths perspective in social work practice (Saleeby, 1992).

Appendix: The American Priority System for Bosnian Refugees

Priority One:

The following UNHCR-referred or U.S. embassy-identified cases: persons facing compelling security concerns in countries of first asylum; persons in need of legal protection because of the danger of *refoulement*; those in danger due to threats of armed attack in areas where they are located; persons who have experienced persecution because of their political, religious, or human rights activities; women-at-risk; victims of torture or violence; physically or mentally disabled persons; persons in urgent need of medical attention not available in the first asylum country; and persons for whom other durable solutions are not feasible and whose status in the place of asylum does not present a satisfactory long-term solution.

Priority Two: (P-2 eligibility for Bosnians ended February 1, 2001 for those in Germany and Austria and April 1, 2001 for Bosnians in other countries of first asylum.)

Former Bosnian detainees who were held on account of ethnicity, religion, or political opinion; persons in ethnically mixed marriages; victims of torture or systematic and significant acts of violence against members of targeted ethnic groups by governmental authorities or quasigovernmental authorities in areas under their control; surviving spouses of civilians who would have been eligible under these criteria if their spouses had not died in detention or been killed as a result of torture or violence.

Priority Three: (Closed on June 1, 2000)

Spouses, unmarried children of any age, and parents of persons lawfully admitted to the United States as permanent resident aliens, refugees, asylees, conditional residents, and certain parolees; unmarried children at least twenty-one years of age of U.S. citizens; parents of U.S. citizens under twenty-one years

of age. (Spouses and unmarried children under twenty-one years of age of U.S. citizens and the parents of U.S. citizens who have attained the age of twenty-one are required by regulation to be admitted as immigrants rather than refugees.)

Priority Four: (Registration for P-4 processing for Bosnians closed on November 1, 1999.)

Grandparents, grandchildren, married sons and daughters, and siblings of U.S. citizens and persons lawfully admitted to the United States as permanent resident aliens, refugees, asylees, conditional residents, and certain parolees.

Priority Five: (Registration for P-5 processing was open for Bosnian Muslims only in fiscal year 1997 and ended on March 31, 1997.)

Uncles, aunts, nieces, nephews, and first cousins of U.S. citizens and persons lawfully admitted to the United States as permanent resident aliens, refugees, asylees, conditional residents, and certain parolees.

Source: U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration; compiled by the U.S. Committee for Refugees: http://www.refugees.org/world/articles/usrpp.

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Index