And the War we didn't even Live.

Challenging Post-Conflict Hegemonic Masculinity and Ethno-National Identity in Mostar, Bosnia & Herzegovina

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the perspectives, experiences, and relationships of young men living in post-conflict Mostar, in Bosnia & Herzegovina. Adopting gender as an analytical device to study relations and processes as the starting point, this study utilizes a mixed qualitative approach to explore hegemonic and alternative understandings of masculinity in the lives of young men and boys living in post-conflict Mostar. Through data gathered from both field observation and focus group interviews with nine young men in a local gender transformative program, this thesis explores their individual and collective understandings of masculinity, social relationships, and national identity. Findings revealed that scepticism and distrust were key themes which influenced identity formation amongst young men and made it hard to build relationships across national lines. Additionally, social norms in Mostar made challenging both hegemonic masculinity and ethnocentrism due to social judgement and isolation. The findings revealed the importance of neutral spaces like BMK, where ethnocentrism and toxic masculinity could be addressed simultaneously.

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This thesis could have actually just been about the goodness of people, as explored through the ridiculous acts of kindness which have supported me and my research and this would serve as the abstract.

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Abbreviations

BiH   Bosnia and Herzegovina

BMK   Budi Muško Klub

EU   European Union

GCP   Gender Conscious Programming

GTP   Gender Transformative Practice

NGO   Non-Governmental Organization

PLA   Participatory Learning Assessment

YMI   Young Men's Initiative

YSA   Youth Service Organization

Preface.

In October of 2016, I left for my first field visit to Mostar, Bosnia & Herzegovina. As previously agreed upon through a long correspondence of e-mails, I met Nedim, the local youth organization leader across the street from their office, in front of McDonalds. He led me to their headquarters, an old apartment on the 6th floor which they had converted into their organization's home. It had two bedrooms turned into offices, with the living room covered in photographs from events, old posters, and various pamphlets. Nedim knew very little about me or my research except for what was briefly discussed through e-mails; that I was writing a master's thesis and that I was interested in the Young Men's Initiative (YMI).

When we sat down to discuss the details on the outdoor balcony, Nedim began to unravel the program's history and his own journey towards becoming a *članak*—or—member. This included the practicalities, such as the year initiated, the membership numbers, the general methodology, etc. And then he began to share his own personal story. When Nedim was in high school, a "change agent", the term YMI uses to describe more experienced members, came to his class and announced that the local YMI chapter, known as the *Budi Musko Klub*—or—Be a Man Club (BMK) was looking for new members. Whatever this man said, Nedim was interested. Casually, Nedim told me that as he stepped towards his teacher's desk, ready to sign up, she stopped him and asked,

> "But Nedim, you know *those* boys will be there?"

Before this visit, I had an idea about the general politics of the area. As a Bosnian-immigrant, born in Mostar but having moved to the States at the young age of 4, the strong ethno-national divide present in the region was not alien to me. It was at this point in Nedim's story, however, that I began to understand just how prevalent this still was. When I pried for more details, Nedim shared that Mostar still operated under a divided school system; one nationality in the morning, one nationality at night.

As our conversation digressed, I couldn't fathom the idea of exploring any aspect of identity in Mostar without exploring how the politics of nationality influenced it. What began as a specific look at hegemonic masculinity progressed into a research project eager to understand how young men viewed themselves and others, through both individual and shared understandings of nationality and manhood. The following research aims to do just that.

1.Introduction

During the early 1990s, efforts to engage young men and boys began to enter international discussions around gender equality (Connell 2005). At the UN General Assembly in 2000, it was strongly declared that "men must involve themselves and take joint responsibility with women for the promotion of gender equality" (United Nations 2001, par.6). These were the first of many efforts made towards integrating a discussion on men and masculinities into the greater conversation on gender equality (Connell, 2005).

These declarations have had a great deal of influence on strategies aimed towards incorporating a 'male perspective' on gender equality work as well as opening up the field of men and masculinities for feminist researchers. In response, international organizations working on women's rights issues have expanded empowerment work with women and girls to include new and transformative ways of engaging men and boys.

This engagement has shown particularly significant results in the Balkan region formerly known as Yugoslavia through the implementation of both educational and activist components aimed at adolescent boys. In 2007, CARE International Balkans teamed up with local non-profit organizations to run a series of pilot studies looking at the underlying causes of high rates of violence amongst men and boys in the region. Their preliminary research found that peer-to-peer as well as intimate partner violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) was a predominant issue facing youth in the region today and young men were identified as the largest population of both perpetrators and victims of this violence (CARE, 2010).

CARE's 2007 pilot study which collected data from 15 young men at five regional sites over the course of several days found that rigid notions of hegemonic masculinity played a large role in shaping young men's unhealthy attitudes and behaviours (Eckman, A., Jain, A., Kambou-Degnan, S., Bartel, D., Crownover, J., 2007). Their research found various factors which contributed to the performance of one's masculinity, such as the use of violent force, the pressure to take on the role of protector, the stigma surrounding displays of weakness and the importance of personal success (CARE, 2007). Additionally, they found that the post-conflict context of BiH had a significant impact on the ways in which young men and boys constructed their identities which was carried down through the generation of men who had participated in the war and had undergone a "masculinity crisis" following the mid 1990 conflict in the Balkans (Eckman et al. 2007; CARE, 2012). Many of the themes

found amongst youth interpretations of what it means to be an 'ideal man' illustrated strong ties to war, such as the importance of honor and the use of violence as a means of defense and protection (Eckman et al, 2007; CARE, 2012). These are just several examples of ways in which the post-war recovery influenced the masculinity constructed and enacted through young men and boys today.

However, gender identities are complex, and Balkan masculinity is affected by various social factors. For example, as Connell (2005) puts it, "class, race, national, regional and generational differences cross-cut the category, 'men' ". In post-conflict Bosnia and Herzegovina, the 'other' can also take on the form of those whom hold a different ethnonational identity. This is, in large part a consequence of the war's aftermath, during which the formation of nationalistic identities coincided with a revival of traditional and patriarchal norms (V. Krasniqi, 2007 in CARE, 2012). Indeed, the residual impact of conflict has highlighted the impact of intersecting aspects of identity such as 'masculinity with religion, nationality and ethnicity' (CARE, 2007).

While the connection between ethnonational identity and masculinity has been identified in several studies done on young men in the Balkans (Eckman et al, 2007; CARE, 2012; Saferworld, 2014), youth programming has consciously excluded this component from being a foundational focus in its work of transforming toxic masculinity with young men in the region. This study aims to make that connection a more central part of the greater conversation around hegemonic masculinity in Bosnia and Herzegovina, looking more closely at the challenges faced by young men in Mostar *today* and the relationship between gender and ethno-national identity.

The goal of this study is to explore the current hegemonic masculinity in Post-Conflict Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina as it is experienced through and challenged by the lives of 9 young men included in this research. More specifically, this study aims to tell a particular story about young men in Mostar, B&H by understanding the factors which influence the current hegemonic masculinity, if and how they are being challenged, and ways in which they overlap with the performance of national identity.

1.1 Problematization

High rates of emotional and physical violence amongst young men and boys in Bosnia and Herzegovina have been connected to "patriarchal attitudes and rigid norms" around masculinities (Dušanić, 2012). This particular type of masculinity branded 'Balkan Masculinity' has been associated with aggression, competitiveness, and self-reliance and is heavily shaped by the post-conflict context in which it is built (Promundo and CARE, 2012). Specifically, in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) where ethnonational identity was implicated in the '92-'95 conflict, the strong tie between nationalism and manhood has left a heavy impression on the brand of masculinity that influences young men and boys in the region today (Promundo and CARE, 2012).

The conflict-recovery period has major implications for the construction of post-war masculinities (Saferworld, 2014) and a feminist analysis of the Balkan conflict has identified several areas where nationalistic rhetoric utilized gender references such as "brotherhood" or emphasizing the need to "protect women" to recruit male combatants (Nikolic-Ristanovic, 2002; Zivkovic, 2006; O'Reilly, 2012). This resulted in strong constructions of conflict masculinity which were also connected to strong ethno-centric attitudes (IMAGES[1], 2012).

While the young men and boys living in Mostar today were not combatants themselves, they were brought up in a post-conflict context and thus formed their identities under the influence and guidance of masculinities shaped by conflict, such as those of family members, educators and peers. Additionally, the young men and boys in Mostar continue to live out the structural consequences of the war. Specifically, in the context of Mostar where this study takes place, youth continue to operate under an educational system known as, "two schools under one roof" in which school sessions are divided between the two dominant ethno-national identities in the area: Bosniak and Kroatian.

Several initiatives have been developed in response to bridging the divide between youth in BiH. For example, The Young Men's Initiative (YMI) is a youth program which

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[1] The International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) is a wide-spread household survey which gathers data on men's attitudes and practices. The specific IMAGES study I refer to throughout the course of this thesis is the survey conducted in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in which 1684 men and 687 women between the ages of 18-59 responded to 300 questions based largely after the Norwegian Royal Ministry of Children and Equality's "questionnaire on gender equality and quality of life" as well as the Gender Equitable Men Scale (IMAGES, 2012, p.7).

uses gender conscious practice[2] (GCP) to engage adolescent boys on various themes identified in a pilot study looking at hegemonic masculinity in the Balkans (Bartel, Crownover, Dusanic, Eckman, Husic, Jain, Kambou, Matkovic, Prvulovic, 2007). Its goal is to raise awareness, provide skills to overcome barriers based on inequality and motivate individuals to take action on gender-based issues (CARE, 2012). Additionally, GCP uses an exploratory approach to "engage young men and women through processes that support them to proactively address societal issues such as inequality and oppression" as well as moves them "into the realm of exploring the other." (CARE, 2012, p 14).

While YMI's pilot studies exploring hegemonic masculinity revealed the connection between hegemonic masculinity and violence, it fell short of addressing the areas where masculinities intersect with other points of identity in Bosnia and Herzegovina, such as "ethnicity, nationality and religion" (Eckman et al., 2007). This has been mentioned several times under "areas of further exploration" in studies looking at hegemonic masculinity in the Balkans (Eckman et al., 2007; CARE 2010; IMAGES, 2012). Additionally, it was included in a report on "Masculinities, Conflict and Peacebuilding" by Saferworld (2014) in which it was shown that YMI's programming brought together "boys and men from countries who had previously been at war with each-other "and contributed to dispelling prejudices" (p. 28). These suggestions point to important gaps in existing research. Thus, my study aims to explore some of these intricacies.

1.2 Scope and Aim of Research

Much research has been done on the hegemonic masculinity of young men in the Balkans as it relates to peer-to-peer and gender-based violence (Eckman et al, 2007; CARE, 2010; CARE, 2012; Crownover, Edmeades, Heilman, Leka, Namy, and Stich, 2015). However, few researchers have looked at Balkan *masculinities* as they are experienced and acted out in their local contexts. This has implications for understanding the plurality and complexity of men's lives in the Balkans. As a result, this project uses data gathered from semi-structured interviews with 9 young men from the regional context of Mostar, BiH to explore what

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[2] Gender conscious practice is a methodological concept which assists youth in the process of exploring gender and encourages them to address societal issues through participatory learning and educational workshops.

factors shape and influence the hegemonic masculinity amongst adolescent men in Mostar. In addition, my intention is to understand if and how young men are challenging this hegemonic masculinity, and what barriers they may face along the way.

By paying specific attention to my participant's discussions on identity formation, I hope to understand how their relationship to hegemonic masculinity as well as ethno-nationality is shaped by their upbringing in a post-conflict context. To do so, I will attentively listen to, analyse and compare the themes which show up in responses dealing with hegemonic masculinity and ethno-nationalism. I will then look for overlapping themes between how young men discuss masculinity and nationality. My goal is not to reproduce or "orientalise" understandings of hegemonic masculinity in the Balkans as singular, but to explore possibilities for richer, fuller understandings of what factors impact socialisation and identity formation amongst young men and boys in Mostar today.

1.2.1 Research Questions

The research questions have been constructed as follows:

1. What are the main themes which influence the current hegemonic masculinity amongst young men and boys in Mostar, B&H? And,
    a. How are they connected to the post-conflict context in which they are situated?
    b. Are they being challenged by young men and boys? If so, how?

And second,

2. Given the influence of national identity, are there overlapping themes in how young men perform their masculinity and ethno-national identity? What are they?

1.3 Outline of the study

Chapter 2 provides background information as well as an overview of some of the key concepts used in this study. These provide a better understanding of the population with whom this research concerns, as well as the sociological, historical and geographical context within which this thesis is situated. Chapter 3 grounds this study in feminist research with a specific focus on the importance of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1993) as well as strong reflexivity (Harding, 2003). Thus, it takes a close look at how my role as researcher was influenced by my own social location, and the steps I took to ensure the validity of my

research. Chapter 4 reviews literature produced within the relevant fields of Post-Conflict masculinities, Balkan masculinities and ethno-national identity with a specific focus on research done within the context of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This chapter highlights some of the past scholarship which has sparked the curiosity that drove my research, and points to gaps in past studies that I attempt to partially fill. Chapter 5 highlights the important of sensitivity when approaching issues like masculinity and national identity within Mostar's post-conflict context before moving into a detailed explanation of the field visits, observations and interviews which were used to collect research data. This includes information on how and what participants were both chosen and recruited for this study, the methods used, language as a factor and a brief introduction to the theories used to conduct and analyze interview data. It concludes with a personal reflection on how my role as a researcher was negotiated throughout this process.

Chapter 6 is the data analysis section. Building from the work outlined in chapters 1-5, I used qualitative analysis to organize the gathered data into various subthemes which I then fit under the two overarching categories of Masculinity and National Identity. These subthemes were selected based on their reoccurrence and prominence throughout participant discussions. I have included participant responses which make up the bulk of data, which I briefly comment on and connect to existing research and/or observations I made in the field. Here I have chosen to place a particular focus on highlighting themes where I noticed national identity and masculinity overlap. In the final chapter, Chapter 7, I discuss my findings in relation to existing research in the field. Here, I look specifically at the most prominent themes discussed through participant responses. This includes the preservation of and challenges to hegemonic masculinity, violence, sports, and the relationship between nationality and hegemonic masculinity. This chapter discusses the relevance of my findings to larger discussions on post-conflict masculinities. It ends with a final conclusion, in which I summarize my findings as they relate to the research questions and suggest areas for further research.

2. Post-Conflict Mostar: Background and Concepts

The following section is dedicated to providing the reader with another background information to assist them in their understanding of the research that follows. In particular, I have included a general explanation of some of the key concepts that have formed the groundwork of this thesis, as well as a descriptive look at the historical, social and political context in which this research has taken place.

2.2 The Young Men's Initiative

The Young Men's Initiative (YMI) is an "evidence-based strategy for engaging young men throughout the Balkans in the promotion of Gender Equality and the prevention of violence" (CARE, 2012, p. 5). The Balkan YMI was developed in September of 2006 as a response to high levels of sexual and peer-violence amongst young men and boys in the Balkan regions (Eckman et al., 2007; CARE, 2012). Initiated by CARE Balkans[3], YMI was integrated as a part of CARE International's Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment framework[4] with the goal of creating a long-term strategy which would increase capacities for local NGOs, establish awareness, promote campaigns and develop sustainable networks for youth, beginning with young men and boys (Eckman et. al, 2007) which would empower them to engage with local policy makers and institutions (CARE, 2013).

Before arriving to the Balkan region, the YMI demonstrated successful results working with men and boys in Latin America,[5] where the creation of a methodology-based training manual entitled, *Program H* or *Program Hombre*[6] put their findings into practice. However, in order

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[3] CARE Balkans has operated in the region since 1992 and focuses specifically on gender equality and social and economic inclusion programming.

[4] For more information on CARE's women's empowerment programming, visit www.CARE.org

[5] Other areas included the Caribbean as well as several locations in South East Asia and Europe. For more information, visit promundo.org

[6] *Hombre* translates to "man" and references the targeted population of men in the Latin American region.

to successfully implement Program H into a new context, it was vital to re-evaluate the framework and adapt it to the specific needs of young men in the Balkans as necessary. In response, a Participatory Learning and Action assessment[7] (PLA) was set up in each of the 5 Balkan territories[8] over a six-week period (Eckman et al., 2007). The PLA was made up of a series of workshops and discussions with the intention to identify, understand and develop ways to address motives for and experiences with peer to peer, sexual, and gender-based violence amongst adolescent boys (Eckman et. al, 2007).

100 male participants between the age of 13-18 from Croatia, Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, Banja Luka[9] and Montenegro attended five day workshops consisting of interviews, workshops, group discussions and questionnaires. Using the PLA model, youth and peer educators from local youth service agencies (YSA) led and facilitated workshops inviting participants to critically reflect on their experiences around gender, violence, and other relevant issues uncovered through discussions. The gathered data revealed a strong relationship between violence-promoting behaviors and hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005) across all sites. Topics such as violence, bullying, and sexual health were listed as common themes which played a significant role in the day to day lives of the boys involved. Using this information, the Balkan Young Men's Initiative was created.

Drawing on previous research, YMI developed various interventions aimed at transforming harmful masculinities on multiple institutional levels. This process would result in the design of the learning manual[10] entitled Program Muško[11], referred to as *Program M*. Program M draws from the framework of Latin America's *Program H* and utilizes a gender conscious approach to programming, as discussed in the introduction section. Staff from local YSAs were then trained to use the manual and began to integrate the YMI into their existing programming models, incorporating both educational components as well as initiating *Budi*

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[7] Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) is a research methodology which "encourages participants to share knowledge and insight about their community and needs" and is intended to help "build the capacity of partners" (Eckman et. al, 2007, p. 9).
[8] These territories include Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Montenegro
[9] Banja Luka is considered as a territory belonging to Republica Srpska, though geographically located in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
[10] Program M is a 111-page training manual for educators and youth workers which is used to help facilitate explorations on gender, sexuality and various other aspects of identity. It has recently been further adapted to including working with girls in secondary schools. It can be accessed through the Young Men's Initiative website at www.youngmeninitiative.net
[11] "*Muško*" means "*Man*" in the local language

Muško Klubs, or *Be a Man* clubs (BMK). BMK serves as the active, campaign-focused component to YMI's education initiative and is oriented towards sustaining long-term participation and activist work related to themes discussed in Program M. This 'lifestyle campaign' exists for the purpose of "reinforcing key YMI messages" as well as "fostering change at the school level and beyond" (Namy et al., 2014, p. 208). This is done through a variety of mediums, of which I will expand on below.

Because of the continual engagement that BMK offers those involved in YMI, my research will in part utilize the perspectives of young men and boys participating in BMK as they offer a unique opportunity to better understand how gender conscious programming effects perceptions of hegemonic masculinity amongst young men and boys in Mostar. The next section will look more closely at BMK, the approach it uses and the theory that has been used to support it.

2.2.1 Budi Muško Klub

Budi muško, mijenjaj pravila![12]

"Budi Muško Klub" (BMK) is the lifestyle campaign component of the YMI. Its intention is to provide a space for young people to engage in community activism which brings awareness to social and structural gender inequalities as well as to promote public interest in YMI's educational workshops (CARE, 2013). It does so through clubs comprised of young men and women and is administered through local YSAs trained in Program M's methodology. Most importantly, the BMK provides youth with the possibility of continual learning and a space to exercise their interest in the topics discussed through YMI's educational interventions. Additionally, it gives them the opportunity to become club ambassadors, acquire leadership skills, travel for youth camps and become gender champions in their local communities. Members have also experienced several unexpected benefits of which I will describe in greater detail in section 7 on Findings. In the next section, I will

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[12] "Be a man, change the rules!" was a slogan used by the BMK for a nation-wide campaign on promoting healthy masculinities

provide additional details on the methodological framework which has been attributed to the success of the YMI, and how it has aided in the transformation of gender norms amongst its participants.

2.2.2 Gender Transformative Programming and Gender Conscious Practice

Gender Transformative Programming (GTP) differs from traditional education approaches in that it seeks to transform unequal power relations by addressing the specific structures and norms that uphold them by provoking "critical reflection on gender socialization and related perceptions" (CARE, 2012; Namy et al., 2015, p. 209). As a result, it moves beyond simply providing skills and suggestions but moves towards active participations in addressing systemic issues with other members of the community (CARE, 2015). Maja Loncarevic and Roland Reisewitz (2016) note that work with men and boys is considered transformative when it seeks to accomplish the following:

> to address men not only through their dominant expression of masculinity, but also through their own vulnerabilities and needs; to make them recognize and understand the oppressive effects of gender inequalities on women, but also on themselves; to help them understand that they must not conform to dominant forms of masculinity; to draw on men's responsibilities from a human rights-based perspective and help them define spaces for change; to empower men to take action at an individual but also societal level and accompany them in this process. (p.212)

Substantial evidence has pointed to the use of gender transformative programming as the most successful approach for long-term change as its aim is to change the perceptions on gender while also working on gender relations between men and women and addressing the root causes of inequality (UNFPA, 2013). As briefly mentioned in the introduction, YMI's Gender Transformative Programming (GTP) is grounded in *Gender Conscious Practice* (Harland and Morgan, 2009). The main objective of Gender Conscious Practice (GCP) is to encourage young men to reflect on the ways in which social influences play a large role in impacting their attitudes and behaviors, particularly in regards to gender (CARE 2012). Additionally, GCP provides the proper tools to combat or overcome these expectations in peaceful ways (CARE, 2012). This is done through both an educational approach as well as

by providing youth with opportunities to become active participants and change-makers in their communities, such as through involvement in BMK.

GCP is informed by feminist theory in that it moves beyond a single-focus approach and instead addresses structural inequalities imposed by patriarchy by encouraging youth to enquire about their lives (Harland et al., 2009,). This approach includes "raising awareness of the inequality, providing youth with skills to overcome potential barriers arising from the inequality and motivating youth, as individuals and as a group, to take action in addressing similar inequalities in their own lives" (Harland et al., 2009, p.13). In this way, GCP puts participant's experiences at the center, ensuring a focus on the complex ways in which gender interacts with their day-to-day lives.

Program M is the vehicle by which GCP is carried out through activities and workshops focusing on 5 main areas. These 5 areas are comprised of an introduction, Reasons and Emotions, Fatherhood and Caregiving, Sexual and Reproductive health, Preventing and Living with HIV/Aids and the last and final section, From Violence to Peaceful coexistence (CARE, 2012).

In order to better understand the unique challenges facing young men and boys today, and develop the most suitable practices to address them, it serves us to understand the effects of toxic hegemonic masculinity on a contextual basis. This makes understanding masculinity within post-conflict Mostar an area worthy of exploration. In order to understand the specificity of Balkan masculinity, the following section will provide information in regards to both the geographical and historical context in which this research takes place.

2.3 Geographical and Post-Conflict Context

2.3.1 Mostar, The Bridge Between

Mostar sits in the heart of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), southwest of Sarajevo and known to locals as the *cultural capital of Herzegovina*. It has been the source of inspiration for artists and poets, visitors and natives, appearing in songs, paintings and various forms of cultural memorabilia. The fifth largest city in all of Bosnia, it is home to the 'Old Bridge'—

Stari Most—a 16th century Ottoman bridge which was destroyed by Croat military forces in 1993 (Grodach, 2002) and rebuilt with international funding in 2004. In recent years, it has gained prestigious recognition and a newly acquired significance as an "embodiment of the peaceful coexistence of different ethnic and religious communities that exist within Mostar" (Ihsanogalu, 1995, p. 1). It's rainbow shape stretches across the river Neretva and joins together Mostar's east and west banks, thus marking it with heavy representational meaning (Grodach, 2002, p.75). This aspect of the town and its metaphorical representation was often referred to amongst research participants when discussed respective ethno-national territories, as will be seen in the data analysis in section 6. As such, it makes it an important symbol to consider.

Mostar is primarily made up of 3 ethnonational identities: Kroat, Bosniak and Serb, with Bosniak's dominating the town's east side and Kroats and Serbs dominating the west. The remnants of the 1992-1995 war which left 2,000 dead and thousands of others displaced have resulted in Mostar's status as a divided city, marked not only by Stari Most but by the Bulevar, or the Bulevar Nordne Revolucije (Grodach, 2002, p. 70), an area which was used as a frontline for fighting. It was at this point that a "physical division of Mostar became an emblem of seemingly indelible ethnic differences" (Grodach, 2002, p. 27). At the crossing of Bulevar lies the Gimnazija, the oldest high school in Mostar as well as a significant point where the line between 'our side' and 'their side' is drawn.

There are few points where the border between us and them remains blurry. These are home to various buildings, occupied primarily by international NGOs and youth centers lining Aleksa Šantic street in the center of the city. Despite these rare third—or neutral—spaces (Soja, 2010), local residents are highly aware of and use these socio-geographical markers to police their movements within Mostar. This is how Mostar has been and continues to be geopolitically divided.

To the untrained eye, such as that of tourists and other onlookers, the separation may not be so apparent, at least not initially. This is due to the absence of any visible marker which illustrates the split; taxis will comfortably drive you from east to west, and you can comfortably reach the opposite end of town on foot. But with careful notice, one can come to understand what slowly and visibly becomes the 'others' side.

The west part of town is known as the Kroat, or Hrvat, side. Here, graffiti on the walls is dedicated to the local *fudbal* team, Hrvatski Športski Klub Zrinjski, Mostar. Notices of the

recently deceased taped to telephone poles that line the streets are topped with crosses, exemplifying the Catholic religious identity present here. At various times of the day, church bells can be heard echoing throughout the city.

Alternatively, the east part of town is known as the Bosniak side. Here, graffiti on the walls is dedicated to their local *fudbal* team, Fudbalski Klub Velež Mostar. Notices of the recently deceased are topped with a crescent and star, exemplifying the Muslim religious identity present here. At various times throughout the day, a call to prayer known as an *ezan* can be heard echoing from one of the many local mosques.

Mostar is also my birthplace, the place of my ancestors, the place I left to seek refuge in the United States. It is the place we would visit in the summer time, however sparingly. It is closely tied to my identity, my roots, and thus makes it a place of extreme importance as well as sensitivity. It is where my cultural narrative began, where it was disrupted, and where it continues as this thesis has brought me back and asked that I hold both my role as researcher and *native* simultaneously. Thus, this thesis is produced with a specific researcher reflexivity, which will be further discussed in section 3 on Feminist Qualitative Research.

2.3.1.1 The way it once was

Before the conflict of 1992-1995, such visible markers of separation in Mostar were rare. In fact, Mostar was nationally recognized for its strength as one of the most ethnically diverse cities in the Balkans. It was known and celebrated as a site of co-existence amongst the presence of churches, mosques and synagogues placed in close proximity to one another. Mixed marriages, though not necessarily celebrated in every household, were common and not far from the norm, making up 30% of all marriages in Bosnia's urban area (Malcolm, 1994). A pre-conflict 1991 population consensus perfectly illustrates this division, calculating a total of 43,037 Kroats, 43,856 Bosniaks and 23,846 Serbs which made up the total population of Mostar (Tabeau, 2009). In 2013, following the resettlement of populations who once occupied the rural areas surrounding the city (Grodach, 2002), the statistics changed to 51,216 Kroats, 46,752 Bosniaks and 4,421 Serbs (Tabeau, 2009). Due to expulsion from the area during conflict, the latter exemplifies the greatest population difference pre- and post-war.

As it stands now, Mostar is home to various ethnic identities living amongst one another in close proximity. This is another important factor, as it has implications for how identities are both formed and experienced, specifically in regards to national identity, as will be discussed in the data analysis and findings sections 6 and 7. Additionally, Mostar has been characterized as a *liminal space*, still dealing with the past while carrying the burden-like prospect of reconciliation (Čehajić-Clancy, 2012). It noticeably wears the marks of its history. Department stores sit next to bare-cemented buildings decorated with bullet holes, trash canisters line the main streets without an efficient sanitation system; main roads are framed by burial sites or memorials of war heroes.

Simultaneously, it is vibrantly alive. Coffee shops—*kafanas*—are filled with both old and new generations sipping espresso and engaging in neighborhood gossip. Children kick around *fudbols* across cement spaces under the careful watch of grandmothers peeling potatoes from balconies overhead. The ethnonational divide, as definitive as it may be, misses its mark in separating the ways locals pass the time. On either side of *Bulevar*, the streets are buzzing, they just buzz in doubles—in kafanas, in libraries, post offices, and schools.

2.3.1.2 Mostar as a home: Two Schools Under One Roof

The specificity of Mostar's post-conflict division is what makes it so valuable for exploring what factors influence the gender and national identity formation of young men and boys. Adding to this specificity is the reality that, as a result of the war, Mostar continues to operate under a split school system known as "two schools under one roof."

In 1995, after the fall of ex-Yugoslavia and during the process of wherein new governments were being established for the new country entities formed, 3 official school curriculums were created. Each curriculum catered to one specific to ethno-national identity in BiH. Namely, Bosniak, Serb and Kroat. Topics like language and culture became politically charged and made into national subjects. It was argued that citizens had a right to learn directly from the curriculum pertaining to their own ethnic-national identity. In response, local schools began to teach two separate curriculums at separate class times, divided by nationality and content.

While the 'two schools' system does not make Mostar unique to other areas in the country, it does have one specific quality: in relation to the surrounding areas, Mostar is home to a heavily ethnically-mixed population. As presented by the statistics mentioned in section 2.3.1.1, Mostar has a relatively equal number of Kroats and Bosniaks living in the region. Additionally, for its level of diversity, it's a fairly small town, making the school-based segregation a large part of day-to-day life. This presents the possibility of various impacts on identity formation for youth in the region, some measurable and others too invisible to notice. Despite uncertainties, Mostar provides a fruitful field for examining the attitudes and behaviors associated with post-conflict masculinities in an area still under the influence of social and structural ethnonational divisions.

2.3.1.3 Conflict & Post-Conflict Context:

The young men at the center of this research, whose responses and life experiences have made up the data that this thesis is built off of were born during a time of difficult post-conflict recovery. This means that these young men were raised in and spent their most formative years in a culture of violence that was heavily influenced by years of conflict (Namy et al., 2014). While I cannot assume that hegemonic masculine norms present today share a direct connection to conflict, nor do I intend to, the ways they have been constructed as a result of conflict are still worthy of investigation. Indeed, such investigation adds to the field of post-conflict masculinities, which I will discuss further in section 2.4.

The aftermath of the war has had detrimental consequences for both the structural and social landscape of BiH. What was once a large slice of former Yugoslavia, BiH has entered a slow economic post-war recovery. This is in part due to a separation of resources, corrupt political power and lack of entrance into the EU (Zivkovic, 2006). The resulting difficult socio-economic climate and ethno-nationalist identity revival has greatly influenced the types of livelihoods available for youth today. This is best illustrated through large levels of unemployment and violence amongst youth in the area (CARE, 2012) which I will discuss in further detail in Section 5 or, the literature review.

Furthermore, the economic degradation as well as the rise of ethno-nationalism within BiH largely influenced definitions of manhood both during and after the war (Dolan, 2002; Greenberg, 2006; Dušanić, 2012; Delić, Kravič, Avdibegovič, 2011). Men's pre-conflict

societal roles as provider, caretaker and breadwinner were severely challenged by the threat of economic instability and this factor was used to motivate men to take part in the conflict which resulted in the eventual collapse of ex-Yugoslavia. This will be discussed further in the following section on masculinities in conflict. Additionally, national identities were used to frame narratives around men from the *other* side threatening not only women and children, but the 'motherland' in question, making the conflict highly gendered both in its construction and its execution (Sofos, 1996; Zarkov, 2001; Zivkovic, 2006). To this degree, it is important to have an understanding of how masculinities are defined before the conflict, within the context of conflict as well as during the post-recovery phase. Further information on the role of masculinities in conflict follows.

2.4 Masculinities in Conflict:

Several of the factors addressed here will be further discussed in the section on post-conflict masculinities, as many of the same variables influence the way masculinity is shaped and performed both during and after conflict. But first, it is important to mention the influence and use of hegemonic masculinity within the conflict itself. Gendered analysis of war allows us to better understand how specific norms add to or drive conflict (Saferworld, 2014). A gendered analysis of a post-conflict society is especially important considering the prevalence of much research illustrating the gendered nature of conflict, gendered motivators for the perpetuation of conflict and the gendered character of many nationalist sentiments used during war times (Sofos,1996; Saferworld, 2014). However, because many of the conversations around gender and conflict in the Balkans have traditionally been focused on the use of rape as a weapon of war (Nikolić-Ristanović, 2000; Skjelsbæk, 2012) the role that masculinities play in all stages has gone largely unexamined.

In his paper on Yugoslav masculinities, Marko Živković (2006) frames the practices associated with masculinity as "resources in negotiating a social reality" in the midst of change on various levels (p. 261). For the Balkan territories in the midst of conflict, these changes included threats to socio-economic livelihoods, which resulted in the "economic emasculation" of men in the region who were at risk of losing their status as the breadwinner (Živković, 2006).

Gender was again implicated in the conflict as those outside national inclusivity were feminized, such as 'intellectuals,' or those with international gaze, who pushed for 'modernity' in the region (Živković, 2006, p. 261). It was this increased threat to both national and masculine identity that was reignited during the war and contributed to the upheaval of traditional male norms and separatism between ethnic groups (CARE, 2012). To reiterate, the threat of "economic emasculation" combined with heavy national pride was utilized cooperatively, thus directly merging issues of economy, ethno-nationalism and masculinity.

2.4.1 Post-Conflict Masculinities

Amongst other factors, masculinity is shaped by the historical as well as situational context in which men exist (Connell, 2005). Thus, it must be understood in relation to both of these factors. I argue that it would do a great disservice to the literature on Balkan masculinities to research the hegemonic masculinity of young men and boys without viewing identities in relation to the post-conflict context of Mostar. Thus, the following section will look at several main themes previously identified with Balkan hegemonic masculinity as it is experienced in the lives of the young men born after the war.

2.4.1.1 Violence

Young men's experiences with and use of violence have been linked to social norms surrounding masculinities (Connell, 2000). It is worth noting that a IMAGES survey done in Croatia found a direct association between participation in armed conflict and prevalence of gender-inequitable attitudes (Barker and Pawlak. 2014). Though today's young men and boys did not partake in the conflict themselves, their exposure to those that have puts them at risk for becoming perpetrators and victims of both peer and intimate violence. Working with young men and boys around violence in the region is especially critical given statistics which show that out of 274 young men, 57% reported being slapped or spanked as children (IMAGES, 2010). Research shows that years of conflict in the Balkans largely influences young men's experiences and attitudes towards violence and must therefore be at the forefront in developing new programmatic approaches towards ensuring social and economic inclusion as well as peace building strategies (CARE, 2013, p.7).

2.4.1.2 Socio-economic changes

As I have argued in section 2.4, the war of '92-'95 was heavily instigated by the deteriorating economic situation in Ex-Yugoslavia, and the weakened socio-economic situation today has major implications for the young men in the region. As a result, the difficulty of fulfilling the role of breadwinner, a defining factor of Balkan masculinity has been directly connected to the level of unhealthy behaviours enacted by young men in the region (Dusanic, 2012). As such, much of programming implemented in this area has been aimed not only at reducing acts of violence against women but simultaneously increasing socioeconomic opportunities in an attempt to increase youth employment and mobility in the region.

2.4.1.3 Ethnonational Identity

The war created strong links between hegemonic masculinity, national identity and the role of protector, resulting in an even stricter adoption of more traditional and patriarchal norms amongst men after the war ended (Eckman et al., 2007). This concept is extremely noteworthy in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where 39.7% of interviewed combatants in the 1992-1995 conflict reported that they "felt comfortable only with members of the same group" (IMAGES, 2010). Though we know that ethno-centric views have been shown to be strong amongst those with patriarchal attitudes (Nagel, 1998; IMAGES, 2012) little is known about how young men are affected by the ethno-centric attitudes and perceptions of the older generations, and just how strong ethno-centric beliefs continue to be.

Conclusion

With this background information, I have attempted to both provide the reader with adequate background information which will assist them in understanding the societal and geographical context in which this research takes place, as well as illustrate the importance of asking questions about post-conflict identities amongst youth as they relate to hegemonic masculinity and ethno-nationality in present-day Mostar.

3. Locating this Thesis in Feminist Research

Because my writing has been done under the influence of Gender Studies, I find it important to locate this thesis within the broad field of feminist research. I will do so by first acknowledging the influence of feminist research and theory on the development of this research. I will place a special focus on the role of Intersectionality (Hill Collins, 1993) and the impact it had on my desire to include national identity as a focal point of my research. I will then underline the move to take a qualitative approach for data collection and how this decision fits into the long and fruitful history of feminist qualitative research.

3.1 Feminist Theory and the Importance of Intersectionality.

My position as a researcher is one which owes itself to a great deal of feminist research and theorizing which has greatly influenced my thinking. First, the interdisciplinary nature of feminism has made it so that I could look at the nature of social relations whilst using gender as my starting point. Contrary to the misconception that feminist thought is only produced by and in service of women, what makes this project inherently feminist is in the fact that it adds to the understanding of men's activities, attitudes and behaviors as gendered (Harding, 1987). Additionally, looking at the category of masculinity allows me to analyze social stratification without focusing only on marginalized people (Yuval-Davis, 2011). Feminist theory defines patriarchy as the social system under which oppressive gender roles are enforced and are oppressive to both men and women. Looking critically at the construction of gender relations under the framework of patriarchy pushed me to ask deeper questions about the relationship between gender and power both while formulating my question as well as conducting my research. Namely, what are the different barriers that men and women face in the fight for gender inequity? What are the drivers? What role do men play in the larger goal of gender equity? To what extent do they view their individual identities as gendered, and what aspects of their identities take precedence over others?

This criticality required that my research take on an intersectional framework (Crenshaw, 1993). Intersectionality is a term coined by Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw (1993) to "denote

the various ways in which race and gender interact to shape the multiple dimensions of Black women's employment experiences" (p. 1244). Since its introduction, it has been extended to include various factors of identity. Christen & Jensen (2012) define this method as an "analytical concept that is useful for analyzing and understanding differences and multiple inequalities in contemporary societies at both the macro- and the micro-level" (p.121). By taking on an intersectional approach and allowing for the inclusion of other social variables such as nationality in my research, I was able to explore the complexity of identity as well as gain a better understanding of how various social factors within the context of Mostar shape one another. This aspect of inquiry opened up the general field of my research, as it ensured that my study would both refrain from generalizations and add to the growing literature on the complexities and differences within male experience.

Within qualitative studies, intersectional analysis has been critiqued as presenting methodological challenges. In response, I found it necessary to utilize the strategy of focusing on the variables of identity which are "deemed most important for a specific research question at a specific time" (Christensen & Jensen, 2012, p.112). As a result, I was simultaneously faced with my own social position in relation to research participants. Specifically, allowing for all aspects of social identity to be present meant that I also had to be conscious of what effect my presence, loaded with social markers of my own, could have on the relationship as well as interaction between interviewer and interviewee. Placing my own identity within the research and thus becoming an active participant through all steps of the project was an important part of the research process.

Initially, as my research topic began to concern themes relevant to my personal identity as a Bosnian woman, I contemplated to what extent my identity could be a hindrance to my role as researcher. Alternatively, I wondered how I could utilize my identity as a bridge as opposed to a barrier between me and my research. To solve this conundrum and ensure the validity of my work, I sought guidance from Sandra Harding's (1987) work on feminist objectivity. Harding (1987) describes strong feminist analysis as one in which the researcher is located in the same 'critical plane' as the subject matter under inquiry (p.8). This means that that the "class, race, culture, and gender assumptions, beliefs and behaviors of the researcher her/himself must be placed within the frame of the picture that he/she attempts to paint" (Harding, 1988, p.9). The amount to which I have allowed my positionality to weave me through the process of working within my homeland while maintaining a researcher objectivity is undoubtedly of central importance to my writing. If it were not for my lived-

experience, the probability of selecting this topic would be unlikely, if not unthinkable. As such, this work asked me to continually call into question my own social location as I explored aspects of identity within a context very personal to my own.

Instead of viewing my positioning as an inherent problem, I found it vital to second guess my intentions, to see my inquiry as a strength. Therefore, to guarantee my role as researcher would not dilute the validity of my results, I followed the necessary steps to ensure my project had "strong objectivity" (Harding, 2003). Strong objectivity demands that research be placed on "the same critical, causal plane as the objects of knowledge" and doing so required the adoption of "strong reflexivity" (Harding, 2003, p.69). Ensuring strong reflexivity (Harding, 2003) meant that my social identification as a white, female, middle-class Bosniak refugee was reflected upon throughout the entire research process. In addition, I am the granddaughter of a political prisoner under the ex-Yugoslav administration, the daughter of a soldier for the Bosniak army, and contain religious ties to Bosniaks from the region. My lived experience has been largely shaped by memories constructed through the stories told around me. These are stories from people with nationalities, histories, and traumas. Indeed, my view was not a "view from nowhere" (Harding, 2015).

Therefore, admit tingly, while my research is inherently feminist in that it seeks to help bring about social change (Wickramasinghe, 2010) I have not chosen this specific field blindly. Harding (1998) argues that a "distinctive feature of feminist research" is in its ability to "generate its problematics from the perspectives of women's experiences" (p.7). It is with my lived experience as refugee, as Bosnian, and as woman that I credit both my interest in and hope for gender equitable attitudes in the respective region of my research. By placing my experience as a starting point for exploration, I am able to use my knowledge towards greater and less partial understandings of social life (Harding, 1998). In this way, I believe my standpoint contributed positively to the research project at hand. I was able to use my relation to the region by building bridges across common experiences as well as utilizing my knowledge of the local language.

3.2 Feminist Qualitative Research.

Qualitative research is grounded in the idea that by immersing oneself in real world, the researcher has better access to looking at social experience as a meaning-making process

(Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). This approach informed my research process in a myriad of ways and influenced my desire to be actively involved in my field of study throughout the entire research process. Most notably, it directed the decision to conduct multiple visits to the field, in which I was able to familiarize myself with the context and participants. During my initial visit in October 2016, I was able to conduct observations during Budi Muško Klub meetings as well as participate in a 2-day meeting conference with YMI program directors from the BiH region. Christensen & Jensen (2012) note that within qualitative intersectionality research, it is of great concern to look at how "gender, class, ethnicity, etc. intersect in the discursive construction of meaning (p.114). Based on reoccurring themes observed during Stage 1 of field work, I was able to narrow my research onto masculinity and ethnonational identity and focus my literature review on previous research conducted in the field. Lastly, this initial research supported me in deciding on interview questions suitable for my topic of interest.

The timeline of this process was led both by a focus on examining intersections of identity as well as maintaining what Hesse-Biber and Lecekenby (2004) refer to as an "openness" in producing new knowledge. This approach within qualitative intersectional analysis is regarded as that "which lies in its openness towards the unpredicted and in its ability to understand the specific and the local" (Christensen and Jensen, 2012, p.112). This "openness" directed my research approach greatly and resulted in a range of topics explored in the data analysis section. Additionally, it insisted that I, in my openness, become aware of methodological challenges to this approach. Amongst them, it required that I remain conscious of running the risk of perpetuating the very categories my research sought to understand during the course of this study. Therefore, my research was informed by feminist qualitative methods in that it made a conscious effort not to reproduce stereotypes and prejudices in the process of addressing them (Christen and Jensen, 2011).

A qualitative approach greatly informed my inquiry into the best possible method suitable to conduct my research. Before deciding on a specific method for gathering data, my general inquiry into themes such a post-war transition, youth and gender produced fruitful conversations with various residents of the area. From the local parking lot attendant to organizational heads, almost all conversations served as important pieces to build upon my interest/initial question. This stage of my research allowed me to observe "everyday social relations" and was used as an "entry point into understanding the complex local interplay where processes of gender, class, and ethnicity constitute each other in a non-additive way"

(Christen and Jensen, 2012, p.120). This included sitting in on various sessions of BMK, taking part in program coordinator meetings, speaking with leaders involved in manual design and cigarette breaks with local youth. Throughout this process, I made a conscious effort to remain open for general themes or areas of interest. In addition, I spent countless hours spent scouring through previous research regarding topics such as gender dynamics, attitudes towards violence, mental health and conflict and youth masculinities. Of particular interest to me were areas noted under as "future considerations" and "unintended findings" that led towards a deeper engagement with topics of nationality that had not been previously confronted.

However, I truly believe the richest content came directly from my time attempting to assimilate into everyday life. Mostar is a place full of history. If you listen closely, this history is openly shared in the form of family stories or post-lunch coffee breaks. History that matters. Hartsock (1998) states that it is the subordination of specific experiences that make feminist struggles for knowledge so political. All things considered, it came as no surprise when the bulk of my research built itself off of the shared experiences of those I came in contact with. It was a goal of this qualitative research to ensure that the results of my findings would not replicate or essentialize gendered or national-specific experiences but would tell "a better story of gendered lives" (Holland, and Ramazanoglu, 2002). Hartsock (1998) argues that subordinated experiences are "more adept for searching for the truth" and that they inspire a stronger reason for "uncovering and transforming oppressive gender relations". In Mostar, there seemed to be a general openness, and many of those I came into contact with were delighted with the opportunity to share their story. Staying as a visitor granted me time and anonymity to listen without judgement and to serve as an interested ear. Indeed, this thesis benefitted greatly from the openness of the local population who gave me the gift of their stories.

4. Masculinities and Ethno-National Identity: A Literature Review

Introduction.

In order to explore the relationship between ethno-national identity and masculinity, my research takes on an intersectional approach; that is to say, as opposed to exploring how gender and nation act as 'separate systems of oppression', my thesis explores how these systems mutually construct one another (Crenshaw, 1998). By placing a special focus on Balkan masculinity as it pertains to the lives of young men and boys in Mostar, my project adds to the groundwork of constructing a more comprehensive understanding of the complexity and specificity of post-conflict masculinities. Thus, this thesis has greatly benefitted from and adds to the developing field of intersectionality both amongst and between masculinities (Noble & Hopskins, 2009; Greenberg, 2006; Christensen & Qvotrup, 2014).

Additionally, my thesis is built upon and in conversation with a wide range of research looking at hegemonic masculinity amongst youth, the role of masculinities in conflict, the relationship between ethno-centrism and masculinity, and the effects of post-conflict context on identity formation, which will be further discussed in the relevant literature below. Using gender as its main tool of analysis, this paper positions itself within the three specific fields of masculinity, post-conflict research, and ethno-national identity. The intention of this literature review is to situate my research within some of the most relevant and prominent work conducted in the field of men and masculinities.

4. 1 Men and Masculinities

In recent years, both academic researchers and practitioners have significantly widened the scope of feminist research by integrating the experiences of men and boys into the field of gender studies, thus adding to the rapidly growing topic of men and masculinities (Connell, 1995). Raewlyn Connell (2005) defines masculinity as "a configuration of practice organized in relation to the structure of gender relations" created through human social

practice with a historical and global dimension (Connell, 2003; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 843). Thus, because "gender relations are not fixed, but can adapt to fit new circumstances," (El-Bushra & Sahl, 2005, p. 90) so too are masculinities subject to change. Notably, one of the greatest contributions to this field has been Connell's work on hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1995). Borrowing from a recent conceptualization, hegemonic masculinity is described as:

> a set of values, established by men in power that functions to include and exclude, and to organize society in gender unequal ways. It combines several features: a hierarchy of masculinities, differential access among men to power (over women and other men), and interplay between men's identity, men's ideals, interactions, power, and patriarchy. (Jewkes and Morrell, 2012, p.40)

While the concept of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1995) has faced criticism for its ambiguity since its initial introduction to feminist academia, it has inarguably changed the ways men's lives and experiences are theorized. By illuminating the multiplicity and complexity of men's identities, Connell (1995) highlighted the importance of using an intersectional approach in the reading of masculinities within their historical and situational contexts. Hence, while hegemonic masculinity can fluctuate, it remains the normative or current example through which men position themselves (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005).

In *Combining Hegemonic Masculinity and Intersectionality*, Christensen and Jensen (2014) argue that internal and external dimensions must be considered when looking at hegemonic masculinity (p.66) and that viewing masculinity strictly within the model of patriarchal domination presents problems and "limits the exploration of alternative masculinities which don't promote unequal power relations through gender differences" (p.67). The following section will look more closely at what Balkan masculinity entails, and what alternative masculinities it has created in response.

4.2 Balkan Masculinity and the "Balkan Boy"

Research on hegemonic masculinity within the Balkans has seen a large increase amongst feminist academics and practitioners from various interdisciplinary fields over the last decade (Nikolic-Ristanovič, 2002; Williams, 2009; Pavlović, 2011; Barker and Pawlak, 2014;

Grubič, 2014; Reisewitz, R. and Loncarevic, M., 2016). Through their research, violence, substance abuse, mental health, nationality and remnants of the '92-'95 war have been identified as prominent themes which influence the construction and performance of "Balkan masculinity" (Eckman et al., 2007; Dušanić, 2012)

The "Balkan boy" has been described as one who is "autonomous, brave, endurable, independent and self-confident" (Promundo and CARE, 2012). Additionally, recent qualitative research (Eckman et al., 2007) has correlated many young men and boys being raised to be "aggressive, competitive and courageous" as a result of the hegemonic masculinity in the region (Barker and Pawlak, 2014). This has also been connected to violence against women and peers (Eckman et. al, 2007; CARE, 2010; Barker and Pawlak, 2014).

4.3 Balkan Masculinity in Bosnia & Herzegovina

To date, few studies have focused on variations of Balkan masculinity at the local level, such as in the Balkan region of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). One such case is an IMAGES (2012) study which used widely-spread surveys to conduct quantitative analysis made up of the responses from 1684 men and 687 women between the ages of 18-59 on the topic of gender equality in BiH specifically. The data indiciated that BiH was considered a "traditional society in which patriarchal norms mainly dominate" (Dušanić, 2012) and suffers from a difficult socio-economic situation, in which 30% of the population is unemployed (Dušanić, 2012). Youth confront a similar situation in the region, in which 58.5% of 16-30 year olds are unemployed (Youth Partnership, 2010; Jasarevic, 2011). Economic-related stress was connected to several factors which affect men in the region and can have several consequences for the hegemonic masculinity present. For example, the IMAGES (2012) study found that 40% of men surveyed suffered from depression as a direct result of unemployment and the inability to fulfill the traditional role of "breadwinner" in the home (Dušanić, 2012). Economic-related stress was also connected to the enactment of violent behaviors amongst men. Additionally, it found a positive correlation between "overall experiences of war" and "violence against women, depression, and suicidal thoughts" (IMAGES, 2012, p.75).

4.4 Violence and its relationship to conflict

There have been several studies looking at the prevalence of violence in the lives of young men in the Balkans (Young Men Initiative, 2010; Barker et. al, 2011; CARE, 2012; IMAGES, 2012). A study by the Young Men's Initiative (2010) found several factors which contribute to the use of violence amongst young men specifically, including peer groups, the school setting and the role of fathers in encouraging sons to become violent in fights (Young Men Initiative, 2010). While this discovery has pushed for "strengthening the link between fatherhood and non-violence," less work has shown how violence linked to men who have experienced conflict is carried on to sons. Eckman and colleagues (2007) found that specifically in the Balkans, the parent is the primary role for learning attitudes and behaviors. This makes the case for looking deeper at the link between conflict masculinities, violence and post-conflict masculinities as well as how certain behaviors and attitudes are strengthened in the home. IMAGES (2012) results found a positive correlation between war experiences and depression, suicidal thoughts and use of violence (Dušanić, p.75). While substantial data is lacking on pre-conflict Balkan masculinities, how young men today understand the effects of conflict masculinity as they relate to or challenge it in their own lives must be researched further.

4.5 Conflict Masculinity & Ethnocentrism

It has been said that the post-conflict context is one which largely concerns "male power systems, struggles, and identity formation" (Cockburn & Zarkov, 2002; Handrahan, 2003). The impact of conflict masculinity on the identity formation of young men must go beyond conversations on gender to include other prominent social categories. Several studies on conflict and masculinities have called on a similar need to look more closely at ethno-centrism and gender (Eckman et. al, 2007; IMAGES, 2010; Saferworld, 2014). This is especially relevant in the context of BiH, where the dominant ethno-national component of the conflict has resulted in high numbers of ethno-centrism in the region. This is expressed in the IMAGES (2012) study which found that 68% of respondents in Bosnia and Herzegovina showed "prejudice towards those of other ethnicities, 40% felt most pleasant in the company of people of the same ethnicity and 48% would not marry a person of an ethnicity different from theirs" (p.11). The IMAGES (2012) study also showed discrepancies in ethno-centric

attitudes between men and women, but provided no explanation or further discussion on gender differences within ethno-nationalism.

Additionally, it was found that men who exhibited ethno-centric views had less equitable views on gender-equality and were more likely to use violence against women (IMAGES, 2012, 39). While they were unable to make any direct claims, the IMAGES study noted that "ethno-centric attitudes and gender inequitable attitudes seemed to be part of a similar constellation of prejudice and stereotypes" (p. 39). Moving forward, it is necessary to begin to unravel this constellation and understand the specific themes through which ethno-centrism and hegemonic masculinity operate. Thus, it is important to look closer at the intersections where national identity and masculinity overlap.

4.6 Ethno-national Identity & Post-Conflict Masculinity

Handrahan (2004) has argued that "ethnicity appears to be created and maintained, in part, through the use of gender identities" (p.436). This has been exemplified in previous research conducted in post-conflict contexts where special calls upon national identity through the use of 'national rhetoric' have been used as a tool for promoting participation in war as an opportunity to regain one's masculinity (Zivkovic, 2006). This rhetoric was also seen during post-war recovery, when an "ideal, proper, and traditional" masculinity was offered and shaped in opposition to that of the opposing ethno-national group (Zivkovic, 2006, p.260). Thus, I would argue that the effects of this must be further understood in the attitudes towards national identity of the post-conflict generation.

Despite the gathered evidence from the studies listed above, there still remains a large gap in our understanding of the relationship between ethno-nationality and post-conflict masculinity. Few scholars have sought to understand how national identity shapes hegemonic masculinity and vice versa, specifically in the lives of young men and boys growing up under post-conflict masculinities. I will argue that one way of starting to address this in academic research is by looking at the diversity of experiences of Balkan men as they relate to both national identity and masculinity.

Christensen and Jensen (2014) have stated that what is missing in work on patriarchal gender relations is a focus on the differences amongst men. I argue that these differences include a lack of research on ethnonational identity.

4.7 The "New Balkan Boy" and Challenges to Balkan Masculinity

As Christensen and Jensen (2011) have noted, the concept of hegemonic masculinity can be viewed and studied through two dimensions: one, as a tool for "male dominance and oppression of women" and two, as a "hierarchal classification of masculinities" (p.63). Despite the growing body of work on men and masculinities, conversations on the diversity of men's experiences as they vary by age, geographical location, religious background, etc. are sparse yet critical for enhancing the understanding of the complexity of masculinities. In order to expand our knowledge of how gender interacts with various social factors, researchers must become intentional about "unravelling" the constellations that are found through men's stories and within data conducted on men and masculinities. Several studies on conflict and masculinities have called on a similar need to look more closely at ethno-centrism and gender (Eckman et. al, 2007; IMAGES, 2010; Saferworld, 2014).

Christensen & Jensen (2014) have argued that in areas where masculinity has lost traditional forms of "patriarchal dividend" do to socio-economic changes, women's empowerment, etc., new forms of masculinity will emerge. Such is the case in post-conflict contexts. These new masculinities open new possibilities for young men and boys to define themselves in opposition to older, inherited masculinities. This offers men the opportunity to "see a range of possibilities," ones that make way for identification with "groups of men who might engage in alliances for change" (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, p.1817). As a result, men become a part of transforming masculinities (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005).

Examples of this can be seen through the Young Men's Initiative (2010), Budi Muško Klub, Program H in Latin America and various other contexts around the world. In the Balkan context specifically, challenges to hegemonic masculinity have opened the door to new, peaceful and gender equitable models such as that of the "New Balkan Boy[13]" (Barker and Pawlak, 2014).

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[13] The concept of the "New Balkan Boy" was created to promote a healthier, non-violent version of Balkan masculinity and was first used at a regional seminar by Center E8 and can be read about here: http://e8.org.rs/

5. Research Design and Methodology

The following section will take a closer look at the intention behind the research presented, as well as provide the reader with a thorough understanding of the strategy and method administered to measure and analyze the results gathered within this thesis. The intention is to provide the steps taken throughout the entire research process with the goal of understanding a specific type of Balkan masculinity, including the basis for my decision to include nationality as a foundational aspect of my research in the Mostar region. This section will familiarize the reader with the progressive steps taken towards reaching the heart of the research project. It will also act as the space to justify and argue in favor of specific decisions made for the purpose of this study. I will focus on the methods administered to gather supportive data, including an overview of my timeline, the participant sample, and interview structure. Additional pieces such as the interview questions themselves are included in the appendix.

Thus, the intention is to provide the reader with enough background information to assist in their understanding of the data analysis which will follow. I will do so by first providing an overview of the research design. This will assist the reader in imagining the project in a holistic sense; in simple terms, how this research got from point A to point Z. I will then move into a more detailed description of the building blocks that have helped create this project. Then, I will move into the body of the research itself, such as the selection of the field, including location and participants, the sampling procedure, including the chosen method of data collection, the process of interviews, the sampling technique, and the consequences of such choices made within the research. This section will follow a with space for reflection, as I believe this to be an important part of building repertoire for further research and replication in the field as well as establishing research reflexivity (

5.1 A Reminder to the Reader

Though I have provided the reader with a general overview of what to expect, I still struggle to find the right words which can convey the context under which this research takes place. As a writer, I am aware of the power words tend to lose when over-used. This cannot be said enough for the descriptor "post-conflict". Though Mostar is currently at 'peace,' or, to more accurately describe it, there is no active conflict, *every* move made in this research

process was done with the knowledge that, despite participant assurance, this is a sensitive context. It is politically sensitive. It is ethnically sensitive. If you speak with a local, you'll learn it is also conflict sensitive. Most conversations can easily bring up hot-button issues and trigger those involved. One wrong question has the potential to be easily misunderstood or misinterpreted, and can be a source of pain and trauma for those involved. My role as an outsider looking in could be judged and used against me. Therefore, I use this section to remind the reader this research design was created under the limits, as well as unique opportunities presented by working in a post-conflict, politically unstable context.

5.2 Research Design Flow

The following section is intended to familiarize the reader with the general flow of my research project. Mihaly Csikszentamihalyi (1975) has described the experience of flow by using the metaphor of moving water, transporting the individual down a stream of progress. This sentiment rings true for the development my research question and describes the process this thesis took to become what it is today. First, prior to choosing the current topic, I attended a public seminar on Men & Masculinities Programming in Oslo, Norway. Here, I was introduced to representatives[14] working with the Young Men's Initiative in a small town by the name of Valpovo, Croatia. Simply put, I was convinced this program was worth exploring. I then conducted an extensive literature review of data documenting the history of men and masculinities work globally, with a specific focus on the Balkan region. After, I consulted data gathered by the YMI to help me better understand what context-specific topics were further explored and what topics were missing or intentionally left out in Bosnia & Herzegovina. Additionally, I conducted several interviews with YMI staff to help me identify what topics could potentially be points of interest for further research.

With the minimal knowledge that this thesis would involve working with young men and would fit under the scope of masculinity research, a project proposal and request for approval was sent to the NSD[15]. I included a general overview of the research topic, the desired

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[14] A special mention to program leader Zdenka Loncaric , whose enthusiasm surrounding her work inspired me to focus my research on the YMI

[15] The NSD, or Norwegian Centre for Research Data approved my proposal on November 18, 2016. Their guidelines and other information can be accessed at their website, http://www.nsd.uib.no/nsd/english/index.html

participants who would be recruited for the study as well as possible obstacles. Minor but significant information was provided and approval was obtained.

The first visit to the field took place throughout the month of October 2016 in Mostar, Bosnia & Herzegovina. This is known as phase one in a two-phase work process. During this time, I met with program staff as well as members of the Budi Muško Klub, sat in on group sessions, shared stories with the local population and acquired a better feel for the environment. It was here that the intersection of national identity became an important part of my research. This *first* phase was used to establish the groundwork necessary to ensure maximum productivity for my next, time-sensitive scheduled visit in March of the following year.

The second stage of field work began March 2017. During this time, program leaders and local residents were asked to assist in recruiting focus group participants based on age, ethnicity and experience with Gender Conscious Programming. Participants were reached out to through telephone calls and social media messaging with the majority recruited through BMK, either due to their involvement or because they were friends of someone who was. Participants were then followed up by the researcher through Facebook messenger, where a time and date was set for interviews to be conducted.

Semi-structured focus groups were held over a 2-month span in Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Focus groups were organized and administered based on those who responded to recruitment. Participants who agreed to focus group interviews included a total of 5 Bosniaks and 4 Croats/Serbs, 6 of whom participated in BMK and 3 which did not. A translator was present for 2/4 groups given the size of group and availability of translator.

The data gathered from recorded focus groups interviews was then transcribed and analyzed using qualitative methods which included both pre-determined scales as well as thematic discourse analysis. Furthermore, relevant themes were identified and selected based on frequency, level of importance and relationship to masculinity and ethno-national identity. Findings are presented in a thematic structure below.

5.3 Selecting and Defining the Field

I arrived at the topic of men and masculinities with a very open-ended framework. I was first introduced to the work of the Young Men's Initiative at a conference[16] on Engaging Men in Gender Equality organized by a local women's organization. After connecting with a program coordinator from Valpovo, Croatia, I became more interested in YMI's work through my time assisting in the Men and Masculinities research department at CARE, Norway. Through the process of compiling an extensive literature review on the effects of gender transformative programming with young men and boys, I saw that YMI programming was successful in transforming harmful behaviors amongst men and boys and had a positive influence on the communities in which it was active. This experience provided me with easy access to the ground leaders who helped establish the Young Men's Initiative and allowed me the opportunity to conduct fruitful research with support from those directly involved. Due to my time at CARE, I was able to speak with many of YMI's program leaders as well as CARE representatives who had assisted in the program's creation. Therefore, with the assistance of multiple forms of information collection, my focus was narrowed to the topic chosen for this thesis.

Because the Young Men's Initiative's methodological framework has been applied in several contexts globally, selecting a specific location to conduct research was both necessary and an intentional choice. Given my own Bosnian heritage, I was ecstatic to learn that my birthplace was also an area where YMI programming had been implemented. Amongst other benefits, I was motivated to work in Mostar because I had a desire to understand this region in a new way. Second, what makes Feminist Research *feminist* is its intention to bring about social change. My desire for contributing to a growing repertoire on gender equity and ethno-centrism in my hometown was absolutely a guiding force within my research. Therefore, selecting Mostar, Bosnia & Herzegovina as my field site was both intentional in respect to my personal goals, as well as motivated by the feminist goal of broadening the research field of men & masculinities.

My first 3-week field research visit, or *stage one*, took place in October of 2016. During this time, I was able to conduct initial field observations. This was significant for various reasons, such as familiarizing myself with the region and becoming a familiar face at the YMI office, thus demystifying my role as researcher. Most notably, I had the opportunity to meet future participants and YMI staff, which allowed us the time to get to know one another and build a

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[16] The conference took place on January 17, 2016 at Litteraturhuset in Oslo, Norway.

relationship based on trust. During this time, I was invited to take part in a three-day planning conference with YMI organizers from the Balkan region, during which my main fieldwork period, or stage 2 was discussed and finalized.

In March of 2017, I returned for a 3-month stay to conduct the interviews which make up the data comprised in this thesis. Due to the overwhelming support from both CARE staff as well as YMI leaders from the region, access to participants was rarely an issue. From my initial visit and throughout the research process, YMI's coordinating staff in Mostar provided me with assistance that ensured the success of my field visit and made me feel a part of their social fabric. Additionally, my frequent visits to the site allowed me the opportunity to understand my topic on a more personal level. I felt socially connected to group members and believe this time made the interview process less intimidating and formal for both myself and those included. Additionally, YMI program leaders offered me a space in the office to work on my research, which made it so that I really felt like an 'outsider'. Without fail, I felt supported, welcomed and confident in my work.

Additionally, at times I felt indebted to the project. Building relationships with staff and youth made me feel accountable for the results of my research. Getting to know most of the participants involved made this thesis intimate. And though stepping into the field with 'openness' provided a fruitful opportunity to explore instead of make assumptions about Balkan masculinities, it also made me susceptible to outside influence and expectation. I have chosen to include this information because it underlines the necessity for consistent reflection on my role as a researcher: *Why am I doing this? Who is my audience?* With these questions to guide me, I held this thesis to an important standard: may it be honest and unconditional.

5.4.1 Sampling Techniques

As previously mentioned, Norway CARE staff put me in contact with BMK's program leaders, who in turn served as a direct link to participants. During the early planning stages of phase 1 and 2 of fieldwork, several emails were exchanged with BMK leaders regarding what my research would require. This included a general description of the project as well as a request for interviews.

The prospect of recruitment had an air of ease to it, with the program leader Nedim stressing that BMK members had participated in various program evaluations and were therefore undaunted by interviews. I was assured that upon returning for phase 2, I would have access

to informants and would be able to conduct interviews as necessary. During my first field visit in October 2016, I sat in on a total of two BMK sessions during which I conducted an observation of how the program functions and what topics are discussed. Initially, my plan was to use individual interviewing in an effort to understand personal experiences within the program. And while this remained a central component of the research, this initial visit introduced a new topic worthy of exploring: national identity. The prevalence of identifying with one's ethno-nationality in this region is explored in greater detail in both the literature review and context & background section of this thesis. However, it is important to stress that during both stage 1 and 2 of field visits, the specific influence of nationality as an identity marker for boys had a special place in conversations around relationships, violence and general daily practices for those living in Mostar.

To account for the inclusion of national identity within my research, I made the decision to conduct interviews with both BMK members as well as non-members. This was done through four sets of interviews in the format of focus groups, expanding my initial field of prospective participants. The method of utilizing focus groups for collecting data was beneficial for two reasons. First, focus groups would ensure a larger number of participants, providing greater validity to my research and allowing for the concept of *masculinities* to shine through. Thus, a larger number meant a greater chance to look at the diversity of experiences. Second, focus groups added the possibility of looking closely at the group dynamics present between participants. This also brought forth the possibility to view how my participants interact. More specifically, focus groups provided the opportunity to view the person in context (Wilkinson, 1998).

Since I was interested in exploring the topic of national identity, I found it to be important that my focus groups be ethnically segregated. I did this for two reasons. The first was to ensure a safe space where participants could feel comfortable engaging in discussions about both one's own membership to their national identity as well as the national-identity of the 'other.' The second reason was to ensure participation would be more accessible, given the conflicting school schedules of the various nationalities in Mostar. Because focus groups required a larger sample of participants, in addition to characteristics which had to be accounted for, recruitment took many forms. Initially, I was concerned that specifying national identity in the description of the study would make informants feel judged, or fear judgement. Given the post-conflict context of the region, my personal thought around the situation was that speaking openly about nationality would be taboo. However, I was

surprised to find that for participants, the reality was quite different. In fact, participants seemed more engaged in their discussions about national identity than masculinity and found this to be the 'juice' of the conversation. This will be looked at in the data analysis section.

Members of both national identities who had participated in Budi Muško Klub were recruited by youth leader Nedim M. through Facebook group messages as well as public announcements in BMK Saturday sessions. Those in agreement or interested were then sent to me through Facebook messenger where we spoke in greater detail about the general theme of research and made arrangements for a set location and time. Gathering participants, however, proved to be a difficult feat. Those who took part in BMK were much more willing to participate and seemed to be more comfortable with the idea of being interviewed. Boys outside of the club, however, were very difficult to recruit. I assumed that perhaps the idea of interviews with a *researcher* might seem scary or daunting during adolescence. To ensure a non-threatening position on my behalf, extra attention was paid to the manner in which participants were recruited. Thus, all non-BMK participants were invited through the use of friend referrals, in which BMK members were asked to bring friends not associated with the club. Having local boys bring in friends seemed to reduce skepticism around my research while also allowing those without any BMK affiliation to feel more comfortable. Indeed, skepticism was an interesting theme which acted as a red thread through this thesis, and I will discuss this in further detail in the findings section.

However, friend referrals have their downsides. I recognize that the inability to gather participants with no affiliation to BMK does have the consequence of a possible bias within responses, as well as presents a limitation to representability. To account for this, I explore the theme of skepticism in the data analysis more thoroughly. While this approach was not the perfect recruitment, it allowed me to gather participants while still ensuring my target characteristics could be addressed.

4.4.2 The Sample

I draw my data from a sample of nine adolescent men whom I interviewed between April & June, 2017. They were paired off into focus groups ranging in size from 1-4 participants. Within the focus groups, I conducted semi-structured interviews using questions drawn from Edward H. Thompson and Joseph H. Pleck's (1986) Masculinity Role Norms Scale which I included in the appendix section of this thesis. I chose to only use questions from the scale

which pertained to the specific themes I was interested in gathering more information about. A list of these questions is also included in the appendix section. I used a scale ranging from one (strongly disagree) to seven (strongly agree) to provide participants with a numerical way in answering questions presented by the MRNS (Thompson and Pleck, 1986) with room to discuss their reasoning in greater detail. Additionally, I included four questions exploring the role and degree of social contact between national groups in the region, which I adapted from a past study (Haglund, 2015) looking at contact in segregated populations through the use of Allport's (1954) Social contact theory.

There were 4 focus groups in total, separated both by experience in Budi Muško Klub as well as national identity. All participants ranged between the ages of 16-19. I chose this age-range for two reasons. The first is due to the fact that "youth is a key developmental stage when gender identities are constructed and can be reshaped" (Eckman et al., 2007, p.7). The second reason is because "young men are more apt than older men to use alternatives to violence" and "reaching boys is a way of changing the way men interact with women" (Barker, 2007). Additionally, because BMK is a youth-based program, most attendants happen to be in this age group. As for participants outside of club boundaries, I interviewed only informants within the same age group for validity.

The informants selected were different in some ways while also sharing many similarities. Because of my method for gathering participants, many informants were friends both inside and outside of BMK. 6 out of 9 participants were members of BMK while the remaining 3 had not taken part in any kind of GTP. Additionally, 5 participants were Bosniaks while 4 were Croat and/or Serb. It should be noted that Mostar is home to 3 prominent national identities, with Kroats and Bosniaks making up the majority (Tabeau, 2009). Thus, I created paired focus groups under the same pairing system as that used through "two schools under one roof", which has Bosniak youth separate from Kroat and Serb youth. Given that nationality and gender were already under exploration, I was careful not to add additional variables. Therefore, I intentionally did not question other areas of life, such as class, parent's profession or sexual identity.

5.4.3 Semi-structured interviews

The data presented in this study has been gathered by identifying common themes and conversations shared within focus groups through the use of semi-structured interviews.

While selecting an instrument of measurement, I was careful not to select questions that would limit the range of topics participants felt were relevant to the conversation. Additionally, due to the existing time limitations, it was not possible to conduct test interviews. Therefore, each focus group was conducted using ten pre-selected questions from Thompson & Pleck's (1986) Masculinity Role Norms Scale with additional space for exploration as facilitated through my role as a researcher.

5.4.3.1. Interview Location and Interview Tools

During my first visit, I had trouble locating facilities where I could write. Besides the *kafanas* that lined the main streets, most of the places I was directed to were either closed or were not ethnically *neutral*. Due to the lack of inclusive public spaces in Mostar, it was difficult to choose, let alone find a space that felt accessible and unintimidating to all participants. Thus, interviews were held at the youth organization, Youth Power—*Snaga Mladi*—where BMK operates. I was aware that participants who had never participated in BMK might feel some sense of hesitancy or make assumptions regarding the study based on this location. To ensure that informants felt both safe and welcomed, I offered the option of changing facilities. Because there were no objections, all focus groups were held at the center. I supplied cookies, soft drinks and coffee as both an incentive to participate as well as to create a comforting environment. Interviews ranged in length from 25 minutes to 90 minutes depending on the number of participants present. Following the guidance of the NSD regulations, each informant was notified of the general intention of the study beforehand and was given an agreement waiver before interviews took place. All interviews were recorded on a digital audio recorder and transcribed soon after. For the case of one specific participant who felt uncomfortable with audio recordings, the interview was transcribed on site directly following the focus group. Each interview session opened with a non-related question, such as *what's your favorite animal*? to break the barrier of discomfort. Participants were then led through a series of questions relating to hegemonic masculinity in no specific order. Before the start of the interviews, I stressed that informants had the right to skip or not answer any of the questions presented. Additionally, they were reminded it was appropriate to speak out of order while respecting one another's talking time and that all information shared would stay within the confines of the group. Thus, questions 1-10 were taken from the MRNS (Thompson and Pleck, 1986) and were explored further with follow-through questions such as, "*can you tell me more about that?*" or, "*what do you mean by…?*"

The next set of four questions were in relation to national identity and contact. The contact hypothesis, developed by Gordon W. Allport (1954), is described as the notion that interpersonal contact will either lower or increase conditions between groups experiencing conflict (Allport, 1954). These questions were selected for two reasons. The first is because of their use in a previous study looking at intergroup contact amongst young adults in Eastern Bosnia and Herzegovina (Haglund, 2016). The second is because perspectives on contact offered me an ability to look at the types of relationships shared by participants across national identities. My goal was to identify what themes came up in the context of these questions, and to try and understand them in relation to similar themes discussed in response to the MRNS questionnaire (Thompson and Pleck, 1986). Both sets of questions were open-ended and participants were encouraged to explain their answers. Here my focus was not necessarily on social contact as a theory but the types of relationships shared between adolescent boys of varying national identities. Despite this fact, utilizing the variable of contact helped provide a framework for discussing how often and to what extent friendships across national lines took place. Additionally, I went into this portion of my research with a personal understanding of national identity as a sensitive topic. I reiterated several times that participants had the right to stop or skip as many questions as they'd like, especially if sharing information made them feel unsafe or uncomfortable. Despite my own concerns, participants were open, engaged and seemed eager to discuss the topic, as further expressed in my data analysis section.

5.4.4 The Language Factor

Initially, I felt very little hesitance about interacting with youth from the region. This was in some way born out of a desire to connect with informants in a non-hierarchal manner. My own broken dialect allowed me to enter the interaction with a hint of humor and relieve my position as *researcher* to a more vulnerable role. This was negotiated from some of my first moments meeting with youth-organization advisors who quickly swerved back and forth between English and the local language[17] with me.

My working knowledge of the local language was adequate for interviews but could sometimes be contested. To ensure my participants had no barriers in expressing themselves,

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[17] I use the term *local language* in an effort to promote inclusivity. Because of the politics of the region, both *Serbo-Croatian* and *Bosnian* are terms used to reference the language used in Mostar.

I invited a translator to the interview sessions. My translator, Elma, was present on site specifically for the task of responding to any difficulties in translation. Because capturing the voices of the informants was my main priority, I assured participants that the interviews could be conducted in the language they felt most comfortable using. Though some stuck primarily with the local language, most chose to speak English. This proved to work efficiently, with participants using the local language when they had trouble finding the right English word. For example, the use of the word *trouble* was questioned in almost all groups. This was clarified together by listing examples that would be troublesome, as further explained in the data analysis chapter. Understanding how these boys viewed trouble, or what situations they deemed dangerous became a very interesting point of clarification. In this way, difficulties in translation were used as opportunities for new areas of understanding.

5.4.5 Personal Reflection on Interview Technique

As a new researcher, I anticipated not every interview would go as planned. Several challenges took place throughout the research process. First, recruiting participants turned out to be more difficult than expected. The use of four separate focus groups required more participants than were necessary for individual interviews. Ideally, a greater number of participants would have granted me the opportunity to reflect more on interaction between participants and make greater comparisons with past MRNS (Thompson and Pleck, 1986) results. However, smaller sample sizes proved to be beneficial. For example, smaller group numbers resulted in a greater sense of intimacy between myself and participants. On a practical level, smaller groups meant less conflicting schedules and more room for discussion. Smaller groups also meant less skepticism between group participants, a theme I will explore in both the data analysis and findings chapter. Perhaps skepticism could be improved in the future through the use of more personal invitations, such as in-person recruiting. In general, finding ways to reduce skepticism amongst participants is necessary. For example, a neutral location in the region would be helpful for future study replication. Picking an environment without any tie to the topic or participants at hand could potentially help relieve negative feelings or assumptions on the participants end. Looking back, I believe the strength of this research is due to the openness in its approach. With the perspective gained from Stage 1 of field work, letting themes present themselves organically fulfilled my personal desire to explore something that was not previously researched. This allowed for a sense of curiosity and wonder to guide every step of the process. Because my intention in

conducting this research is to provide fruitful information for future studies, I hope its contents will act as a road map for those interested in exploring these themes further.

5.5 Methods of Analysis

5.5.1 The Male Role Norms Scale

The MRNS, or *Male Role Norm Scale* (Thompson and Pleck, 1986) was developed as a derivative of the Brannon Masculinity Scale (Fischer, Good, Glenn, 1998). While the Brannon Masculinity Scale (BMS) (Brannon and Juni, 1984) was developed to assess masculine gender norms amongst men and boys in the United States, the MRNS was created to be used amongst more generalizable populations. The MRNS (1986) developed further to include new sub-scales which expanded on the themes identified in studies looking at US masculinity These sub-scales include,

> status, reflecting the need to gain respect and status; toughness, reflecting the expectation of men's being independent and rugged mentality, emotionally and physically; and c, anti-femininity, referring to the expectation that men should avoid behaviors and activities that are perceived as stereotypically feminine. (Fischer et al., 1998, p. 136).

These resulted in the popularity and extensive use of the MRNS within the field of gender role research (Thompson & Pleck, 1995). As mentioned in Section 5.4.3, choosing the most relevant measurement tool was a difficult process. The preliminary literature review conducted provided several examples of tools previously used to explore attitudes amongst men and boys. Most of the data produced was focused on male attitudes towards gender equitable behaviors and less on men's attitudes towards masculine norms. Because this research is interested more in men's own relationship to their masculinity, or internal hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005), I intentionally resisted the use of scales concerning men's perceptions of gender equality as it pertains to gender relations between men and women. Focusing specifically on young men and boys in the Balkans allowed me to identify elements of masculinity that are context-specific. The MRNS (Thomspon and Pleck, 1986) was deemed most fit because it contains the 3 latter sub-scales of "toughness, status and anti-

femininity" (Fischer et al, 1998) which mirror the dominant concepts of Balkan masculinity as identified in YMI's pilot study (Eckman et al., 2007)

5.5.2 Social Contact Theory

As previously mentioned, Gordon W. Allport (1954) proposed the idea that interpersonal contact would reduce or improve conditions between groups experiencing conflict (Allport, 1954). Given the national segregation still operating under Mostar's school systems and, as presented in the data analysis, social relations, I used Social Contact Theory (Allport, 1954) as an approach to exploring the theme of ethno-national identity amongst my participants. To do so, I pulled questions from a previous study used to investigate contact amongst men and boys in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Haglund, 2016). While this research does not directly concern the impact of contact across national lines, Social contact Theory (Allport, 1954) was helpful in providing a framework for ways to discuss national relations in a safe, comfortable and non-confrontational manner.

4.5.3 Content Analysis

To analyze the results of my gathered qualitative data, I looked for a method which would allow my participant's articulated thoughts to shine through. In order to ensure this, I made it a point of selecting one which would not transform the responses of my participants into quantitative data, but would instead use excerpts of their narratives as pieces of a collective story. Thus, I adopted the process of "systematic content analysis" (see, e.g., Boyatzis, 1998; Flick, 2002) to organize my data. With the general topics of masculinities and ethno-national identity as my priori themes, thematic analysis allowed me to further explore emergent topics which presented themselves throughout the course of interviews. To do so, my thematic synthesis took on three stages, as stated by Angela Harden and James Thomas (2008) below:

> The free line-by-line coding of the findings of primary studies; the organization of these 'free codes' into related areas to construct 'descriptive' themes; and the development of 'analytical' themes (Harden and Thomas, 2008, p. 7)

Luckily, YMI's pilot study (2007) had already coded the responses gathered through their PLA research with young men and boys from 5 Balkan territories. Thus, I was able to use

these themes in relationship to the subscales identified in the MRNS (1986) and select questions which were most fitting. Then, I organized the responses from participants into more descriptive themes, which made them context-specific. At the last stage, these identified themes were then analyzed in relationship to National identity, and resulted in the larger 'analytical themes' presented in Chapter 7 on findings.

6. Data Analysis

Mostar is a relatively small town, the kind of place you can't buy a carton of milk without greeting at least 3 people along the way. As I learned through my daily interactions as well as in the stories of the young men I spoke with, this factor makes living a life outside of the public-eye rather difficult. Through the course of my research, I would come to discover that this aspect of the community has a significant effect on the way identities are formed, acted out and policed. As a result, I was able to explore how the wider social context of Mostar affected men's subjective and collective experiences of masculinity (Flick, 2002) within a post-conflict context. The following section is devoted to taking a close look at the most definitive themes surrounding the enforcement of and challenges to hegemonic masculinity in post-conflict Mostar as they occurred in my interviews.

6.1 Masculinity

Underneath the responses of the young men in my interviews, I noticed a general sense of skepticism that effected the ways they interacted and built relationships with individuals in their communities. They openly shared with me day-to-day difficulties they experienced as young men in Mostar, from worrying about their self-image or feeling ostracized and burdensome when they failed to live up to the type of emotional restraint that was required of them. It took them years of close connection to establish a sense of trust with anyone; as one participant notes, even one's own mother.

This skepticism is illustrated through an encounter I had with a young man who once joined me on my lunch break. He was curious about the circumstances of my visit and, as it often did, the divulgence of my research topic led us into an interesting conversation about his own gendered experience. Eagerly, he shared his perspective on the gender roles present in Mostar society. He tried to explain this through a personal story about a time in which he acted out lewd sexual behavior[18] on a local woman. As his story goes, this encounter quickly made word around town, and resulted in his being ostracized from the community, which he

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[18] For reasons of privacy and established trust with community members, I have chosen not to share the specific details of this story.

found unfair. He stressed that because Mostar was so small, he could never be redeemed. While his story revealed a type of entitlement, his desire for redemption paired with a hopelessness in re-assimilating into his social circles made me think about the influence of societal judgement. Because I was an outsider, he told me he felt he could be vulnerable and that he could trust me. As a stranger, I posed no threat. I would later come to witness similar sentiments in my interviews.

I include this story to highlight one man's experience within a wider social context (Flick, 2002) which I will explore below. What follows is a deeper look at how the aforementioned themes of vulnerability, respect and skepticism influence male identity formation as they were further discussed in the context of my interviews.

6.1.1 Emotional Vulnerability, Respect & Skepticism

How men think, act and feel about their emotional vulnerability is a prominent theme in Masculinity studies (Connell, 1995; 2000; Williams, 2009). However, because masculinities are multiple, contested and contradictory (Williams, 2009) I did not want to use the existing literature to make generalizations about Balkan masculinity. Instead, I wanted to understand how the concept of vulnerability is perceived specifically amongst the young men in my study. To do this, I used the MRNS (Thompson and Pleck, 1986) statement "Nobody respects a man who frequently talks about his worries, fears or problems". This statement resulted in internally conflicting answers amongst several participants[19]. This specific question noticeably required that participants express their own opinions while also addressing the reality of their lives. In some cases, it was difficult to know whether they were expressing their personal attitudes, the prevailing attitude in society, or the reality of their behavior within their social context. Some participants partially solved this dilemma by stating their own opinion in combination with the societal expectation regarding the accepted masculinity.

I noticed that participants seemed unwilling to agree that men *should* be able to speak of their own worries, fears and problems without stressing that this was nonetheless not the case in their society. This made the discussion significant in that it highlighted a type of self-policing

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[19] I use the term *internal confliction* to describe the process in which a participant's response highlights a disagreement between their own personal beliefs and those which are nonetheless shaped by social norms.

that is enforced amongst boys in this context despite their own desires. This is evident in Participant A's initial response to the statement:

> At least here [Mostar], it's a stereotype, and I know for myself, I used to talk about my worries, troubles, and I got less and less respect from them [friends]. So, here usually it's a stereotype so that's why I said 2 [strongly agree], because only of the stereotype and I know from my experience.

<div align="right">Group 1, Participant A</div>

Participant A demonstrates awareness around the way that the hegemonic masculinity in Mostar prohibits men from sharing their emotional experiences by specifying that 'here it's a stereotype,' expressing the possibility that this is not the case elsewhere. He then uses his personal experience as proof of this, in which the stereotype is validated. Through his use of the past tense, we can see that his previous attempts to share his "worries and troubles" resulted in "less and less respect". Despite his own willingness to challenge the stereotype, when faced with the opportunity to disclose his vulnerabilities, he lost respect from his peers. As a result of his experience, he holds onto conflicting beliefs.

Additionally, respect is mentioned as something one risks losing the more vulnerable they appear within their social circles. The importance of earning or having respect was mentioned numerous times in several of the focus groups. When I asked about local understandings of respect in another group, two men weighed in with their reflections, stating:

> I look at respect as when he always lets me say what I want to say, I listen to him, and he listens to me, and then we compromise around something. Or we don't agree and then there isn't anger and I mean, that's that.

In the same group, participant B added that,

> Respect means not to mock someone's personality, not to disturb somebody because of something he does and we don't like it.

<div align="right">Group 2, Participant B</div>

Participant B adds that to respect someone means not to mock or make fun of another individual. Respect is thus communicated as something which does not minimize the

character of the other person. It provides one another with a sense of autonomy that does not result in conflict and/or violence.

With Participant A in Group 1, we can see that speaking about one's feelings and/or worries requires one to risk the level of respect they receive from his/her community. This consequence might then shed light on a type of hegemonic masculinity that stigmatizes men's emotional vulnerability on the basis that that doing so threatens one's respectability and/or status in the community.

As signified in the introductory story, the importance of respect amongst young men and boys need not be taken lightly, as it is discussed as something which must be earned and is not easily regained. Following his description of respect, Participant B returns to his answer around the 'worries, hopes, and fears' statement, adding:

> Unfortunately, that is the case in our society because the man is like, the figure or the metaphor for something strong, for something that is destructive and something that goes only forward and has no feeling.

> Group 2, Participant B

Participant B explains that in Mostar, strength is defined as something achievable through the suppression of feeling, which is the only way to progress or "move forward," implying that *real men* do not second guess or allow themselves to feel at all. Additionally, he illustrates that showing vulnerability does not fit the hegemonic masculinity, which he pairs in direct opposition to strength. Seidler (1997) has found that for some men, strength and reason are associated with masculinity, while emotionality is seen as a weakness (Williams, 2009). Another participant in Focus Group 1 concurs:

> Unfortunately, it's a stereotype in our society and everyone will put you down or everyone will stop taking you seriously. You will become a liability if you talk of your problems in front of, doesn't matter if it's friends or just about anyone, even your mother maybe; And the other stereotype is that men are expected to be successful in everything they do, and unfortunately that's the stereotype in most societies.

> Group 1, Participant B

Participant B describes that men risk losing their social status and relationships if they talk about their 'problems'. He adds that in general, men are expected to be "successful in everything they do", signifying the influence of external pressure to not make mistakes or show weakness. Deborah Lupton (1998) has argued that men must master their emotions and enact "strength through silence" to uphold such an expectation. Ultimately, one might feel pressure to enact a confidence that isn't necessarily there. This was affirmed by one participant, who stated:

> Many people think that a man should be confident but most of them are actually not, that's not true.

<div align="right">Group 2, Participant B</div>

Participant B challenges the stereotype that men should be confident by expressing that this expectation is not reflective of his personal experience. His response highlights a positive change from 2007, in which Balkan men reported high rates of self-satisfaction despite the presence of high rates of depression amongst youth (Eckman et al., 2007). In addressing the reality of men's internal feelings about themselves, Participant B's response points to an interesting connection between mental health and masculinity. While this is an important topic worthy of exploration, I will not be dealing with it in my thesis. However, it is still interesting to note.

Nevertheless, participants did express a few conditions under which showing emotional vulnerability was permissible, and with whom. As exemplified by the responses above, I found that young men needed to trust that their emotions could be expressed without ridicule. Indeed, their answers highlighted a fear of judgement. They expressed skepticism towards both friends and acquaintances, going as far as to express uncertainty towards their own mother. I wondered if or how the young men in my study ever had the chance to be emotionally vulnerable.

In several responses, participants discussed specific characteristics within their relationships that made them feel safe enough to share their "worries, fears and problems." One of these specifications was how long they have known the other person. The longer the duration of the friendship, the safer the participant felt to share their worries, fears of problems without having to fear they would be judged or less respected. For example,

If I don't know the person really much, because of, as [*other participant's name*] said, society, they will think that, they wouldn't really respect me as a man. But if I'm talking to [*other name*], who I know for 12 years or if I talk to someone from BMK who I know that, he wouldn't judge me because if I, because they, *[switches to local language]* they have a different perspective on men for the reason that most of them in our friend group have a different view on men and I would lose that respect for the reason that I am speaking about my feelings.

<div align="right">Group 2, Participant C</div>

Therefore, by sharing vulnerabilities with someone that they don't know very well in their community, men risk facing ridicule and a loss of respect. However, he notes that in order to feel he can speak openly without repercussions, he must speak to someone that falls under one of two categories: someone he has known for an extended amount of time or, alternatively, someone with a "different perspective on men." Here he presents a second factor: gender consciousness. Indeed, Participant C expresses that it is easier for him to "break from" the hegemonic masculinity amongst those who hold alternative views or an understanding of gender.

I noticed that in Participant C's response, there was a type of 'safe space' referenced amongst those within BMK that allowed him to feel freer to digress from the norm and risk ridicule and/or loss of respect. This struck me as an important benefit of BMK, and I was curious if this was something unique to participants who had been involved in gender transformative programming (GTP). This proved to be a fruitful point of research, and is discussed in greater detail in section 7.4 on Nationality and Relationships.

Amongst participants who had not undergone any previous GTP, I found that there was a general agreement that it is only with close friends or those you have known long enough with whom you feel comfortable sharing worries, fears and problems. However, no direct mention of hegemonic masculinity or current social roles were examined nor discussed. Instead, a more general discussion took place surrounding the preconditions necessary for expressing vulnerability. One participant in particular stressed the importance of not sharing one's worries and fears with others, which he framed in a negative light:

If you emit negative energy, you're gonna receive that negative energy.

<div align="right">Group 4, Participant C</div>

This is reflective of studies that have shown that men believe emotional experiences should be solitary, so as to prevent one from becoming a burden to others by expressing weakness (Lupton, 1998; Williams, 2009). Indeed, Participant C implies that expressing weakness is something contagious which will only negatively affect those around you. This statement is reminiscent of the aforementioned response from Participant B in Group 1, who stated that "You will become a liability if you talk of your problems," reiterating the view that men's expressions of vulnerability puts them at risk of being seen as a "liability" to others. "Energy" can thus be seen as a replacement word to otherwise hide or coat the underlying stigmatization of disclosing one's vulnerability to others (Williams, 2009). Both statements allude to the idea that the more a man expresses his struggles, the more of a burden he becomes to others.

Under such strict restrictions, ideally these boys would experience no situations in which worries, fears and problems were issues at all. However, as the progress of my interviews revealed, struggle is not absented from the lives of young men in Mostar. Indeed, the young men in my study expressed several factors which made their lives difficult. I found that the socioeconomic condition in post-conflict Mostar made it rather difficult to live up to the hegemonic masculinity and, as a result, was challenged by the young men in my study. This is exemplified through the following statements as they are discussed in greater detail below.

6.1.2 Independence, Class & Help-Seeking behaviors

Exploring how the young men in my research understood and experienced the notion of independence revealed a number of different variables that affected their ability to live up to this 'ideal.' I explored the concept of independence in my interviews using the MRNS (Thompson and Pleck, 1986) statement, "A man must stand on his own two feet and never depend on other people to help him do things."

This made for an extremely stimulating conversation which looked closely at the impact of several other aspects of identity. Through participant responses, it was found that class, age and stability were all factors which either made it more challenging or supported them in their efforts to reach what they saw as a universal goal of independence.

, It's okay if you ask someone for help. It's not, it shouldn't be stereotyped, like a man shouldn't seek help or anything like that, or that's a woman's trait, that's all wrong.

It's quite okay to ask for help before you get your own, whether it's a job or some kind of stable- until you have something of your own.

<div align="right">Group 1, Participant B</div>

Participant B's response illustrates both an understanding of hegemonic masculinity by refuting the notion that asking for help is a woman's trait. Noticeably, the participant corrects himself by arguing against the stereotype instead of denying it altogether. He then destigmatizes the act of asking for help, at least until one has *something of their own*. In their study looking at how men negotiate their independence through the aging process, James Smith and colleagues (2007) found that men often described independence through acts of self-sufficiency. This included, amongst other things, refusing to ask for help from others and became more important as men got older (Smith et al., 2007). As we can see from Participant B's response, young men then pose an age group that is better equipped, at least by social norms to seek help on their way towards independence. Indeed, participants collectively established the acceptance of young adulthood as a period when it is more acceptable to ask for help from others. Furthermore, asking for help was justified or acceptable if it was reaching towards an end result of self-independence.

Due to negative attitudes expressed towards participants sharing worries, fears or problems as discussed in section 6.1, I was surprised to hear open attitudes towards asking for help when it came to the topic of independence. Through their responses, it became evident that the impact of class and the unstable economic climate of the region played a big role in normalizing help-seeking behaviors, specifically in regards to financial independence. Participants used their responses to make sense of their own realities, often referencing their own experience as justification for seeking help:

I also strongly disagree with this because life is really rough nowadays. It's really hard to keep up without someone's help. I think that every person in this world needs help by other people, or someone can help others because, like I said, times are rough and it's really hard to achieve something without someone's help.

<div align="right">Group 2, Participant C</div>

Participant C makes it clear that life without assistance is particularly difficult in Mostar. Through his comment, I noticed that young men destigmatized or justified the act of asking for help by referencing the stifling economic situation in which they live. Thus, the socio-

economic climate or class barrier actually presents a positive opportunity for challenging hegemonic masculine norms by normalizing the act of asking for help.

This normalization was seen within various responses, as exemplified below:

> I also say 7 [strongly disagree] and I totally disagree with this because the human being has formed groups, some kind of groups to survive in life on easier ways. So, the man is also a human being [*laughs*]. And, without anybody's help, I don't think anybody could succeed. And if we are actually fighting for values of equality between male and female genders, I would say also that I totally disagree with this.

> Group 2, Participant D

While arguing against the idea that a man should "never depend on others", Participant D uses the concept of equality to highlight the shared experience of being human. He argues that if we are seeking equality, this would only strengthen his statement. Though I did not probe, we can assume that Participant D, in other words, means that in order for men and women to be equal, they must share tasks, including those of income provider. Indeed, participant D presents us with another opportunity in which economic insecurity can be used as a way to encourage greater sharing of tasks and responsibilities between men and women, thus shifting some aspects of the existing hegemonic masculinity.

When I probed further and asked participants if they could explain what obstacles might stand in the way of asking for help, one Participant responded with,

> Pride, I think. Pride is the one thing that people are not okay with and they don't like asking people for help because they think they'll end up being weak in the end because they asked for help.

> Group 4, Participant A

Participant A uses the term 'pride' to describe a barrier that stands between men and accessing help. He then explains that 'people' resist seeking help in an effort to protect themselves from being seen as weak. Indeed, this response can also be looked at in light of the section on vulnerability, which highlighted that despite participant's personal views, there still exists a lack of social acceptance when it comes to men expressing uncertainties.

Whether personal opinion reflects the actual behavior is still up for debate. Again, this disconnect between personal opinion and behavior highlights a methodological challenge in my study, yet also points to a gap between individual and structural forces which affect the formation of masculinity amongst participants, which I will discuss in further detail in the discussion section of my paper. Nevertheless, this disconnect is partially a consequence of using a pre-determined questionnaire, which made it difficult to separate whether or not participant's answers were based on their actual experiences or how they thought things *should* be. What people say they do, or think they do, can often be very different from what they actually do. This is reflected on in greater detail in the methodology section.

The theme of independence and seeking help from others was further discussed in response to the MRNS statement, "A man should never back down in the face of trouble" (Thompson and Pleck, 1986). This question required clarification amongst participants which was partially facilitated by the local translator.[20] There were essentially several different types of trouble used to better interpret the question, including participants witnessing a man hitting his girlfriend, a fight on the street or difficulties with uncomfortable situations. When trouble was interpreted as personal struggle in Group 2, facing 'trouble' took on a new direction and was discussed as a solitary experience which highlighted independence and self-determination:

> I had also trouble with new people when I first got in BMK. I didn't know anyone; all the people were different: different personalities, different hobbies, everything was different for me. And if I hadn't faced it, if I had given up, then I wouldn't have come here and I wouldn't be sitting here and giving this interview.

> Group 2, Participant A

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[20] The term 'trouble' was difficult to directly translate in the local language and solicited a discussion between the translator and participants. While I welcomed and encouraged participant's engaging in the clarification themselves, I did not want to interfere with the process. Instead, I affirmed their own suggestions and encouraged them to go from there. During groups 1 and 2, the translator present attempted to assist participants in their understanding of the word "trouble," which was not directly translatable to the local language. This resulted in a variety of interpretations amongst participants and made it more difficult to analyse individual responses in relation to other focus groups.

Participant A is faced with an unfamiliar situation which makes him feel uncomfortable. Through his response, we can see that he highlights difference as the reason for his discomfort. However, if he had 'given up,' he would not be where he is today. He expresses the fear of difference, as well as a positive experience which reaffirmed the rewarding aspects of 'overcoming' said difference. Thus, trouble, or in this case, the fear of difference is seen as something that one can persevere through and can lead to a positive ending, such as interview participation. What the participant describes is overcoming a hurdle of discomfort initially experienced within a new territory.

> …if you're in some trouble, and mostly in life, you will have to face it even if there is a fear of not going through it or not succeeding because failure, failure is a part of the success. Because on the road to success, you will always have to fail. If you're afraid to fail then hardly you will achieve anything because you have to fail if you want to achieve anything bigger.

> Group 2, Participant A

Participant A offers two challenges to hegemonic masculinity in his responses to the statement on trouble. In his first responses, he situates himself as vulnerable in the context of difference in Budi Muško Klub. As such, perseverance is highlighted as a learning experience gained from involvement in BMK. In the second quote, he then conceptualizes failure as a positive path that leads to success. In light of the discussion on men's worries, fears and problems in which one participant stated that 'men are supposed to be successful at everything,' Participant A then normalizes failure as something which can be used for "achieving something bigger."

As I mentioned above, several focus groups conceptualized 'trouble' as involving a situation in which they see somebody attacking somebody else:

> If he sees someone that is fighting on the street, he can always call someone for help, or go there if it's safe to separate them. But, he shouldn't enter the fight. He should, he has that choice to stop the fight. That's why I say three [moderately disagree]. He faces the trouble but he has a choice to stop it.

> Group 1, Participant A

In this scenario, Participant B clarifies that meeting violence with further violence is not an option, and offers up the agency of the bystander to "stop the fight". In this sense, he provides alternatives to fighting and shows a desire towards conflict resolution. However, when another participant asked for further clarification, the translator offered the following example:

> When he [a man] sees something, for example, that a man is attacking a woman, that two men are fighting.

> Group 1, Translator [*Clarification*]

Notice that the focus has now shifted to a man hitting a woman, versus a scenario of two men fighting. In response, Participant A changed his original answer from moderately disagree to strongly agree.

> Then I'll change my vote to one.

> Group 1, Participant A

Participant A's change in answer, from a moderate to a strong agreement that a man should never back down when 'trouble' involved a man and woman as opposed to two men underlines an interesting moment of reasoning when it comes to justifying acts of violence. This response highlights the acceptance of the use of violence when it is in response to who the bystander views as in need of protection, and who does not. Indeed, this response sheds light on a protective hegemonic masculinity, which Messerschmidt (2015) identified as the "brave, strong, and tough masculine solder/protector in contrast to the timid, weak and tender feminine wife/mother in need of protection" (p.22). This view affirms findings from YMI's pilot study (2007) which found that young men "linked violence to the key masculine protectors, especially of peers, girlfriends and family" and "especially connect violence with men's need to protect their pride or reputation" (p.36). In the case of defending peers, I have included an excerpt from a participant in Group 3:

> He went to pick on two of my friends and basically that was one of those situations where you can't avoid it, you just gotta stand up for yourself and for others.

> Group 3, Participant A

However, some responses offered a variety of alternatives in place of involving oneself in violence. For example:

> Well under no circumstance, whether that's a man or a woman who makes the decision, I think that the human, whichever gender, can call for help. Yes, if they alone can't stop it, that violence, there always exists authority.

> Group 1, Participant B

While participant A sees no opportunities for avoidance, Participant B interprets the situation as one in which the bystander now has a choice between inaction and action. Additionally, he lists asking for assistance in deescalating the situation as an option that is available to men and women alike, specifying that gender is not, or perhaps should not be a factor.

The prevalence of violence in the lives of young men in Mostar and its relationship to Balkan masculinity was first noticed in a CARE pilot study (2007) and was further analyzed for the purpose of my thesis. I wanted to know, how do these young men experience violence? Does the threat of violence have any connection to the variable of nationality? Is it influenced by the post-conflict context in which they live? I explored these questions in great detail with the use of through several participant responses. I will discuss them more thoroughly in the following section on toughness and violence.

6.1.3 Toughness & Violence

In focus group discussions, participants paired words like '*emotions*' and '*vulnerability*' in direct opposition to the idea of "*toughness*". The importance of '*toughness*' as it relates to Balkan masculinity was first noticed in a CARE pilot study (2007) and was further analyzed for the purpose of my thesis. I set out to explore toughness by using the MRNS statement, "I think a man should try to become physically tough even if he's not big" (Thompson and Pleck, 1986). Toughness was recognized as an important ingredient for the ideal and desirable hegemonic masculinity in the Balkan region. In the 2007 pilot initiative, young men and boys were asked to draw the "current social constructs of young men with regard to hegemonic masculinity" (Eckman et al., 2007, p. 16). While the results varied across sites, there was a general consensus over some key ideal characteristics. These included visible strength, large penis size (associated with "authority, respect and power), the ability to protect one's family and "defend honor", and engage in drinking and sports,

amongst other answers which I will discuss below (Eckman et al., 2007, p. 16). I wanted to know if the responses in focus groups would show changes from those found in the pilot study, compiled over 10 years ago.

Discussing this statement in the focus group sessions lightened the mood in interviews. It provided a space for participants to make reference to their own body types and a sense of comedic relief. It was difficult to decide if laughter was used to cope with one's sense of difference from the norm or to poke fun at the absurdity of the question. Regardless, amongst almost all participants, big bodies or physical toughness were not seen as necessary components of masculinity but instead as something one uses a scare tactic. For example,

> We are born the way we are. Something what is our real personality, not something that society wants to- not something that society wants from us, only the thing that we are.
>
> Group 2, Participant B

Participant B begins by making a clear division between what is inherent in the individual as opposed to "something that society wants from us." In this case, he points to 'physical strength' or a 'big body' as the socially desired attribute. Physical toughness is thus described as an added value, but not necessary. Here we can see that this general consensus is supported by the YMI pilot study (2007), in which the young men emphasized that "physical strength alone would be empty without mental strength" and was often used as "a compensation for other weaknesses" (Eckman et. al, 2007, p. 21). This ideal of 'natural' toughness was a reoccurring theme. For example,

> I don't know. I don't think every person should be tough. Maybe some people should be emotional and they are built to be emotional. I don't think that everybody should be tough as a stone or to fight everybody in a physical way. Some people need to be emotional for the world to work.
>
> Group 4, Participant A

Drawing on the same theme of inherent characteristics, Participant D stresses that *some* people are naturally emotional. Without specifying who, he continues by placing emotionality and toughness on opposite ends, adding that this seemingly natural order is what allows the world to work. Therefore, toughness and emotionality/vulnerability are not

regarded as characteristics which exist simultaneously in individuals but separate concepts inherited by specific individuals.

Additionally, participant A brings up the use of physical violence in opposition to 'being emotional'. To explore this further, I used several statements from the MRNS (Thompson and Pleck, 1986) to explore the role of physical violence in the lives of young men in Mostar. Specifically, I wanted to know under what spaces and conditions physical violence took place. This appeared in the context of self-defense, as explained below.

6.1.3.1 Self-Defense & Reactions to Violence

Due to the region's history of conflict, I felt that it was important to try and understand young men's violence within its local context. My preliminary research revealed significant rates of violence amongst young men and boys in the region. For example, in Serbia, it was discovered that one-fourth of school-aged children were exposed to violent behavior from their teachers (Eckman et al., 2007; UNICEF report, 2006). Several questions on Thompson and Pleck's (1986) MRNS explore men's reactions to and relationship with physical violence. This includes the statements, "A man should always refuse to get into a fight, even if there seems to be no way to avoid it", "A man should never back down in the face of trouble", and "Fists are sometimes the only way to get out of a bad situation" (Thompson and Pleck, 1986, p.140). I wanted to understand how these boys understood physical violence; if they saw it as something inevitable, preventable or altogether rare.

Participant's responses ranged from providing alternatives to engaging in direct violence, to one's reactions in the presence of danger. The responses were both confusing and enlightening, and were often expressed through the use of hypothetical situations. The statements below illustrate a variety of factors which influence the use of violence, as expressed in story form. For example,

> I'm walking through my old hood and I see 3 or 4 guys that I know are trouble and they are sitting down and they are drinking. I can choose to walk past them and maybe start something, it just depends if they're too high or drunk to notice who it is. Like, they wouldn't recognize me. They'll just outburst. And if I go around, even though I'm good with those guys, if I go around, I'm avoiding the trouble, then it's good. But if I see those four guys beating someone up, I'm going to choose to get involved to save that 5th person.

As he describes it, even acquaintances are capable of enacting unwarranted violence if they are 'too drunk to notice'. Participant A names alcohol as the main factor in this situation. Additionally, he provides an example in which preventing violence is his own responsibility in what may otherwise be a seemingly innocent situation. This is done by either taking a different route or making himself visibly familiar. He presents a situation in which young men must be aware and careful of their movements so as to ensure they do not become a target of violence. Because they are "too high or drunk" to notice him, he must enact self-policing behavior to avoid violence with the boys mentioned altogether. A similar thought is shared by another participant:

> But where you can avoid this, that fighting situation scenario, you should always avoid it because, mostly it's just non-sense. Somebody, you walk in a bar and somebody sees you wearing something they don't like and just want to fight with you or something like that, so I would say that you should avoid it if you can.

Group B, Participant C

Similar to Participant A, Participant C describes violence as something more commonplace that can occur without reason. It is made clear in both of these statements that the combination of alcohol and normative male social bonding can result in a situation that provokes violence. A few other instances of provocations were mentioned, including sports:

> Most guys today are very aggressive and most of them, most of the fights are based on religion or nationality--*["nationality" expressed in unison by group]* ---especially futbol clubs, basketball clubs, I don't know, sport.

Group 2, Participant C

While normalizing aggression amongst men in Mostar, Participant 3 then adds various aggravators of violence by specifying the domains of religion, nationality, and sport. From his examples, we can see that acts of violence seem to be grounded in various issues. The particular moment of shared agreement around the prevalence of fights based on national identity stood out strongly to me, as it highlighted a point of resonance for all participants in the focus group. That this provocation occurred through sports was something that other

participants in various focus groups agreed with and stressed further. This is discussed in greater detail in section 6.2, in which I discuss the specific role of sports in relationship to both masculine as well as national identity.

6.1.3.1.2 Alternatives to Violence

Some participants did indeed include alternatives to physical violence in their responses. Here, I noticed differences between the responses of those who have taken part in BMK programming and those who have not, with BMK members expressing other ways of dealing with aggression.

> Of course, it's never good to respond to violence with violence.
>
> Group 1, Participant B

Participant B notes that responding with violence is not the only option, later adding that violence is only warranted in the case of self-defense. Alternatively, in Group 3, Participant B states,

> If that person tries to pick a fight with you and you don't want to, there's no way to just overcome it; show him. If he wants that [fighting], give [it to] him. And if he gets like, beat down, then it's his own fault."
>
> Group 3, Participant B

Fighting is therefore seen as something 'inescapable,' even against one's own wishes. By adding, "show him," Participant B signifies a moment of proving oneself. Similarly, Participant 1 signifies the inability to avoid a fight:

> I don't think he should refuse to fight. I mean, you should stand up for yourself in any way possible. But if you can't avoid a fight, why not fight? I mean, I'm like that. If somebody doesn't want me to fight them, I won't; but if somebody really wants to fight me, I will. It's just how I am. But, I don't know, if you can't avoid a fight, why try to?
>
> Group 4, Participant A

Participant 1 in Group 4 uses the idea of inherent characteristics or the 'way one is' to support his insistence on fighting. In both responses, participants frame violence as

something which is called upon, and 'given' to the other. There are no alternatives reactions given, and the participants go as far as to question why one would avoid responding to the violence altogether.

This insistence on responding to physical violence was further explored with the statement, "Fists are sometimes the only way to get out of a bad situation" (Thompson & Pleck, 1986). A note-worthy theme that was appeared within this discussion self-image. In one focus group, Participant A expressed that it was okay to defend oneself without ruining one's own image:

> If he is generally a man of peace and all he does is good for others and he doesn't pick fights, then he should have the right to defend himself without ruining his image or anything like that.

Group 1, Participant A

Participant A equates doing good for others and not picking fights with the trope of 'a man of peace'. With his use of this description, Participant A presents us with an opportunity for a new type of hegemonic masculinity. Indeed, Participant A challenges a key aspect of the hegemonic masculinity identified in the 2007 Pilot study which found "references to the role of war or fighting as defining masculinity (Eckman et al., 2007, p. 21). In his response, Participant A signifies that one has the option to operate under the 'rules' of a healthier self-image or masculinity. He references a desire to be seen in a positive light; as a man of peace, something worthy of striving for and practiced through non-violent response.

Additionally, this response is particularly noteworthy in that it highlights a typical concern for adolescents: that of one's image and/or reputation. Key strategies for engaging young men in gender based violence have found that adolescence is a key stage during which "gender identities are constructed and can be shaped" (Eckman et al., 2007, p. 8). Thus, adolescence is a key time for challenging hegemonic masculinity, and the concept of a 'man of peace' highlights an opening for a possible new model of being.

Mostar's post-conflict context is especially relevant when it comes to violence amongst youth. UNICEF's State of the World's Children report (2007) found that "boys coming from violent families are twice as likely as their peers from non-violent families to become violent men" (Eckman et al., 2007). In contrast to the hegemonic masculinity found amongst older generations, Participant A describes a new way of thinking about men. His

response clearly communicates or normalizes a non-violent figure who only engages in violence when it is the *only* alternative. Defining the self through acts of peace is thus substituted for defining the self through acts of violence. As a theme, 'peace' was mentioned by another participant:

> When you sometimes talk about the issues of peace in the world, we can compare [that] to this question. So, if we don't use, if we use our power to our self-defense- if the land doesn't use its, for example, army, it won't make sure that that country is peaceful. So, if we don't fight for ourselves, we are going to get into an enormous number of troubles.

<div align="right">Group 2, Participant B</div>

Participant B refers to peace as a condition achieved through the act of violence and/or self-defense. By using physical violence as a necessary action in order to ensure peace, he frames power in line with more complicit forms of masculinity (Connell, 1997; 2005) which define power as power-over. In other words, he states that in order to keep a state of peace, one must be willing to enact violence to defend it. He then shifts from speaking about self-defense in reference to the individual and extends the conversation to include land and/or nation, using the army to reference land power. Refusing to fight, then, is to risk surrendering one's power, which can result in 'an enormous number of troubles.'

Participant C furthers this statement, adding that self-defense can also be extended to specific people within one's social circle:

> We are here to fight for ourselves and maybe for someone else who is in good relation with us…If we don't show our fists or if we don't fight, then we are going to be, I don't know, maybe like an animal or something. Everyone would do with us what they want. We would be like, a predator.

<div align="right">Group 2, Participant C</div>

Participant C states that in general, one must fight for oneself and those in close connection to them. Fighting is thus seen as something inevitable, without alternative options. Without defense, one would subject oneself to playing the role of the animal, or the source which others play out their violent acts on. He expands on this idea in the following statement:

The strong pick on the weak and it doesn't matter if you're a good person; if you're weak and show that you're weak, the strong will pick on you.

Group 2, Participant C

William's (2009) research found that the idea of being 'strong' as opposed to being 'weak' was "associated with some men's perceived leadership, power, or authority from families in the past (p. 453), thus pointing to the possibility that such views could be inherited from the war generation before them. When threatened in violence, being 'good' becomes irrelevant, and acting in a certain way does not prevent you from being a target. Therefore, violence is normalized, and displaying weakness justifies the grounds for 'the strong' to 'pick on you.'

From the quotes I have included here, we can see that hiding weakness so that one does not attract 'inevitable violence' is an important part of hegemonic masculinity amongst the young men in my study. In addition, I noticed that strength and weakness as separate, dichotomous categories appeared several times in discussions. Thus, I wanted to know more about how men viewed their masculinity in relation to its counterpart, femininity. This discussion is included below.

6.1.4 Anti-Femininity

An attempt to understand a specific brand of masculinity would be fraught without a discussion on how that masculinity is linked to local conceptualizations of femininity. To explore this link, I used the MRNS ((Thompson and Pleck, 1986) statement, "It bothers me when a man does something I consider feminine." As Connell (2005) has argued, when we refer to the concept of masculinity, we are actually naming is "configurations of gender practice." Thus, I was interested in exploring how transgressions of gendered practice were judged and felt. This statement felt more personal to my participants, and resulted in varying responses with some exemplifying skepticism and discomfort while others used the concept of individual freedom to argue in favor of gender transgressions. For example:

7 [strongly disagree], because again, that's a person, whatever gender. And if that, if he really wants and desires to feel "more feminine," then that's his choice, his right, and let him be free to do what he wants.

Group 1, Participant A

Participant A gives an answer justified by personal independence. Thus, each individual has the right to do as they want, which he views as being equal parts personal choice as well as a right. Thus, he argues that gender 'transgressions' should be accepted.

> Everyone has a right, correct? To express themselves in the way they want. Whether or not that's through dress or the way one acts, we shouldn't judge people on the basis of that. We live in the 21st century, we shouldn't have to come to any judgements.
>
> Group 1, Participant B

Participant B concurs with an argument based on rights. He then adds that femininity can be expressed in two ways: through one's dress and through one's act, thus exemplifying knowledge on various outlets of gender performance. He shows general acceptance while stressing that judging is not warranted, and expresses that the generational era should perhaps be "forward thinking" enough to do so. Participant A then adds:

> 21st century and everything is strange
>
> Group 1, Participant A

The participants in Group 1 noted the importance of freedom in their responses, signifying that individuals should be able to choose in which manner they wish to express themselves. However, the follow-up response which signified this choice as 'strange' after what seemed to be a general acceptance confused me in trying to understand their actual feelings. This viewpoint was not combatted by other participants. The following response lingered on the idea of strangeness, signifying that while there is freedom, there is also delineation from the norm. In Group 2, responses amongst participants varied, and showed that perhaps the questions in itself challenged participants:

> "Well, it still does. It bothered me a lot more before the BMK. I changed my mind but, not totally. I mean, I have to be honest. And, it really bothers me because if a man is…I'm born as a man. And, why would I want to be a woman? Because, I don't know, I believe in God, and if God gave me to be a man, I don't think that I would change myself to be a woman or something like that."
>
> Group 2, Participant B

I think that in men's nature is pretty simple. It's that we need to be strong, tough and to be confident, but there are some guys out there who they just like, jump out of that. It bothers me but like *[other participant name],* I wouldn't fight or get in conflict with that guy.

Group 2, Participant C

Personally, I would also feel kind of a little bothered but I would start to think about it. I would think this way: Like, if he has some female hormones, that's simple human biology. From this standpoint, it's not his fault, that's not a problem for me. But if my personality is in danger, then it would bother me.

Group 2, Participant D

From the selected responses above, I noticed a few interesting insights. For example, while participants recognize the existence of different gender expressions, they are nonetheless bothered by the transgression. Additionally, there is an understanding that the exception to the rule might be those who have no other choice. While there might be, in theory, an understanding of homosexuality, there is still stigma around the topic. Specifically, in the response of Participant C, he returns to the idea that gender identity is an inherent trait that some men "jump out of." It was difficult for me to understand if he began his response in reference to the stereotype, or if he was explaining his own thoughts.

Similar sentiments were felt between other participants but were met with in a different manner. For example, in Groups 3 and 4, the question itself in some way '*bothered'* the atmosphere. Instead of digging into the question or providing responses similar to those in previous questions, the silence was the most pertinent part of the conversation. However, the same concepts of '*freedom*' and '*free choice*' were expressed. Some participants stated, "it's a free country" which was followed up by another participant with the sentiment, "that's basically it. We fought for that freedom, they can do whatever they want".

While I was prepared to sit with the silence in this question, it was difficult to linger too long before pushing through to the next. It became very apparent that the question itself caused discomfort in the room. This was noted in Group 4, in which the participant, quickly and

without much discussion, responded, "no, it doesn't bother me at all" (Group 4, Participant D).

When discussing uncomfortable topics, it noticed that participants could easily justify gender transgressions or challenges to masculinity when it did not push beyond the boundaries they found acceptable or comfortable. As one participant noted, so long as "his personality wasn't in danger," he was not bothered by a feminine man. For this specific topic, I didn't pry too much. It remains an important area of research for future studies on a changing Balkan masculinity, and I hope this study will highlight the worthiness of its exploration.

6.1.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, I have used the section on masculinity to highlight several important themes that stood out in conversations regarding the topic of Hegemonic masculinity as supported through the use of the MRNS (Thompson & Pleck, 1986) questionnaire and as experienced in the lives of the young men in my study. In particular, it was noted that emotional vulnerability and displays of weakness were specific obstacles towards challenging hegemonic masculinity which resulted in loss of respect, physical violence and judgement. These were further described as being policed by the greater society. Additionally, the socioeconomic status of the region made help-seeking behaviors less stigmatized and allowed men to challenge the notion of independence through asking for help, specifically financial assistance.

However, violence was still identified as an issue amongst young men and boys, and was linked to the themes of sports, nationality and religion. While several alternatives to violence were presented, including the importance of preserving the ideal of a "man of peace," participants still felt it was important to protect oneself in an effort to avoid being seen as weak. Additionally, a discussion on femininity brought up much discomfort and revealed an area in need of further exploration. Collectively, these discussions helped identify several themes important to the formation of gender identity amongst young men in Mostar. Amongst these, a specific topic of interest which I will explore further below is that of National Identity.

6.2 National Identity

This is my favorite topic

Group 1, Participant 2

There's a lot of hatred in this town, I guess, and it's emitting on the young people in this town, a lot.

Group 4, Participant 1

Eckman et al. (2007) found that "in the context of post-conflict situations, identities of nationality, ethnicity and religion and experiences of war are also crucial categories in the construction of masculinities and gender-based violence" (p.58). Though I had a feeling national identity would find its way into my research after the countless taxi rides, coffee talks and family stories I had heard it mentioned in, the extent to which it was used to talk about masculinity in my focus groups was beyond what I could have predicted. It made the idea of overlooking this topic impossible, and leaving it out of my research unthinkable.

However, it also made me skeptical, as I was well aware through my conversations with YMI methodology creators as well as through countless literature reviews that past studies refrained from asking specific questions relating to national identity due to "observed levels of discomfort," and disagreements between participants in this context, thus leaving the topic of nationality as an area for future research. (Eckman et al., 2007, p.58). Nevertheless, I felt its presence was like an elephant room that needed to be addressed.

The following section looks at several reoccurring themes that appeared throughout conversations focused on the topic of National identity. These themes appeared in response to questions using Social Contact Theory, as discussed in the methodology chapter. I have prioritized the following quotes based on their relevance to masculinity and the post-conflict context in which they are formed. My goal is to better understand how national identity influences the lives of young men and boys in post-conflict Mostar today. In doing so, I am interested in the specific impact it has on the type of hegemonic masculinity discussed above. My findings will be further discussed in the last section of my thesis.

6.2.1 National Identity & The Post War Context

Milićević (2006) has argued that gender is "closely connected to other dimensions of identity which are enabled or constrained by the context in which they are played out" (p. 267). As is the case in Mostar, I found that the precedence of national identity for how young men perform their masculinity is one consequence of growing up in a post-conflict context. As referenced by one participant,

> There's much more hate in the post-post war generations than there is with the amount of those who actually lived through the war, were born before the war. So that only leads to the conclusion that parents were the ones who taught their children. Some parents taught their children to hate people of other nationalities, which is bad in my opinion. And those barriers don't really exist, their just, their invisible. We're being, uči nas[21] that from an early age. Most parents, sadly, tell their children those things, that, 'there is a Muslim there' or anything.

> Group 1, Participant B

Participant B references his own generation as that which has inherited the hatred from those who experienced the war themselves. He then makes the connection that this must mean it [hatred] is something that is passed on by some parents. He frames this as an 'invisible barrier,' something that isn't real but nonetheless effects the dynamic between nationalities. When asked to expand on the notion of an invisible barrier, Participant 1 added:

> Well, here it was like, war, since, you know. And after the war, I think kids, maybe older kids, teenagers around 16-17 years taught these younger kids who were 11-12 years old, like, "oh, there's a Muslim, you got to hit him," or. "Oh, there's a Croatian, let's beat him," and that's a national barrier…. I don't know how it come to this, that we have like, we should hate each other only because of the nationality and the war we didn't even live. So, we're trying to break that national barrier.

> Group 1, Participant A

Participant A's statements offer a look at two different ways ethnonational prejudice is transferred. First, he highlights a generational gap. While his initial statement focuses on the

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[21] *"They're teaching us"* in the local language.

influence of parents, or "the war generation", the second statement then highlights peer influence amongst what I assume to mean young men. Then, he identifies two ways in which prejudice is passed down: through verbal affirmation, and through physical contact and/or violence. In doing so, he additionally introduces age as an important identity marker which effects the way nationality and hegemonic masculinity interact and play out in the lived-realities of men in the region.

Another participant in Group 4 spoke more generally about the influence of the home:

> It's kind of like, it comes from their home. Like, there's a lot of hatred in their home, like their parents really hate the 'other people', as they call them. But it kind of rubs off on children too. Maybe they don't think it does, but it kind of does. In some way, it does manifest.

Group 4, Participant A

Here participant A identifies the home as a passive site of influence which indirectly and perhaps unintentionally influences the opinions and perceptions of young people in Mostar, specifically in regards to national identity. He frames prejudice as something which "they" pass on without acknowledging it. Echoing YMI's 2012 case study, he illustrates that even an unintentional act of 'othering' results in the "explicit or implicit rejection by one group of the 'other' and creates misconceptions that lead to discriminatory attitudes or behavior" (p.14). Another participant concurs:

> 12-13 years later, we have friends from the outgroup. It's just, it's not about the contact, it's just about raising them, raising of the kids. If you raise them nationalistic, then they're going to be nationalists. If you raise them tolerant, they're going to be tolerant. But if you raise them to be open minded, they're going to choose their own path and they're gonna be much more focused on staying that path.

Group 3, Participant B

Participant B's response expresses that parental influence is the main factor in determining intragroup friendship. He then provides three possible alternatives as an outcome: to be nationalist, to be tolerant, or to be open minded. He argues that the third choice presents an opportunity for the individual to decide on their own path, directed by an "open-mindedness".

However, whether or not this path is structurally supported by the post-conflict context of Mostar was up for debate, and became a reoccurring discussion in groups. Indeed, Mostar's "2 schools under one roof" policy assures makes it particularly difficult to resist such biases. This is made evident through the response of Participant B, as quoted below:

> Most people don't get an opportunity [to get to know each other]--they just get to judge from the t.v. screen, from the internet. They just get to hate each other without actually even meeting each other. They just- is it because of no opportunities? Something, something else. I'm not sure, but contact could greatly improve the relations, and national relations and enable those without prejudices to become more comfortable around people of other nationalities.

> Group 1, Participant B

Participant B points to media as a site of influence, adding that 'hatred' amongst groups is a result of prejudice gained through false representations of the other. Before he can answer his own question of what it actually is that perpetuates the ethnonational separation, he suggests that further contact could reduce the discomfort individuals without pre-existing prejudices feel. Another participant identified this attitude towards the other as influenced by one's mentality:

> It's really tough for somebody with a really different mentality than mine to make a friend with someone who is from the other side.

> Group 2, Participant B

The 'mentality' participant B describes signifies a way of thinking which he sees as necessary in order to challenge national biases. He places this mentality in opposition to his own, which he argues is necessary or makes it much less difficult to build friendships with someone "from the other side". By including this opposition, participant 2 tells a story about himself. This was a common trend that I noticed in responses, with a majority of respondents making it a point to separate themselves from "*those*" people. For example:

> I will also add that those people who have prejudice about others, the people, the person who refuse(s) to have any contact with the outgroups are often considered patriots, patriotic, and I think it is the opposite. The nationalism isn't equal to patriotism. And I think the only difference between *us* and *those* people is that we are,

we don't have any fear to go in every circle of our town. And I say to all the people who are nationalists, and who have a nationalistic view of the world, I say, 'unlike you, I'm not afraid to cross on the other side of my own town…'

<div align="right">Group 2, Participant C</div>

Following this statement, another group member responds:

I would add that I'm still scared. I mean, I'm not, I'm not calling something on, but I'm still scared because not everybody thinks like me. I mean, you can always find somebody not worthy, someone who doesn't really care, you know? Who doesn't bother you but, he can always make trouble for you when it comes to that.

<div align="right">Group 2, Participant D</div>

Participant C illustrates the complicated relationship between nationalism and patriotism in Mostar, which asserts that devotion to one's in-group is considered characteristic of a patriot. To separate himself from *those* people, he uses the example of entering "every circle of town" without fear as an act of challenging the town's geographical division. However, participant D presents a different outlook, one in which fearlessness does not necessarily prevent you from being a target of violence. This conversation points to the risk one must take in an attempt to break the existing "national barrier." The next section takes a closer at several other responses which presented attempts at challenging the national divide in the region.

6.2.2 Challenges to Ethno-centrism

Spike Peterson (1999), in his work on *Nationalism and Sexing Political Identities*, states that while studying identities, we must ask not only "how identities are located in time and space but also how they are (re)produced, resisted and reconfigured" (p. 37). What is shared amongst many participant responses is the acknowledgement that ethnocentrism is not something that withers through generations, but must first be unlearned, contested and challenged. I found that through their responses, several participants described ways in which they saw themselves as actively working to challenge ethnocentric biases. For example,

I lived in two neighbourhoods in Mostar where I was maybe considered perhaps minority and I always had friends in either of those neighbourhoods.

And, I meet such people every day, on university, on BMK, and I never had any problems with them. I treat them with respect and they do the same and I make friends regardless of nationality and I used to hang out with them and I *will* hang out with them; Breaking the barriers.

Group 1, Participant B

…Breaking the nationality.

Group 1, Participant A

Despite Mostar's 'invisible barrier', Participant 2 describes several spaces in which he interacts with the 'other group.' Amongst them, he includes Budi Muško Klub. I noticed that BMK was mentioned several times as a prominent space that participants felt reduced or challenged prejudice amongst different ethnonational groups. Take, for example, the following responses:

Making contact would really help and I strongly agree with that because BMK actually does that. On the meetings there is like, approximately 30 people every meeting and there is people from every part of the town and there are some people who are outside of the town and we just come here together, talk about some things together and mostly we agree or disagree but that's nothing based on our religion or nationality. So, making contact and seeing how other people think and talking with them is really going to help.

Group 2, Participant A

Somehow the point of that is that in Mostar, we have 2 sides, let's say. And frankly, we hang out at the meetings. And frankly, we think the same. Its only because most people, frankly because of that nationalism, that they don't want to speak to others.

Group 2, Participant D

Here, both participants signify the importance of BMK as a meeting space in which people get together and share conversations without conflict. In the place of discussing topics like religion or nationalism, Participant 1 refers to the fact that talking about "some things" and "seeing how other people think" is a positive aspect of BMK meetings. He includes "thinking

the same" as a type of precursor for getting along. When I asked what kept participants in BMK, one shared:

> I think the basic thing that kept me in BMK is values and it's hard trying to change something in this community and also to set some other like, social force or social, not roles but social ways of living and, and also meeting new people and also changing my personality, my personality was also changed by BMK a lot.
>
> Group 2, Participant C

Thus, participant C describes that the appealing aspect of BMK lies in its ability to be an active source of change in the community. Similar thoughts were shared amongst some other interviewees who pointed to the specificity of BMK as a space where judgements are absent:

> I like to meet new members because sometimes when new members come here, they don't have judgements; everyone is immediately like they know each other, like they've known each other for years, and everyone here is friends.
>
> Group 1, Participant A

Participant A states that what makes BMK appealing is in the feeling that it is a judgement free space. Without the fear of being judged, for example, friendships are built much more easily. As he dives deeper into his explanation, he adds:

> …I wouldn't call them like, real friends, like I have mentioned earlier; like those 2 only real friends. But, I have many friends. They come even to Budi Muško Klub and I don't know, we always hang out, I don't see what's the problem there.
>
> Group 1, Participant A

I noticed that 'real friends' are separated from casual friendships. With this in mind, I wanted to look closer at the quality of these friendships. Particularly, I wanted to know how or *if* they operated in the larger context of post-conflict Mostar. If young men and boys felt more trusting of or had greater accessibility to friendships across national lines in spaces like BMK, what did this mean for those not participating? What were these relationships like

outside of this space? This is further explored in the next section on Nationality and relationships.

6.2.3 Nationality & Relationships

In his book, *The Great Good Place,* Ray Oldenburg defines the concept of a "third space" as a community site where individuals gather to create a shared sense of "cohesion" and "identity" with one another. Through participant's responses, I have gathered enough information to conclude that BMK could fall under the category of a third space, or a neutral space, in a context like Mostar. Despite this fact, in their conversations regarding the theme of contact, participants mentioned few other 'third spaces' in the social landscape. I wondered how young people, and young men in particular could challenge this social division held up by "national barriers" without ever having to face each other. To explore this question further, I used more general questions such as, "Do you have many friends from the outgroup?" and "Do you feel close to your friends in the outgroup?" I noticed that most participants began their responses feeling very confident, explaining without hesitance that yes, they do have friends from the outgroup. Yet as our conversations were directed more towards the quality of those friendships, they lost that initial sense of certainty. For example:

> Yeah, [friends] to some. Like, I choose. I'm picky when it comes to friends. Like, I don't want someone to lie behind my back, that's why I'm picky. So, I don't have a lot of friends. I'm good with everyone but I'm really picky when it comes to any friend, not just the outgroup, any friend. But, I am close to some, uh, outgroup friends. Like, really close.
>
> Group 2, Participant B

Participant B attempts to justify his friendships with the other group, in a sense by stating that this is due to his own selectiveness. In explaining his selectivity, he describes himself as "picky" because closeness requires trust. Thus, he is selective so as to prevent the risk of being spoken about or, as he refers to it, "lied behind his back." Thus, his friendship choices are controlled by a sort of scepticism. This judgement showed up again in a separate group discussion:

So, people judge you. Not a lot, but, I don't know, it's just a different state of mind when they learn that maybe you have friends, the close friends, that are not like 'your people,' I guess, but yeah.

Group 4, Participant A

Participant A starts out by expressing the fact that friendships across ethnonational lines do risk judgement from the 'outside world'. By his reference to a 'different state of mind,' without specifying who, he explains that this information can affect someone else's opinion about you. Thus, he points judgement as a sort of social punishment. He then continued his answer with a story:

Well, I have friends from the outgroup, as you call it *[laugh]*. I had a relationship, one relationship, yeah, that was [*laughs*] really an experience, I guess. Yeah, that's why I said that it comes from the home, from their parents and stuff. I'm seeing this girl and, she really wasn't a big--*[pause, changes trajectory]* --she didn't mind that my name was *name here. (pause with cough).* But, as soon as she told her mother that she had a boyfriend named *name*, she told me that her mother wasn't very proud, I guess. It was like, 'sure, you know, you can have a boyfriend but, I don't know, if his name is *name*, is he really a good person?' Just because I am from the other side.

Group 4, Participant 1

I noticed that sharing this story made Participant A visibly uncomfortable. I also picked up that the 'they' he referred to in the first statement, as in "it's just a different state of mind when *they* learn you have friends" was actually in reference to his ex-girlfriend's family. Thus, this participant was rejected because his character came into question because of his nationality, which was identifiable through his name. Thus, participant 1 concludes that though his girlfriend was not, what I am inferring as a reference to the term, 'nationalist', the judgement brought on by the older generation nonetheless took precedent. This highlights the difficulty in challenging the 'national barrier' whilst still under the influence of family opinions.

However, family, as it was mentioned several times regarding the origins of prejudice, was also discussed as a space where tolerance is taught. For example:

My uncle is outgroup. Let's say, in my head and also in my thoughts, I'm not making any differences between Bosniaks or somebody of outgroups, because we're humans, because the human is the human. I don't know. If he's a Croat, or Serb, or Bosniak, it doesn't mean that he has to have another psychology in his head, another structure of his body, of his thoughts. And I find that, it's, that's, it's, we're humans, we're human beings. So, I have a lot of friends.

Group 2, Participant A

Participant A begins by first pointing to the fact that his own family is a member of the outgroup. His argument is one based on equality; that on the basis of humanity, they share something important. He then goes on to specify amongst the different groups, referring back to the idea that national differences are not inherent, but societal. Overall, participants used the topic of relationships to speak more about how they saw national identity, which shed light on the various sources that influenced their opinion.

Some of the discussions amongst members in focus groups became places to police one another's answers. For example, consider the following dynamic between two participants in response to the question, "do you have friends from the outgroup?"

B: Yes.

A: Yeah. I have some. But uh, close, nah. I'm not, I mean, I have two, three, that's it.

B: Nah dude, it's, I can count two right now. Like, they're half, you know?

A: Uh, does like, uh, half nationality count? Like mixed?

Interviewer: Yeah, sure.

A: Oh.

B: Yeah, you got a few.

A: Oh, then I have like a lot. I mean, I know people but, friendly? Maybe two.

[*Interaction in Group 3 between Participants A and B]*

Whereas Group 1 and 2's answers were followed by additional responses which justified *why* they didn't have friendships with the outgroup, Group 3 was short and direct. I noticed that participant B attempted to police the answer of participant 1 by correcting him on his initial response, while his answer still concluded that friendly relationships were few and far between. His response then continued:

> They are people as well so if they want to be friends with you, they will be. But if they're like, pushing out religion to you and stuff to you then, dude.

> Group 3, Participant A

Participant 1 then interjects:

> No, that's intolerance. Uh, our friends from the outgroup, uh, they are mostly tolerant, just like us. So, we realize they have their religion, we have our religion. They have their words, like kava, or kafa, and we say *kava*. So, it's different cultural traits but uh, we accept the differences and are just good friends.

> Group 3, Participant B

Participant 2 again attempts to 'clarify' the answer of participant 1, by arguing that those they are in relationship with are "tolerant" of the cultural differences, just like them. By defending his own position as someone without prejudice, Participant 2 uses his answer to argue that "they" are not like "those" people who show intolerance towards others. Participant 1 then adds on,

> I'm just gonna— [break in thought] —I'm okay with their religion and stuff, but sometimes I mostly like joke around and stuff, so I'm just like using those words against them and in the end, they're like, mad at me. And they use my words against me so it's like fair trade, it's fun. So, I'm not being like uh, racist or something like that, but I'm just like being…

> Group 3, Participant A

Participant A highlights the use of humor as fair play to 'poke fun' at the other group, insisting that this is done in good spirits, not as a way to be racist or 'nationalistic' or an 'islamaphobe,' as was added into the conversation by participant B. In essence, participant A

is attempting to shed light on the innocence of the situation while also suggesting that this bothers the 'other' group. As he argues that this is just a matter of being friendly, Participant B clarifies that it isn't nationalistic or islamaphobic. Indeed, I noticed that both respondents defend their own positions as they explained the way they experience relationships which fall under the influence of national identity.

However, there was a significant agreement that only certain types of friendships could be counted as 'close friendships,' and these were usually within one's own national group. The concept of 'real friends' was mentioned several times, with references to what constitutes a real friend. When pressed a bit further as to what these qualities were, there was a general agreement that few people could be considered trustworthy enough to build close relationships with.

I have now discussed several ways the post-conflict context in which these young men have been raised impacts the ways they experience national identity, both in their personal lives experiences as well as in relationship to others. As touched on briefly in the section on masculinity and toughness, another area where several respondents felt the effects of nationalism was through the arena of sports. The following section is dedicated to a deeper exploration of that.

6.2.4 National Identity & Sports

Though I had structured my interviews so that the theme of national identity would follow the section of masculinity, the link between sports, men and nationality was referenced early on in the interview process.

> 'Most guys today are very aggressive and most of them, most of the fights are
> based on religion or nationality *['nationality,' in unison]*, especially fudbol
> clubs, basketball clubs, I don't know, sport.'

> Group 2, Participant B

Participant B identifies the context of sports as a site of aggression where ethno-national prejudices are acted out through violence. Sparking a collective nod of agreement, I noticed that his statement spoke to something familiar for all other participants in the room; that indeed, the terrain of sport had a relationship to ethnonational identity, and that violence was a prominent theme within it.

And I don't know if he *[Participant 2]* will agree with me, but I think that our two football clubs are also the reasons why they fight. We have Zrinjski which is mostly Croatian, like, catholic people, and we have Red Army, which is more like, um, Muslim people. So especially when it is a game like Zrinski against Velež, *clears throat*, there comes the fight. I don't know why; I never liked fudbol, especially for that reason. I just hate those soccer hooligans.

Group 1, Participant A

Participant A describes the two local teams in the region, who occupy home stadiums a distance of 2.6 kilometers apart from one another on their respective ends of town.' He does so, albeit with a hint of discomfort, by pointing to their cultural affiliations. This highlights the fact that in Mostar, futbol teams represent more than national pride, but the identities associated with them. Like participant 2, he emphasizes the inevitably of violence that comes with the local derby. He then dismisses the act altogether, justifying his disinterest specifically because of its nationalist undertones.

Berg, Migliaccio, and Anzini-Varesio (2013) have defined the link between masculinity and sport as the "masculinity-sport nexus" as a way to highlight the fact that the behaviors which often equate to success in the context of sport are the same ones associated with masculinity, such as aggression, competition and pride (Brown, 2006). With the masculinity-sport nexus concept in mind, I wanted to get a better understanding of how these behaviors relate to a performance of one's national pride.

…it [sport] provides fuel for aggression. There is little good from it, the city derby[22]. You can always read in the newspaper that someone was injured or there was a fight. It's quite bad, in my opinion. It gives them an opportunity to participate in violence. That's one of the outcomes.

Group 1, Participant B

Participant B's comments illustrate that sport becomes the field for where pre-existing aggressions can be acted out, implying that aggression is something dormant that becomes activated in this specific context. He references the city derby in particular, an event in which

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[22] The city derby is an occasion in which the two local terms, Zrinjski and Velež play against one another.

the two local teams play against each other at alternating stadiums. Stating that there is little good from it, he shows his own contempt for the act and highlights the idea that the 'field' is less about sport than that it is a stage to act out otherwise subdued prejudice. Therefore, the local futbol match is seen as a space to engage in violence with the 'other side.'

> …And that's another like, national barrier, invisible national barrier. Like, "oh, Croatian's beat us in a game, let's fight" or, "Oh, Muslims beat us in a game, let's fight." It's like they don't live together, like two different cities and they live in the same city. I don't know.

> Group 1, Participant A

As noted in section 6.2.1 on Nationality and the Post-Conflict context, participants made reference to the concept of "barriers" several times. As participant 1 describes, "barriers" in Mostar are invisible, and thus make them difficult to detect, challenge and transform. As such, they signify important areas to be studied. Participant 1 emphasizes that in this context, sport exacerbates a very metaphorical separation, and underlines differences amongst Mostar's residents, thereby justifying violence triggered by defeat.

> I think there are more outgroups [Croatians and Serbians] in my friend circle. So then, it [contact] doesn't even bother me. I mean, I'm happy with that because in Mostar, it's really tough for somebody with a really different mentality than mine to make a friend with someone who is from the other [west] side. I mean, my brother goes to football games of Velež [Eastern team] and he's afraid to cross over the bridge because of that. That's just stupid for me. Why would I do something that I couldn't live in my own city like I want to? That's it.

> Group 2, Participant B

Here, participant 2 highlights the difficulties of creating friendships 'across the bridge' due to a particular mentality common amongst youth. He illustrates the view that prejudice is a mental state which has manifested in two ways: by acting out on the 'other', and by limiting one's movements due to a fear of violence. By attending games and showing his allegiance to the eastern team, participant 2 argues that his brother puts himself at risk of danger and limits his movement within the city. This circumstance, he adds, results in self-policing to reduce the risk of violence. Again, he includes that this mentality is different from his own.

The influence of sport matches, especially the city derby is noticeable through the responses I have intentionally chosen to include here. This is significant because it identifies a specific space in which masculinity and nationality are acted out through violence. Additionally, it points to places where old national conflicts can hide out and thrive. The rivalry between east and west runs deep in Mostar, and the sports arena serves as a stage in which they are acted out.

> We always hope for a null-null (0-0) result.
>
> Group 1, Participant B

In hopes of preventing what is otherwise seen as an inevitable clash between the two sides, Participant 2 expresses that the most desirable outcome is that in which no one wins and no one loses. His statement implies the reality that often times, preventing violence from occurring on the basis of nationality means preventing their occurrence altogether.

6.2.5 Conclusion

Refer back to the preface story, in which a member of the YMI shared with me a warning he received from his teacher; that his participation in the YMI would mean direct affiliation with young men from the 'other side.' In Mostar, contact amongst groups is inevitable. Yet despite this fact, there are still forces preventing it. As we saw in section 6.1.3 on masculinity and violence, the solution for preventing violence is simply to prevent the meeting altogether.

In conclusion, using social contact theory allowed me to explore several ways young men in Mostar experience the effects of national identity, which many described as a result of '*invisible barriers.*' I have used participant statements to highlight some of these potential barriers, as well as behaviors young men must enact in order prevent violence across national lines. This included self-policing, ignoring certain parts of town and refusing to take part in spaces where nationality and masculinity collided, such as sports. Several participants used their responses to express how they challenged such separations, often through expressing that they shared relationships with members from '*the other side.*' However, they also expressed that these relationships were not very close. I found that this was due to their own pickiness, lack of trust, and skepticism about the loyalty of friends in general. To understand this analysis as it relates to hegemonic masculinity amongst the young men and boys in this

study, I will include a greater discussion on several overlapping themes that I noticed in the following section entitled, "Findings."

7. Findings

Cockburn and Zarkov (2002) found that the post-conflict environment, similar to the conflict environment is very much about changing power systems and identity formation. Thus, gender roles change as result of war (Bushra and Sahl, 2005). Despite this realization, there have been very few feminist analyses of gender and ethnicity in a post-conflict setting (Cockburn and Zarkov, 2002; Handrahan, 2004). Even more so, fewer have been devoted to a specific analysis of masculinity and ethnicity. Spike Peterson (1993) described identity formation as "the interaction of psychological and socio-cultural variables in a historically specific context" (p.4). Because I explored the variables of gender and ethnicity amongst young men in Mostar, it followed that placing the post-war context of this region at the forefront my analysis was a foundational piece to the construction of this thesis.

Because gender is fluid and thus subject to environmental changes, it is difficult to conclude what aspects of hegemonic masculinity identified in this study were direct results of the post-conflict context under which they were formed. Several studies have managed to identify some effects of war on post-conflict masculinities such as socio-economic strains which affect men's roles as the main breadwinners and leaders of their households, as well as feelings of inadequacy and heightened acts of violence amongst men (Helsinki Citizens Assembly, 2007) and this was confirmed in the results of my study. The themes associated with hegemonic masculinity as identified amongst the participants in my study showed a deep stigmatization towards emotional vulnerability and weakness. They shared feelings of distrust towards others and a fear of judgement, which made forming close relationships difficult, especially across national lines. This was supported by the enforcement of gender and national ideologies through the home and sports, where parents played an influential role in shaping attitudes and behaviours. Thus, the themes I have identified below point to the ways identity formation is policed and enforced amongst young men in Post-conflict Mostar (Handrahan, 2004) and what opportunities young men have to challenge them.

7.1 Preserving Balkan Hegemonic Masculinity

In the 2012 Young Men Initiative's case study, Balkan masculinity was identified by rigid norms around what it meant to be a man (Eckman et al., 2012). This included being a provider, exhibiting aggression, competitiveness and self-reliance, refusing to engage in help

seeking behaviors, and express emotional vulnerability (Eckman et al., 2012). In addition, the 'ideal man' was described as someone strong, protective, engaged in sports and drinking, and never showing any weaknesses. (Eckman et al., 2012).

By exploring the general theme of hegemonic masculinity with my participants, I wanted to see if their ideas about masculinity had shifted from those presented above. I found that individual men's attitudes showed a general disagreement with the hegemonic masculinity listed above, but were still maintained and difficult to break because of the gender ideology that permeated their society. Specifically, participants referenced a shift in thoughts around asking for help and responses to violence. I noticed that participants who took part in Gender Transformative Programming showed a general consciousness around how a man is expected to be versus the lived realities they of their lives. Changing attitudes and behaviors often begins through providing individuals with the tools necessary to come to their own conclusions about masculinity. While my study did not include enough participants to make concrete conclusions, those involved expressed links between masculinity and unhealthy behaviors, I noticed several examples of challenges to hegemonic masculinity as well as barriers which made doing so difficult.

7.1.1 Weakness and Emotional Vulnerability

The concept of weakness was mentioned several times amongst participants. I found that while almost all participants agreed that men should be able to openly share their worries, fears and problems, they nonetheless felt uncomfortable doing so. When I probed further in an effort to understand what stood in their way, participant's described fears around being judged, seen as a burden, gossiped about and becoming a target for of violence. I noticed a fear of judgement preventing many respondents from exercising any behaviors outside of what was perceived as the norm. Through their responses I noticed the value they placed on preserving their self-image, which seemed especially vulnerable given the relatively small context of Mostar. Thus, the fear of judgement and gossip acted as an internalized enforcer of outward expressions of emotional vulnerability.

The stigmatization of weakness has a long history in the masculinization of men and boys (Handrahan, 2005). Weakness has also been studied in relation to the intersectionality of masculinity and militarism, in which it is stated that men become "socialized into subjectivities and roles that feature aggression, being in control (emotionally, physically,

politically, economically), and denying anxiety, ambivalence, and vulnerability" (Peterson, 2010). Thus, the strict enforcement around displays of weakness may be a direct result of the militarized masculinity that supports it. This can be seen through one participant's response which highlighted that not even one's mother could be trusted as a reliable source to explain one's worries, fears and problems. This is affirmed by Joanne Nagel's (1998) work on the role of gender and sexuality in the making of notes, where she describes that men who resisted the call to fight during WWII risked disdain from their mothers, with many opposing their son's 'pacifism' (p. 252). This supports the idea that hegemonic masculinity is passed down through the institution of the home.

7.1.2 Parental Influence

The power held by parents in shaping the attitudes and behaviors of the young men in my study was especially prominent. While there are various social institutions through which the impacts of conflict are preserved and dispersed, parents as sources of influence in regards to both gender and national identity formation were referenced several times. Barker (2012) found that many men who returned from the Balkan war experienced a masculinity crisis, resulting in "feelings of inadequacy, stress and low self-esteem," which was connected to an "increased likelihood to perpetrate violence" (p. 8). Lukes (1974) has noted the effectiveness of parental influence, as it is often unconsciously internalized by both parties. Indeed, several participants confirmed that these biases were often passed down unconsciously, but nevertheless had an effect on the recipients. This was expressed in one participant's sentiment, who, when speaking about ethno-centrism in the home, commented "Maybe they don't think it does, but it kind of does. In some way, it does manifest" (Group 4, Participant A). El-Bashra and Sahl (2005) research on power models has shown that power exercised unconsciously is often the most effective kind. Additionally, it is often the hardest to challenge, because it remains invisible and thus often interpreted as something inherent.

The young men in my study found parental influence especially prominent in shaping opinions around national identity, which could very well be a direct consequence of conflict-inspired divisions. This was additionally enacted through older peers, who specified religion and nationality as grounds worthy of committing an act of violence towards another man in the community. Several sources have noted the importance of parental influence in the lives of Balkan young men (Eckman et al., 2007; CARE, 2012). Thus, ways to engage the older generation on challenging ideas around hegemonic masculinity and nationality are worthy of

being introduced to the region. Additionally, I would argue that incorporating healthy ways to discuss these sensitives issues with one's family would be an important addition to programming strategies which work with youth in post-conflict contexts.

7.2 Violence

Several factors were identified as themes which led to acts of violence between young men and boys in the region. This included alcohol, national and religious differences which were especially a problem amongst "futbol hooligans". Alcohol was seen as a "trigger" for violence and was discussed as something which aggravated male aggression. This finding is in line with previous research which found that alcohol abuse combined with inherent frustrations due to failure to fulfill traditional masculine roles was often expressed through violence (Tankink and Richters, 2007). In earlier research on Balkan masculinity, violence was noticed as an underlying theme which affected the day to day lives of young men and boys. While participants generally confirmed this idea, I also noticed that many included alternatives to physical violence in their responses. When violence was seen as warranted, as described through protecting oneself or "*yours*," participants stressed the importance of self-defense so as not to be seen as "*weak*" or invite future violence. This is highlighted in the following response:

> The strong pick on the weak and it doesn't matter if you're a good person; if you're weak and show that you're weak, the strong will pick on you.

> Group 2, Participant C

In looking at conflict masculinities, Eckman et al. (2007) found that violence was carried out by men in war as a way to "survive and avoid being treated as feminine, essentially protecting their masculinities" (p.8) I found this reluctance to be viewed as weak or seen as effeminate in participant responses that justified self-defense and responding to violence with violence. Thus, participants justified physical acts of violence based on the idea that failure to do so would result in a lack of living up to the hegemonic masculinity.

7.2.1 A Man of Peace

Throughout my interviews, I looked for specific moments in which participants challenged hegemonic masculinity through their responses as it was a significant component of my research question. In the midst of discussing alternatives to violence, I was particularly

drawn to one participant's response, which opened the possibility for the creation of alternative masculinities opposed to violence:

> If he is generally a man of peace and all he does is good for others and he doesn't pick fights, then he should have the right to defend himself without ruining his image or anything like that.

Group 1, Participant A

As opposed to the masculinity which focused "on the need to protect one's brothers" and attempted to appeal to "a men's sense of 'duty' to protect their homes and families," used to motivate male soldiers throughout the Balkan war (Eckman et al, 2007), participant A revealed that the post-war generation indeed has the ability to "flip the script" and invest in protecting a new, peace-oriented self-image. Such a statement reflects the characteristics attributed to building the new "Balkan boy" who supports non-violence and gender equality (CARE, 2014).

7.3 Challenges to Hegemonic Masculinity

An important part of researching the types of masculinities created within a post-conflict society is identifying spaces which present opportunities for transformation, as war can have positive effects on gender relations. However, these positive effects have mainly been noted in terms of shifting gender power relations, and less on the ways in which masculinities are transformed themselves. Thus, I was interested in exploring this possibility. Through the course of my interviews, I identified several spaces in which participants expressed alternative ways of understanding what it means to be a man.

7.3.1 Class

As Dolan (2002) has argued, many men experience a 'crisis of masculinity' upon returning from war as previous outlets towards achieving one's masculine status are no longer available to them. In the context of Mostar, this includes fulfilling the position of the breadwinner, and being the protector and provider of the family. Additionally, the replacement of women in positions traditionally held by men leads to a source of shame and frustration, resulting in post-conflict men struggling to find ways to respond to their changing expectations. Such is a masculinity that these boys have experienced as a result of their context, in which they must negotiate a traditional masculinity norms amidst structural difficulties brought on from the

war. In discussions on help-seeking behaviors, several participants exemplified a change in attitudes towards asking for help. Reasons for doing so were justified by Mostar's difficult socio-economic situation, which was highlighted in statements such as, "times are tough" and "it's okay to ask for help until you get something of your own." I noticed that the difficulty in establishing one's economic independence provided participants with an opportunity to exercising help-seeking behaviors, and could actually be used as an effort towards challenging the norm that men should be successful and independent.

7.3.2 Budi Muško Klub

Grieg (2009) argues that in order to transform toxic masculinity as well as unequal gender relations, young men must have spaces where they are allowed to question the notion of masculinity and feel the agency necessary to create new, equitable models. I argue that BMK qualifies as this type of space. For example, almost all participants who have taken part in BMK referred to the klub as a space where they interacted across national lines. In the opening segment of the interviews, when participants were asked to speak about their engagement with BMK, several participants mentioned that meeting new people whom they would have never previously met was what kept them motivated to continue participated in BMK. This can be connected to various other responses throughout the interview process which identified the positive aspects of BMK as bring a space where people were "open", "thought differently" and were "like-minded."

Thus, as a result, BMK allows its members to "see a range of possibilities," ones that make way for identification with "groups of men who might engage in alliances for change" (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p.1817). In this way, men become a part of transforming masculinities to end men's privileges (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). More research needs to be done on the effects of these groups, and several studies have pointed to this need. For example, a study done by Care International found that "the opportunity to reflect together on and collaborate around a common cause helped to dispel the prejudices many of the young men held toward young men from other countries, thus contributing to peace-building among the younger generation" (Young Men Initiative, CARE International and Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2012). Indeed, this agrees with participant responses and affirms that BMK is a positive space for challenging ethno-centric attitudes alongside unhealthy gender norms.

7.4 Sports

Drummond (1995) has argued that sport is an "institution for the maintenance and reproduction of hegemonic masculinity" and remains a site where traditional masculinity is celebrated (p.39). As we have seen through participant responses, several of the young men in my study agreed that the futbol field in Mostar was a site where national tensions could be acted out through physical violence. This was highlight in one participant's response, who described futbol matches as an "opportunity to participate in violence" and provided "fuel for aggression" (Group 1, Participant A). This is reminiscent of research on Balkan masculinity that found that for some men, "war provided an opportunity to act out hegemonic behaviors that would normally not be tolerated in times of peace" (Eckman et al., 2007, p. 8). I found similar sentiments about the sports arena in the responses from my participants, who refused to take part in sport activities. One participant mentioned this was partly due to the fact that attendance to futbol matches made young men vulnerable to violent behavior when crossing over to the other side of town. As I mentioned in chapter 2 on context and background, the aftermath of the war left Mostar geo-socially divided, thus creating separate ethno-national sides marked by East and West. For many, 'crossing over' means risking bullying and physical violence. As a result, many expressed contempt for the sport altogether, and in doing so reflected an understanding of how masculinity can often times be "mobilized in the service of hegemony" (Grieg, 2009, p.72) as is seen in relation to men's acts of violence on the sports field.

Additionally, participants added that futbol in Mostar was a site where visible group ethno-national lines were drawn, thus making it a space where group identification on the basis of religion and/or nationality was welcome and normalized. Whitson (1990) found that sports offered a site where a type of male solidarity could be developed and acted as a space where masculinity could be regularly performed. In addition to this, I would argue that the futbol stadium in Mostar acts as a space where hegemonic masculinity and national identity can be acted out and legitimized simultaneously. Additionally, it becomes a place where the aforementioned virtues of success and strength, foundational to the construction of Balkan masculinity are thus used to legitimize the masculinity of one national identity against the other. As such, it is a space where they legitimize their masculinity through "winning and being successful" (Drummond, 1995, p37).

7.5 Nationality and Masculinity

Dolan (2002) found that in some cases, the state used hegemonic models of masculinity to manipulate men into enacting violence by creating a link between masculinity and ethnicity. Such was the case in the Balkan war, in which several studies have looked at the use of gender in both garnering support for and sustaining active conflict (Sofos, 1996; Grodach, 2002;). Thus, the connection between masculinity, ethnicity and conflict has very real effects on the men who fall under its influence. This begs the question of, what are the effects on a *post*-post war generation? And how do we measure these effects? To get a better understanding of the how Nationality and Masculinity affected the identities of the boys in my study, I looked for themes within their responses which discussed them. By doing so, I found several overlapping topics which proved to influence both gender and national identity formation amongst the young men in my study.

7.5.1 Judgement

I noticed that my respondents had a difficult time building close relationships across national lines. One of the reasons given for this was the fear of judgement by the local community, or being seen 'differently.' These thoughts were supported through the use of personal experience in the stories given throughout the interview process. I found similar sentiments shared when participants answered to why they felt hesitancy around expressing weaknesses. There was a general sense of distrust as to who could be trusted to not 'gossip' or 'spread rumors' about difficult topics. It seemed that participants were fearful of exposure, and found silence as their solution.

7.5.2 Trust

When looking a bit closer at the reasons for a lack in close relationships across national lines, participants mentioned difficulty in establishing a sense of trust with another individual. When I probed as to how trust could be established, they specified the length of time a friendship has lasted. Similar responses were also given in response to emotional vulnerability, it which participants expressed large amounts of skepticism as to who felt 'safe enough' to open up to.

7.5.3 Respect

Respect was described using several different meanings. In order to assure a feeling of safety with others, participants stated it was important to enter conversations with a shared sense of respect. Respect was identified as listening to one another without "mocking" the individual in question, and being okay with disagreements without resulting in conflict. Indeed, respect was referenced as both something to be risked when expressing emotional vulnerability as a man, as well as a requirement for building relationships across national lines. For example, as mentioned in the idea to "respect" each other's differences.

7.6 Limitations

As with all research, this study presented several limitations. The first limitation, and perhaps the biggest was time. Due to the fact that this thesis involved fieldwork outside of the context in which I lived and worked, I was limited in the time I had to conduct more thorough preliminary fieldwork. More specifically, this thesis could have benefitted from pilot focus group interviews, from which I would have been able to construct questions more specific to the main issues discussed in my existing data, rather than rely on those provided through the Male Role Norms Scale (Thompson & Pleck, 1986) and gathered from Social Norms Theory (Allport, 1954). The second limitation was access to participants. Amongst other factors, the lack of 'neutral' public spaces made it rather difficult to recruit participants. Thus, those interviewed were either members of Budi Muško Klub or connected to someone who was. This led to a smaller sample size of 9 participants amongst 4 focus groups. Thus, these findings should not be generalized to all young men's attitudes in Bosnia, nor does this thesis aspire to do so. Instead, this thesis attempts to identify various factors which affect national and gender identity formation in the lives of 9 young men within the post-conflict context in which they are created. Additionally, it was difficult to know if participant's attitudes, as expressed through the data analysis are conducive to their day-to-day behaviors. However, despite these general limitations, I was able to use the data at hand to produce fruitful findings which will assist future feminist researchers from disciplines such as feminist studies, post-conflict studies, men and masculinities, and so on, as discussed in Chapter 8 under "areas for future research."

8 Conclusion

This study contributes to the overall understanding of how post-conflict masculinities affect identity formation amongst young men and boys. More specifically, it suggests that gender and national identity are two aspects of identity that are vulnerable to influence from the perceptions, judgements and policing behavior of generations before them, most specifically in the home. It also suggests that post-conflict masculinities in Mostar are largely defined by the influence of violence, lack of trust and the stigmatization of emotional vulnerability amongst young men and boys.

Furthermore, I have found that dormant aggressions fueled by ethnocentrism have specific arenas in which they are acted out such as sports, where nationality is a primary dividing tool. This is heightened by the use of alcohol and encouraged by the societal notion that self-defense is equated to strength, while refusing to take part in violence is conducive to weakness in general, and a weakening of masculine status more specifically.

This affects the way young men and boys build relationships both amongst and within national lines, as a lack of trust and fear of judgement results in an inability to show weakness by sharing their "worries, fears and problems," which they saw as characteristic of a close relationship. I argue that due to a lack of third spaces or 'neutral' spaces in the region, establishing close connections across national lines becomes more difficult for young men and results in prejudice and continual discomfort amongst 'the other.'

On the other hand, some participants who have taken part in BMK and gender transformative programming were able to identify social constructions of masculinity as false representations of manhood, and offered up the alternative of "a man of peace." Additionally, it was noted that the difficult socio-economic situation of post-conflict Mostar could be used as a positive opportunity for allowing men to exhibit help-seeking behaviors and open to the possibility of shared responsibilities in the household.

While the majority of the participants in my study agreed that the hegemonic masculinity in Mostar had a negative effect on young men and boys, most of them felt trapped by the strict social structure which enforces it. This is policed by instilling a fear of judgement and results in a lack of trust and skepticism. A similar sentiment was found in the way they expressed their feelings towards the separation cause by national identity, in which all participants

framed themselves as tolerant and in opposition to "nationalists", yet still lacked close connections across groups.

In spite of the national barriers and strict expectations of men that my participants discussed, several were able to use BMK as a space where they felt more comfortable challenging hegemonic masculinity and building relationships across national lines. This information is important for a greater understanding of how toxic masculinity and ethnocentrism can be challenged together through the inclusion of youth-based programming which presents new, healthier models of identity formation while challenging old, toxic models of the past. In doing so, young men in particular may be better equipped to challenge the post-conflict influence they've inherited from the generations before them.

8.1 Areas for Future Research

I have attempted to produce a pilot study which opens the door for future research, and I believe the data included here presents several noteworthy topics worthy of further exploration. First, more qualitative studies are needed to understand the relationship between sports, nationalism and masculinity. Although several studies have looked more generally at this topic, it is important to look at its influence on a context to context basis, thus allow one to gain a better perspective on why certain arenas might make violence more permissible.

Additionally, the role of gender transformative programming in reducing ethnocentrism, specifically amongst young men is an area still requires a deeper understanding. Without a wider understanding of individual factors which impact masculinities, NGOs working in local contexts run the risk of reproducing hegemonies which fail to take into account the impact of, for example, national identity. Thus, more research must be done in this area so as to ensure that the new "Balkan boy" is equally as concerned with all forms of inequality and oppression as they are with gender.

Furthermore, the prevalence of judgement as a factor in which young men felt unable or unwilling to challenge hegemonic masculinity was especially noteworthy. Future programming working with young men and boys might benefit from implementing tools to allow youth better strategies at dismantling and overcoming their fear of judgement, as well as developing tools for parents to help instill these values in the home.

More generally speaking, the role of toxic masculinity in inciting ethnocentrism is an area of exploration extremely relevant in today's global landscape. With the rise of men's groups, dangerous attitudes and behaviors have shown up in the form of right wing nationalist groups and a revival of neo-Nazism. Additionally, with men representing the highest number of perpetrators in regards to mass-shootings and acts of terrorism, we lose an important opportunity to build more peaceful, equitable societies when we let toxic masculinity go unnoticed.

Additionally, as this study is in conversation with the field of post-conflict studies, it is important to mention that while the impact of war on women and girls must not be minimized, further research is required to understand the impact of conflict on shifting masculinities. Studying post-conflict environments allow us to better understand what specific attitudes and behaviors may lead to and influence such situations, and what tools are used to challenge and thus prevent them from occurring in the future.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview Guide and Questions

1. Welcome
2. Overview of the topic

"This study aims to investigate an understanding around gender. Specifically, I am interested in how gender conscious programming has an effect on people in Mostar. Additionally, I am interested in how young people in Mostar live together".

Respondents "rights"

- No name will be presented in the thesis
- The interview can be ended or paused at any given time
- The respondents have the right not to answer questions which they disapprove of
- Ask if we can use a Dictaphone.
- No right or wrong answers
- Take time to answer questions
3. Ground Rules
   a. At any point in time, you can step out. Please don't talk over each other. Please feel free to speak openly. All information is confidential.

Begin Interview Process

Introduction with letter (participant A, B, C) & year of age, followed by warm up question.

    For example: favorite animal

Can you each individually tell me a little bit about what brought you to BMK and what keeps you in it?

MRNS Statements

Rating scale: Agree a-lot, agree a little, disagree a-lot, disagree a little.

1. A man should always try to project an air of confidence even if he really doesn't feel confident inside (S).
2. I think a young man should try to become physically tough even if he's not big (T).
3. When a man is feeling a little pain, he should try not to let it show very much (T).

4. A man must stand on his own two feet and never depend on other people to help him do things (S).
5. A man should always refuse to get into a fight, even if there seems to be no way to avoid it (T).
6. A man should never back down in the face of trouble (S).
7. Fists are sometimes the only way to get out of a bad situation (T).
8. It is essential for a man to always have the respect and admiration of everyone who knows him (S)
9. I think it's extremely good for a boy to be taught to cook, sew, clean the house and take care of younger children (A)
10. It bothers me when a man does something that I consider 'feminine' (A).
11. Nobody respects a man very much who frequently talks about his worries, fears, and problems (T).
12. In some kinds of situations, a man should be ready to use his fists, even if his wife or his girlfriend would object (T).

Social Identity/Contact

1. Do you have many friends from the outgroup?
2. Do you feel close to your friends from the outgroup?
3. In that case, what types of relationships do you have with members from the outgroup?
4. Do you feel comfortable to have cross ethnic contact in public?
5. Do you think contact would improve your views on the other group?

Suggested Follow-up Questions:

1. Could you explain further?
2. Could you give an example?
3. I don't understand, could you explain it?
4. Why is that important?
5. How come?
6. Would you give me an example?
7. Can you elaborate on that idea?
8. I am not sure I understand what you're saying…
9. How did you come to that?
10. Is that anything else you'd like to ask me?

Thank participants for participating and offer them ways to contact you if they have any concerns or questions they'd like to discuss.

Appendix 2: Consent Forms

Researcher: Anja Jerkovic

Date:

Time:

Location:

Age:

Gender:

Ethnic Background:

<u>Informed Consent</u>

By signing this document, I agree to participate in this study, which aims to investigate how young men are influenced by traditional or non-traditional masculinity norms and how this affects their social relationships. I have been made aware that this information will be used for research purposes. I have also been made aware that this study will be audio recorded for transcription purposes, and that all the information I provide will be treated with confidentiality and anonymity. I understand that I have the right to withdraw my participation at any time during the study. I understand the intention of the study.

Signature

_____