“It’s a Big Torch to Carry”: “Place-Based Trauma” in the Postmemory of the Bosnian War

By

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Abstract

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, diaspora communities have emerged as prominent claim-makers, particularly due to the limited success of transitional justice processes following the Bosnian War at both institutional and societal levels. This is especially evident in *Republika Srpska*, where official narratives often deny wartime crimes committed against non-Serbs. Understanding how the second generation in the diaspora relates to these events is crucial for assessing the long-term legacy of the war. However, academic literature on postmemory—defined as the second generation's relationship with their parents' traumatic past—remains limited and yields conflicting conclusions, particularly in the Bosnian context. This thesis addresses this gap by focusing on the Prijedor region, known for its notorious network of concentration camps during the war, yet understudied in terms of its impact on second-generation diasporans. Using a qualitative approach, the study conducted ten semi-structured interviews, incorporating elements of biographical narrative interviews, with second-generation individuals with at least one parent from the Prijedor region. Findings suggest that postmemory is transmitted through familial verbal narratives, embodied communication, and visual materials, creating a "living connection" to the past among second-generation diasporans. However, postmemory does not develop in a linear or predictable way; extensive storytelling by parents does not necessarily lead to a deeply internalized memory of the war in their children. At the same time, participants demonstrated agency in reshaping inherited meanings of the war. Ultimately, the shared postmemory of Prijedor's "place-based trauma" functions as a generational bond, despite participants' geographical dispersion.

Author's declaration

I, the undersigned, Melita Vilkeviciute, candidate for the MA degree in Nationalism Studies. declare herewith that the present thesis titled "It's a Big Torch to Carry": "Place-Based Trauma" in the Postmemory of the Bosnian War is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright.

I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

Vienna, 5 June 2025

Melita Vilkeviciute

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I want to dedicate this thesis to all people currently living at war.

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Introduction

In the summer of 2022, I first visited Bosnia and Herzegovina, specifically the Prijedor region, where I was conducting my field research at the time. Prijedor and its surroundings are sadly famous in the context of the Bosnian War for their network of concentration camps, which was established by Bosnian Serb forces aiming to cleanse the area from non-Serbs ethnically, and is currently in the *Republika Srpska* part of the country, thus subject to the Bosnian Serb denials of war crimes. I visited Tomašica, one of the biggest mass graves in Bosnia, went to commemorations of such notorious concentration camps as Omarska and Trnopolje, and looked at bullet marks on the walls and endless gravestones with the year 1992 on them. I met people who told me stories about their experiences in the concentration camps, looking for the remains of their relatives for decades, and rebuilding their destroyed homes. All this gave me the impression that the memory of the Bosnian War feels very fresh and present there, even though around 30 years have passed after the end of the war. Having coffee in the small town of Kozarac, 20 minutes by car away from Prijedor city every morning, I watched new and shiny cars pass by. Car number plates made me realize that most of the people around me lived in Sweden, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Germany, and other countries. Those cars were driven by diasporans who would return to Kozarac primarily only for summer holidays. Later, I would understand that the memory of the war seems so fresh and present in the summer specifically because of the diaspora that puts enormous effort into keeping the memory of the Bosnian War alive in the region.

Back in 2022, one of the *Kozarčani* told me that crimes in the Prijedor region are still essentially "in the shadow of Srebrenica": the massacre in Srebrenica was internationally recognized as genocide, but crimes committed in the Prijedor region never acquired such recognition, even though in terms of the overall death toll across Bosnia and

Herzegovina, Prijedor ranks third (Kovačević, 2020, p. 105). Being in this "shadow" and *Republika Srpska's* denial of crimes activates the diaspora in the Prijedor region, whose members are often survivors of concentration camps. They organize commemorations of the most significant war dates and community events that aim to bring people together regardless of their ethnic and religious background. They also finance war-related monuments and celebrate weddings and birthdays in a way that embraces and emphasizes Bosnian traditions. Meanwhile, the returnees and the ones who never left Bosnia seemed to be leading a much calmer life: they were too preoccupied with earning enough money to have food on the table as Bosnia's economy continued to shrink and much too afraid to organize the memory events that would be perceived as controversial and conflict-stirring in the region. Seeing how much the memory of the Bosnian War depends on the first-generation diaspora and how much energy they bring to continue keeping the memory of the crimes committed mainly by the *Republika Srpska* forces in the region alive, I observed families that the first-generation diaspora created in their host countries, and wondered about the future. What kind of perception of the Bosnian War will their children hold? Will this postmemory (the term coined by Marianne Hirsch in 2012) of the war in Prijedor be as emotionally charged in the second generation as the memory is in the first? How does the second-generation Prijedorian diaspora feel about the Bosnian War? These questions nudged this research and positioned it in the field of memory and diaspora studies.

In the academic literature on the Prijedor region in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the role of the diaspora in memory activism (mainly in countering denial of war crimes) is highly acknowledged. Bosnian diaspora from the Prijedor region engages in memory activism advocating for the crimes committed by *Republika Srpska* forces during the Bosnian War to be recognized internationally and locally and important dates to be commemorated both in the host countries (Halilovich, 2022; Koinova and Karabegović, 2017; Paul, 2024) and in Bosnia and

Herzegovina (Koinova and Karabegović, 2017; Paul, 2020; Karabegović, 2019). For example, in 2004-2013, the diaspora from the Prijedor region, mainly consisting of Omarska concentration camp survivors, coordinated its activities with a UK-based NGO and civic groups based in Bosnia and Herzegovina for continuous advocacy for the Omarska concentration camp to be turned into a memory site. Sadly, the activism was not enough for this project to be successful: from 2004 up until today, the Omarska concentration camp site is part of a fully-functioning ArcelorMittal iron mine complex, and only one little plaque speaks of the crimes committed there (Koinova and Karabegović, 2017). Another example of Prijedor diaspora memory advocacy is the work of Vienna-based artist Anita Zečić, who created a traveling monument titled "Prijedor '92" aimed at recreating the claustrophobic feeling of being inside the Omarska concentration camp. This art installation was exhibited in Sarajevo, Rijeka, Belgrade, Zagreb, and Vienna, proposing an alternative way to make crimes in Prijedor known and recognized in Bosnia as well as abroad (Paul, 2024).

Meanwhile, even the people who live in such faraway places as Australia and might not have come back to Bosnia in decades do not only commemorate the war events in the diaspora but also continuously organize rebuilding schools, mosques, or roads in the Prijedor region just to send the message to the *Republika Srpska* authorities that the non-Serbs of Bosnia are not defeated and have not forgotten their home (Halilovich, 2022, p. 28). Thus, among the conflict-generated Bosnian diaspora, the memory of the same crimes serves as a basis for "global intimacy" among people scattered around the world (Halilovich, 2022, p. 25), thereby sustaining diaspora mobilization in advocating for memory (Koinova 2016). It is crucial to mention that when it comes to Bosnia and Herzegovina in general, grassroots diasporic memory initiatives and financial, emotional, and human capital of diasporic people from Bosnia also have been increasingly acknowledged in the academic literature because the transitional justice process in Bosnia and Herzegovina did not achieve reconciliation and sense of justice on the

societal level (Subotić, 2009), and thus Bosnian diaspora has become one of the main political claim-maker at local and global levels (Koinova and Karabegović, 2017; Karabegović, 2018; Heider, 2014; Karabegović and Orjuella, 2022)

When it comes to further generations in conflict-generated diasporas, academics have become generally more interested in the relationships these generations have with memories of wars that their parents hold. However, the case studies of intergenerational transmission of the memory of the war are still few, and the researchers who do engage with this question approach it from different angles. For example, some researchers explore this question by examining the roles that second generations play in transitional justice processes, interpreting it as an advocacy for the memory of the war. Camilla Orjuela (2020) argues that the second generations of Sri Lankan and Rwandan diasporas play a crucial role in advocating for the memory of wars in their countries, as they are socialized into perceiving the memory of the war as part of their identity. Hess and Korf (2014) elaborate on this argument by stating that, in the case of the Sri Lankan diaspora, what drives second-generation Tamils to engage in memory activism is the pain of the war and empathy for people who suffered in their home country. Meanwhile, Nicole Hirt (2023), after researching second-generation Eritrean diaspora, states that while one part of this diaspora is active in memory advocacy, another significant part of diaspora members prefers to distance themselves from its postmemory of conflict and live their usual lives.

Marianne Hirsch described postmemory as second generation's "living connection" to the painful past of their parents (Hirsch, 2012, p. 31). Therefore, some other scientists look closer into postmemory itself—how it is formed in the second generation, how it changes from one generation to another, and what leaves the biggest marks in the minds and hearts of the second generations. Baser and Toivanen (2024) stated that the second-generation Kurdish diaspora has inherited the trauma of the first generation through the transmission of memory in families, the actual community sphere, and the imagined community sphere. Meanwhile, Élise

Féron (2024) engaged in a study that supplements and slightly opposes Orjuella's (2020) and Hess and Korf's (2014) findings: she found that in the case of Rwanda, it often happens that amid conflicting narratives of the Rwandan Civil War between Rwandan state and diasporic families, second-generation diasporans become so lost that they create their own postmemory and do not necessarily engage in memory activism (Feron 2024). Here, the topic of silence becomes central: it is because of the silence of the first-generation survivors of the Rwandan genocide that the information gap appears and confuses the second-generation, moving them to base their understanding of the war on their own experiences (for example, they start understanding the reasons for the genocide as common racism they experience abroad) (Féron, 2024, p. 291). Nonetheless, silence is not always perceived as confusing and damaging. For example, in the case of the Kurdish diaspora in Europe, "chosen amnesia" can become a central mechanism of coping with the past for the second generation (Baser and Toivanen, 2024, p. 300).

In the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, only a few researchers have approached the memory of second-generation diasporans in a manner that attempts to understand the content and consequences of postmemory. Müller-Suleymanova (2023; 2022; 2020) found that amongst the Swiss-Bosniak diasporans, the second generation is both highly affected by their parents and other relatives' stories and lived experiences during the Bosnian War and willing to distance themselves from it either by leaning towards Swiss identity and trying to live a "normal" life or by idealizing Yugoslavian times. The author noted that the memory of the Bosnian War plays an important role for second-generation diasporans even if their parents are reluctant to talk about the war, as second-generation growing up is still curious about what happened and try to collect knowledge about the war from the trips to Bosnia and conversations with extended family or their education (Müller-Suleymanova, 2023, p. 1792). Nonetheless, Yugo-nostalgia, or turning towards the identity of the host country, signals fatigue among the

second generation, which stems from the need to piece together all the parts of a complicated war puzzle on their own (Müller-Suleymanova, 2023, p. 1793). Just as in the case of Rwanda (Féron 2024), this fatigue and confusion might be catalyzed by the silence surrounding Bosnian War memories, which has proven to be a very present phenomenon in Bosnian families both in the diaspora and locally (Palmberger, 2016; Müler-Suleymanova, 2023; Yordanova, 2015). Speaking about silence, it is important to mention that just as in some cases of diasporic Kurdish families, "chosen amnesia" can also be noticed in the Bosnian diaspora: for example, Marita Eastmond (2016), observing a Bosnian family in Sweden, did not notice any effects of the Bosnian War on the second-generation diasporans, thus no traces of transmitted trauma, because the children are always shielded from the information about the war.

Contrary to Müller-Suleymanova's two-fold findings of second-generation diasporans wanting to both remember and forget the Bosnian War, Amina Hadžiomerović (2022) found more homogeneity in second-generation Bosniak diaspora's feelings about the Bosnian War as she looked at the case of "place-based trauma." She spoke to the children of survivors of the Srebrenica genocide in Melbourne and found that specific context (and place) "serves as connective tissue that binds the children survivors in "trans-local endogamous" marital unions through which they seek to preserve, perform and reproduce their identities" (p. 308). Therefore, these members of second-generation diaspora value their Bosnian and genocide-survivor identity so much as to even engage in endogamy in order not to lose the same self-identification and memory of the genocide.

This literature review demonstrates that when research is conducted on the postmemory of people whose parents come from any part of the country that suffered from conflict, the conclusions regarding postmemory are usually manifold or even conflicting. Nonetheless, Hadžiomerović's findings (2022) show that it is significant to research second-generation diaspora's postmemory in the context of a "pace-based trauma," as it leads to more clear-cut

conclusions and more in-depth understanding of the lived experiences and feelings of people who are bound by specific memories of the happenings in a particular region. Even though it proves to be highly valuable to research second-generation attitudes towards the Bosnian War in terms of particular areas from which diasporans come, to this day, Hadžiomerović remains the only researcher who has explicitly attempted to understand the processes determined by postmemory of the "placed-based trauma" in the diaspora. To fill in the vacuum of knowledge on "place-based trauma" in the diaspora, this research will focus specifically on the processes of transmission of the memory of the Bosnian War in diasporic families in which at least one of the immediate family members is from the Prijedor region. To date, no research has been conducted on second-generation diasporans whose parents originate from the Prijedor region, indicating that Prijedor remains in the "shadow" in terms of international and academic attention. To fill the gap in the scholarly literature on second-generation diasporans' from the Prijedor region postmemory of the Bosnian War, this research will aim at answering the central question: How and why does the postmemory of the Bosnian War affect the second generation of the Bosnian diaspora from the Prijedor region?

In addition, these subquestions will be raised:

- What are the contents and proofs of postmemory in the second-generation Bosnian diaspora from the Prijdeor region? How was the memory of the war transmitted to the second generation?
- How do members of the second-generation diaspora refer to their parents' pain? Are the meanings of their pain different from the meanings their parents articulated? Is fetishization of pain present in postmemory?
- Can the second-generation diasporans be considered to belong to the same actual generation and a generation unit?

These subquestions are formulated in light of the theoretical framework and thus will be elaborated in the upcoming chapter.

This thesis will consist of five chapters: Theoretical Framework, "Place-based Trauma" of the Bosnian War in the Prijedor Region, Methods, Analysis, and Conclusion and Discussion.

The Theoretical Framework chapter, first and foremost, will explain the central notion of this research: postmemory. It is built on Marianne Hirsch's (2012) theory of postmemory in the second generation, which posits that it is transferred from the first to the second generation through verbal and embodied stories and pictures. Hirsch's theory will be supplemented by the works of Sara Ahmed (2002), Karl Mannheim (1952) and, lastly, Rogers Brubaker (2005), Bahar Baser and Camilla Orjuela (2024), and Marianne Hirsch and Nancy K. Miller (2011). Sara Ahmed's (2002) notion of the contingency of pain serves as proof that it is crucial not to take postmemory for granted by examining only the processes of memory transmission, but also to pay attention to the agency of the people who receive the transmitted memory. Karl Mannheim's work (1952), which defines generation as actuality, generation location, and generation units, will be utilized in this research to conceptualize a generation and to raise the question of whether second-generation diasporans from the Prijedor region can indeed be considered to belong to the same actual generation. Lastly, the chapter on Theoretical Framework will conceptualize the term of diaspora using the criteria of Rogers Brubaker (2005) and explain the centrality of memory as an imaginative binding material in diaspora, drawing on the works of Bahar Baser and Camilla Orjuela (2024) and Marianne Hirsch and Nancy K. Miller (2011). Conceptualization of diaspora and its memory will also serve as a basis for stating that working with the case of diaspora is most suitable to research postmemory in Hirsch's terms (2012), as the imaginative nature of diasporic memory means that memory is "transferred" mainly through verbal and embodied stories and pictures and not by life surrounded by physical artifacts of the war. The chapter "Place-Based Trauma" of the Bosnian

War in the Prijedor Region will describe the context of ethnic cleansing of non-Serbs and particular atrocities in the Prijedor region and how the fact that the Prijedor region is situated in the current *Republika Srpska* influenced the remembrance of the Bosnian War after its end, thus conceptualizing the "place-based trauma" in the Prijedor region. The Methods chapter will present qualitative semi-structured interviews combined with biographical narrative interview elements as a method of this study, explain the process of sampling and structuring the interviews with the participants of the study, and discuss the process of data analysis. Then, in the Analysis chapter, I will present the main findings from the data analysis. Finally, I will introduce the Conclusion and Discussion chapter, which will summarize the main findings and points of discussion, defining the insights and suggestions for future research.

Theoretical framework

Firstly, to understand how the second-generation Bosnian diaspora "remembers" the war and, in particular, what happened to their parent(s) in the Prijedor region, it is crucial to understand what the memory of the second generation is and how it develops. The theoretical framework proposed in this chapter will draw upon the work of Marianne Hirsch on postmemory (2012), which will be supplemented by the writings of Sara Ahmed (2002), Karl Mannheim (1952), Rogers Brubaker (2005), Camilla Orjuella and Bahar Baser (2024), and, finally, another work of Marianne Hirsch which is co-written with Nancy K. Miller (2011).

Marianne Hirsch, a daughter of Jewish Holocaust survivors, introduces the concept of postmemory by arguing that "postmemory is not identical to memory: it is "post"; but, at the same time, it approximates memory in its affective force and its psychic affects" (Hirsch, 2012, p. 31). She suggests that there is a need to look at the memory itself and its transmission to understand how one regards the "pain of others" (Hirsch, 2012, p. 2). Sara Ahmed's (2002) theory of contingency of pain brings a more complex perspective here, as she argues that living close to someone else's pain does not necessarily mean that another person is understanding the pain; nonetheless, by witnessing someone's pain, one can start understanding the pain as a real "happening in the world" (p. 23).

This chapter will also conceptualize terms of generation and diaspora. Karl Mannheim (1952) denies the homogeneity of a "generation" and proposes using terms such as generation location, generation as actuality, and generation units as practical and analytical categories. Meanwhile, Rogers Brubaker (2005) proposes clear-cut criteria for what constitutes a "real" diaspora: dispersion, homeland orientation, and boundary-maintenance. Those criteria will be explained, and further, the centrality of memory in the diaspora will be described by using the work of Bahar Baser and Camilla Orjuela (2024) and Marianne Hirsch and Nancy K. Miller (2011).

Postmemory

Marianne Hirsch grew up in Bucharest, where her Jewish parents settled after fleeing Czernowitz during World War II (Hirsch, 2012, p. 4). In the introduction of her book "The Generation of Postmemory. Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust", Hirsch wonders why she can better recall the streets of pre-war Czernowitz and the details of her parents' war-time life than the streets and details of her childhood life in Bucharest (Hirsch, 2012, p. 4). Building on this paradox and auto-biographical writings of children of Holocaust survivors all around the world, Hirsch comes up with the notion of postmemory as the relationship that the second generation has to the collective trauma in personal, collective, and cultural terms (Hirsch, 2012, p. 5). She emphasizes the importance of "post" arguing that just as in the case of "postmodernism" and "poststructuralism," "post" carries a meaning of "both a critical distance and a profound interrelation" with the original phenomenon (Hirsch, 2012, p. 5). Thus, she argues that the memory of the second generation carries the same traits of the original memory, but at the same time, it is ruptured: trauma makes memory non-linear, "opposed to history" (thus subjective), and, as in her case, even more vivid and salient. Therefore, the second generation becomes the guardians of memory, as they have both distance from the original trauma and a real, "living" connection to it. Nonetheless, according to Hirsch, there is not only a rupture in the memory itself but also in its transmission: the trauma that the first-generation carries might have consequences for the particular ways the memory of the traumatic events is transmitted through both verbal and non-verbal "acts of transfer" (Hirsch, 2012, p. 31).

Hirsch proposes two main variables in "acts of transfer" of the memory: family and pictures. She favors "intergenerational vertical identification of a child and parent" instead of "intergenerational horizontal identification that makes the child's position more broadly

available to other contemporaries" (Hirsch, 2012, p. 36). She does not ignore the fact that memory can be transmitted through horizontal social systems, but she argues that when it comes to families with traumatic pasts, it is almost impossible to position them in particular horizontal social systems, mainly because they get scattered all around the world (Hirsch, 2012, p. 36), which indeed happened in the case of the Bosnian diaspora. In addition, Hirsch implies that the legacies being transmitted to the child are already embedded in the "broader public and generational stories, images, artifacts, and understandings" (Hirsch and Miller, 2011, p. 4). That is why, in trying to understand how postmemory is being transmitted, there is a need to look at the ways traumatized parents spoke (or did not) about their past, how their bodies behaved when they spoke or did not speak about their pain, and how it settled down in their children's memories. Hirsch also focuses on pictures, primarily family pictures from the pre-war periods that second generations came to discover in their lives. She cites Roland Barthes, who came up with the notion of "punctum" in photography which means features of the pictures that invoke recognizability, the feeling of "having-been-there" (Hirsch, 2012, p. 38) and states that pictures are central in the creation of postmemory because they are physical things in the present that connect an individual to the past, especially if it is one's familial past. That is why this research will examine the contents of postmemory in the case of the second-generation Bosnian diaspora and the schemes of memory transmission in their familial surroundings, with a focus on verbal and embodied ways of memory transmission (including silence) and memory transmission through pictures from first-generation life in the Prijedor region.

Agency of the second-generation diasporans

The fact that memory is being transmitted from one person to another does not imply that memory transmission (verbal and non-verbal stories of a traumatic past and pictures from the

past) causes the child of a traumatized individual to internalize the memory in a specific, definable way. What Hirsch's theory lacks is awareness of the individual agency of the members of the second generation. Although she raises the question, "How do we regard the pain of others?" (Hirsch, 2012, p. 2), she simply assumes that the second generation *does* regard the pain of their parents and internalize it without questioning. In trying to understand how this internalization works and why, the writings of Sara Ahmed (2002) become central.

In the chapter "Contingency of Pain" in her 2002 book "Cultural Politics of Emotion," Sara Ahmed explores the idea that pain is something experienced in solitude, but it is never truly private because it is contingent. Firstly, pain arises when the border of a human surface (skin) meets another surface, and in this way, pain becomes a mediator between internal and external[2] (Ahmed, 2002, p. 19). Ahmed states that pain can also be caused by other living bodies (Ahmed, 2002, p. 23). That is why, at this point, we can take not only physical but also psychological pain into consideration. When one is in pain, first of all, the process of the attribution of meaning happens. As pain is caused by something or someone, "'it hurts' becomes 'you hurt me,' which might become 'you are hurtful'" (Ahmed, 2002, p. 18). Thus, for something to be painful, something has to be interpreted as causing pain by a person. This explains why Ahmed states that sometimes pain might even be felt not because something is particularly hurtful but because one owns a memory of a particular pain with an attributed meaning of causing pain. Then pain appears just because of the memory of the pain itself (Ahmed, 2002, p. 18). The contingency of pain and attribution of meaning during the experience of pain is relevant to this research in two aspects: a) it proves that pain binds people in the experience of pain, even if there is only one person who feels the pain; b) it proves that memory through attribution of meaning plays a central role in the experience of pain, thus, in the

[2] One could argue that this definition excludes internal pain such as caused by a disease. Nonetheless, Ahmed uses pain as an illustration that something is painful only when a person attributes a meaning to that something as causing pain, and that is why she mainly uses examples of pain caused externally.

framework of this research, the pain and trauma of the war will have their meanings attributed by people who feel that pain.

Even though Ahmed states that pain is never private, she presumes that it is impossible to feel the pain that another person feels (Ahmed, 2002, p. 21). In a way, Ahmed mentions the experience of the second generation when it comes to pain, as she refers to "living with her mother's pain" (Ahmed, 2002, p. 21). Interestingly enough, Ahmed states that her mother was lonely in her pain, and indeed, however much one loves a person, one can never feel another person's pain *for* that person. But at the same time, Ahmed argues that because of the love that she felt for her mother and because the pain her mother was in was so "embodied" (Ahmed, 2002, p. 22), she "felt the unfeelable"—to some extent, she felt her mother's pain (Ahmed, 2002, p. 23). Ahmed calls this phenomenon of being open to another person's pain, to being moved by that pain even if it will never be entirely understood, an ethics of pain (Ahmed, 2002, p. 24). Here, Ahmed's theory speaks to Hirsch's theory: it is through those *embodied* ways the pain is being transmitted from people who felt the pain initially to the people who are open to feeling their pain because of the incentives love and empathy create in their relationship.

As already mentioned, this research will tackle embodied stories of the past. Nonetheless, the crucial point drawn from Ahmed's understanding of the pain that is social is that it proves that when it comes to trying to understand someone else's pain and, in the case of this research, the parent's pain, the agency of the receivers of memory (the second generation diasporans) themselves create meanings of that pain. In addition, one can never be certain what kind of ethics of pain one has and, thus, how intensely the child will internalize the parent's pain. This means that second-generation diasporans have the agency to shape their own postmemory, and it does not necessarily mean that their postmemory and its interpretations will be similar to their parents' memories. The notion of the agency of people who witness the pain (in the case of this research, second-generation diasporans) is also mirrored in the works of

Bahar Baser and Camilla Orjuela (2024), Peggy Levitt (2009), and Susan Rubin Suleiman (2002), who state that the second-generation diasporans (or, in Suleiman's case, 1.5 generation) tend to have a different memory than their parents, either because they are always influenced by social norms, values, and memories of the host country more than their parents, or because each person intrinsically internalizes the trauma of the family differently.

One more aspect of Ahmed's (2002) work on pain that is relevant to this research is what she calls the fetishization of pain. Citing Wendy Brown, the author states that people can become so invested in the wound that "the wound comes to stand for identity itself" (Ahmed, 2002, p. 26). In this case, people who have fetishized their pain are being "held by the past" (Ahmed, 2002, p. 26). There is existing research on the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina proving that all three ethnic groups (Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs) create a positive self-image of their groups by relying on collective self-victimization (Mijić, 2021). In the case of fetishization of pain, the attributed meaning of the pain changes: in a way, a person who once felt the pain or feels another person's pain loses the ability to rethink the relationship between the past and present and continues to live by and reproduce the same narratives of the past. Even though Ahmed highly criticizes the fetishization of pain, this research will aim to understand if the first-generation diaspora transmits pain as the main characteristic of self-identification to the second-generation diaspora.

In general, Sara Ahmed's theory on the contingency of pain serves as a basis for understanding the agency held by the second-generation diaspora in shaping their own postmemory. To put it differently, Ahmed's theory (2002) challenges Hirsch's theory (2012) who argues that the transmission of memory is a one-way process. Thus, it is crucial to examine how parents' memories are perceived and (re)shaped by their children.

What is a (second) generation?

In the field of migration studies, the first generation of migrants is typically defined as individuals who left their countries of origin to settle in a host country, while the second generation is usually considered to consist of people who were born in the host country and have at least one immigrant parent (Rumbaut, 2006, pp. 1162-1163). Nonetheless, the usage of the term "second-generation" in the migration context can differ: while some authors consider the second generation diasporans as people necessarily born in the host country, some others use looser definitions, for example, second-generation diasporans can be regarded as people who were brought to the host countries until the age of six or even twelve (King and Christou, 2010, p. 168).

It is essential to note that the very concept of a generation, especially in the face of such cataclysms as war or other disasters, is complex. For example, Susan Rubin Suleiman (2002) discussed the ambiguity of the term "generation" and even "child" in times of the Holocaust—herself being born in a Jewish family in Hungary in 1939 and thus being a small child during the Holocaust, she refers to the generation 1.5, in itself a complex concept of being a child during the cataclysm, therefore living through the same horrors as the adults but not being able to comprehend the horrors fully[3]. Nonetheless, in cases such as Suleiman suggests, the cataclysmic event (war in Suleiman's case and the case of this research) becomes a reference point when conceptualizing generations. Another example of referring to particular events in conceptualizing a generation (even when approaching a generation from a normative sociological point of view) is the work of Karl Mannheim (1952). In his essay "The Problem of Generations," Mannheim denies the homogeneity of a generation as such. He states that

[3] Suleiman's conceptualization of generation 1.5 is far more complicated than I introduced: she differentiates between children who are "too young to remember" the cataclysm, "old enough to remember but too young to understand" and "old enough to understand but too young to be responsible" (p. 283), and also suggests that age can be vague when it comes to war - very often, children in war are forced to act as if they were older than they actually are.

when it comes to the same generation (which is born roughly every 30 years), it is essential to differentiate between such analytical and practical categories of generation location, generation as actuality, and generation units. Mannheim explains a generation location to be an objective fact, referring to people being born in the same cultural region, particularly in the same territory, around the same time, and compares this concept to a social class, which is indeed also a social fact (p. 303). Nonetheless, people born in the same generation location do not necessarily constitute the same actual generation. For Mannheim, generation as actuality means the people in the same generation location experiencing the same historical events and problems and social change, as he also calls it, "participation in common destiny" (p. 303), "crucial group experiences" (p. 310), or "crucial turning points in historical chronology" (p. 311). Thus, Mannheim (1952) conceptualizes generations through events in the world just like Suleiman (2002). Lastly, when it comes to generation units, which Mannheim defines as similarity in consciousness and interpretation of the events of social change amongst groups of people in the same actual generation (for example, all liberals in the same actual generation would belong to the same generation unit) (Mannheim, 1952, pp. 304-305), the agency of the people in the actual generation is being taken into consideration. In generation units, it becomes important what the members in the same actual generation produce, what they state, and what they identify with.

Mannheim's theory largely speaks to this research. Firstly, it is essential to mention that Mannheim (1952) perceives generational change as a highly positive phenomenon: he states that in the continuity of life in this world, "social remembering is just as important as forgetting and action starting from scratch" (p. 294), and both remembering and forgetting naturally take place through generation change. Here, Mannheim's theory resonates with both Marianne Hirsch (2012) and Sara Ahmed (2002): just as Hirsch, Mannheim posits that remembering endures through generations, and just as Ahmed, Mannheim pays considerable attention to the individuals who receive the messages transmitted from older generations to the young.

Mannheim states that although younger generations tend to adapt themselves to the ways of older generations, what a new generation always has is a natural "fresh contact" with the world and the ways of being of the older generations (Mannheim, 1952, p. 293), thus, a continuous reinterpretation of memory of the previous generations takes place. The problems that are important to the parents of the new generations can become completely or almost unimportant to the new ones. In the context of this research, this once again proves that it is not only important to examine the stories of the war that were told to the second generation of survivors but also how the second generation interprets and lives with them.

What Mannheim does not discuss is the possibility of members of the same generation being scattered around the world, namely, being in the diaspora. Looking at his definitions of elements of a generation, one could state for sure that when it comes to the diaspora, people born around similar times are not in the same generation location, as their actual geographical locations differ highly. Nonetheless, one could argue that in the framework of this thesis, where the scholarly gaze is turned towards children born to the people who fled the same country because of the same event—the Bosnian War in the Prijedor region—the children born to these people indeed share the "participation in common destiny," and that would make them belong to the same actual generation. In the case of this research, the Bosnian War in the Prijedor region serves as a "crucial turning point in historical chronology" (Mannheim, 1952, p. 311). Thus, the diasporic life, shaped by this experience, binds the second generation from the Prijedor region together. Particularly because of the "common destiny" of the second-generation diasporans from the Prijedor region, I use Mannheim's concept of actual generations, as it would not make sense to talk about the same actual generation in the case of second-generation diaspora(s) in general—they would lack the "participation in common destiny."

Nonetheless, although Mannheim states that living through common historical and social changes "form a link between spatially separated individuals who may never come into personal contact at all" (Mannheim, 1952, p. 306), it remains unclear if, according to him, one can speak about the actual generations and a possible formation of generation units within the groups of people born around the same time to the survivors of the Bosnian War in diaspora. For this reason, in the following subchapter, I will introduce a theoretical framework that elaborates on the "common destiny" of second-generation diasporans. I will argue that what makes diasporic people belong to a specific generation is memory, a crucial element of diasporic identity, and will attempt to fill the gap in Mannheim's theory. Nonetheless, without empirical data, it will be impossible to prove that the second-generation diasporans from the Prijedor region might indeed constitute an actual generation and answer the question of whether they could constitute a particular generation unit (namely if they have similar attitudes towards the Bosnian War). Thus, I aim to demonstrate that second-generation diasporans belong to the same actual generation and answer the question of whether they form a distinct generation unit using the empirical data I gathered.

Diaspora and memory as a binding tissue

In 2005, Rogers Brubaker diagnosed "a dispersion of the meanings of the term [diaspora] in semantic, conceptual and disciplinary space" (Brubaker, 2005, p. 1). He stated that diaspora as a term had been so overused that it has lost its meaning, and proposed to "speak of diasporic stances, projects, claims, idioms, practices and so on" (Brubaker, 2005, p. 13) and use quite clear-cut criteria to distinguish "the "diaspora" diaspora." Brubaker's criteria for diasporas are three: dispersion, homeland orientation, and boundary-maintenance (Brubaker, 2005, pp. 5-6). Dispersion usually refers to being scattered around the world due to traumatic experiences such

as war. Still, it may also encompass broader understandings, including dispersion for any reason or even dispersion within state borders (Brubaker, 2005, p. 5). Homeland orientation refers to having a real or even imagined homeland as a compass for values and self-identification and to the homeland as embodying the collective memory that members of the diaspora carry (Brubaker, 2005, p. 5). In addition, homeland orientation may involve the idea of an eventual return to the place of origin, or at least a strong desire to support and maintain the homeland in its best condition (or, for example, in the event of war, to rebuild it) (Brubaker, 2005, p. 5). Lastly, boundary maintenance refers to maintaining self-identification, norms, and values that are distinct from those of the host society. Interestingly enough, according to Brubaker, boundary-maintenance might appear not only because of the will of diasporic people to maintain their identities of the home country but also as a natural consequence of exclusion in the host society (Brubaker, 2005, p. 5). This thesis follows Brubaker's conceptualization of diaspora and supposes that both first-generation and second-generation diasporans from the Prijedor region are dispersed geographically outside of Bosnia and Herzegovina, orient themselves towards Bosnia and Herzegovina and maintain some of the Bosnian cultural, linguistic, and other boundaries.

Brubaker also puts a lot of emphasis on generational change when it comes to "real" diasporas: when elaborating on what he means by boundary-maintenance, Brubaker states that diasporic boundaries must stay intact throughout extended time, thus different generations (Burbaker, 2005, p. 7). Nonetheless, it is evident that boundaries, even if factually they stay intact through generational change, might change their forms: for example, some boundaries might become fuzzy in second-generation diasporans, as they are socialized both into social norms and values of their parents (thus, country of origin) and into the "transnational social field" meaning the social norms and values of the host country (Levitt, 2009, p. 1226).

One could ask why diaspora is central in this research, which revolves around memory and its transmission. I build an answer to this question on the theory of prominent diaspora scholars Bahar Baser and Camilla Orjuela (2024), who state that memory is the tissue that not only binds the members of the diaspora together but is also a central and crucial requirement for the diaspora to remain in existence. Here, the notion of memory speaks to what Brubaker calls homeland orientation and boundary-maintenance. According to Baser and Orjuella (2024), the memory of the homeland, and in the case of conflict-generated diasporas, the horrors that made them flee their homelands, is the element that *makes* homeland orientation and boundary-maintenance central and persistent through time and thus creates what Brubaker calls a "diaspora" diaspora (Brubaker, 2005). Of course, when it comes to such a difficult past as war, one could also say that memory is crucially important both to the diaspora and the returnees and other survivors who stayed in their country of origin. Nonetheless, Baser and Orjuella (2024) argue that there is a salient difference between the memory of the past between the diaspora and locals: "While the past is lost to everyone, emigrants—and sometimes also their descendants—feel this loss even more intensely as they are geographically separated from (parts of) their past" (Baser and Orjuella, 2024, p. 3). Thus, diasporic memory that creates a diasporic identity is based on imagination. While researching the transmission of the memory of the war, as Marianne Hirsch (2012) proposes, in vertical structures of family through verbal and embodied ways as well as physical pictures based on the feeling of something that is lost, looking at the case of diaspora comes in especially handy: diaspora members do not have any physical legacies of the war around them, so the second-generation postmemory of the war is created purely through transmission of imagination, of something beyond physical, on the feeling of having lost something itself; all the things that Hirsch makes central describing the creation of postmemory.

The argument for researching postmemory of the war in diaspora can also be supplemented by another work of Marianne Hirsch (with the co-author Nancy K. Miller) (2011). In the introduction to the book "Rites of Return," the authors discuss the special magnetism of the feeling of belonging that is unique to diaspora communities (Hirsch and Miller, 2011, p. 5). To Hirsch and Miller, willingness to belong is connected to Brubaker's criteria of homeland orientation and, in particular, the idea of returning to the lost homeland. They argue that the desire to return often comes from such trauma as expulsion, colonization, and migration (Hirsch and Miller, 2011, p. 7) and, in the current world, is also mediated through the digital (Hirsch and Miller, 2011, p. 12). Thus, the memory of the trauma and the lost homeland that is transmitted through family relationships offers a sense of ontological security and can even lead to an "obsession with roots" (Hirsch and Miller, 2011, p. 5). This again demonstrates that an imaginative memory of home and an orientation towards it are central to the diaspora specifically.

Both works of Brubaker (2005) and Baser and Orjuella (2024) highly emphasize that for a diaspora to continue to exist over time, the transmission of memory to further generations is crucial. Meanwhile, for the diaspora, memory itself is the primary source of ontological security and the basis for building homeland orientation and boundary-maintenance in the host countries. Because of the centrality of memory, its imaginative nature, and complexity in the diaspora, as well as the emergence of new possible forms of homeland orientation due to globalization and digitalization, researching memory transmission in the diaspora becomes not only academically significant but also an exciting task.

Against the backdrop of my theoretical background, the research question and subquestions have been elaborated:

How and why does the postmemory of the Bosnian War affect the second generation of the Bosnian diaspora from the Prijedor region?

- What are the contents and proofs of postmemory in the second-generation Bosnian diaspora from the Prijdeor region? How was the memory of the war transmitted to the second generation?
- How do members of the second-generation diaspora refer to their parents' pain? Are the meanings of their pain different from the meanings their parents articulated? Is fetishization of pain present in postmemory?
- Can the second-generation diasporans be considered to belong to the same actual generation and a generation unit?

These questions will be answered using analysis of empirical data, which will be analyzed using qualitative methodology that will be introduced and elaborated below. Before that, it is crucial to provide some background information on the Prijedor region, which will discuss the Prijedorian "place-based trauma," and I will do that in the upcoming chapter.

"Place-based trauma" of the Bosnian War in the Prijedor region

In this chapter, I will explain the biggest crimes and their implications in the Prijedor region, which will serve as a basis for concluding that there indeed is a "place-based trauma" when it comes to war survivors from the Prijedor region. I will overview the process of ethnic cleansing, the network of concentration camps in the region, and the White Armband Order, which symbolizes a genocidal intent against the non-Serbs. In addition, as it is essential to contextualize these events within contemporary contexts, I will provide a brief overview of the war memory situation in the Prijedor region after the war.

The beginning of ethnic cleansing

Bosnian War started in spring 1992, following the referendum of independence in Bosnia and Herzegovina in June 1991, which supported Bosnia and Herzegovina's secession from Yugoslavia but caused outrage from Bosnian Serb leaders: soon after Bosnia and Herzegovina proclaimed independence, Bosnian Serb paramilitaries started the 4-year long siege of Sarajevo which included bombardment, sniper attacks, and terror upon civilian population (Morus, 2010, p. 9). The war eventually consisted of two conflicts: the fight between Bosnian Serb forces and united Bosnian Muslim-Croat forces, and, later on, an additional fight between Bosnian Muslim forces and Croats arose (IRMCT). The Bosnian War took the lives of more than 100,000 people, of which around 68% were Bosnian Muslims, 22% Bosnian Serbs, 8,8% Croats, and almost 5% others (Zwierzchowski and Tabeau, 2010, p. 17). It is essential to mention that religion played a central role in this conflict, as all three ethnicities professed different religions: Orthodoxy (Serbs), Catholicism (Croats), and Islam (Bosniaks/Bosnian Muslims).

The Prijedor region is located in the northwestern part of Bosnia and Herzegovina. According to the 1991 census, it had over 112,000 inhabitants: 44% were Bosniaks, 42.5% were

Serbs, 5.6% were Croats, 5.7% were "Yugoslavs," and 2.2% were others (including Ukrainians, Russians, Italians, and Roma) (Greve, 1994). In 1991, SDS (Serbian Democratic Party), led by Radovan Karadžić, claimed that all Serbs should be gathered in one state of the "Greater Serbia." Bosnian municipalities which either have the majority of Serbs or allegedly would have Serbs as a majority "had there been no genocide against Serbs" in WWII should be included in the "Greater Serbia" (Mihajlović Trbovc, 2014, p. 27). SDS attempted to "homogenize Serb people and territories" (Kovačević, 2020, p. 114) and, in January 1992, created the Republic of the Serb People of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which later became *Republika Srpska* (Kovačević, 2020, p. 114). The creation of this entity meant an intention to ethnically cleanse the municipalities that were claimed to be a part of "Greater Serbia."

In April 1992, Bosniaks in higher offices in the Prijedor region were effectively removed from their duties, as they were no longer allowed to perform their jobs or attend work (Lippman, 2019, p. 272). On the 30th of the same month, troops of Republika Srpska surrounded the town of Prijedor and began taking over power by force. The takeover of the entire municipality lasted into May, June, and July (Lippman, 2019, p. 273). Such towns in the Prijedor region as Kozarac, Čarakovo, Šurkovac, and Hambarine became famous as towns where almost all houses were burnt down (sometimes with people still in them) or bombed, thus the whole towns, in the words of locals, resembled Hiroshima after the nuclear bomb attack (Lippman, 2019, p. 273) In Kozarac, *Republika Srpska* forces shouted "Muslims, get out!" out of the tanks, and non-Serbs were told that they would need to surrender to be able to evacuate: people did not have any other choice but to move from the forests and other shelters and surrender, not knowing what awaits next (Kovačević, 2020, pp. 118-119). An additional reason to make people surrender was to indicate the elites of the community: doctors, government officials, intellectuals, teachers, and lawyers, and eliminate the community leaders first so the

non-Serb community is left scared and with less organizational means to resist the Serb extremists. Scholars refer to this approach as an "elitocide" (Lippman, 2019, p. 274).

Another clear proof of ethnic cleansing, and, as some researchers argue, genocidal intent, is an example of the White Armband Order: on May 31st, 1992, the Serb authorities in the whole Prijedor municipality issued a law requiring all non-Serbs to wear white armbands on their clothes and mark their home windows with white flags so the non-Serbs can always be identifiable (Nielsen, 2022, p. 85). This was the first time since the 1939 Nazi order for the Jews to wear a Star of David on their sleeve that people belonging to a particular ethnicity and religion were marked aiming to kill, deport, rape, and generally traumatize them (Mihajlović Trbovc, 2014, p. 35).

Concentration camps

Prijedor and its surrounding areas experienced the highest number of killings in all of northwestern Bosnia, and in terms of the overall death toll across Bosnia and Herzegovina, Prijedor ranks third (Kovačević, 2020, p. 105). Estimates of people who died in the Prijedor region because of the war vary around 3000, including 102 children and 256 women (Lippman, 2019, p. 276), while counting all the deported, the number reaches more than 52,000 (Karabegović 2019, p. 1921). It is important to note that not only Muslims but Croats were also persecuted: around 200 Croats were killed in the Prijedor region (Lippman, 2019, p. 277), and thus, the Prijedor region became overwhelmingly Serb-dominated in the first year of the war alone. But how were expulsions and killings in such numbers possible there?

The answer lies in the fact that the Prijedor region held a network of 28 concentration camps for non-Serbs. The people who lost their homes or were forced to surrender to the Serbs were immediately sent to concentration camps. The most notorious and biggest ones were

Omarska, Keraterm, Manjača, and Trnopolje (Kovačević, 2020, p. 119). Camps Omarska and Keraterm are famous because the inmates of these camps were mostly men who were perceived as a threat to the non-Serbs. Thus, these camps are largely connected to the aforementioned "elitocide" (Lippman, 2019, p. 274). For example, Omarska was established at a site of an iron mine, and around 3300 people were held there and beaten, starved, raped, and killed. Serb extremists also committed such notorious crimes as burning people alive, castrating them, and decapitating them (Lippman, 2019, p. 275). The famous *bijela kuća* ("white house") at Omarska is largely known to be the place where inmates would be "interrogated" about their "extremist" activities every day, and after those "interrogations," every morning a pile of bodies would lay outside of the "white house" (Karčić, 2022, p. 126). Thirty-seven women at Omarska were repeatedly raped, and overall around 500-900 people died in this camp (Sivac-Bryant, 2015, p. 170).

Meanwhile, Trnopolje was initially established as a center where people would be collected before deportation; therefore, in the beginning, most of the inmates were women and children (Kovačević, 2020, p. 120). However, later on, as Keraterm and Omarska were closed, many men were also transferred to Trnopolje (Kovačević, 2020, p. 120). Trnopolje was later claimed to be an "open camp" or even simply a "refugee center" by the Republika Srpska officials. Nonetheless, even if some women were allowed to leave the camp on some occasions (even though there was nowhere to go), in Trnopolje as well as other camps, rapes, beatings, and killings were largely widespread (Lippman, 2019, p. 273). The aforementioned closure and general restructuration of the camp system happened after August 1992, when journalists Roy Gutman from "Newsday," Ed Vulliamy from "The Guardian," and Penny Marshall from "Independent Television News" managed to visit the sites of the camps and showed the world the pictures and videos of malnourished people behind the barbed wires who cannot comment on their living situation or are forced to say that everything is fine (Sivac-Bryant, 2015, p. 171).

The existence of concentration camps meant a large number of mass graves in the Prijedor region. For example, in 2013, a mass grave of Tomašica was found, from which 450 bodies were excavated, and these bodies are mainly of people who were held in Keraterm and Trnopolje (Lippman, 2019, p. 341). After the war, Prijedor still had a large number of missing people (around 1200), and discovering Tomašica helped identify some of them (Lippman, 2019, p. 341). Tomašica constitutes one of the biggest mass graves in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Europe after WWII (Lippman, 2019, p. 341).

Post-war "memorycide" in the Prijedor region

The Bosnian War ended with the Dayton Agreement in 1995, and the official entity of the Serb-dominated *Republika Srpska* was created. Up until today, the Prijedor region is located there. Nonetheless, some Prijedorians dispersed in Bosnia and beyond were keen to return immediately after the war. At the beginning of returns, a massive backlash from the Serbs was present: the buses with the returnees were attacked with rocks thrown, and it was clear that the returnees were not welcome (Lippman, 2019, p. 278). Nonetheless, in the 2000s, some persistent survivors managed to return and start rebuilding their cities and towns. In fact, the Prijedor region has one of the highest return rates in the whole of Bosnia and Herzegovina, with between 20,000 and 30,000 people returning (Lippman, 2019, p. 278). Here, the question was present—how to live together again? This question soon proved to be almost unanswerable, as transitional justice processes, which were intended to bring acknowledgment of the truth and a sense of justice to the victims, failed on both societal and some institutional levels (Subotić, 2009). So, for example, guards, beaters, killers, and rapists of concentration camps could be met on the streets by the victim returnees in the Prijedor region. That is why Jovana Mihajlović Trbovc (2014) calls the memory of the Bosnian War right after the end of it "offensive denial,"

(p. 31) meaning that the crimes committed by the *Republika Srpska* forces were not only denied but the people advocating for the memory of the crimes were often attacked.

The situation improved slightly after the 2000s when the number of returnees increased, and more people began demanding the right to commemorate the events. Nonetheless, for example, in 2012, the at-the-time mayor of Prijedor Marko Pavić, refused to issue permits to organize commemorations of 20 years after the beginning of the war if the commemorators used the word "genocide" and called the White Armband Day commemoration "yet another gay parade" (Mihajlović Trbovc, 2014, p. 31). Not only did the people willing to commemorate the tragic events in Prijedor faced (and still face) problems when they wanted to use the word "genocide," but they also did not have actual memorial sites to organize commemorations in. Up until today, only Kozarac, which is now once again a mainly Muslim town, holds a monument for Bosnian War victims (Bajec, 2021, p. 102). All the other monuments in the Prijedor region commemorate the Serb community and, most often, only hold a message of heroism and victimhood of the Serb soldiers during WWII (Bajec, 2021, p. 102). There are even highly absurd cases of the choice of monuments in the Prijedor region: for example, next to Trnopolje concentration camp, which is now a functioning school, stands a 1950s-style eagle monument dedicated to the heroic Serbian forces in WWII (Bajec, 2021, p. 104). András Riedlmayer, a Harvard University professor, referred to such acts of denial in *Republika Srpska* as "memorycide"; essentially, an attempt to erase the real memory (and memories) of the Bosnian War (Halilovich, 2022, p. 209).

Sadly, the philosophy of "memorycide" proved to be successful so far: in recent years, two Serb-extremist groups "Samopostovanje" and "Princip" started actively working in the Prijedor region, denying all the crimes committed in Prijedor (including the order to wear the white armbands), actively claiming that the war in Prijedor was begun by "Muslim extremists" and praising Bosnian Serb military leader Ratko Mladić as a hero (Hodzić, 2023). Since 2021,

these groups have been trying to influence the Prijedor government to ban the commemoration of the White Armband Day. Besides that, the commemoration of the White Armband Day always faces institutional difficulties. For example, the day before the last commemoration in 2024, the Prijedorian authorities held an event celebrating Bosnian Serbs as defenders of the city from the Nazis. The event was organized in the same square where the White Armband Day is and was attended by the *Republika Srpska* government, police, military, and many Bosnian Serb supporters (Kurtić, 2024). Thus, up until this day, the history of the Bosnian War in the Prijedor region remains revisionistic, and the crimes are highly denied by most of the Prijedorian authorities. This means that the burden of keeping the memory alive through commemorations and other community events falls entirely on the shoulders of the returnees and the diaspora: they organize and finance such grassroots events as funeral processions for people who are identified from the exhumations of mass graves every year and visits to the sites of the concentration camps, even if they are allowed to enter the territory of those sites only once or twice a year (Koinova and Karabegović, 2017, p. 222).

The notorious events of the Bosnian War in the Prijedor region and the fact that *Republika Srpska* officials have been performing "memorycide" throughout the 30 years after the end of the Bosnian War clearly prove the existence of a specific "place-based trauma" in the Prijedor region. In addition, the fact that the diaspora and returnees are utterly responsible for the only initiatives of commemoration of the killings, concentration camps, and the White Armband Order in the Prijedor region sheds an even brighter light on the research question of this thesis. As the memory of the Bosnian War in the Prijedor region is at risk of fading away, it becomes even more important to see if that memory of the war remains important in emotional terms in the circles of second-generation diaspora from the Prijedor region.

Methods

In this chapter, I outline the rationale behind selecting a qualitative approach for the research. I provide information on my choice to combine semi-structured interviews with the elements of biographical narrative interviews for data collection and on applying content analysis combined with the hermeneutical approach for data analysis. I also introduce my sampling strategy and provide information on the research participants, as well as note possible limitations and ethical considerations associated with working with the sample and the methods of this research.

Qualitative approach in researching postmemory

Trying to understand postmemory and its transmission is not easy: it is impossible to track down every single element from one's childhood and adolescence during which pieces of knowledge about the Bosnian War were transmitted from the outside world (in the case of this research, family) to the member of the second-generation diaspora. Nonetheless, this research aims to examine the "final product" of memory transmission, meaning the postmemory that has already formed, and to understand how members of the second-generation Bosnian diaspora remember and interpret both the Bosnian War and the verbal or embodied stories about it within their families. Keeping in mind that postmemory is a qualitative concept in itself, in this thesis I engage with a qualitative research approach. Jane Ritchie (2003) argues that when it comes to trying to understand deeply rooted, complex, sensitive, delicate, and not yet well-understood phenomena, a qualitative research approach is needed (p. 32-33). In addition, when working with the case of postmemory in the second-generation Prijedorian diaspora, the researcher must take the context of the Bosnian War, the post-conflict situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and

the nature of diasporic identity into account, and be able to later make connections between postmemory and broader contexts, and for that qualitative approach is also the most suitable.

To answer the research question and subquestions, I conducted 10 semi-structured interviews incorporating elements of a biographical narrative interviewing, using a trauma-informed approach. This type of interview provides a certain flexibility to both the interviewee and the interviewer, ensuring open responses instead of brief answers (Petrescu and Lazar et al., 2017, p. 38). It was essential to me to be able to react to particular things I heard from my interviewees with follow-up questions, and semi-structured interviews helped me preserve both the structure of my inquiries and that possibility. Meanwhile, biographical narrative interviews help the researcher to understand not only the social reality of the interviewee but also the interviewer's experiential world (Rosenthal, 1993, p. 1). Elements of biographical narrative interviews in my thesis (for example, first of all, asking my interviewees to tell me about their life and family) gave the interviewees the freedom to tell their story the way they want it to be told. Meanwhile, I could understand which parts, moments, and people in their lives meant the most to them and thus possibly had the biggest effect on postmemory formation.

Applying a trauma-informed approach to my interviews ensured that the interviewees felt comfortable during our conversations. Although my interviewees were not the ones who got direct trauma from the Bosnian War, their families were most often the ones who survived concentration camps, shellings, and other inhumane conditions, so I was conscious of possible secondary trauma. That is why, as suggested by Sophie Isobel (2021), I provided participants with the possibility to take as much time as they needed for their answers, stop or take a break at any point of the interview if needed, not answer the questions they felt uncomfortable with, and generally make them feel that I am not in an advanced position power-wise. Semi-structured interviews with biographical narrative interview elements hold this flexibility and give power to the interviewee to talk about what they will, and this approach highly supports

the trauma-informed approach. In addition, all the participants signed informed-consent forms before the interviews, in which I was completely transparent about the aims of this research, which also correlates with the trauma-informed vision of the study.

Sampling and participants

The sampling method used in this research combines convenience sampling and a snowball sampling approach. I have previously conducted field research in the Prijedor region, Bosnia and Herzegovina, during which I interviewed members of the first-generation Bosnian diaspora and individuals who have been living in the region and working in various Prijedor-based NGOs. Thus, I had contacts with first-generation diasporans whose children I could interview or who could direct me towards other people they knew who would fit my research sample. Additionally, local people working in NGOs also helped me greatly with recruitment, as they are involved in the community life of the Prijedor region. Although convenience sample and snowball method are not considered to create a very diverse sample, it is essential to mention that previously, I had developed a pretty vast network of acquaintances in the Prijedor region, and thus, most of my interviewees were from entirely different contexts (grew up in various countries, had parents who are memory activists and had parents who are completely not involved in any memory work relating to the Bosnian War, were of different age, etc.).

As I will demonstrate in the table later in this chapter, my sample included two sets of siblings. There were twins, 18 years old, born and raised in Switzerland, and two sisters, 23 and 21 years old, born and raised in the Netherlands. The decision to interview siblings came directly from the theoretical approach of this research. As described in the Theory chapter, Marianne Hirsch (2012) argues that memory is transmitted via vertical structures (families). I supplement this theory with Sara Ahmed's (2002) notion of the contingency of pain and further

elaborate that it is not enough to take memory transmission for granted as an event that necessarily happens, as it is crucial to look at the agency of the memory receivers themselves (in this case, members of the second-generation diaspora). Thus, it becomes a curious case to see whether people who grew up in the same families have similar or different postmemory. In other words, the decision to interview siblings was deliberate, and it helped me understand the significant role personal agency plays in the formation of the postmemory of the war.

Here, I present a table with data of the interview participants of this research. It is worth noting that I specifically chose to interview individuals born outside of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1992 or later. I made this decision to be able to look at the pure transmission of the memory of parents to their children who physically have never lived through conditions of war. For example, it was important to me that in case parents were imprisoned in concentration camps, they would then speak to their children purely about their experiences[4].

All the names of the interviewees have been changed (I replaced them with the most popular names in Bosnia and Herzegovina).

No.	Name (changed)	Gender	Age	Host country	Occupation
1.	Asja	Female	18	Switzerland	Student
2.	Esma	Female	18	Switzerland	Student
3.	Amina	Female	26	Austria	Nurse
4.	Davud	Male	18	Switzerland	Student
5.	Ilma	Female	24	Austria	Student
6.	Eman	Male	30	UK	Graphic designer

[4] In case I interviewed people who by some scholars might still be considered second-generation or 1.5 generation diasporans, but who were small children during the war, the element of "You have been there [in war, in concentration camps]" might have appeared in the stories told by the parents to their children, which could move second-generation diasporans to develop not only postmemory but, in some sense, their own memory of the Bosnian War. That could have interfered with my interest in postmemory only.

7.	Haris	Male	33	UK	Architect
8.	Nejla	Female	23	The Netherlands	Student
9.	Ajša	Female	21	The Netherlands	Student
10.	Imran	Male	31	Switzerland	IT specialist

Data analysis approach

All interviews were conducted in English and online via the Zoom platform (except for one interview, which had to be conducted via WhatsApp due to technical issues with Zoom) and lasted between 1 and 2.5 hours. Later, they were transcribed with the help of the transcribing software "Descript" and the transcription function in MS Word. The generated transcription was double-checked, and I corrected the mistakes. The transcripts were coded using MAXQDA software, and the codes were formulated in line with the theoretical framework (and are mirrored in the names of the subchapters, sections, and subsections of the analysis chapter of this thesis).

Interviews were analyzed by applying qualitative content analysis and combining it with a hermeneutical approach. While content analysis helps develop categories of analysis inductively from the text (Forman and Damschroder, 2007, p. 40), the hermeneutical approach focuses on detecting both the manifested and latent meanings of what is said (Wernet, 2013, pp. 235-236). The hermeneutical approach also acknowledges the agency and bias of the researcher in interview conducting and analysis, as it is conscious about the fact that the mere presence of a researcher might change the reality which the interviewee depicts, but still strives to find "true understanding" of the phenomenon (Wernet, 2013, p. 235). In this research, I explored the topic of silence in depth, as well as the embodied forms of pain that can occur within families. Thus, it was essential for me to take notice not only of what was said but also to understand what might be left unsaid and try to grasp a broader meaning of the categories of

analysis in each interview. In addition, because of the trauma-informed approach to interviewing, sometimes, when I felt that it was needed, I let the interviewees know that I previously did research in the area of their origin and, in some cases, previously interviewed their parents, just to make myself less of a stranger to them. Thus, in rare instances in which I felt that more encouragement was needed for the interviewees, the interview became a dialogue, where I would also provide my insights or pieces of experiences that I had while in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and this way of interviewing in the form of a dialogue is also allowed and encouraged while conducting interviews for later analysis applying hermeneutical approach.

Limitations and ethical considerations

Generally, the people I recruited were willing to discuss their experiences and opinions, and only a few expressed a need for more information about me so they could decide whether to participate in my study. Keeping in mind that conducting research with a potentially vulnerable group may require a more sensitive approach to the recruitment process, I always provided the information potential interviewees needed. I thus approached not only the interviewing process but also the recruitment process in a trauma-informed manner. In addition, as already mentioned, all potential interviewees who agreed to participate in the study signed the informed consent form, which gave them the option to withdraw within 72 hours after the interview if they felt uncomfortable with it.

There were no significant issues with interviewees being uncomfortable with the questions, and no questions were refused to be answered by anybody. And although online interviews might be perceived as inferior to face-to-face communication, during this research, I often felt fortunate: it seemed to me that being in their own surroundings, having a computer between us, knowing that I do not have personal relations to Bosnia and that I will anonymize

all the interviews, made my interviewees more relaxed and open. It often happened that I gained important knowledge after the official interview, where my interviewees were able to ask me questions and add whatever they wanted, and felt as if we were having a casual conversation. Thus, I always felt that the interviewees wanted me to be a human and not only a researcher, and I made sure that was the case.

Here comes the question of my positionality in this research. Although I am not from Bosnia and Herzegovina and do not have any direct links to it, my interest in post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina and previous research made me feel close to the country and its people and empathetic about its problems. Visiting the sites that mark huge war crimes and making friends with people whose family members were killed and sent to concentration camps made me naturally biased in the sense of empathy for war victim communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Nonetheless, in the case of this research, none of my interviewees were my friends, and I only knew two people (sisters Nejla and Ajša) slightly, as I met them in Kozarac in the summer of 2022. I am sure that the connection with the Bosnian people I have built through time, and at the same time, my distance from the country put me in a fortunate position: I was able to create meaningful and trusting conversations, but at the same time maintain the distance required from the researcher.

Talking about data selection and analysis, some doubts can be raised: some scientists claim that semi-structured interview questions might be formulated in a way that directs the interviewee to certain answers, and those answers can be too dominated by the values of the interviewer (Nomnian, 2009, p. 61). Firstly, I mentioned that in rare cases, during the interviews, I provided some personal background and insights from my experience in Bosnia and Herzegovina; however, these insights were never related to the issue of the second-generation diaspora and its post-memory of war. Secondly, all my questions were formulated in a way that did not imply any values or suggestions: for example, I would always simply say,

"Tell me (more) about *x*." Some authors also raise questions about biographical narrative interviews, as it is unclear how much is left out when a person recounts their life. Research has revealed that there are indeed many things people do not mention during biographical interviews (Correia and Caetano 2024, p. 1396). For this reason, I combined biographical narrative interview elements with semi-structured interview elements, allowing me to ask follow-up questions after the initial stories people shared about their lives and families. This way, I believe, I managed to avoid things of major importance to my research being left out of the conversations.

The last limitation of this research concerns a bigger picture of the study and its methodology. Due to the relatively small scope of the master's thesis, I chose to focus on the second generation of diasporans only and, in a way, to examine only the "product" of postmemory. Nonetheless, one could legitimately argue that if I use Marianne Hirsch's (2012) theory on memory transmission, where conversations and embodied ways of parents of younger generations are crucial, talking to the second generation only means seeing half of the picture. I completely agree with this point and think that research on postmemory can never be completely full unless speaking to both members of second-generation diasporans and their parents. This approach would help to better understand both the process of memory transmission and the agency of second-generation diasporans in deciding for themselves what postmemory they want to have, and it remains a prospect for further and larger-scale research.

Analysis

In the upcoming chapter, I present the main insights and findings from the qualitative analysis I conducted. In reference to the theoretical framework, research question, and subquestions, I have divided this chapter into three subchapters: "Postmemory," "Agency of the second-generation diasporans in dealing with postmemory," and "Actual generation in diaspora." The subchapter of "Postmemory" is divided into sections of "Contents and proofs of postmemory" and "Memory transmission," as I follow Marianne Hirsch's (2012) notion of postmemory and demonstrate both what kind of postmemory the interviewees carry and how this memory was transmitted in their families. The section "Memory transmission" is divided into three subsections: "Speaking the war," "Embodying the war," and "Showing the war," as I examine verbal, embodied, and visual ways of memory transmission articulated by Marianne Hirsch. The subchapter "Agency of the second-generation diasporans in dealing with postmemory" is divided into sections of "Ethics of second-generation pain," "Personal relationship with postmemory," and "Fetishization of pain," as it builds upon Sara Ahmed's (2002) theory of contingency of pain and explores the agency of the second-generation diasporans in (re)creating their own postmemory. Lastly, the subchapter "Actual generation in diaspora" introduces the reasons for considering second-generation diasporans from the Prijedor region as an actual generation within the frameworks introduced by Karl Mannheim (1952). Due to the subchapter's overviewing nature, it serves as an introduction to the conclusions of this thesis.

Postmemory

Contents and proofs of postmemory

Combining semi-structured interviews with elements of biographical narrative interviews proved helpful in understanding the contents of the postmemory of second-generation diaspora from Prijedor. When asked about their life story and growing up in their family, the interviewees could narrate the most important aspects of their family history.

I would like to begin unraveling the contents of postmemory from a slightly different standpoint than Marianne Hirsch (2012) proposes. In the case of my interviewees, second-generation diasporans from the Prijedor region, the Bosnian War appeared very central to the stories of their lives, but not necessarily because they could describe every detail of pre-war Prijedor (as Marianne Hirsch could describe every detail of pre-war Czernowitz where her parents lived), but because almost each of the interviewees stated that they are "the products of war." Firstly, the interviewees did not take their diasporic state for granted: they talked about forced relocation and fleeing of their parent(s) from the Prijedor region as the beginning of their family's diasporic life, something that divided the time into pre-war and post-war, into life in Bosnia and life outside of it. Secondly, the majority of them perceived themselves to be "products of war" in an even more direct sense, as people who would probably not have been born if the war had not happened because their parents met after one or both of them fled Bosnia. This happened in the case of Imran and Amina, whose parents are from Kozarac (in Imran's case) and Prijedor (in Amina's case) but met only after leaving Bosnia and Herzegovina:

> *And then I'm thinking about what would happen, what would be different if this war never happened. What would happen if there was never this voting about Bosnia to be independent? Maybe we would be part of Serbia, but that would be even better because all those dead people would be alive? Maybe I would not be alive because I'm a product of this war, let's say because my parents got in touch [with] each other in Bern? (Imran, 31)*

> *And I would not change anything that happened, no, because I didn't know if I... I mean, if the war didn't happen in 92, my parents… I don't know if they would have me, you know. I don't know if my parents would meet each other. (Amina, 26)*

When it comes to the Bosnian War, most of the interviewees appeared highly knowledgeable about it and had a strong connection to it. Talking about the war, they always referred to it in the framework of their family experiences, and sometimes even explicitly stated that they are comfortable talking about the war only when telling the "actual stories" (meaning the ones of their family) and not generalizing any happenings of the war because they did not feel knowledgeable enough to tell the general story of the war.

The most prominent stories in talking about the Bosnian War amongst the interviewees revolved around the concentration camps. Almost all of them shared stories of parents, uncles and aunts, cousins, and grandparents being imprisoned, tortured, beaten, starved, and killed in the concentration camps of Trnopolje, Omarska, Keraterm, and Manjača. Very often, the male members of the family would be said to be moved from one concentration camp to another, and their experiences would be explained in more detail. In contrast, the female experiences would be described as less horrible and might even be somewhat overlooked. Interestingly enough, rapes in the concentration camps were also mentioned consistently but were never part of the stories of the family members. Rapes were always mentioned as things that happened to somebody else or as general experiences of women and girls in concentration camps.

Hand in hand with the prominence of concentration camps in the postmemory of my interviewees came the mass graves. Interviewees, especially the ones who had their family members killed in the concentration camps, would often mention them right after talking about the camps. What struck me here was the fact that even though the interviewees consistently referred to corpses or, quite frequently, only pieces of bones of their relatives later exhumed from the mass graves and identified as having DNA of their family, they always referred to those remains as if they were referring to living humans: for example, they would say "we found him in the mass grave" or "he and my mother's aunt were found in Travnik [mass grave]," instead of referring to remains, corpses, or bones. This phenomenon strongly signals the

personal relationship of second-generation diasporans with people they never actually met because of the war but who remained permanent figures in the stories of the surviving family and then became part of their postmemory.

The postmemory of the second-generation diasporans from the Prijedor region is marked by one more thing that is highly specific to the region: the perpetrators being neighbors, friends, colleagues, or even further family members of the victims. The interviewees articulated this as the most horrible and hardest to comprehend aspect of the crimes committed by the Bosnian Serbs in the Prijedor region. A few interviewees, including Amina, referred to the crimes that happened in Prijedor as genocide and thus compared Prijedor to Srebrenica:

> *In Srebrenica, they said that it is a safe zone, you know, they shot over 8000 people in one day. But in Prijedor, it was three years earlier than in Srebrenica. And that did their neighbors, Melita. You know, not in a day. In a longer time. And they took jobs and the places [of the dead] like nothing happened. (Amina, 26)*

The centrality of the same concentration camps, mass graves, and experiencing the terror of the Serb neighbors in the stories of the interviewees signal the "place-based trauma": all the relatives of the interviewees survived or died because of similar causes in similar places.

Nonetheless, the fact that the interviewees knew these stories does not prove the presence of postmemory as Hirsch (2012) understands it—as a "living connection" to the past, deeply internalized trauma. Thus, it was also important to me to examine the type of evidence for the internalization of the Bosnian War stories among my interviewees.

During the interviews, the majority of the second-generation diasporans said that it was crucial for them that the horrors that happened to their relatives did not repeat themselves, although they can see that history is indeed repeating itself and, according to them, once again "the world is just watching." Although a few people mentioned the war in Ukraine, the majority of the interviewees meant the war in Gaza when they stated that what happened during the Bosnian War is happening again. The interviewees established two crucial links between the Bosnian War and the war in Gaza: according to them, both are wars against Muslims, and both

are wars against innocent and civilian people. Living in the diaspora, they understand that because of their family history, seeing what is happening in Gaza "gets to them more [than to the people around them]" and makes them want to speak up for Palestinian people because they feel that they are connected by the crucial link of Islam, even if only a few of my interviewees said that they are religious. In addition, they feel that, in comparison to people they live surrounded by in the diaspora, they know that "genocide can happen to anyone," and that is why they do not feel that much of a distance from the people currently living in war. For example, Nejla, whose father grew up in Kozarac and later was imprisoned in several concentration camps in Bosnia and whose several family members died in the war, says to be constantly reminded of the Bosnian War when seeing the news about Gaza:

> *I think [about the Bosnian War] more when, for instance… the war in Gaza that I now see really reminds me of everything in Bosnia. I've also posted about it on my Instagram for instance, my aunts post a lot and then I repost. Like last year they crossed the line of how many Bosniaks died in Srebrenica and also how many people in Gaza died. So I post about it then. And then I'm like, oh my God, it's happening, again and again, the world is just watching. And we can't do anything. So, yeah, it really reminds me of what my father's been through and my family also and all, all the people there [in Bosnia]. (Nejla, 24)*

In addition, it is important to note that the interviewees often expressed overall insecurity about the future or in trusting others in everyday life. They would mention being afraid of another war in Bosnia, understanding that war can happen anywhere, or that they generally always knew how "scary life can be," so they found it more challenging to live a comfortable, calm life as other people in the host countries do. For example, Davud, whose both parents are from Kozarac, expressed disappointment that people in Kozarac were not prepared for a war, and thus, the lesson not to be naïve in his life:

> *You hear about it [tensions] in Bosnia and some people say "No, it's impossible [that war happens again] and some say "Yeah, don't go to Bosnia right now because there's tension and new war might break out" or something, but I think it was always there and... Probably [it is important] to not be naive and think "Ok, I am having a beautiful life here in Switzerland. There's no chance that anything could happen regarding war or anything else, economic crisis or something". I should not be as naive and think that nothing could happen. There's always the possibility cause it's*

> *also… how a lot of people were thinking in Kozarac before the war, like "No, there's no chance that the war will break out." They saw the war in Croatia […]. But they [people in Kozarac] were naive. A lot of people were naive and thought it would never happen, it's not realistic. And in the end [the war] happened anyways. And I think that's something to be conscious of. (Davud, 18)*

The Bosnian War marks something very crucial for the second-generation diasporans from the Prijedor region. They articulate clearly that the Bosnian War began a new—diasporic—life of their family and even consider the possibility of not being born in case the war did not happen. The interviewees also clearly articulate "place-based trauma" in the stories about the Bosnian War, as speaking about the war, they tell stories of their family, which consist of similar experiences of being imprisoned in the same concentration camps, losing their relatives, and shock of experiencing terror (or, as some put it, genocide) from their neighbors. Meanwhile, sensitivity to the current wars in the world, especially the one in Gaza, and feelings of uncertainty about the present or future in the lives of the second-generation diasporans signal the internalized trauma and the "living" connection to the Bosnian War. Now, it is essential to understand the other side of postmemory—namely, how this memory was "transferred" from the first generation to the second, and I will address this in the following subchapter of this thesis.

Memory transmission

Speaking the war

As elaborated in the theory chapter, Marianne Hirsch (2012) argues that postmemory is formed when the memory of the war is transmitted in the vertical (family) structures through spoken and embodied ways from the first generation to the second. Firstly, it is important to note that in the case of this research, vertical family structures appeared wider than just parent-children relationships. The interviewees constantly referred to surviving grandparents, aunts, and uncles almost equally as to parents when asked about who told them the stories of the war. As it probably has to do with the fact that in Bosnia wide family is a great value, close relationships

are being maintained within a wider family circle, and some of my interviewees spent an even greater amount of time with their grandparents than parents growing up, I decided not to differentiate between the stories and embodied ways of transmission that second-generation diasporans got from their parents and the further family.

In contrast with the contents of postmemory, stories of the Bosnian War and embodied "acts of transfer" of the memory appeared very heterogeneous in this research sample. One part of the interviewees grew up with almost complete silence about the war and had to collect their knowledge about the Bosnian War from books, documentaries, conversations with friends, or those few people in the further family who did not avoid questions about the war altogether. Another part grew up with relatives' silence about the war when they were kids, but later, when they got older, relatives started talking about the war with them. The last part grew up with parents and other relatives who constantly discussed the war. Interestingly enough, I did not notice any direct correlation between knowledge about the war and the extent of war stories growing up among the interviewees. For example, Amina, who seemed to be one of the most knowledgeable about the Bosnian War in the Prijedor region among my interviewees and who shared very detailed stories about her family's experiences in the war, said that when she was growing up, nobody ever spoke to her about the war. Nonetheless, growing up with her grandmother because of the family circumstances, she noticed that the only conversations about the war in her family were being held in women's circles when the family went to visit Bosnia, and sometimes she would overhear these stories:

> *My family cannot speak about it [the war] because mental pain is one of the worst pain that a person can have. […] My whole life, I asked myself: Why they don't talk about it? Why are they always quiet about that theme? And they only talked about that when they were in Bosnia. And when they sit with [other] women, with women to whom happened what happened to them. They would never do an interview with you, like me. Never. Never. My grandma 10 years ago spoke about it [the war] for the first time. It was 2015, April. She said one word and she cried. And after that, after 10 minutes, she said a second word and she cried. We were here [in Austria] in hospitals [visiting] doctors, psychiatry, and no one could help her. (Amina, 26)*

On the contrary, sisters Nejla and Ajša reported that their father would constantly talk to them about his experiences in the war and about the Bosnian War in general, but because "he talks about it so much, it almost doesn't seem very special anymore." Ajša even reported that she wishes her dad told fewer stories, as this way, she would have paid more attention to them, and Nejla said that she would often "zone out" when her father talked about the war, and that is why she currently does not remember many details about her relatives' experiences during the war. Similarly to Ajša and Nejla's family, Haris mentioned that to his parents, war seemed to be a tool to "define time" in his house because, as he put it, everything his parents would speak of would be either happening before or after the war and, at the same time, anything, even conversations about bread, could become conversations about war. Nonetheless, Haris would not "zone out" when his parents would speak about the war— on the contrary—he felt aware yet quite uncomfortable about his parents' openness: "It was kind of unsettling because you're talking about people being taken into camps, you're talking about friends that have died, but for her [mother], it was just kind of having a casual conversation," and made him question the topic of the war more, especially when he grew older.

Embodying the war

The fact that stories about the war did not necessarily have to be explicitly told to the second-generation diasporans for them to develop postmemory and thus internalize the trauma of their parents speaks about the possibility of other ways of memory transmission. As suggested by Marianne Hirsch (2012), the embodied "acts of transfer" of memory from the first generation proved to be highly relevant in the context of this thesis.

Firstly, interviewees consistently reported that they would notice physical changes in their relatives when discussing war. Most interviewees reported their relatives getting really loud and agitated when talking about the war and rushing to finish the story, or, on the contrary,

"sinking in," getting very silent, being less present, crying, and appearing scared: for example, shaking or clenching one's fist. Nonetheless, the second-generation Bosnian diasporans did not notice changes in their relatives' bodies only when they talked about the war. The interviewees also extensively spoke about general embodied reactions to the war that persisted in their relatives' everyday lives. For example, Amina reported her relatives having problems with sleep, her grandmother screaming in her sleep, and her father having drinking problems. A few interviewees also reported relatives having general psychological issues throughout their lives and some of their family members committing or having considered committing suicide.

Speaking about observing embodied forms of war, it is essential to mention that all the interviewees had frequented Bosnia at least once a year since they were children. Coming back to the Prijedor region in summer or for other holidays was and usually still is a big part of their lives, and that is why embodied ways of memory transmission play an even more important role: the second-generation diasporans could watch their parents and other relatives react to the places where they lived through terror. Amina shared with me that she had always had the impression that her grandmother would change completely the moment they came to Bosnia: for example, she would close the blinds in the house while it was still early and bright outside as if she wanted to hide. Another interviewee, Asja, remembered a story of visiting Bosnia and playing with a bubble wrapping paper with other children in the house of her grandparents. At one moment, her grandmother heard the popping of the wrapping paper and ran down the stairs shouting that the Serbs were shooting: according to Asja, her grandmother "thought that she was back in the war," and they, the children, never played with the wrapping paper again.

Very often, specific moments during the first visits to Bosnia were articulated as the moments of realization that something horrible happened to their family or as moments so important to the interviewees that they will never forget:

> *And then one special moment that I [will] never forget [is] this first time, then I was 5-6 years old. No, in fact, that was already 2001. And then my mother came with us [to*

Kozarac]. And then I was there, observing my mother, how she's crying in front of a ruin, you know, in [front of] what was a house, obviously. And I didn't understand that then, but now I understand that was in fact her house, the house of her family, of her father. (Imran, 31)

In fact, some of the interviewees reported being brought to some war-related events when they visited Bosnia. The most often frequented event was the annual funeral in Kozarac of newly identified corpses from the mass graves, referred to as *dženaza*[5] by my interviewees, or commemorations of the concentration camps. The latter would reportedly leave an immense feeling of shock or sudden understanding of what happened, as during those commemorations, the interviewees could watch and listen to not only their parents but also other survivors of the camps, and through bodies of the parents, the strangers, and general surroundings of places of war crimes, the memory was transferred. Imran shared with me one more moment that he called one of the moments he will never forget. He talked about a woman whom he saw when he was a kid in the commemoration of Omarska concentration camp:

I was maybe 10-11-12 years old. We [people attending the commemoration] went to this room [in the concentration camp] and then she demonstrated to us how she was raped. How she had to bend over… And then she explained to us how this whole thing happened, how they called her up out of this room with all these people, [how she was told] that she's going to be raped and that the Chetniks[6] said that it would be an honor that she's been raped by them. You know, such disgusting stuff. And yeah, this is burned in[to] my brain and I will never forget that. (Imran, 31)

The fact that the interviewees reported noticing and watching their parents and other relatives having different bodily reactions when talking about the war throughout their lives, as well as the possibility of the interviewees witnessing the complete embodiment of war—to visit Bosnia and the places of violence—speaks about how important it was for the second-generation diasporans to see the physical bodies and places that speak about the war without words, and how much these embodied ways of memory transfer eventually became "burned into their brain."

[5] Dženaza generally means a funeral prayer performed together (Hadžiomerović, 2024, p. 5)
[6] "Chetnik" originates from Serbian nationalist royalist movement during WWII, but the term was revived during the Bosnian War as a label to Serb nationalist fighters.

Here, I took one step further from Hirsch's (2012) theory. When she discusses embodiment in memory transmission, she generally focuses on the physical changes of the parents of the second generation when they recall the war. Here, I described the importance of the physical surroundings in Bosnia that speak about the war (like sites of concentration camps); thus, it does not directly mirror Hirsch's theory, but it appeared to be highly relevant to the interviewees and, in the end, to be a different yet perfect embodiment of the war to the second-generation diasporans.

Showing the war

Marianne Hirsch (2012) discusses pictures as another powerful tool of "memory transfer," as they convey the feeling of "having been there" to the generations that follow those in the pictures. In the case of this research, one main problem appeared to be present among most of the interviewees—they were unable to see almost any of the pictures of pre-war Bosnia because many of them were burned along with the houses in the Prijedor region. Only Asja and Imran reported having seen pictures of their family's life before or immediately after the war. Asja was not shown that picture—she accidentally found it—and it was a picture of her father right after he survived a concentration camp and fled from Bosnia to Croatia. Asja reported that seeing her father extremely skinny in the picture made her understand why, later on, he would not want to talk about the war, as it was "probably really hard, really traumatic for him." Meanwhile, Imran's grandmother managed to save a few pre-war pictures by burying them under a tree next to her house in Bosnia. According to Imran, she would later always show him those pictures: they were pictures of his grandmother and grandfather with their small children, as well as one picture of his grandfather from the time when he served in the Yugoslav army. Interestingly, he did not report a feeling of "having been there" when looking at pictures of his family before the war. On the contrary—he felt that he does not belong to the world before the war:

> *One feeling is to be happy for my relatives, that they passed these happy times. I'm always happy to hear [stories] when they are happy to speak about it, you know, but on the other side, I also feel that I do not belong in this world. I do not belong in this black-and-white world of this picture, you know what I mean? Not only because of the generational difference but also because there was a time before war, I was not part of this world. And then there is a time after the war and I am part of this world. Now, sometimes I'm thinking that our family is being separated by these two spheres. You know, the younger cousins, we belong to this post-war time without our grandfathers, without a lot of relatives that got murdered. And there is this time before the war where all relatives belong to each other. They are happy. (Imran, 31)*

Nonetheless, there was some other visual material that proved to be very powerful in terms of helping second-generation individuals deeply understand the trauma that their parents and other relatives have been through. I was very surprised to find out that two of the interviewees, Eman and Davud, reported having handicrafts from their fathers' time in the same concentration camp that they felt were significant additions to their understanding of what happened to their parents. Eman told me that when his father was in the Omarska concentration camp, he found a piece of wood and drew himself on both sides by chiseling the wood. He drew a barbed wire and a sign saying "concentration camp," and then on one side, he portrayed himself entering the concentration camp, and on the other, he portrayed himself leaving it. Eman told me that he was surprised seeing his dad bold in that handicraft as he would only know his dad having longer hair and that unlike any other visual material relating to the Omarska concentration camp, this handicraft always made him feel really emotional, as it is something that connects Omarska and his family directly (the picture of this handicraft was kindly shared with me by Eman and can be seen in the appendix of this thesis, as Eman granted the consent to add it to the thesis materials). Meanwhile, Davud's father also created a wooden handicraft in Omarska: he wrote "Kozarac," the name of his town, and crossed it out, as if on a road sign that marks having left a place. Davud told me that he thinks that by drawing it, his father meant that his life was "completely turned around" and that it turned out to be somewhat prophetical—his father left Kozarac for Switzerland for good after leaving the concentration camp. To Davud, just as to Eman, this handicraft holds a specific emotional value—through

that small wooden piece, he "understood what was the story behind" everything that happened to his father during the war.

The first subchapter of the analysis served as a basis for understanding the kind of postmemory the interviewees hold and how it was transmitted. It became clear that the interviewees hold similar postmemory that binds them together because the postmemory relates to the same place—the Prijedor region—and similar acts of terror their family members survived or died because of, and that the Bosnian War in this postmemory serves as a crucial event that began the interviewees' families' diasporic life, and thus the later life of the interviewees themselves. The "living connection" to the past in the second-generation diasporans is proved by the deep empathy that the interviewees feel towards the people who currently live in war conditions, especially the people of Gaza, with whom the interviewees feel connected by the Islamic background, and by often occurring uncertainty about the present and future. In the second part of this subchapter, it became clear that memory transmission is not necessarily straightforward: if relatives tell many stories about the war, it does not necessarily mean that the second generation will have a far-reaching postmemory. Memory transmission is a much more complex mechanism: memory is transmitted not only through stories but also through painful silence or embodied ways, such as shaking when speaking about the war or even experiencing psychological problems. The transmission of memory through embodied experiences, such as being surrounded by physical objects that evoke the war (e.g., concentration camps or sites of burned houses), and attending commemorations where one can meet other war survivors, has also proven to be very important. When it came to pictures or other visual material, the strongest "memory transmitters" appeared to be handicrafts made by the fathers of the interviewees, as they evoked the feeling of connectedness with the war events

to the interviewees, while other kinds of pictures were either absent or did not evoke the sense of "having been there" as Marianne Hirsch (2012) supposes.

I would like to end this chapter by saying that no matter if the interviewees reported that their parent(s) spoke a lot to them about the war or if the memory was transmitted to them via any other embodied ways, all of them reported that the Bosnian War has always, especially in the younger age, been a puzzle to them. All of them consistently found it hard to either understand the whole picture of the war or/and to comprehend the Bosnian War in general, mainly because they lived in the host countries where their lives appeared very normal and peaceful, which made it even harder to comprehend the possibility of horrors their parent(s) been through. The feeling of dealing with a puzzle builds a bridge to another subchapter where I will discuss the agency of the second-generation diasporans themselves in coping with their postmemory and even (re)creating it: in the end, it is up to the people who hold the puzzle of postmemory to put all the pieces together and understand what they see for themselves.

Agency of the second-generation diasporans in dealing with postmemory

Ethics of second-generation pain

Understanding how members of the second-generation diaspora from the Prijedor region relate to their parents' pain is not an easy task, as pain, just as Sara Ahmed (2002) puts it, is felt very individually. Each person can have a different "ethics of pain," meaning that each person may have varying levels of openness to another person's pain. Nonetheless, talking to the interviewees, it became very clear that they are pretty open to understanding the pain of the people who lived through the Bosnian War because those people are their closest family members. Driven by a desire to piece together the puzzle of the war and by empathy for their

loved ones, the interviewees showed no signs of wanting to distance themselves from the pain of their relatives. On the contrary—they deeply mourn the dead, feel sad and sorry even for the ones they never knew or who did not belong to their family, and feel lucky that they have the surviving family members around them. The latter phenomenon could be noticed very clearly: the interviewees constantly repeated how fortunate they feel that not more of their family members died in the war and that their parent(s) survived. This gratitude and honest attempt to understand how hard it was for the parent(s) and other relatives during the war and how hard it still is to deal with the memory of it became most clear as the interviewees often said that even though they had a big curiosity about the Bosnian War and wanted to have more details of the puzzle so to understand the whole picture of the war, they restrained themselves from asking their relatives the war-related questions because they did not want their parents to experience the pain while remembering the war. For example, Imran mentioned that once he asked his grandmother what it was like living in the war, and his question made his grandmother cry, and that is why he "told himself he won't ask her, never again," just not to make her cry again. Meanwhile, Haris said that even though his father did not hesitate to talk about the war, he "almost didn't want to approach him on the topic" not to put him into a "vulnerable position." Here, the ethics of pain manifest as feeling so much for the relative's pain that one does not want to remind them of it.

Another pattern of feeling for the relatives' pain was the fact that most of the interviewees articulated that they do not want to induce any pain to their relatives by their life choices, meaning that they understand how much their relatives have been through, so they are almost afraid to disappoint them and cause more pain. This feeling is often intertwined with the sense of some kind of debt to the people who died. For example, Esma expressed her wish to be the best version of herself because she feels that her parents went through a lot to grant her

the life she has now, and she feels that she needs to live a more fulfilled life because so many people died during the Bosnian War:

> *It was always in the back of my mind: "Oh, I need to make my parents proud. I need to try to be as best as I can, give the best grades" because I always think: there are people dying, there were people dying, and they [the parents] survived, and that's why I want to make sure to just give my best. […] I think I'm not really thinking about it consciously, more subconsciously. And I don't think that will change. Bosnia or the war, or just all of this what happened is just a part of my personality. It's a part of my history, even if I was never involved in it, I never signed the consent to be a part of it. So it's just kind of my goal to be the best person just because of all of those people that died. (Esma, 18)*

Meanwhile, Haris and Ajša articulated similar feelings not in terms of debt to the parents or the survivors but in terms of a sense that they cannot or do not want to complain about their lives because they always know that in comparison to their parents' experience, their life is very good:

> *When I see my parents who lived through a war, lost everything they had, had to move to a [new] country, couldn't speak the language, had to find a job they hated, I can't complain when something bad happens in my life, because in comparison it's not very proportionate—my issues versus their issues. So I always think if they kind of got on with it, why can't I just go on with it? (Haris, 33)*

> *I just think about my life a lot and then, you know, it's gonna sound very weird, but sometimes you can really feel sorry for yourself or you feel sad. And I sometimes think: "Oh my God, but my father or my father's family…" And then I just go thinking about that, and then I'm like "OK, I didn't have it that bad. (Ajša, 21)*

Not wanting to cause any additional pain to the relatives, while also acknowledging that no pain in their lives can equal the pain felt by their relatives signals the interviewees' openness to the war's pain and their willingness to understand or even soothe it. Nonetheless, to fully understand the second-generation diasporans' relationship to the painful past of their relatives, it is crucial, speaking in Ahmed's terms, to understand what meanings the interviewees attribute to the war's pain: namely, how they understand the war and its legacies.

Personal relationship with postmemory

As I was trying to understand what meanings second-generation diasporans attribute to the pain of their parents and, thus, how they choose to be with that pain, once again, I could not reach one-fold conclusions. I saw different patterns of a personal relationship with the postmemory of the Bosnian War: almost absolute internalization of the memory of the parents, normalization of the postmemory and trauma by accepting it as a normal element of one's life, and distancing onself from the postmemory and aspiring to live a "normal" life by not focusing too much on the past. Those patterns were also not clear-cut and often overlapped with each other. For example, it was clear that no matter how much internalization of the trauma of the parents there is, the distance from the experiences of the parent(s) is always present. Thus, Ahmed's (2002) presumption that one can never fully feel and therefore understand another person's pain immediately proved to be true in the form of the inevitable distance the interviewees held from the Bosnian War.

It was also immediately apparent that (often from an early age) the second-generation diasporans really tried to put the puzzle of the war together and reach their own understanding of it: almost all of the interviewees reported to have always been interested in the topic of the Bosnian War, thus they often conducted school research and presentations on the subject or asked their school teachers to give lectures on Bosnian War when they saw that this topic is not included into the curriculum. Additionally, the interviewees frequently reported reading books or watching documentaries about the Bosnian War on YouTube, as well as discussing the war topics with their friends, especially those from Bosnian or ex-Yugoslavian backgrounds. This shows that second-generation diasporans are keen to create their own relationship with the Bosnian War, often by collecting information on it from different sources and thus supplementing or comparing such pieces of information with those they received from their relatives.

Of course, having talked about high levels of ethics of pain amongst the interviewees, it is clear that because of the empathy felt for the relatives, many of the interviewees self-identified with the stories of the war of their parents and did not question most of the narratives of the war heard from their parents too much. However, what appeared to be the best indicator of whether the second-generation diasporans create their own meanings of the Bosnian War or not was when they faced a conflict between outside influence (such as the stories of their relatives) and their own feelings. For example, most of the interviewees reported that the most challenging part of navigating the memory of their parents, which was transmitted to them, was deciding whether to have personal relationships with people of Serb ethnicity or not, especially if their parents taught them that one should hate Serbs or never befriend one because of the crimes that the Bosnian Serbs committed during the war. Examining how the interviewees addressed the question of whether to have personal relationships with Serbs proved to be a useful analytical tool for understanding the meanings the interviewees attribute to the war.

Some of the interviewees who mentioned the inner conflict of not knowing how to behave around people of Serb ethnicity reported that their parents would be very direct by saying that one should hate Serbs. The others reported that they were taught not to hate Serbs but to be cautious when making friendships with them. Nonetheless, no matter what the parent(s) taught them, none of the interviewees reported that they have extremely negative feelings towards the people of Serb ethnicity—on the contrary—most of them reported that they do not want to hate Serbs only because of what their relatives told them or because they learned that the Bosnian Serbs were the aggressors who inflicted suffering on their relatives. An excellent example to begin with is Amina's story: she was never taught to hate the Serbs, but explicitly and consistently talked about how much it hurts her to know that the pain that was inflicted on her family was caused by their Serb neighbors. She also could not hold back tears talking about her family history and even talking about her own life, using the Bosnian

War as a point of reference. For example, she told me that if it was not for the Bosnian War, she would not have become a psychiatric nurse, as growing up, she became more and more keen to understanding how the trauma of war affects people who have been through it. Nonetheless, she reported that no matter what the Serbs did to her family, she would never want to hate them because she genuinely believes that being a perpetrator also inflicts many psychological struggles and that are also worthy of empathy:

> *I don't like to hear that Serbian people are the evil ones, that they are not good. It was political, you know and […] When the political is over your head and they say to you "You have to do this and this for money", you are so scared that you [would] do anything just to stay alive. And I also think that the people who did this, they cannot fall asleep. Melita, they cannot sleep the whole night. They cannot live a normal life. (Amina, 26)*

Meanwhile, Eman told me that his father would often directly say to him that one should hate Serbs and that he never had a Serb friend as a kid. Nonetheless, he fondly remembered his childhood growing up in a council estate in London and befriending people from Somalia, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and other countries, and understanding that there are little differences between him and people of different ethnicities. This made him question his parents' prejudice, and it later came to Eman's parents as a shock when he met and decided to marry a Serbian woman, but Eman stood his ground in his firm belief that people of Serb ethnicity do not deserve hate:

> *And then when it comes to like, for example, Serbians, because that was the group that affected my family the most, it was [said by the parents] "You can't be friends with them, you can't like them, you can't do anything like that." And as I grew older, I realized it's… As much as I understand why they were saying that, at the same time it was wrong. Because you can't just paint everyone with the same brush. It's like now everyone [would be] saying "Oh, you could never speak to a German because they're just all Adolf Hitler." They're not. There are nice and bad people everywhere. […] so yeah, you end up finding that [other] side of things and just kind of coming up with your own conclusions, your own way to work yourself through your own life, essentially. And I mean, it's funny because my wife is Serbian. So technically, that's a big no-no, and you kind of figure it out. (Eman, 30)*

Nonetheless, some of the interviewees who were taught to be cautious about trusting Serbs or making friendships with them chose to find the middle ground between not wanting to

hate anyone because of their ethnicity and following what they were taught. For example, Imran told me that he speaks to Serb people but does not befriend them:

> *And you know my father, he doesn't like to speak with Serbs. He tried to not have any contact with Serbs. [There was] an interesting moment that I had in this district where I grew up. I had a Serbian friend in kindergarten. It was just a Serbian, you know? And he just spoke Serbian and I Bosnian. And it's really like dialect, there is basically no difference. And my father heard of that. And then he told me: "You are not allowed to speak with him anymore." This was really like, why? What did he do to me? But then I really abandoned him [the Serbian friend] and I didn't speak with him anymore. […] My cousin has those Serb friends and me and my brother, we don't. It's not that I'm saying "You are a Serb, I don't speak with you." There are a lot of Serbs in Switzerland, but I don't have them as a friend. (Imran, 31)*

Meanwhile, Davud says that he noticed that there is a difference between Serbs who are more educated and less educated, and thus he understands that friendships are possible with educated people:

> *My cousin works in Banja Luka and he's Bosnian. And a lot of his friends are Serbian. And he also has Bosnian friends, but they're not like… As evil, if you understand what I mean, you know, they're like, educated, and I think, especially when people are educated, they tend to have less of these [nationalistic] thoughts (Davud, 18)*

Listening to my interviewees, it became clear to me that even if they internalized such meanings of the Bosnian War as "Serbs should not be trusted" or even "Serbs should be hated," the diasporic nature of their life and being exposed to many different people moved them towards facing an inner conflict of whether they want to have meaningful relationships with Serbs and make their own conclusions, thus attribute their own meanings towards the legacies of the Bosnian War. For example, Esma told me that she would consider herself a "racist" if she had a prejudice against Serbs and Croats, and as she previously spoke to me about how immigrants, especially people of color, can sometimes be treated without respect in Switzerland, it made me understand that the experience of being an immigrant in another country made her understand that "othering" certain ethnicities inflicts pain and is wrong.

Understanding what kind of relationships the interviewees decided to have with people of Serb ethnicity no matter what they were taught made it clear that the second generation, no

matter how open they are to the pain of their relatives, are keen to decide for themselves what attitudes to have when it comes to their parents teaching them certain meanings of the Bosnian War and sheds light towards the agency of the second-generation in creating or recreating their own postmemory. Of course, the agency in deciding whether to have relationships with Serbs is only one analytical category in a broader picture of the agency of the second generation when it comes to postmemory. Sadly, due to the scope of this work, I could not address other meanings of the Bosnian War that were transmitted to the second generation and could not explain whether they were recreated by the second-generation diasporans. I am hopeful that this is a task for future research by myself or other scholars.

Fetishization of pain

As already mentioned in the Theory chapter, Sara Ahmed (2002) stated that when it comes to pain, there is always a risk that it might become fetishized, as sometimes "the wound comes to stand for identity itself" (p. 26). Keeping in mind that there is existing research confirming that ethnic groups of Bosnia and Herzegovina tend to build their self-identification on the grounds of victimhood in the Bosnian War (Mijić 2021), it became an interesting task to see if second-generation diasporans from the Prijedor region would emphasize their victimhood and thus "fetishize their pain."

As already hinted in this chapter, personal agency in shaping postmemory and some meanings of the Bosnian War are really important to take into consideration, and I noticed some relevant distance that the interviewees have from the Bosnian War, which could be a consequence of growing up in diaspora or simply being a generation that has not experienced the traumatic events directly. Generally, the interviewees consistently reiterated that they find it very meaningful not to dwell on the past (meaning the war) and to focus on the future. Most of them mentioned that currently Bosnia is focusing too much on the war and differences between three ethnic groups of Bosniaks, Serbs, and Croats, and that is why Bosnia has many

problems: “politicians themselves don’t understand how Bosnia works”, “employees are not appreciated,” there is significant segregation and tension between the ethnic groups, there are problems with the medical system and corruption, and few career opportunities. According to them, all of these problems signal that Bosnia is still stuck in the times of the Bosnian War, and the only way out of these problems is to look to the future and solve them for future generations of Bosnia. Sometimes, this willingness not to focus on the past would not only mean that second-generation diasporans want a better future for the people of Bosnia but also that they want a better life for themselves and their children. The interviewees quite often expressed the will just to live an everyday life, and solve the problems of the present instead of the past:

> *There's just so many other things going on right now that is more important to talk about than than memories or living in the past, if that makes sense. A lot of the Bosnian friends that I do know are also from the Prijedor region, so we have that same connection there and we've all basically been told the same stories through family experiences. But yeah, we don't really talk about it [the war] that much. It's just more stuff that's going on right now in the world or in London or the kids and stuff like that. (Eman, 30)*

Normally, the willingness to look into the future instead of the past and to just live a normal life would signalize that the second-generation diasporans from the Prijedor region do not fetishize the pain of their families and their ethnic group. However, there appeared to be one important detail when discussing with the interviewees whether they believe it is essential to continue advocating for the memory of the Bosnian War. Speaking about the problems in Bosnia, the interviewees had a place-based gaze: they would mainly talk about the issues in Prijedor and thus mention how hard it is for them to come to terms with the Serb nationalism, which is still very apparent in the region, and the fact that many perpetrators still walk without being punished and thus their relatives can meet their perpetrators on the street. The interviewees would also often mention that the denial of war crimes by the Bosnian Serbs is still one of the most significant problems in the region. Thus, talking about these problems, the interviewees concluded that it is still crucial to organize events about the Bosnian War that

would speak about real facts of the war, that they find it really meaningful to tell the stories of their families' experiences during the war to the (future) children so that the victim side of the Bosnian War should not be forgotten. Therefore, I got a feeling that the second-generation diasporans would be willing to move on from the pain of the war, but they are, in a way, sometimes forced to fetishize the pain of the victims—and thus of themselves—so that it is not forgotten because of the continuous *Republika Srpska's* effort to conduct "memorycide." The denial of the *Republika Srpska* often evokes feelings of rage, anger, and injustice in the second-generation diasporans and moves them to think about, talk about, and in other ways stick to the pain of the war. For example, a couple of the interviewees mentioned that their experience is similar to the experience of Jews during the Holocaust and even before it, and as Jews have been doing a lot of work to keep the memory of the Holocaust alive, the Bosnian people should follow this example: Imran stated that if the memory of the Bosnian War is forgotten, Bosniaks are going to "disappear as people":

> *And the irony of this whole thing is that it never ended, we are still in this agony. We are still part of the RS, they are still trying to delete our history and our cultural heritage. And I really don't know how did they come so far, you know? […] They even built themselves these big stones where they glorify their warriors in the same place where our people were murdered, you know. […] I mean, we need to speak about those things and this is a part of our past, it's like how the Jews in Israel had a lot of success to build up a new society even if they are surrounded by people that hate them. Maybe for the better, maybe not, this is a whole other story. But what I want to say is yes, we have to speak about it, and the Jews are also speaking about their history and they are very successful in it, and they did not forget from whom they are even after 5000 or 2000 years in living in the diaspora. And we need to do so because if we're not doing so, we are going to disappear as people. (Imran, 31)*

Meanwhile, Davud did not directly compare the experience of Jews and Bosnian people, although he thought that Bosnians have a lot to learn from the Holocaust survivors:

> *I think it's important [to remember] for every war that happens, and especially like if such war crimes and things happen. A good example is the Second World War, I think. The Holocaust survivors, they're doing it really good, like spread the story. (Davud, 18)*

Thus, when it comes to *Republika Srpska's* denial, the second-generation diasporans from the Prijedor region feel that it is highly unjust, and then some hints of development of identity around the wound can be seen: as, for example, Imran articulated the risk for Bosnians to "disappear as people" if the history of the war crimes of the Bosnian War is forgotten. The second-generation diasporans understand that they carry a lot—that the postmemory of the Bosnian War is heavy, nonetheless important and at-risk—and think that oftentimes, it is up to them to prevent the disappearing of their history.

It can be concluded that fetishization of pain is not highly present amongst the second-generation diasporans, and in cases when it can be noticed, it is accelerated not by the choice of the diasporans themselves but by the background of the denial of the *Republika Srpska*. When the understanding of how big and painful the postmemory they carry meets the will to move on from the painful past and concentrate on their own lives and the future, it leaves second-generation diasporans in limbo.

I would like to end this section by telling what Haris told me. According to him, his postmemory "is a big torch to carry," and he feels that it is important to tell his daughter, at the time of few years, what happened during the war, but he feels unsure about how to do that and even whether it is needed:

> *It's hard, especially when you're like the first generation from the war. It's like a big torch to carry. It's up to you then to educate others. I have two children. One is 6. So, you know, I've not thought about this, but at what point do I talk about the war? Do I try to explain it? […] I was educated about it and that is now up to me to teach my daughter and explain to her what happened. But is there a need for it? Is there a desire for it? Will it upset her? Will it confuse her? Probably. So you know, there's a lot of things to think about [while] passing down powerful kind of memories. (Haris, 33)*

The second subchapter of the analysis served as a basis to understand the agency of the second generation in (re)creating their postmemory. It became clear that the interviewees of the research have high levels of ethics of pain and thus are open to their relatives' pain and often

do not even want to induce it by asking questions about the war or by generally disappointing them. Nonetheless, the second-generation diasporans appeared to have a strong feeling of agency and a need to rethink the meanings of the war that they got from their parents. For example, almost each of the interviewees faced an inner dilemma of whether they want to have meaningful personal relationships with people of Serb ethnicity and made their choice how they see fit. Lastly, I noticed that the second-generation diasporans have a certain distance from the pain of their parents and even their own postmemory and would often prefer moving on from the painful past of the war, but are often somewhat trapped in the past because of the circumstances in Bosnia and Herzegovina, mainly, *Republika Srpska's* denial of the crimes. The latter phenomenon induces anger and feelings of injustice in second-generation diasporans and sometimes moves them to the forced fetishization of pain just so the collective pain of their families is not forgotten.

Actual generation in the diaspora

Karl Mannheim (1952) left some room for wondering whether second-generation diasporans scattered around the world because of the "participation in common destiny" of the Bosnian War in the Prijedor region could be considered belonging to an actual generation or even a generation unit. In this chapter, I will attempt to fill the gap in Mannheim's theory by applying it to the case of this research and explain why the interviewees in this research can be considered to belong to the same actual generation, and speculate whether they could belong to a generation unit. This chapter will also serve as an introduction to the conclusion, as it will examine both overall similarities and differences in the postmemory of the interviewees and variations in its interpretation. It will thus summarize the contents of the previous subchapters of analysis.

When it comes to an actual generation, which means experiencing the same historical events, problems, and social change (Mannheim, 1952, p. 303), it becomes clear in the case of this research that specifically being bounded by the trauma that happened in a particular place—the Prijedor region—makes the second-generation diasporans participants in the same "common destiny." They all articulate the postmemory of the same concentration camps and mass graves, killings, and terror from neighbors, and similarly mark the events of the Bosnian War in the Prijedor region as events that began their life—even if they were not born then—as they know it now. Thus, the Bosnian War in the Prijedor region and its postmemory serve as a "crucial turning point in historical chronology" that binds all the interviewees together.

The interviewees often articulated that, due to their shared postmemory and similar experiences growing up in the diaspora, they feel strongly drawn to other people from Bosnia, especially those from the same region. They repeatedly articulated that they feel that they can be themselves more around other Bosnians; they feel more understood and overall more comfortable around them, especially if those Bosnians also grew up in the diaspora and thus share similar experiences. Interestingly, three of the interviewees, all of whose parents are from Kozarac, reported being involved in romantic relationships with individuals from Kozarac who grew up in the diaspora. One of them met their partner while visiting Kozarac in the summer, and the other two, who are together, met each other in Switzerland. Esma, whose parents are also from Kozarac but met in the diaspora, told me that people from Kozarac are "magnets, they try to live as near as possible."

The magnetism and feeling of almost unexplainable connectedness amongst Bosnians in the diaspora was explained well by Davud, Imran, and Amina:

> *I think the only people that can really understand you are the people that live through the same thing, and I think that's why I can connect with them so good because they had a similar life. (Davud, 18)*

I have just Bosnian friends. I have just one Swiss friend and one friend from Libya. That's it. […] It's not like I targeted just to connect with Bosnians. It just happened, and I even don't know how. (Imran, 31)

I met a girl. She's a little bit older than I am, I think about 5 or 6 years. She's from Switzerland and she was born in the war of Bosnia [in] 92. When I speak with her or when I sit with her… We feel each other, you know, when I tell her something about Bosnia, she feels me much, much more than my other friends because she went through the same way like my mom, like my grandma. Like me when I was a child. (Amina, 26)

Thus, one could conclude that even though second-generation diasporans who share the same "place-based trauma" do not share the same generation location because they live in diaspora, they are still deeply bound and thus brought together by postmemory, which also often brings Bosnians in the diaspora together. Therefore, building upon the overall findings of this thesis, one can conclude that the tissue that "form[s] a link between spatially separated individuals who may never come into personal contact at all" (Mannheim, 1952, p. 306) is indeed postmemory of the "place-based trauma," and thus participating in the "common destiny" of the Bosnian War in the Prijedor region and later of diasporic life indeed makes the second-generation diasporans in this research belonging to the same actual generation.

Concluding that the second-generation diasporans from the Prijedor region indeed belong to the same actual generation, one could speculate whether they belong to the same generation unit, which Mannheim defines as a similar interpretation of the events experienced by the same actual generation (Mannheim, 1952, pp. 304-305). Therefore, in the case of this research, there is a need to look at the agency of the interviewees in shaping their postmemory and making life decisions taking (or not) their postmemory into consideration and see if the interviewees develop similar attitudes to the similar meanings of the war.

In the previous subchapter, I aimed to understand whether the interviewees of this research developed their own ways of interpreting what was transmitted to them through stories, embodied ways, and pictures from their relatives. I took the interviewees' relationship with people of Serb ethnicity as a reference point, trying to understand what meaning they attribute

to the memory that has been passed down to them. It became clear that the second-generation diasporans consciously think through the meanings of the war articulated by their parents and make their own decisions about whether to follow those meanings or not. Thus, the interviewees demonstrated clearly that, even though they are highly empathetic towards their relatives regarding the pain they have experienced and still experience, second-generation diasporans feel a significant amount of agency in changing or at least rethinking their own postmemory. In the particular example of relationships with people of Serb ethnicity, the interviewees proved to make their own decisions of whether they find it meaningful to connect to the Serbs, even in cases when their relatives passed down their negative feelings towards these people. Nonetheless, using the example of the relationship with the Serbs, the interviewees proved to come to quite different conclusions: some of them decided to take distance from people of this ethnicity, and some of them decided to break the circle of prejudice in the family and create such meaningful relationships with the Serbs as even marrying a Serbian person.

Some of the interviewees even explicitly stated that they find it highly valuable for each person carrying the postmemory of the Bosnian War to rethink what they have been told and come to their own conclusions, even if these differ from the opinions of those around them. For example, when talking about conversations with other Bosnians, Imran expressed his encouragement for such people to critically approach the topic of the war, distancing themselves from the memory of their parents:

> *And I'm always saying to them [other Bosnians]: "Don't trust your parents. Don't trust even me. Go and look to different sources and make your own image. And then we can discuss again, and I will be happy to discuss again with you. (Imran, 31)*

Thus, even while examining one small aspect of the overall meaning created around the Bosnian War—specifically, relationships with Serbs—I found no homogeneity among the interviewees. This speaks a lot about the agency of second-generation diasporans in dealing with the similar postmemory but also stands for the conclusion that because of the differences

in opinions on how to live with certain meanings of the postmemory, the participants of this study cannot be considered to belong to the same generation unit, as they have not developed the same attitudes and opinions about the war and its legacies.

This subchapter thus sheds a new light on Karl Mannheim's (1952) notion of generation as actuality, seeing it meaningful to consider the people who did not grow up in the same generation location but who share the same destiny of living in diaspora after their families experienced the same "place-based trauma" to belong in the same actual generation. Nonetheless, the heterogeneity of attitudes towards the similar meanings of the war leads to the conclusion that in the case of this research, the people belonging to the same actual generation cannot be considered to belong to the same generation unit.

Conclusions and discussion

Postmemory—the "living connection" to the personal, cultural, and collective trauma of those who came before (Hirsch, 2012, p. 5)—was a central concept of this research. To the participants of this study, the postmemory of the Bosnian War is not just something that happened to their parents and then later they heard stories about. The Bosnian War marks the crucial turning point in the lives of the interviewees' families, and thus, in the eyes of the second-generation diasporans, the beginning of their diasporic life and even the beginning of them, especially in cases when the parents of the participants met in the diaspora.

Postmemory also bound the participants of this research through a "place-based trauma." All the second-generation diasporans from the Prijedor region referred to very similar circumstances of their relatives being expulsed, imprisoned in concentration camps of Trnopolje, Omarska, Manjača, and Keraterm, tortured, killed, and buried in the mass graves around the Prijedor region. The contents of postmemory also included the horror and incomprehension of the interviewees' relatives' experiences of being persecuted by their neighbors and colleagues. This quite deeply internalized trauma of the war also has consequences in the everyday life of the participants of this study: they often feel insecure about the present and future, and some of them think that people should not be naïve thinking that another war is not possible, and most of them carry the understanding of "how hard life could be." The postmemory is also highly apparent when the interviewees talk about the feeling that "it is happening again" currently in the war in Gaza, as they feel connected to victims of this war through Islam.

This memory of the war was indeed mainly transmitted through vertical (family) structures to the members of the second-generation diaspora. As Marianne Hirsch (2012) states, verbal and embodied stories of the family, as well as visual materials, proved to be highly important to the participants in this study. Nonetheless, I could not identify a direct relationship

between the family's verbal openness about the war and the depth of the postmemory of the member of the second generation. Sometimes, the people who seemed to have internalized the memory of the war the most were the people who grew up with almost complete silence about the topic, and, on the contrary, some people who reported growing up with plenty of stories about the war stated that they would often "zone out" when their relatives were telling those stories and thus would not remember the details of these stories well. This aspect proved that memory is not only transmitted by verbal means. Such embodied ways as seeing the family members get loud or shaky when asked about the war or just observing the members of the family having general psychological problems such as screaming in their sleep, being depressed, or having alcohol abuse problems, shaped the second-generation diasporans' understanding of the level of trauma the war created. Meanwhile, the pictures were not very central "memory transmitters" in this case. Still, a very interesting phenomenon of second-generation diasporans discovering their fathers' handicrafts from their time in a concentration camp was noticed—the handicrafts, not the pictures, became that visual material that enhanced the feeling of "having been there" (Hirsch, 2012, p. 38) to some of the participants of this study.

The inquiry on content and proofs of postmemory in this research also made me propose an insight that Marianne Hirsch (2012) does not speak about—in case of the second-generation diasporans from the Prijedor region, regular trips to Bosnia also stood for highly embodied ways of memory transmission: actually seeing the sites of the war and meeting other survivors of the war than their relatives or simply seeing their relatives in spaces where they lived before or during the war seemed to have been highly influential and salient in formation of postmemory of the participants of this study.

A high level of empathy, the will to understand what happened to the relatives during the war, and a desire not to cause any pain to the relatives signified a high level of ethics of pain (Ahmed, 2002, p. 24) among the participants in this study. Nonetheless, it became apparent that

even if the second-generation diasporans are open to their relatives' pain, each second-generation diasporan creates their own attitudes towards the memory of the war. Relationships with the people of Serb ethnicity served as a great analytical tool to understand what meanings of the war second-generation diasporans create themselves, as most of them reported that their parents either warned them to be wary about befriending people of Serb ethnicity or explicitly stated that Serbs should be hated. None of the interviewees expressed highly negative feelings toward Serbs, and most reported rethinking their parents' teachings throughout their lives because they did not want to harbor prejudice against other people. A great example here is Eman, whose father sometimes would explicitly tell him that one should hate Serbs, but who later on fell in love and married a woman from Serbia, stating that he does not want to hate people because of their ethnicity. Thus, it became highly apparent that second-generation diasporans are keen to draw their own conclusions about the meanings of the war and, therefore, have the agency to rethink and recreate their own postmemory.

Sara Ahmed's (2012) proposed risk of fetishization of pain (p. 26) did not appear highly relevant in this research: it seemed that the second-generation diasporans would gladly move on from the painful past of the Bosnian War, as they expressed the importance of not living in the past but solving problems that will make the future better. Nonetheless, to most of the interviewees, the issue of *Republika Srpska's* denial of the crimes in the Prijedor region meant the need to somewhat stay in the past by continuously fighting for the right to remember their family's history. Because of that, some signs of fetishization of pain could be noticed, such as Imran expressing that if the memory of the war is forgotten, "the Bosniaks will disappear as people." Nonetheless, it could be argued that this fetishization of pain is quite circumstantial and almost forced by the *Republika Srpska's* denial. The fetishization of pain or its absence in the context of Prijedor remains an important perspective for future research, as to draw more certain conclusions, it is essential to examine this phenomenon more in-depth.

War in the Prijedor region and the diasporic life of many families that followed it indeed proved to be the "participation in common destiny," as Karl Mannheim (1952, p. 303) conceptualizes it by speaking about actual generations. The second-generation diasporans do not only have destinies determined by the same historical and territorial circumstances but are also highly bound together by the postmemory of the war: they repeatedly reported being drawn towards other Bosnians and/or being best understood by other Bosnians who have similar experiences. This "common destiny" and connectedness illustrated my supposition that second-generation diasporans from the Prijedor region can indeed be considered to belong to the same actual generation, even if Mannheim (1952) does not speak about the possibility of formation of actual generations amongst diasporic people. Nonetheless, when it comes to the generation units, which Mannheim describes as groups of people who develop similar understandings of the social change (pp. 304-305), I could not draw conclusions that the participants of this study can belong to one generation unit—they developed different attitudes towards the Bosnian War and, as already said, often tried to rethink their own postmemory as they see fit.

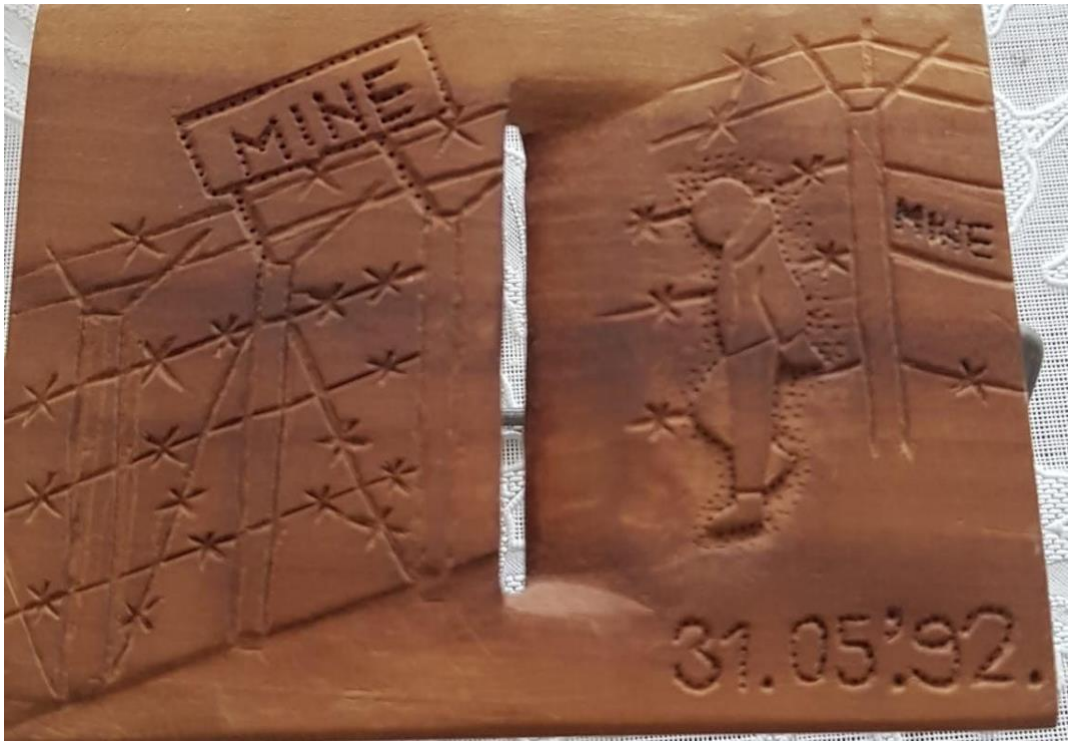
Overall, researching postmemory in the context of the "place-based trauma" of the Bosnian War in the Prijedor region proved to be highly informative and interesting, while researching diaspora provided an additional layer to this research—I could research postmemory that formed based highly on imagination, just as Baser and Orjuella (2024) argue when talking about memory in diaspora. And even though with this research, I stumbled upon a highly complex reality of postmemory, a straightforward thing is clear: postmemory in the case of the second-generation diasporans from the Prijedor region is important, and such immeasurably painful experiences as war indeed linger through generations, even the ones that grow up far away from direct reminders about the past. I would like to end this passage once again citing Haris' though: "It [postmemory] is a big torch to carry". To some members of the

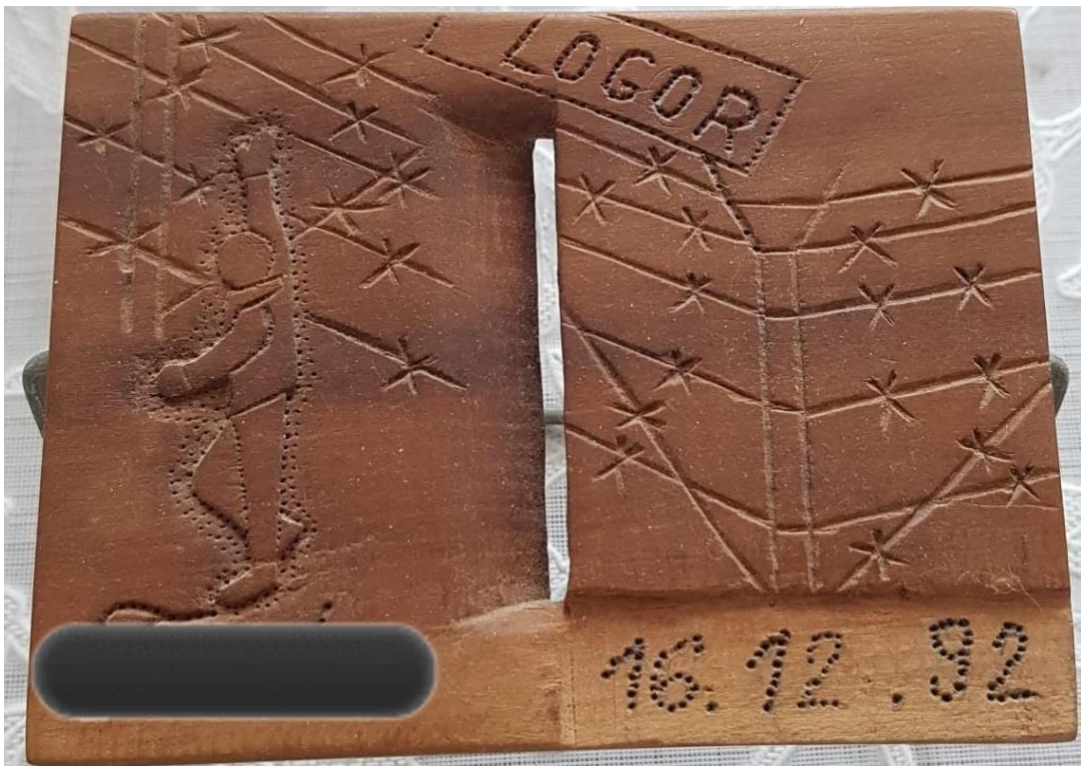
second-generation diaspora, this means seeing everything in life in the light of this torch, and to some others, this torch might become too heavy or too painful to carry.

Having taken a glimpse at the complexity of reality, I understand that I had to simplify the highly complex life stories of 10 individuals (and even more people, including their families) into concise terms. Thus, there is genuinely a lot yet to be done in this field: firstly, larger-scale research on the postmemory of second-generation diasporans from the Prijedor region would provide a much greater diversity of postmemory and attitudes towards it. In addition, I would find it very meaningful to conduct similar research in other regions of Bosnia and Herzegovina, even the ones that do not belong to the *Republika Srpska* and are not subject to the "memorycide." What was left untackled in this research is also a gendered perspective on memory transmission: it was clear that people who grew up in distinctly female or, in opposite, quite patriarchal surroundings, have experienced different processes of postmemory formation, but due to the relatively narrow focus of this thesis, I could not delve into that. To better understand the agency of second-generation diasporans in rethinking their postmemory, conducting life history research that focuses on the life of one or a couple of people would track the change in the meanings of the war articulated to them by their families more clearly. Lastly, as already mentioned in the Methods chapter, interviewing only the children and not the parents when researching memory transmission will probably always show only half of the picture. Thus, supplementing this or similar research with conversations with the parents of the second-generation diasporans also remains an important niche to be filled in the future.

Appendix

This appendix demonstrates Eman's father's handicraft created in the Omarska concentration camp.





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