

# **Chapter 11**

## **The Choices that Minorities Make: Strategies of Negotiation with the Majority in Postwar Bosnia- Herzegovina<sup>1</sup>**

**Paula M. Pickering<sup>2</sup>**  
**College of William and Mary**

*If I, or other minorities, stayed among ourselves, we wouldn't be able to survive.  
Really, only Muslims can help me survive.<sup>3</sup>*

This paper investigates how urban minorities in chiefly Bosniak areas of Bosnia negotiate with members of the majority group. Based on intensive interviews, participant observation, and analysis of surveys, it also explores the factors that facilitate everyday interaction. It finds that urban minorities reach out to ordinary members of the majority in the workplace, where there are opportunities for repeated interaction with “others” as professionals, allowance for individualism, and few expectations for the forming of intimate ties with “others.” It is in this is the type of context that minorities can engage in mutual help and downplay essentialist identifications, which helps build bridging links to “others.” Minorities rarely approach more distant local voluntary organizations, except in cases where they seek expert knowledge for mediated interaction with majority authorities. This exploratory study challenges the assumptions of some students of civil society and suggests increased assistance for mixed workplaces.

### **The Puzzle**

Even in the wake of a war fought largely along ethnic lines and the continued rule of ethno-nationalists, significant numbers of ethnic minorities continue to reside in the region of Bosnia that is now chiefly Bosniak.<sup>4</sup> Using intensive interviews, participant observation, and analysis of

---

<sup>1</sup> Chapter in Dimitris Keridis, Ellen Elias-Bursac, and Nicholas Yatromanolakis, eds., *New Approaches to Balkan Studies*, volume 2 of the IFPA-Kokkalis Series on Southeast European Policy, Dulles, VA: Brassey's, 2003, pp. 255-309.

<sup>2</sup> This paper was first prepared for delivery at the Socrates Kokkalis Graduate Student Workshop on Southeastern Europe, Harvard University, 9-10 February 2001. I give special thanks to the Bosnians who shared their opinions and experiences with me, and thanks also to Audrey Budding, Sladjana Danković, Bob Donia, John Fine, Zvi Gitelman, Khristina Haddad, Elissa Helms, Claudio Holzner, M. Kent Jennings, G. Patrick Lynch, and Kathy Cramer Walsh for advice during my research process. This paper is based on work supported in part by a U.S. Institute of Peace Jennings Randolph Peace Scholar grant, a Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad Fellowship, and a Social Science Research Council International Field Dissertation Research Fellowship.

<sup>3</sup> Vera, Catholic respondent who stayed and continues to stay, in Sarajevo, December 1998. All names of respondents and informants are pseudonyms. See exhibit A for background data on respondents and informants.

<sup>4</sup> Peoples who before the war called themselves “Bosnian Muslims” now generally call themselves “Bosniaks,” following a 1993 vote by the Congress of Bosniak Intellectuals to return to what they termed the old name—Bosniak—for the Bosnian Muslim nation (Filandra 1998, 384). To respect the respondents and informants, the

surveys, I investigate the strategies these minorities use for negotiating their relationship with members of the majority group. I also explore the factors that facilitate everyday inter-ethnic interaction. Given the international community's involvement in re-building plural post-conflict societies across the globe, sound strategies for assisting multi-ethnicity should be grounded in a thorough understanding of how ordinary, non-elite minorities negotiate with ethnic "others." Ultimately, information on how minorities negotiate with ethnic "others" should provide information on what kind of institutions, under which circumstances, facilitate inter-ethnic interaction.

To set the stage for this paper, the context for minority choice is presented below, followed by a comparison of previous literature on possible negotiation approaches for minorities and on factors facilitating inter-ethnic interaction. It then offers alternative hypotheses for pathways to assist inter-ethnic cooperation and describes my multi-method investigation. Drawing on data from interviews and participant observation, the paper describes the minority strategies encountered in the field and discusses factors that bolster minorities' negotiation with ordinary persons who are Bosniaks.

## **Context**

The political system that the international community has imposed on Bosnia complicates minority choices, since it contains contradictory provisions for ethnic separation *and* multi-ethnicity. First, Bosnia's postwar political system appears modeled on consociationalism. Students of consociationalism advocate that a state recognize its major ethnic groups,<sup>5</sup> isolate them at the mass level, and constrain inter-ethnic contact to the elite level in order to transform ethnic groups into constructive elements of stable democracy (Lipjhart 1968-9; Nordlinger 1972; Burg and Berbaum 1989). Accordingly, the Bosnian political system institutionalizes ethnic cleavages—Bosniak, Serb, and Croat—in a grand coalition (tri-ethnic collective presidency), ethnic-based federalism, mutual veto, and ethnic keys. The internationally recognized state of Bosnia names Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs as constituent nations (Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina 1995). Of the two political entities into which Bosnia is divided, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina grants constituent nation status only to Bosniaks and Croats, while Republika Srpska confers constituent nation status only on Serbs.<sup>6</sup> At the time of my research, most of those nationalist leaders who conducted the war remained in power, implementing policies aimed at ethnic separatism and thwarting multi-ethnic governance at the national level (Cox 1998, 7).<sup>7</sup> Despite endorsing these provisions for ethnic separation, the international community has also intervened to implement integrative measures that encourage inter-ethnic cooperation, such as promoting refugee return and diverse police forces, as well as imposing a unified currency and customs regime. The dire state of the economy, which features unemployment rates ranging from 33 percent in the Federation to 47 percent in the Republika Srpska (Bukvic 1998), demoralizes all citizens of Bosnia, especially minorities and members of other marginalized groups.

---

discussion uses the terms ("Bosniak" or "Bosnian Muslim") that they themselves use. Otherwise, the term "Bosniak" is used in this paper. I found that minorities rarely used the term "Bosniak," and instead used "Muslim."

<sup>5</sup> This paper uses Smith's definition (1991, 21) of an ethnic group as a group possessing a collective proper name, a myth of common ancestry, shared historical memories, at least one differentiating element of common culture, an association with a specific homeland, and a sense of solidarity for significant sectors of the population.

<sup>6</sup> See U.S. Department of State 1994, and Serbian Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina 1992.

<sup>7</sup> As Burg and Shoup have pointed out, the Dayton constitution lacks incentives for inter-ethnic cooperation, instead encouraging political conflict along ethnic lines (1999, 367-73).

For this paper, minorities are defined as persons who belonged to ethnic groups that were smaller than the majority group in their original, *prewar* municipality.<sup>8</sup> Thus, in chiefly Bosniak Bosnia, minorities are Serbs, Croats, and persons from mixed marriages. Roughly two-thirds of Serbs, Croats, and mixed persons who lived in Bosniak-dominated areas before the war fled or were forced to flee during and immediately after the war. Postwar estimates of minorities now residing in the Bosniak-majority area range from 10 percent (UNHCR 1997) to 22 percent (Medjunarodni Forum Bosna 1999).<sup>9</sup> International authorities seek to increase this percentage by promoting refugee return.

### Previous Literature—Minority Strategies

Most literature on ethnic politics considers either the strategies that the minority group takes toward the state or the policies that the state employs in attempting to manage ethnicity. I contend, however, that the inter-ethnic negotiation strategies of *individuals* who are minorities are important, because they are indications of their attitudes toward the state and society and their future there and/or their reaction to constraints on and opportunities for inter-ethnic cooperation that the Bosnian state and society provide. The actions of ordinary persons do not always match the dictates of minority group leaders. Based on theoretical literature on ethnic relations (McGarry and O’Leary 1993), migration (Hugo 1981; Wahlbeck 1999), regional literature (Woodward 1995, Laitin 1998) and my fieldwork, I suggest that Bosnian minority strategies are confined to one or a combination of several of the options on the following continuum:

←-----**Continuum of Bosnian minorities’ strategies of negotiation**-----→  
 assimilation   integration   selective engagement   manipulation of identifications   anonymity   voice   circulation   exit   communalism   violence

Minority individuals who employ strategies at the left end of the continuum express a willingness to incorporate themselves into the Bosniak-dominant society. At the left extreme, assimilation is a process in which minority individuals surrender their ethnic identities and ultimately become incorporated into the dominant society and cultural group (Barth 1964, 31). Assimilation rests heavily on the willingness of the majority group to accept full inclusion of minorities.<sup>10</sup> In theory, those employing a strategy of civic integration do not surrender their ethnic identities, but seek to belong to a common civic, national, or patriotic identity (McGarry and O’Leary 1993, 17). Note that many observers of racial and ethnic relations in the United States argue that integration in practice involves the assimilation of ethnic, racial, and religious minorities into the dominant Christian Anglo-Saxon culture. In the case of Bosnia, integration would be a process in which each of the ethno-religious minorities would retain its cultural identities, but would accept the regional, supra-ethnic identity as “Bosnians,” or citizens of Bosnia in the public sphere. Though not originally envisioned, the third strategy of selective engagement implies that minorities stay true to their sub- or supra-national identities, yet refrain from full integration into society by using criteria to select only certain members of the majority-

<sup>8</sup> Many of my respondents, informants, and colleagues in Bosnia found the term “minority” offensive. My use of this term is not an endorsement of it, but is a reflection of the very real social and political implications of belonging to an ethnic group that is smaller than others, particularly in the transitional countries of Eastern Europe.

<sup>9</sup> This estimate is based on population figures compiled by UNHCR (1997) and Medjunarodni Forum Bosna (1999). Population estimates vary because of the still large numbers of displaced persons and the lack of a postwar census.

<sup>10</sup> Indeed, Laitin’s lack of attention to the role of the majority group’s acceptance of others in the process of assimilation has led to criticism of his proposition that Russians in Estonia and Latvia are assimilating.

dominated society for cooperative relations. “Manipulation of identifications” connotes some willingness to adapt to the dominant culture, through the tailoring of different collective identifications—some ethnic and some not—to take advantage of particular contexts.<sup>11</sup> This contrasts with the strategy of anonymity, a degree of withdrawal from society in which minority individuals attempt to go about their lives in the most inconspicuous way possible, remaining quiet about collective belonging and political views. On the other hand, with the strategy of voice, minorities turn to the public sphere, through activism in voluntary organizations and/or politics, to advocate for change that improves their rights. The strategy of circulation is a concept borrowed from Hugo (1981, 194), wherein minorities circulate between prewar homes in minority areas and postwar residences in majority areas as an attempt both to get the best of both worlds and to hedge their bets by keeping a foothold in two communities and spreading the risk of failure. “Exit” simply means that minorities leave for their putative homelands or perhaps beyond. And in using a strategy of communalism, minorities rely on kinship and communal ties. “Violence” is self-explanatory.

### **Previous Literature: Facilitating Negotiation**

Beyond the approaches that minorities use to negotiate with “others,” of interest are the factors that contribute to a minority's use of strategies on the left end of the spectrum. Investigation of these factors should provide information on how minorities implement their inter-ethnic negotiation strategies.

Given the nationalist political environment, one would not expect ordinary persons who live as minorities to trust political authorities in predominantly Bosniak areas enough to rely on them for practical assistance. Inability to rely on official institutions would necessarily leave them to seek help elsewhere.

In a January 1999 interview, an official with the Office of the High Representative's Return and Reconstruction Task Force in Sarajevo mentioned just such an approach. Returnees must know what it is like to be a minority, to understand that “this is what I have to take.” And to say, “This is my home; I get along well enough with my neighbors, etc., that I can wait out the storm.”

This international official believes that individuals living as minorities will have to cope with the suffering that accompanies their minority status by, among other things, maintaining trusting relationships with individuals living around him. In discussing literature on civil society and social networks, alternative pathways exist for facilitating such everyday inter-ethnic cooperation.

### ***Social Networks and Institutional Context***

The institutional environment available to minorities can facilitate (or obstruct) everyday inter-ethnic interactions. As shown in work by Mutz and Martin (1998, 2), the majority partners on whom a minority depends for help are a function of availability and selectivity. More specifically, the availability of helpers who are ethnic “others” in an individual's immediate environment sets a baseline likelihood of encountering people of differing backgrounds. Three structures in the urban environment can frame the opportunities for inter-ethnic cooperation: voluntary organizations, neighborhoods, and workplaces.

#### ***Selectivity***

Selectivity helps uncover the mechanisms that minorities use to connect opportunities presented by voluntary organizations, neighborhoods, and workplaces to the strategies for negotiation with

---

<sup>11</sup> For other examples, see Barth on Lapps (1964, 13) and Malkki on Hutu refugees (1995, 105-96).

ethnic “others.” For example, social network literature predicts that minority ties with ethnic “others” are likely to be acquaintance- rather than friendship-oriented. This is because research in the United States strongly suggests that individuals seek out those similar to them (culturally, socioeconomically, and ideologically) for frequent and close interaction (Huckfeldt 1983; Laumann 1973, 73).<sup>12</sup> According to this logic, a Bosnian Croat would choose as a friend another Bosnian Croat who earns a similar income and who shares his political beliefs. In this vein, friendship ties are probably not the type of ties that will connect individuals with ethnic “others.” As Granovetter argues, such “strong” ties between two individuals often produce an overlap in friendship circles that decreases the opportunity for individuals to connect with those different from them (1973, 1362-9).<sup>13</sup> The result is that friendship ties are bonding and isolating. In sum, selectivity is assumed to promote greater homogeneity of views, while structure is assumed to *limit* the potential impact of individual selectivity (Mutz and Martin 1998, 3). Drawing on Granovetter 1973 I propose that institutions that allow for the development of weak ties among a minority and ethnic “others” facilitate inter-ethnic cooperation and the likelihood that a Serb or Croat will embed herself into chiefly Bosniak society. Such groups build “bridging” social capital and the heterogeneous social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trust that arise from them (Putnam 2000). As Axelrod asserts, cooperation can emerge even in an anarchic, amoral world if a group of individuals rely, consciously or not, on a strategy of reciprocity (1985, 69). Voluntary groups, neighborhoods, and workplaces all provide locations for iterated interaction that helps build trust (Seligman 1997). In fact, Cushman contends that even highly conflicted and initially very mistrustful interaction between individuals can be mitigated by the process of repeated interaction with one another (1998, 12).

#### *Voluntary Organizations*

Theoretically, voluntary associations can facilitate identifications and interests that cut across ethnic ones (Bell 1975, 159). For example, Varshney argues that heterogeneous civic associations in India have developed networks that increase communication and create shared interests among persons of different ethnicities (2001). Partly as a result, such cross-communal civic associations, Varshney argues, can help ordinary individuals survive attempts to foment inter-ethnic violence (7). Yet, contrary to the well-rooted Indian civic organizations, whose traditions stretch back to Ghandi, Bosnian civic associations just recently emerged and many survive only with outside assistance. This is because the state-socialist system of Yugoslavia did not allow for a civil society, that intermediate associational realm between state and family populated by organizations that are separate from the state, enjoy autonomy in relation to the state, and are formed voluntarily by members of the society to protect or extend their interests or values (White 1994, 379).<sup>14</sup> Yet, in the aftermath of the Bosnian war, the West has heavily

---

<sup>12</sup> Laumann writes that persons select for interaction those who are socioeconomically similar to them because socioeconomic similarity facilitates intimate association by enabling the even exchange of valued goods and services, such as visiting in each other’s homes (1973, 73). In addition, people of similar socioeconomic status share many values, problems, and experiences that provide bases for common interests. Finally, they often share neighborhoods (1973, 74).

<sup>13</sup> According to Granovetter, “the strength of a tie is a (probably linear) combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding), and the reciprocal services which characterize the tie” (1973, 1361). However, Cramer (1998, 18) points out that some dimensions of the network may be *distinct*. For instance, she argues that the content of network interaction varies depending on the level of intimacy involved.

<sup>14</sup> This definition allows for opposition political parties to be a part of civil society. However, political parties are not the focus of this investigation, whose focus is ordinary people, while it is primarily elites who engage in political activism.

invested in projects that feature the sprouting of local voluntary organizations as a strategy for building democracy in the region (Carothers 1999).

Not all voluntary organizations are heterogeneous. As Mutz and Martin point out, the ability of persons to select the voluntary organizations in which they want to participate can result in bringing together people who already share a lot of interests and background characteristics (1998, 4). Only those civic associations that focus on interests that appeal to those of different ethnicities, as those that are based in the local community or at the workplace often do, possess the greatest potential for facilitating inter-ethnic cooperation.<sup>15</sup> Those individuals seeking a heterogeneous environment but looking to avoid domestic institutions such as neighborhood and workplaces, which may have been tainted by personal betrayal during the war, may be attracted more to voluntary organizations than to these indigenous institutions.

### *The Neighborhood*

Nonetheless, informal institutions like the neighborhood and workplace also provide opportunities for repeated inter-ethnic interaction. Granovetter argues that neighborhood and work networks are settings in which individuals develop the weak or bridging ties necessary to integrate them into communities (1973, 1378). In Bosnia, urbanites rarely had the ability to choose their place of residence, a situation that facilitated the development of ethnically diverse city neighborhoods that to some degree survived the war.

During socialist times, the peoples of former Yugoslavia often relied on personal connections (*veze*), for example, among neighbors to get by. In some cases they did so because they wanted to address their needs while keeping a distance from distrusted and/or dysfunctional authorities. As Drakulić wrote about individuals in the former Yugoslavia, “Because there is no such thing as a self-sufficient communist household, you depend fatally on your neighbor for all kinds of favors, from borrowing coffee...or cursing politics., to getting your child enrolled in a better school” (1993, 183). Or as one informant stated, “You should be able to turn to your closest neighbor for help, before you turn to your own brother.” Hospitality among neighbors is a form of social exchange “motivated by the returns...expected” (Vinogradov 1974). But the neighborhood (*komšiluk*) can serve more than practical needs. For instance, Bringa found that inter-ethnic interaction taking place during rural neighborhood coffee visiting provided a base for expression of multiple collective identifications, some of those being inclusive and others being exclusive (1995, 66). In fact, several comparative investigations of inter-ethnic relations have found that ethnically heterogeneous contexts enable individual minorities to shun exclusivist identities and instead consciously (Malkki 1995), partly consciously (Laitin 1998), or unconsciously (Pilkington 1998) inhabit multiple identifications or conglomerate ones. Yet as Bougarel points out, the neutral institutional structure of the neighborhood, which is based on *communal* affiliations rather than on individualism, can easily be used in nefarious ways (1996). During the war, political elites demonized communal differences and appealed to the traditional aspect of good neighborly relations that recognizes and reinforces different communal identities of Bosnians, in order to pull people apart.

### *The Workplace*

Because of the damage the war inflicted on the neighborhood, minorities may seek alternative institutions, particularly those more focused on individualism, for help with negotiation. One such context is the workplace. Research conducted just before the war indicated that citizens of the former Yugoslavia overwhelmingly viewed inter-ethnic relations in the workplace as good,

---

<sup>15</sup> Church-based or ethnicity-based associations, though more homogeneous than locality- or work-based groups, can still facilitate inter-ethnic cooperation by reaching out to associations of ethnic and religious “others.”

even when they evaluated them as bad in other, more general contexts (Baćević et al. 1991, 144-9). Because an individual's ability to select his workplace is limited, place of employment may provide unique opportunities to interact with peoples of diverse backgrounds (Mutz and Martin 1998, 4). Occupying more of a person's waking hours than any other activity, work is a social situation in which people are together for long periods of time with extended opportunities for interaction (Finifter 1974, 612). Furthermore, most work relationships are instrumental: they consist of encounters of limited duration in which the participants are primarily focused on performing a task and receiving remuneration (Romann and Weingrod 1991, 145). Such inter-ethnic relationships hold fewer expectations for deep connections than do relationships among kin or even among neighbors in Bosnia. These factors combine to increase the opportunity for minorities to forge the weak ties that are theorized to build bridging links between individuals of different backgrounds (Mondak and Mutz 2001, 16).<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, contacts at work are personal, direct, and repeated, so that ordinary persons are able to gain immediate, first-hand knowledge of their colleagues of other ethnicities (Romann and Weingrod 1991, 144). And finally, while it is possible for a person to ignore a neighbor of another ethnicity, it is often not possible to avoid working with a colleague of another ethnicity.

## Method

Addressing gaps in regional literature on ethnic politics that has focused on the essential role of elites and the institutions they use (Burg 1993; Cohen 1995; Donia and Fine 1994; Hayden 1993; Ramet 1992; Woodward 1995), the present investigation adopts an individual-level approach to examining the choices that ordinary minorities at the non-elite level make. The very fact that an individual *lives* as a minority in Bosnia is a political statement. Thus, every action of an ordinary person who lives as a minority is a political act and should be the locus of a political investigation. This perspective allows for emphasis on agency and suits efforts to describe and explain how decisions are made and acted upon. For instance, Laitin focuses on how individuals develop strategies to cope with the constraints imposed by history and elites (1998, 366-7). Similarly, Rieder investigates how ordinary whites in Brooklyn experienced racial integration (1985). In this case, despite the ethnically exclusive environment of Bosniak-majority Bosnia, minorities continue to live there and interact with "others." This individual-level approach was used to explore how ordinary minorities interact with ethnic "others," *given* existing political constraints. Because of the subjective dimension of ethnicity, understanding of inter-ethnic relations requires listening to popular voices as individuals interpret elite rhetoric, and contemplate their sense of belonging, their beliefs, and their future.

In investigating factors influencing minorities' migration choices, the investigation used an intra-regional comparative case-study design focused around the Bosniak municipalities of Bihac and Novo Sarajevo.<sup>17</sup> This allows for deep investigation into the complex research questions (Ragin 1987; Yin 1994). It also facilitates the generation of hypotheses on minority choices for later testing in "other" post-ethnic-war areas. The use of multiple cases addresses a concern in the regional literature on investigators' over-reliance on Sarajevo, a city known for its uniquely vibrant inter-ethnic relations.

---

<sup>16</sup> Putnam appears to miss this point when he mentions the racial diversity of the workplace but bemoans the fact that most working individuals have acquaintances among their colleagues but few have close personal ties to colleagues (2000, 87).

<sup>17</sup> These geographic constraints and sample selection mean that the study's findings cannot be generalized beyond these localities in Bosniak-majority areas.

I used ethnographic participant observation to explore in depth the choices and attitudes of minorities. Specifically, I lived with local families in apartment buildings in Sarajevo and Bihac that housed a mix of ethnicities. I sought consent by announcing myself as a student interested in learning from Bosnian citizens about their concerns and how they cope with everyday problems in the difficult postwar period. Basing myself in apartment buildings afforded a close look at actual, rather than merely reported, minority-majority exchanges. I also observed the behavior of minorities toward Bosniaks, primarily in the neighborhood, but also in cafés, workplaces, markets, NGO meetings, schools, buses, courtrooms, conferences, gyms, book-signing gatherings, cultivated fields, and churches. In fact, I observed nearly half (24 of 51) of my respondents in at least one natural setting. I also talked with and observed 115 informants. For example, during an unplanned visit to Dragica's NGO (described later), I watched a leader of a group of displaced Bosniak women drop by to ask Dragica for advice. In this way, I corroborated her claim made during interviews of a good working relationship with displaced Bosniak women. Thus, participant observation mitigates against over-dependence on attitudinal data, which can be problematic given the ambiguous relationship between attitudes and behavior.<sup>18</sup>

Bosnian culture's expectations of frequent social interaction among neighbors—through coffee visits and by reliance on neighbor-based barter networks—provided a unique opportunity to view inter-ethnic behavior and listen to perspectives in a near-natural setting. It also enabled me to explore the role of neighborhood networks in integration. I confined my investigation to urban neighborhoods in chiefly Bosniak areas, in order to focus on the living spaces where inter-ethnic interaction occurs.

I conducted one-on-one intensive interviews in the local language with minority neighbors toward the end of my three-month stay at each site.<sup>19</sup> This combination of intensive interview and participant observation techniques is suited to the challenging research environment, since it helps investigators build trust among their informants, and avoid “survey fatigue” common among marginal peoples (IOM 1996; Cox 1998; Helms 1997).<sup>20</sup> Intensive interviewing with open-ended questions prevents the investigator from imposing particular answers and also facilitates generation of theories, because it allows interviewees to offer explanations different from those conceived of by the investigator, and to explain motivations. The strategy of rooting myself in local communities helped me concentrate on the quiet sub-population of minorities. I then used minority neighbors, local gatekeepers,<sup>21</sup> and my volunteer activities at local civic organizations to gain access to “other” minorities. I also drew on survey data (Cushman 1998; Dani et. al 1999; IOM 1999; Sweeney 2001; USIA 1998).

---

<sup>18</sup> Participant observation was an essential part of the methodology that helped me check against the possibility that my status as an American prompted views and behavior exaggerated toward tolerance. My long-term immersion (three months of living with, and participating in, four different neighborhoods) made it impossible for my hosts to constantly tailor their behavior and for “quiet” minority neighbors to avoid me completely. The validity of the testimony that I obtained and the behavior I observed is strengthened by the fact that they conveyed a diverse set of strategies (including communalism and anonymity), as well as behavior and views often expressing ethnic intolerance and distrust of institutions that the West favors, like NGOs.

<sup>19</sup> Partly as a check against bias, I hired locals to conduct several interviews in each site.

<sup>20</sup> Surveys in Bosnia are also vastly complicated by the lack of a postwar census.

<sup>21</sup> A gatekeeper is a representative of the setting the researcher wants to enter (Sieber 1992, 85). In my case, gatekeepers include leaders of local voluntary organizations and prominent persons in the neighborhood. I endeavored to approach gatekeepers who did not belong to different social networks, so that I could cultivate a variety of respondents and informants. For example, for help in finding accommodation with local host families, I approached four different gatekeepers who did not know each other.



## Findings

To get a sense of the level of Bosnian minorities' interaction with ethnic "others," I asked respondents, "What everyday steps do you take to increase your feeling of security and well-being during such insecure and difficult times?" I only intended this interview question to suggest the strategies that minorities use. An interview questionnaire cannot capture the dynamic and contextual nature of strategies; no one person employs one strategy of negotiation in contexts of immense variability and during different time periods. That said, an open-ended interview question can point to a respondent's perception of his or her own behavior. Given the legacy of the war and socialism, discrimination, ethnocentrism, and the departure of most nationalist minority groups to neighboring regions where they are in the majority, I expected minorities to retreat to anonymity.

What I found, however, was that many of my urban minority respondents expressed commitment to reaching out to ordinary "others" in their environments, while a good portion selected ordinary persons of a different ethnicity for stronger ties. In fact, some minority interviewees equated their sense of security with engagement with "others." For instance, Serb returnee Dragan spoke of "communication with Serbs, Croats, and Muslims" as bolstering his security. And Veljko, a Serb who stayed in Sarajevo, replied that he "constantly" contacted neighbors and acquaintances, rather than kin and close friends. Recognizing that wide social networks helped him both socially and financially, Croat Srečko endeavored to "sustain contact with people," particularly since he ran a private business. These minority respondents suggest that the everyday steps they take to increase their sense of security revolve around building and strengthening weak and bridging ties to "others" located in the community around them. This is consistent with Granovetter's social network theory that weak ties help integrate individuals into their communities. Many of my minority respondents sought to build inclusive ties by developing networks that, just as Putnam describes, are "outward looking and encompass people across diverse social cleavages" (2000, 22). Thus, rather than seeking help from his co-ethnics, Serb Goran maintained that he worked to "improve relations with his neighbors." Not surprisingly, those minorities most emphatic about engagement with "others" were activists in civic-oriented voluntary organizations. For instance, Serb Dragica told me, "I stay active; I associate, and I don't contemplate things." She added that she worked to help others, like displaced Bosniak women, through her volunteering with a women's group. But her engagement with "others" reached beyond that organized by the women's group to individuals from her everyday life. For example, after she ran into one of her former Bosniak colleagues on a bus and found out that this colleague was ill and desperately sought to emigrate, Dragica later visited her and approached me for help with emigration information.

In sum, many—but not all—minority respondents appeared to hold conceptions of security grounded in social integration. They conveyed that improving the quality of their connections with ordinary "others" helped improve their sense of security. And they used a shared ideology to cross ethnic boundaries to forge ties with diverse people. In contrast, those minorities who relocated to majority areas seemed to feel that they could rely only on a dwindling circle of close friends; this made them feel insecure and disconnected from people and places in chiefly Bosniak areas of Bosnia. Take Malik, a Croat informant who relocated to Zagreb after being seriously injured in Sarajevo during the war:

**Participant observer:** How does it feel to be in Sarajevo?

**Malik:** It is o.k. Everyone feels comfortable within their circle of friends....But my circle is becoming smaller and smaller. Out of my [secondary school] class of three hundred students, only fifty are left in Sarajevo.

**Participant observer:** Have you experienced any discrimination or hostility in Sarajevo?

**Malik:** Not directly. But I feel in the atmosphere that there are fewer opportunities to speak freely. It's as if you are walking in the night. You feel insecure.

Thus, minorities who stayed or even those who returned expressed a greater faith than minorities who relocated in their ability to communicate with and connect to those found in Bosniak-majority environments. As social network theory predicts, lack of weak ties with “others” hinders integration.

Other minorities talked about security in a multidimensional way, expressing concern about the financial dimension of their security along with other dimensions of security. Serb returnee Sladjana's story about the everyday steps that she took to improve her security featured work. For Sladjana, however, work was not just about making money. She considered work as important to her financial, psychological, and social security. For example, she told me she found her workplace to be an important venue for being among the mixed members of her in-group. And in discussing her involvement in a local women's organization, she stressed its role in providing a place for meeting people, and “not fearing them,” which she valued as “very important.” Sladjana had the good fortune of returning to a husband—also Serb—who had remained in Sarajevo during the war and retained his job. Needless to say, economic issues were extremely urgent concerns for minorities who returned, many of whom could not rely on a family member who stayed and maintained his or her job (see IOM 1999; Sweeney 2001). Beyond universal concern about economic issues, it was striking that Bosniaks tended to think of security chiefly unidimensionally, mainly in financial terms. Though some did express concern about physical security, these majority respondents did not feel they had the ability to influence the environment for their personal security. That is, these Bosniaks tended to believe that their personal security was ultimately dependent on the desires of their militarily stronger neighbors—Serbia and Croatia, and their surrogates, the Bosnian Serb and Bosnian Croat militaries. As a result, they believed only international peacekeepers were able to improve their security situations. Moreover, as members of the majority, they did not have to be concerned about integrating into an environment that their co-ethnics dominated and did not express a need to reach out to “others” in their surroundings. Instead, Bosniaks focused on the dimension of security that concerned them the most and on which they felt they could have an influence—work:

**Munira:** I continue to strengthen the material security of my family, so that we can develop and move ahead.

**Emina:** I work and I study.

**Aida:** Well, I'm unemployed, but sometimes I work here and there as a hair stylist.

Those in the majority do not need to be so focused on physical security and community integration, which frees them to focus on bolstering their financial security.

Responses to additional interview questions aimed at uncovering the prevailing strategies that minority respondents used in negotiation with “others” buttress the proposition that Bosnian minorities selectively reach out to members of the majority. One indicator of Bosnian minorities’ selective engagement strategy is their attitude on the content of the educational program. Borrowing from Smootha 1994,<sup>22</sup> it can be argued that minorities’ views on education indicate their vision of how minority-majority relations should be. Most minority respondents argued that children of all nationalities should study from one, united curriculum, whereas less than a third advocated free choice or separate curricula for each ethnic group. Croat Marijan provided a response typical of those minorities favoring a unified curriculum: “There should be a common educational program that includes...an objective discussion of the history, culture, and traditions of all peoples in Bosnia.” Others, like Serb returnee Katica, supported a unified curriculum in public schools along with private schooling as an alternative. “There should be one program, because otherwise education works toward ethnic division. If people want other options, there are private schools.” In contrast, a recent poll of Croats and Serbs residing in neighboring areas where they are in the majority indicated their preference for communalism. Over 78 percent of Croats in Croat-majority areas of Bosnia preferred that children learn from separate curricula, while 68 percent of Serbs in Serb majority areas even advocated separate schools for each ethnic group (USIA 1998, 131-2). As Milan, an interviewee who relocated from Sarajevo to a Serb-majority area explained, “I believe each ethnic group should have its own program. My language is Serbian. My child does not want to go to a school where he will read that Serbs are Chetniks.”

The preference of minority respondents for children of all ethnicities to be educated under a united program differs from that of Palestinian citizens of Israel, who overwhelmingly believe that Palestinians in Israel should control their own schooling (Smootha 1984, 54-56). The willingness of Bosnian minorities to be educated under one educational program suggests their rejection of communalism.

The finding that minorities are more likely than individuals who now belong to a majority group to engage with “others,” particularly acquaintances, in the environment around them is not wholly surprising. Comparative literature notes that minorities, simply by virtue of their smaller numbers, are more likely to engage in at least casual contact with people belonging to the majority group than vice-versa. This is particularly the case if the minority group is politically and/or economically marginalized (Romann and Weingrod 1991; Seligman 1997), because a minority has more to gain from inter-ethnic contact than majority members, who may even stand to lose from such contacts (Smootha 1984, 52). Yet even so, Palestinian citizens of Israel opt for communalism. Selective engagement, on the other hand, implies a willingness to invest in adapting to, and to work with at least elements of, the current community, rather than focusing on isolation or seeking exit to a nearby majority community. The behavior of an individual who chooses, or is resigned, to stay in an area where she is in the minority is usually moderated by the multi-ethnic milieu. This is because, once a minority individual decides that she will not leave

---

<sup>22</sup> As Smootha suggests, education in plural societies partly reflects the existing patterns of minority-majority relations in that society. Societies attempting to build a common culture employ a unitary education system, societies embracing consociationalism allow minorities’ education to be autonomous, and societies seeking to control their minorities use education as a means of dominance (1984; 66). This discussion follows Smootha’s logic, but takes the perspective of the minority.

for a majority area, she realizes she will need to interact repeatedly with the ethnic “others” with whom she is apt to share neighborhoods and workplaces.<sup>23</sup> These venues then breed ties among diverse acquaintances that, many hypothesize, work toward integration.

Vera, a Catholic informant from Sarajevo, recognized the need to interact with proximate majority individuals. Through participant observation it was revealed that she used a multi-faceted strategy that varied according the context: she practiced anonymity in official public situations and careful engagement with individuals from her work and neighborhood surroundings. To illustrate this dynamic process in which individual minorities tailor their strategy to specific contexts, it is necessary to go beyond a single interview question and display summary figures of different strategies observed and to follow informants like Vera through several different inter-ethnic situations. When asked how she coped in such insecure times, Vera replied:

I cope by tutoring [privately] and by being honest....

You know, if I, or other minorities, stayed among ourselves, we wouldn't be able to survive. Really, only Muslims can help me survive. ....[For example,] I help my next door neighbor, a Muslim woman who has three children....Once her children were locked out of the apartment while their mother was at work. I invited them into my apartment and fed them cakes and entertained them until their mom arrived. Then, when I went on vacation to the coast, the neighbor looked after my apartment.

There's another woman. A Muslim woman who covers herself. She is a single mother. She used to work as a cleaning lady at my old school, but recently she was let go, as “surplus.” I helped her get a job in this apartment complex cleaning the hallways and stairs. She receives forty deutsche Marks a month for this.... She also does some mending for me.

At the end of this story, Vera expressed embarrassment about the instrumental character of these relationships. “I help them and they help me. I'm forced to do this; I have no other choice.” In these ways, Vera has successfully developed weak but helpful ties with “others.”

On an individual level, she used the ethnically diverse social networks of her workplace and sometimes her neighborhood to recruit selected members of the majority group, with whom she believes she can develop relationships involving the exchange of very concrete, practical services. To her former colleague, she offered her recommendation for employment in exchange for mending.

But her relationships with majority neighbors, most of whom were displaced Bosniaks, were limited largely by Vera's experiences with them. She told me that one night during the war, when they were huddled in the cellar together, some of her Bosniak neighbors accused her of being a traitor. Vera believed that her neighbors would have liked to see her leave Sarajevo. Despite all her fears of her neighbors, however, Vera realized that she had no choice but to live

---

<sup>23</sup> For example, Sudetic (1998, 63) tells the story of how a Bosniak returnee to now Serb-majority eastern Bosnia worked for moderation in his mixed village by attempting to intercept delivery of an inflammatory card that his relative sent to a Serb neighbor. In pleading with the postmaster to give the card to him, instead of delivering it to the Serb addressee, he proclaimed, “That card will bring nothing but trouble...’And I've got to live in this place!’”

next to them. So she adapted accordingly, even to those from whom she felt the most distant—Bosniaks displaced from the countryside.<sup>24</sup>

A month later, Vera revealed that she behaved differently in public contexts, where inter-ethnic interaction may involve, or ultimately spill into, the official public sphere. When international police came to check up on her, she “kept quiet,” since she was sure that the Muslim translator with them would tell the nationalist Bosniak authorities about her complaints. “This would only make things more difficult for me.” In fact, Vera was convinced that ordinary Bosniaks would like an ethnically homogeneous region. “No one wants to be a minority.” But because she blamed chiefly political and security elites for espousing ethnic purification and causing insecurity for minorities, Vera adopted a strategy of anonymity in contexts involving those foes:

As a Croat born in Sarajevo, I shut up. I can't speak my mind. I can't voice my opinion, as long as I value my head. I remain inconspicuous. Well, this land is mine, also, but in practice, I'm a ‘last Mohican.’

Vera then was painfully conscious of tailoring her behavior toward ethnic “others” to particular contexts. This is rooted in her belief that she is part of an oppressed and disappearing group. Vera’s behavior is consistent with Axelrod’s game-theory work that examines the conditions under which cooperation can emerge in a world of egoists without central authorities (1985). This framework is important given Bosnians’—particularly minorities’—lack of confidence in the rule of law in Bosnia (Cushman 1998; Djipa, Muzur, and Lytle 1999, 8-9; Sweeney 2001, 1). As with players in the prisoner’s dilemma game, Vera’s actions in the “game” of inter-ethnic interaction were not motivated by friendship. Instead, they appear based on what Axelrod describes as an evolutionary approach: whatever is successful is likely to appear more often in the future (1981, 69). Like winners of the prisoner’s dilemma game, Vera realized that she has a large enough stake in future interactions with at least selected Bosniaks to engage in cooperative behavior. She used the “tit for tat” strategy, in which she cooperated on the first move and then did whatever the other player did on the next move. For instance, she took the initiative in cooperating with two single Bosniak mothers by offering them necessary services. Each of these players responded reciprocally, by providing other necessary services.

Other minorities revealed a similar belief in reciprocity when queried on the everyday steps they take to increase their sense of security. Serb returnee Nikola told me that he increased his sense of security by “approaching everyone with trust and certainty that [such] relations will be reciprocated.” Nikola strove to make clear his belief in reciprocity, in parallel to Axelrod’s advice to “clarify your behavior, so that others can adapt to your pattern” (1981, 20). Dragan, a Serb returnee, described how he attempted to overcome the fear that he experienced upon his return by reaching out to persons who shared his belief in reciprocity. He also used reciprocity as a means to try to negotiate relationships with initially hostile Bosniaks in his immediate environment. To illustrate his approach, Dragan told me a story about the person (a Bosniak) who occupied his home after the war and who is now his next-door neighbor.

This man attacked my mother in front of the municipality building, when she was submitting the claim for the return of our home. I took the initiative to connect with him. I told me that I would not seek that he be charged for the attack. And I have been successful. He later approached me and apologized; now he greets me.

---

<sup>24</sup> Acknowledging the fear that displaced Bosniaks, many of whom were violently forced from their homes, had of “others,” Vera said, “I started slowly with my new neighbor. I gave their family some chocolate, just to show them that I am not a criminal.”

Like Vera, Dragan realized that his neighbors who were displaced Bosniaks were not going to disappear and thus he would need to find some way to live next to them, as acquaintances who were not hostile. So he used reciprocity, forgiving his neighbor's initial attack and approaching him "with sincerity." He considered his strategy successful, in that he was able to elicit an apology and he had more or less regularized their acquaintance by regularly exchanging greetings.

### **Facilitating negotiation**

The investigation generally found that while minorities might participate in the activities of voluntary organizations, they were less likely to turn to these organizations for help in negotiating their environment and to forge cooperative links with "others." Rather, they were more likely to look to the workplace and, to a lesser degree, to the neighborhood.

### ***Voluntary Organizations***

Given that the concerns of Bosnians, particularly those belonging to marginalized groups like minorities, focused on material, legal, physical, and social-psychological dimensions of security (UN Development Program 1994, 23),<sup>25</sup> I concentrated my examination of how minorities used voluntary organizations on whether such groups addressed these concerns. My volunteering for several ethnically mixed local civic groups, however, also provided me with an opportunity to get an idea of whether voluntary organizations assisted inter-ethnic interaction.

On the one hand, statistics show that minorities seeking assistance when their human rights were violated have become more willing since the end of the war to approach local voluntary organizations. Minorities appear emboldened just enough to use such organizations as intermediaries between them and majority authorities. In February 1999 interview, Jelena, a Sarajevo lawyer for one local human rights organization, said that ordinary people were initially afraid to approach her office, but that recently they had brought an increasing number of cases.

But the fear sets in when it becomes necessary for them to take steps to try to gain authorities' implementation of decisions. For example, when people come to me with favorable court decisions regarding their occupancy right to their apartments, and I offer to go with them to the police or to take their case to the TV station, they aren't willing to do so. They are still afraid.

Furthermore, a survey by an NGO in Bihac found that nearly one-quarter of respondents (172 persons) had turned to the organization for assistance in cases of alleged violations of their human rights (Srpsko Gradjansko Vijece 1998). Minorities' fear of directly taking on majority authorities limited the extent to which such voluntary groups could help empower minorities. While these advocacy groups also provided aid, they offered limited possibilities of building bridging relationships with "others." This is because they are not civic associations (like

---

<sup>25</sup> A mass survey of refugees who had just returned from Germany found that the minorities' concerns focused on concrete issues of employment (nearly 37 percent), living expenses (25 percent), and housing (24 percent) (IOM 1999). Similarly, another survey found that returnees to the Federation—mainly minorities—viewed their most urgent issues as unemployment (43 percent), low economic status (17 percent), and poor living conditions (13 percent) (Sweeney 2001, 2). A different study of minorities who returned to rural areas of Republika Srpska found that their primary concerns were employment (39 percent), public services (21 percent), pensions (19 percent), education (18 percent), and security (14 percent) (Alfaro 2000).

neighborhood or professional associations, choral societies, cooperatives, sports clubs, and so on) that provide the opportunities for intense horizontal interaction that generate “mutual reciprocity...and the broadening of social identities” (Putnam 1995, 76). Instead, the specialized knowledge that legal assistance groups provide and the individualized nature of each case meant that ordinary minorities merely turned to, rather than participated in, such local organizations. Even in this way, advocacy groups in Bosnia played an important role in strengthening democracy by working to hold officials responsible for their actions.

In answer to the question, “Do the activities of international or local organizations help you in everyday survival and/or help increase your sense of security?” most respondents expressed confidence in the work of international organizations, such as the NATO-led peacekeeping operation. And while minorities were more likely than other respondents to belong to voluntary groups ranging from unions to political parties, almost none thought that nongovernmental organizations addressed everyday survival and security needs. One exception was expressed by Vuk, a Serb who returned to his Serb hamlet in the mainly Bosniak Bihac region, who reported that a Bosniak women's group had promised to donate cows to returnees in his hamlet. Generally, these opinions did not vary by site, as I had expected. That is, minority individuals in Sarajevo, which hosts a plethora of internationally supported civic groups, did not appear to be more likely to approach civic groups or more in favor of the work of such groups than minority individuals in Bihac, where there are only a few civic groups. Even when voluntary organizations offered both assistance to and activities for ordinary persons, minorities tended to accept the aid but turn down participation. After Nela confided in me about depression stemming from her three-year legal battle to reclaim her Sarajevo apartment, I asked her if she was aware of a voluntary women's group that offered programs to help female returnees:

**Nela:** Yes, I know about them, they provided me with three hundred deutsche Marks when I first returned. Without them, I wouldn't have been able to survive. That is because I started working in August, but I didn't receive my salary until October.

**Participant observer:** They also provide group psychological services.

**Nela:** Yea, I know. But I talk to myself. Only I can solve my own problems. In groups, it is exhausting to hear about person after person with their own pile of problems. I heard that in the collective center where we were staying in Serbia.

Only one respondent, Serb returnee Sladjana, told me she felt that a local voluntary organization—the same one that Nela approached—helped reintegrate her into Sarajevo society:

Aside from my family, at the beginning of my return, [a women's organization] was the number one thing that helped me feel included in life. There were computer exercises and workshops to meet people with the same problems, people who think the same, people who can help others find work. There was also a psycho-social group of seven or eight. I used to volunteer. But now I don't have time. It's very important to meet people. And not to fear them.

Many of my Bosnian contacts indicated “time” as inhibiting their involvement in local groups. Some were focused on scraping together money to make ends meet, and did not feel that adjusting their schedule to make time for participation in local groups was worth it. Activist

Ditka told me, “Our youth just don't want to get involved....Most are in their early twenties and if they have the opportunity, they work to earn money.”

Others appeared to fear that some of the local groups, particularly those aimed at minorities and marginalized persons, ended up exacerbating social divisions. For instance, Serb Dragan told me that he regretted the exclusive nature of an NGO designed to assist Serbs from the Sarajevo suburbs. “[The NGO] must exist now, because we are a minority. But I hope that it will soon change and grow out of this narrow national focus.”

Still other minorities limited their involvement in voluntary groups because of faults they found in them, which is not surprising given the newness of these civic organizations. Serb Mira told me that she suspended her involvement in one local group mostly because of its “undemocratic decision-making structure.” And several minority informants who had been active in associations of displaced persons told me that they now limited their contact because of concerns that leaders were using the groups for personal gain. Informants echoed concerns about the opportunism of the leaders of some organizations, particularly religious institutions. For example, Vera believed her priest focused mainly on keeping his job, rather than on providing services to his community. “If his people leave, then he loses everything. He lives at the church office and his church is here.” She also expressed concern about his involvement in politics. Thus, she went to church to “pray to God...and to show the community that I am one of them,” since they gave out humanitarian aid during the war and she anticipated that they would do so again, if necessary. Cushman found that many members of his focus groups participated in religious life, but did so with a pronounced detachment from formal religious authorities (1998, 4).

Activist Sofia believed that “voluntary organizations in general...[were] helping take responsibility for initiating change in their environment,” particularly those that provided practical services. But she also felt some had initiated only shortsighted projects, and had become too dependent on, and too critical of, the international community. Echoing common perceptions of internationally financed NGOs in other parts of the world (Carothers 1999, 219), some of my minority respondents viewed NGO workers as arrogant, overpaid, and self-interested.

My volunteering, however, did uncover signs that some civic associations had begun to attract a small group of ordinary persons from different ethnic backgrounds who wanted to pursue common interests such as discussing women's concerns, or to develop skills such as English. I found some support for Carothers's assertion that women's voluntary organizations have often been the most impressive sector of advocacy NGOs operating in transitional societies (1999, 217). He attributes this success to the ability of women's NGOs to take up issues of immediate interest to their constituents; to implement an agenda that naturally synthesizes economic, political, and social concerns; to bridge the urban-rural gap; and to attract strongly committed leaders and members (1999, 217). In the woman's organization for which I volunteered, the leaders were multi-ethnic and passionately devoted to improving the situation for women in Bosnia. I frequently observed and participated in different types of meetings that drew women of diverse backgrounds and needs. For example, during one evening workshop on violence against women, a physician working with battered women talked about the opportunities for and obstacles to preventing violence against women in Bosnia and treating its victims. She fielded questions from around eighteen women of all ethnicities, some of whom had stayed in Bosnia throughout the war, some of whom had fled Banja Luka for Germany, only to relocate eventually to Sarajevo, and some minority returnees to Sarajevo. Such a voluntary gathering persons of



mixed ethnicities and migration statuses would have been unheard of in most contexts, yet these women found common ground around gender concerns.

Those who did not participate in local voluntary organizations were the most suspicious of these organizations' motives, partly because the most visible associations were nationalist ones. For instance, Zorica's opinion of women's groups was:

They're only for Muslims! These Muslim women wearing scarves are only a reaction to the war. They are looking for something simple. Over time, things will go back to normal. They do nothing; they sit around and drink coffee among themselves. During the war, individual women were working hard; they had direction.

And Ahmet believed that "most [local organizations] were formed by the government."

But perhaps the biggest obstacle to minorities' participation in voluntary organizations was their belief that such organizations were not capable of making an impact in the face of concerted opposition from majority authorities. An OSCE official in Bihac told me, "Serb returnees, if they mention [X organization designed to assist Serbs in the Federation], say, 'I've been there,' and they roll their eyes [indicating that it is not effective]. Generally, minority returnees put their faith in international organizations." As Jež told me, voluntary organizations and ombudsmen work only in societies where the rule of law is present. "But, here, in the 'Wild West,' you need cowboys to get things done!" Even before the war, grass-roots efforts to promote peace appeared impotent against nationalists willing and able to employ any means to achieve their goals. One Slovene informant, who participated in an NGO-organized protest for peace three days before the war started, took from the experience "the lesson that mass peaceful protest cannot prevent war." In another instance of the weakness of voluntary organizations, Serb refugee Tamara once asked me for advice on organizations offering assistance with property rights. I mentioned three local voluntary organizations, two ombudsmen, and three intergovernmental organizations. She had already approached them *all*. Despite her efforts at enlisting the knowledge and assistance of multiple organizations, she was unable to resolve her property dispute.

Finally, some observers argued that the low efficacy of ordinary people presented a formidable obstacle to minority participation in, and the ultimate influence of, voluntary groups. Minority activist Olivera blamed the general lack of civic engagement in Bosnia on the fact that "citizens here don't realize that they have the power to organize, just as the nationalists do." Activist Munira placed the blame partly on political obstacles and partly on the Bosnian "propensity toward collectivism." She continued:

I personally work for change. I believe that each person must give his or her own proposal for change. [However,] voluntary organizations are making only slow progress, [because] 1) people are conscious that you can't bring about change overnight, and 2) people accept [the proposition] that they feel better in a group rather than as individuals with freedom.

Because of minority concerns and the political environment that limited the effectiveness of civic-oriented voluntary associations, the social network that voluntary organizations—particularly advocacy groups—built served primarily to link those already committed to civic activism. Activist Olivera acknowledged that activists in civic organizations spent "too much time talking with each other." Another principal function of voluntary organizations was to

provide committed activists with a vehicle for attempting to bring about political change from below. This was the case for Ivanka who felt it was her duty to speak out:

I work in [an alternative intellectual group, a human rights NGO, and an opposition political party]. We want to be transparent. We want people to recognize that they can fight openly. I fight for my son to decide freely whether he wants to return or not. I fight to do everything to give my family the opportunity to decide. I have a responsibility to be active. I say that even breathing is political in Bosnia. Therefore, even if you don't want to be involved in politics, it's involved with you. We had fifty years of a situation where being against the leader was being against the state. We need to implant civic responsibility.

Ivanka linked her personal goal of protecting her family's ability to decide freely where to live to achieving her larger goal of imbuing civic attitudes in Bosnian citizens. Predrag, one of the only Serb mayors in the Federation, similarly linked his personal goal of return to his activism for non-nationalist ideologies.

That civic organizations for now appear most useful for activists like Ivanka and Predrag does not mean that civic organizations can neither assist democratization, nor ever play a significant role in demanding government accountability and responsiveness, nor eventually exert pressure to counteract political efforts to stoke ethnic conflict. Indeed, independent sources said that they believed people like Ivanka and Predrag were making a difference.<sup>26</sup> And Varshney's findings, that associational forms of civic engagement are sturdier than everyday forms of civic engagement when confronted with attempts by politicians to foment riots or pogroms (2001, 1), suggest that multi-ethnic civic associations and advocacy groups, once firmly embedded in local communities in Bosnia, could facilitate inter-ethnic interaction and constrain elite efforts to engineer ethnic conflict for political gain.

### ***Institutions of the Neighborhood and Workplace***

If ordinary persons rarely turn to voluntary organizations for help with everyday needs and forging cooperative links with "others," where and to whom do they turn? I sought to gauge the influence of institutional factors on the negotiating strategies of minorities largely through participant observation. Thus, living with minority families gave me the chance to monitor inter- and intra-ethnic interaction in everyday life. On the one hand, my observation confirmed common knowledge of the pervasiveness of ethnic divisions that inhibited inter-ethnic interaction. In times of practical need—for fixing a television or toilet, for interpreting a property law, for borrowing the telephone, for getting advice, and for obtaining information—my three minority hostesses turned first to selected co-ethnics in their immediate environment and sometimes to their fellow Christians, the Croats, as well as mixed Serb-Croats individuals. As in the case of Palestinian citizens of Jerusalem (Romann and Weingrod 1991), ethnocentrism and the nationalist political system interacted to favor narrowing "bonding networks" of mutual help. Nationalist rule meant that the experiences of minorities during and after the war began to converge. Urban minorities shared battles against discriminatory property legislation and

---

<sup>26</sup> International humanitarians who had observed Predrag's behavior over several years believed that he was instrumental in bringing about significant minority return and governing his town for persons of all ethnicities. And minorities in Sarajevo applauded Ivanka's activism, particularly her successful lawsuit against her wartime employers for firing her on discriminatory grounds.

alienation from an increasingly Muslim and decreasingly cosmopolitan culture that affected their children's education, their ability to become and remain employed, whom they could trust, and their opportunities for the future.

On the other hand, the most diverse social networks of the minority respondents and informants were those formed initially in the workplace. Surprisingly, participant observation of minority host families at the neighborhood level and analysis of interview responses revealed that workplace networks, rather than neighborhood networks, facilitated inter-ethnic interaction.

#### *Ambivalence about the Neighborhood*

Even in urban areas, wartime experiences, propaganda, the influx of rural Bosniaks, and the outflow of intellectuals helped poison the ability of the neighborhood to serve as a site for rebuilding inter-ethnic ties. A few informants even suggested that the whole ideology of good neighborliness was destroyed by the war.

To get an idea of how respondents viewed inter-ethnic relationships in the neighborhood, I asked them how important it was to them to have good neighborly relations. Surprisingly given the tradition of *komšiluk*, more than half of the respondents viewed relationships in the neighborhood as just as important as or less important than social relations in other settings. In a common response, Croat and Catholic respondent Renata viewed relations with neighbors as important, but limited in function:

*Komšiluk* is a good thing, particularly for concrete needs. But, I don't have time to spend in long talks in the neighborhood. I don't like to think that I have an obligation to visit, or for someone to visit me. Honestly, I don't always have a lot to talk about with my neighbors. They are not necessarily interested in the same issue or things that I'm involved in.

Renata asserted that lack of common interests, and perhaps ideology, of many neighbors confined their relationships with them to practical needs. Like Renata, Serb respondent Gordana emphasized that she actively chose partners for socializing, rather than merely allowing her surroundings to determine her social circle: "I associate with people who meet other criteria, rather than just being my neighbor." Bosniaks also shared these sentiments. Most interviewees then conveyed hesitation about the involuntary nature of association in the neighborhood and of the cultural tradition that obligated Bosnians to intimate relations with their neighbors. Such high expectations complicated their ability to form weak ties with neighbors that focused on mutual help and respect.

Attention to the behavior of minorities in their neighborhoods clarifies how minorities view and use the neighborhood as a setting for inter-ethnic negotiation. Hosts Ana and Jovan did not use their neighborhood to forge close ties with Bosniaks, though they counted as close friends a long-time neighbor of mixed Serb and Croat background and one long-time neighbor of Bosniak background who considered herself "Yugoslav," along with her Serb husband. Ana and her mixed-background neighbor Zorica were particularly close. More often than not, they would spend part of their evenings together, one visiting the other, confiding in each other about personal problems; chatting about gossip, work, and news; sharing coffee and food; and sometimes going out together beyond the neighborhood. But direct experience with Bosniaks in the neighborhood helped convince Jovan to move back and forth, between a village in Serbia, where he had fled during the war, and Sarajevo, where his wife lived permanently. Though he lived for months at a time in the Sarajevo apartment that he had purchased with his wife before the war, Jovan spent most of his time at a weekend house in Serbia and did not seek to move

back to Sarajevo permanently.<sup>27</sup> The fact that he was a Yugoslav military officer, albeit one who retired just before the war, and that he was imprisoned at the beginning of the war after a neighbor accused him of spying for Serb nationalists, led to his personal security concerns in Sarajevo. In addition to Ana and Jovan's troubled relations with some long-time neighbors, the demographic changes in their neighborhood during the war complicated relations among those living in their apartment building. Bosniak neighbors who had arrived at varying points during the war now occupied many apartments. My minority hosts believed that their new next-door neighbors, who boasted a Mercedes *and* a BMW, had gotten their apartment through political connections. The neighbors' political connections were not conducive to inter-ethnic co-operation. "We don't associate with them," my hosts told me. These circumstances confined Ana and Jovan's neighborhood network to some Serbs, Croats, and mixed minorities.

Ana and Jovan's neighbor Minka had better connections with her neighbors, but still limited her reliance on them because of their behavior during the war. As a pensioner, a native Sarajevan who endured two wars in Sarajevo, and the wife of a Croat, Minka maintained a large network of acquaintances and friends. The first time I met her, she and her husband had just returned from a visit to her former hairstylist. She told me,

She is Muslim. During the war, she brought us food....I will never forget this; never. We were acquaintances before the war. When I traveled to Belgrade, I would bring her back a little something. But we didn't visit each other['s homes]. I just gave her a teakettle, some sweets, and other food. We surprised her. I think she was pleased.

Thus, according to Minka, "the war showed who was a human and who wasn't." She compared the generosity of this acquaintance from her everyday life with the absence of help from her husband's relatives in Serbia. "At the beginning of the war, I went to Serb-held territory to call his sister in Serbia, but the conversation was very short and strained; we have heard nothing from her since then." Regarding her neighbors, she did maintain relations with quite a few of the old-timers of all ethnicities, hosting them in her home for coffee and visiting them for holidays such as *Bajram*. She also attended a Tupperware party that brought together neighbors of different ethnicities. She was an exception among my minority respondents in characterizing her relations with displaced persons as "normal; I can knock on everybody's door and know that they'll open it." She even mentioned that she had just attended the wedding of one of these new neighbors. In fact, during the war, she felt close to her neighbors, who "did not divide up people" according to ethnicity and worked together with them to help others in the neighborhood. Yet Minka was disturbed by what she considered the immoral behavior of some of her neighbors. Several months into our relationship, she told me that one of her neighbors stole humanitarian aid; another took things from the apartments of neighbors who had fled and entrusted their possessions to him; and yet another had family members who took over Muslim homes and a shop. "I just couldn't take other people's things," she declared. And these neighbors were Serbs. While paying a visit of condolence to Muslims who were former colleagues of her husband's, she concluded:

---

<sup>27</sup> Additional indicators of Jovan's preference for Serbia were his references to Bosnia as "their [Bosniaks'] country," his lack of knowledge of Muslim customs, his Yugoslav passport, the fact that Belgrade distributed his pension, his general pessimism about minority return, and his wife's hope that she can shift her base from Sarajevo to the weekend house in Serbia when she retires.

Not because Paula is here, but sincerely, it was really Muslims who helped my family survive the war. My hairstylist gave us food. My seamstress loaned us money. My daughter's former colleague sent us bread. And my dry cleaner sent us milk and cheese. We never once received a care package from our family in Belgrade.

By observing her interactions with some of these acquaintances and neighbors, as well as by talking independently with some neighbors, I collected evidence that supports the sincerity of Minka's testimony. Then, consistent with Granovetter's theory, it was weak ties with acquaintances from her everyday economic life, rather than strong ties to kin or immediate and long-time neighbors of the same ethnicity that helped her physically survive and integrate herself into her Sarajevan community. It was through this network that extended beyond her immediate surroundings that she was able to find persons, regardless of ethnicity, who shared her ideology of "humanness" and behaved accordingly.

Wartime experiences and even more massive demographic change than in Ana, Jovan, and Minka's neighborhood made my second hostess, Zlata, fearful of most of her neighbors, including some co-ethnics. First, after the war, an outflow of Serbs and an inflow of displaced Bosniaks into her suburb resulted in rural Bosniaks' outnumbering Serb residents.<sup>28</sup> Zlata, a Serb returnee, repeatedly expressed disappointment in what she viewed as the unwillingness of her Bosniak neighbors displaced from rural areas to engage in reciprocity as urbanites did. Exasperated one evening, she told me, "I just greeted my neighbor in the hallway with 'good evening,' and she didn't even respond!" Some weeks later, after returning from the neighborhood store one morning, she announced, "My neighbor just greeted me with *merhaba!* ['Hello' in Turkish]. My old neighbors never did that! This is no kind of neighborhood....I will use a greeting that communicates with people regardless of their nationality!"

For Zlata, her neighbors' use of exclusive language symbolized their unwillingness to communicate with minorities, much less engage in mutual help. In the three months that I lived with Zlata, the only Bosniaks I saw enter her home were several children and a relative.

Because she believed she could not negotiate with her Bosniak neighbors, Zlata confined her relationships of mutual help to a narrow group consisting of members of her own ethnically mixed family<sup>29</sup> and selected co-ethnics from her prewar neighborhood. One evening, I walked into a living room conversation between Zlata and Tamara, a Serb and former neighbor. They were discussing how Tamara would persuade her husband, a jack-of-all-trades, to repair Zlata's faucets and washing machine. This was a "payback-in-kind" (*milo za drago*), Tamara told Zlata, who was providing refugee Tamara with a temporary place to stay. Zlata explained that "to pay back in kind meant that you do something for someone you like, and they later do something for you."<sup>30</sup> When I asked if that is what happened when Zlata's neighbor came down to fix her toilet, she responded:

---

<sup>28</sup> Before the war, Zlata's suburb was 34.6 percent Serb, 9.3 percent Croat, 35.7 percent Muslim, and 20.4 percent other. Estimates indicate that the suburb is now 6 percent Serb, 9 percent Croat, 7 percent other, 62 percent Bosniak pre-war residents, and 15.8 percent Bosniak displaced persons (UNHCR 1997). For additional background on the reintegration of the Sarajevo suburbs, see Sell 1999.

<sup>29</sup> Zlata's son-in-law is a Croat and her daughter-in-law is a Bosniak.

<sup>30</sup> Zlata also told me that paying back in kind could be done for negative purposes. "When the Partisans killed my brother in WWII, my mother said about those who killed him 'will be paid back in kind.'" I frequently heard Bosniaks discuss reciprocity in this vein, to punish those people they held responsible for the war, often Serbs who left Bosniak areas.

Well no, not exactly, because I asked if he needed anything and he said no. But he would know that sometime in the future, he could ask me for something. For example, I could mend some things for him or cook for him....

I observed Zlata consciously engage in reciprocity only with Serbs and Croats. However, Zlata also distrusted some Serbs, particularly the one living a floor below, a woman who had looted Zlata's apartment down to her dentures during the war.<sup>31</sup> As a result, Zlata's tiny neighborhood network consisted of no Bosniaks, only a few Serbs, and a Croat. Her ability to rely on her multi-ethnic family decreased her need to appeal to the neighborhood for persons willing to engage in mutual help. And finally, her intention to move to Serbia removed incentives for inter-ethnic co-operation.

I am here to settle [ownership of] the apartment. Then I will sell it and buy a house in my birthplace, to be with my husband who is buried there. Here, I'm visited only by my friend from my hometown and by my daughter's family...I know that my neighbors don't want to have contact with me.

A mixed neighborhood did appear to some extent to facilitate the inter-ethnic contacts of my minority hostess Kristina, who stayed in Bihac during the war. She had good relations with her long-time Bosniak neighbors, particularly those in the apartment across the hall, with whom she exchanged at least weekly visits and from whom she borrowed household items. She also demonstrated her good relationship with those whom she called "old citizens of Bihac" by relating that when her husband died during the war:

People of all three nations came to visit. They came and offered, "What can we do to help?" I was exhausted and they handled everything from death notices to arrangements for the burial. Two Muslims agreed to go to the Catholic Church to ask the priest if it was okay for him to bury an Orthodox in a Catholic cemetery. Two Muslims, mind you!

Echoing a popular sentiment that the war uncovered those who were good people, Kristina asserted, "People are either human or they are not." Kristina adhered to a principled non-ethnic identity, seeing herself as a Yugoslav, though she was Slovenian by background. The fact that she had been married to a Serb led some in the Bihac community to label her a Serb.<sup>32</sup> Overall she was a private person and highly self-sufficient, growing much of her own food for example. To the small extent that she sought information and help, she relied first on her mixed family members and on colleagues from her mixed workplace.

Of all my host families, my Bosniak hosts in Bihac, Mirsada and her husband Alija, led the most ethnically exclusive lives. This should be expected given the lower probability that they would interact with, much less need help from, a minority, in comparison with a minority's chances of, and need for, interaction with a member of the majority. For example, it makes sense that Mirsada would use family connections to look for a job, and would use her own ties in finding employment for her wartime neighbor, who was a displaced Bosniak. But Mirsada and Alija

---

<sup>31</sup> She told me, "If we [my husband and I] had stayed in Grbavica during the war, we would have suffered the most from that Serb neighbor!"

<sup>32</sup> Despite some confusion over her ethnic background, Kristina's Slovenian roots were undoubtedly viewed as more neutral than Serb roots; this probably facilitated her interaction with "others."

went further in consciously avoiding interaction with Serbs. Despite receiving guests for coffee nearly every day for three months, Mirsada entertained no Serb in her home. Traumatized by the war and betrayal by Serb neighbors, and well connected to the Bosniak community, Mirsada saw no reason to engage with ethnic “others.” Over coffee on her balcony, Mirsada told me one afternoon about the exodus of her Serb neighbors just before the war:

**Mirsada:** I watched our neighbors pack their things. I didn’t understand. They left overnight. They just disappeared. They knew why they were leaving, and they didn’t say anything to us, give us any warning. They thought that they could finish us off quickly.

**Participant observer:** “Us?”

**Mirsada:** Muslims. I can’t be friends with them. Can you imagine their coming back and not being able to participate in *komšilik*? That is why they are selling their homes here.

She ruled out friendship with Serbs and believed that her refusal and that of other Bosniaks to accept their re-incorporation into the predominantly Bosniak social fabric would work with other factors to discourage Serb return. Mirsada consciously avoided Serbs and engaged in a strategy of communalism with other Bosniaks.

As touched upon in the stories of the neighborhood experiences of all my hosts, tension existed between long-time urbanites—regardless of ethnicity—and new Bosniak neighbors who had fled the countryside. The social division I observed most often apart from the ethnic one was the rural-urban one. Indeed, long-time urbanites frequently crossed ethnic lines to agree about placing blame for the decline in cosmopolitanism on an influx of displaced persons from the countryside. In fact, Cushman suggests that “inter-ethnic co-operation could come at the expense of exacerbating class differences” (1998, 10).<sup>33</sup> A closer look at majority—Bosniak—opinions helps isolate the effect of migration status and its overlapping urban-rural cleavage by controlling for ethnicity. Bosniaks in both Sarajevo and Bihac made frequent distinctions between old-time city residents and their co-ethnic newcomers from rural areas of Bosnia. Bosniak informant Edhem, who stayed in Sarajevo, told me, “My wife and I don’t associate with the displaced persons; they don’t have our upbringing.” Bosniak respondent Ahmet, who stayed in Bihac, provided an illustration of the fears of long-time urbanites of all ethnicities that rural newcomers did not uphold what Rundell (1998) describes as the mutual recognition of and reciprocity between different individuals that characterize cosmopolitanism:

Officially our relations are good with the displaced persons, but we aren’t close....We say hello, but that’s it. There are two kinds of people, and the displaced persons are peasants who want you to live as they do, according to their traditions. For example, they say *merhaba* and they observe religious holidays. They dress differently; [women] cover their heads in scarves. They don’t like urban life or [styles]. I believe that if we were to do things together, this would create an opportunity for conflict.

---

<sup>33</sup> Of course, for all the time that long-term urban residents devote to professing their tolerant cosmopolitanism, their collective denigration of the rural persons reveals their intolerance.

Ahmet stayed clear of his new neighbors because he did not believe that they would reciprocate his respect of different ways of life.

Respondents who were long-time urbanites, regardless of ethnicity, most often characterized their relations with new neighbors displaced from villages as “surface-like” or “correct.” After this most common response, however, respondents’ answers diverged according to their status as members of the minority or majority. Responses by old-time urban residents who were Bosniaks conveyed that while they did not feel close to their ethnic kin who were displaced, they did not view them with the same suspicion with which they were prone to view, in particular, Serb neighbors who returned after the war. Thus, long-time urbanites who were Bosniaks next talked about relations with Bosniak displaced persons as “good.” My Bosniak hostess Mirsada, for example, occasionally helped two sets of new Bosniak neighbors, one family who had fled from Banja Luka and another family who had fled from a nearby village, while she rejected communication with a former colleague, a Serb who had just returned. In contrast, long-time urbanites who were Serb, Croat, or ethnically mixed, next characterized their relations with these new neighbors as “distant” or “strained.” In fact *none* of the minority respondents believed that they had “good” relations with new neighbors.

Research by the World Bank on social distance suggests that Bosnians of all nationalities see the greatest social distance between categories of class; between nationalities; and between refugees who fled and persons who stayed in Bosnia during the war (see table 3).

**Table 3: Social Distance between different social categories (expressed in percentages of people reporting high social distance)**

Categories listed for social distance	Serb	Bosniak	Croat	Average
Rich vs. poor	58%	43%	12%	38%
Between different nationalities	57%	12%	29%	32%
Refugees from abroad vs. persons who stayed	38%	29%	15%	27%
Between members of different political parties	37%	21%	11%	23%
Rural vs. urban <sup>34</sup>	12%	21%	5%	13%
Elderly vs. youth	11%	10%	4%	8%
Male vs. Female	2%	3%	1%	2%

Source: Dani et al. 1999, table 5.

N= 3,120 persons in a nationally representative sample covering all of Bosnia.

Clearly, demographic changes bring tension to inter-ethnic (and intra-ethnic) relationships in the neighborhood.

#### *Forging Cross-Ethnic Networks in the Workplace*

While working within the constraints of my limited vantage points,<sup>35</sup> I found that mixed workplace networks helped assist minority interaction with “others” in several ways. First, they provided a context within which to interact with ethnic others and gather first-hand information

<sup>34</sup> My observation suggested that rural-urban differences are more pronounced than the World Bank survey found. It is possible that the World Bank respondents conflated class and urban/rural categories, which often overlap in practice.

<sup>35</sup> The focus of my participant observation on minority families at the neighborhood level obviously constrained the extent to which I could investigate the nature of work-related networks. However, other activities that provided for a better window onto workplace networks included my volunteering at local civic organizations and my travels with humanitarian organizations to reach minority returnees. I simply did not anticipate the importance of workplace ties.



about their beliefs and behavior. Secondly, mixed places of employment provided a relatively individualist-oriented context in which to seek out ethnic “others” for practical assistance and like-minded persons for camaraderie. Minorities also appeared to view the absence of expectations in the workplace for forming intimate ties as freeing them to establish varied connections with Bosniaks. The stories of several informants convey a better understanding of the importance of workplace networks for minorities.

In a fundamental sense, the workplace provides a context in which minorities can view the realities of multiple identifications and differing values beyond the official rhetoric of ethnic homogeneity. For example, in response to a question from Zorica about who in her workplace observed the contested Bosnian Independence Day, Ana talked about the divergence between some ordinary Croat colleagues and the Croat political appointees at her place of work:

**Ana:** Well, my deputy director – a Croat – ordered, by word of mouth, that Croats work on Independence Day. But one of my colleagues didn't work. So the deputy asked her today, “Where were you yesterday?” She said, “It was a state holiday.”

**Zorica:** Is she Croat?

**Ana:** Her mom is Catholic and she is married to a Muslim, but she declared herself a Croat for work.<sup>36</sup>

In this conversation, Ana revealed her frustration over the intrusion of politics into her workplace. But at the same time, she noted that her “ordinary” co-worker who is a minority defied the instructions of nationalists. Similarly, Zorica once told me that she saw her [Bosniak] students’ interest in celebrating Valentine's Day and many different holidays as a sign of their support for multiculturalism and knowledge, as opposed to the other “people who wanted something small” and supported the Bosniak nationalist party. Not only did Zorica's experience with the students prevent her from lumping all Bosniaks together, it also allow her to connect with a group of Bosniaks sharing her non-nationalist ideology. In fact, her contact with youth led her to have confidence that young Bosniaks did not share the nationalist ideology of their parents, an interpretation that gives hope for a better future, especially for mixed people like her. In another case, Serb returnee Sandra told me that she felt that after the war her prewar employer had unfairly put her on the waiting list for a job. Sandra asserted, “Only Muslims work at this company now, and the Muslim who is in my position has no previous experience with that kind of work; she is also less educated than I.” But Sandra did not blame the company's director, who she described as “a good person who accepts her as a human,” for her predicament. According to Sandra, the real problem is the Bosniak nationalist party (SDA), which holds ultimate power over the company and would never allow her boss to re-hire her.

Beyond allowing individuals to view the contradictions between nationalist rhetoric and the everyday behavior of ethnic “others,” the workplace also served as a setting for developing cross-ethnic identifications and cooperative relationships. For instance, Zorica was able to downplay ethnic markers and emphasize shared beliefs in professionalism, self-criticism, and/or non-nationalism to communicate with Bosniaks at her workplace. She also met some of her colleagues after work, visiting them in their homes, sharing coffee and cigarettes at a café, socializing with them at a bar, or hosting them. I also found that Ana tended to socialize and depend more on Bosniaks from her multi-ethnic workplace than on those from her neighborhood.

---

<sup>36</sup> This statement implies that the colleague declared herself a Croat in order to take advantage of the quota system practiced in federation institutions.

Ana used acquaintances from both the neighborhood and the workplace to seek out subletters for her apartment. In addition, she sold to co-workers and neighbors textiles that she obtained cheaply on the black market during her visits to family in the Serb entity. But Ana's relationships with her work colleagues went beyond using them to help earn additional income. In this way, Ana's behavior contradicts Putnam's assertion that workplace ties tend not to build social capital, because of their primarily instrumental nature (2000, 87-92).

Reciprocity governed most of Ana's interactions with members of her work network. During religious holidays, she exchanged cakes with them and invitations into homes for celebrations. She frequently socialized with colleagues of different backgrounds, both during and after work hours. After running into her and her colleagues, I realized that Ana even took afternoon coffee breaks in public cafes where townspeople would acknowledge and sometimes join them. Ana had strong ties to her Bosniak colleague Anisa; they saw movies together and confided in each other about family concerns. The different ethnicities of Ana and Anisa did not prevent them from establishing inclusive identities based on professionalism and on mothering. As an expression of solidarity with her colleagues, Ana proudly displayed on her office wall a 1994 newspaper picture of her and Anisa peering out from their pocked-marked office at the height of the war.

Several visits to Ana at her workplace suggested that ethnic identification did not disappear in the workplace. Rather, it was only one of several collective identifications expressed and it did not prevent communication or the forging of constructive work relationships that sometimes went deeper. I am confident that Ana and her colleagues were not inventing good inter-ethnic relations for my benefit since one of my visits was unannounced, my visits included two different sets of her colleagues, Ana frequently updated me on work gossip, and she brought colleagues into her home. Ana was also close to one of her former colleagues, Lilac, a Croat married to a Serb.

Ana's husband Jovan even hosted former colleagues of Muslim background in his home, hospitality that was returned. Both of Jovan's colleagues fought for the Bosnian army during the war. Colleague Adil helped Ana and Jovan's family during the war. As evidence of continuing good relations, Adil, en route to visit family members who now live abroad, stopped by to pick up a care package for Ana and Jovan's daughter who now lives abroad in the same country. Jovan also visited and hosted his former military colleague and friend, Bosniak Enver. During his conversations with Enver and Adil, Jovan emphasized parenting and his disapproval of the role of Islam in Bosnian politics, shared ideas that bridged ethnic divides.

Several respondents said that they increased their sense of security by seeking out friends who shared their viewpoints; these friends were also colleagues. For example, Mina told me that her interaction with members of her circle of professionally minded persons provided her with all the security she needed. "I don't feel insecure. It's normal. I have my own community. I have colleagues from the primary school, where I taught. We are all mixed. We meet once a month to share cakes and drink coffee."

During the interview, Mina offered me cakes that she had baked for her colleagues, who were scheduled to meet in her apartment later that day for one of a series of English lessons that her colleague had arranged. Mina gave no hint that her choices of "others" for friendship were strategic; she considered it "normal" that she found among her former colleagues friends who shared her interests and probably many of her views; these individuals just happened to be mixed. Like Mina, Croat Nina found friends among her colleagues. Nina, who stayed in Sarajevo, coped with the postwar environment by choosing "a circle of people who think the

same way...[I do]. People who are not nationalists. For example, my friends at work [are of all ethnicities.]<sup>37</sup> One of the problems, however, is that these non-nationalists are always quiet and peaceful.”

Croat informant Franjo, who stayed in Sarajevo, however, illustrated how shared ideology can bring together colleagues of different backgrounds. When I visited Franjo and his wife Anica, they had invited a small group of friends over to celebrate New Year's Eve. What the friends shared was not an ethnicity—one couple was Bosniak and one friend was Serb—but their wartime experiences of fighting together in the same unit defending Sarajevo.

In another example, Croat informant Maja described dynamics in the multi-ethnic hospital where she worked as a nurse. In response to my query about cooperation among hospital colleagues during the war, she related that she got along by emphasizing the inclusive identification of a professional.

Good. I experienced no problems. I worked as a professional. And I didn't get involved in politics....I work with a Muslim, whose son died in a Croatian [prison] camp. And we get along fine.

Serb returnee Blagoje believed that his reputation from his prewar working relations facilitated his current relations with Bosniaks. “I am not afraid; because of my trade, people know me. Up to now, I have not experienced any unfriendliness.”

Again, research conducted by the World Bank corroborates these findings, this time, on the importance of personal networks in supporting inter-ethnic interaction. Focus-group research strongly suggests that Bosnians turn to informal institutions, such as the family, friends, and neighbors, for support, while they hold negative views about official institutions, like the local government, the judiciary, police, and army (Djipa, Muzur, and Lytle 1999, 8-9). In addition, surveys indicate that Bosnians of all ethnicities express the greatest support for inter-ethnic cooperation in the workplace.<sup>38</sup> And, a separate study reveals nearly identically divergent views toward informal and formal institutions (Cushman 1998).

But many of my minority contacts expressed distress over the increasing politicization and declining heterogeneity of the workplace. In fact, several of my informants told me they had been fired during the war because of their ethnicity or political views. Serb Ivanka, who was fired on ethnic grounds and whose case was legally recognized, was miserable at her workplace where she was reinstated. She told me she felt betrayed by her colleagues, whose children's birthday parties she had attended, because they had said nothing in her defense at the time of her firing. Furthermore, virtually all of Ivanka's colleagues isolated her after her reinstatement, refusing to talk with her or even meet her gaze. Ivanka felt as enthusiastic about her activism for local human rights groups and an opposition political party as she felt dismayed about her job. Ivanka was not the only minority informant to turn from discriminatory experiences at her local workplace to internationally aided jobs. Several informants and interviewees sought out

---

<sup>37</sup> Nina never mentioned ethnicities in this conversation. Of the people she named as being part of her “circle” at work, two are Bosniaks, one is half Croat and half Serb, and one is a Bosniak married to a Serb. I know their ethnicities from previous contacts with these colleagues.

<sup>38</sup> A Bosnia-wide survey found that the majority of Bosniaks and roughly half the Serbs and Croats express willingness to share the workplace with members of other national groups. Furthermore, focus groups revealed that participants expect to be working in ethnically mixed environments (Dani et al. 1999, para. 69). According to a different survey, even members of the three groups who live in areas where they are in the majority expressed more support for cross-ethnic economic cooperation than for autarky (USIA 1997).

employment with international voluntary organizations and international organizations because of the relative economic security and ethnic neutrality that they could offer. When I asked Bosniak Ahmet, whose public opposition to nationalist parties drew threats, what steps he had taken to increase his sense of security, he replied:

Work. I'm very lucky because of my work. I'm happy because I'm employed by an international organization. First, I receive a better salary and this increases my psychological peace. And secondly, I don't have to work with people with whom I don't want to work. With small people [who blindly embrace nationalism].

It is in such international NGO workplace environments that Bosnians of all ethnicities, even those who live in increasingly homogeneous neighborhoods, can find common ground based on their professionalism and sometimes on shared experiences.

Nikola and Selma, displaced persons of Serb-Bosniak and Croat backgrounds, respectively, are good examples. I joined these two humanitarians as they worked in the field on a project to rebuild homes for returnees, many of whom were minorities. During a break for coffee, a cigarette, and heat, Selma turned to me and said, "We [Nikola and I] are united by the fact that we are not in our original homes." My multiple observations of these two provided additional evidence supporting Selma's claim of her and Nikola's common identification and good working relations. Whether they were working in an office dealing with local applicants and international colleagues, or in the field collecting information from local beneficiaries, or in a café with me, they communicated freely, based on what appeared to be shared professional standards and a common understanding of displacement. During discussions, they expressed differences of opinion but supported opposing views with evidence. They chose to take their breaks together and they emphasized commonalities, discussing previous humanitarian work and colleagues. Furthermore, Selma had intervened personally to assist Nikola in his quest for the return of his home, an act demonstrating that their trust went beyond superficial working collaboration. In short, their workplace and profession, which focused on their mutual interest, provided them with a neutral context in which they could collaborate and move beyond the fact that they resided in different entities and came from different ethnic backgrounds.

### **Implications**

Serbs, Croats, and ethnically mixed persons realize that they need the help of ordinary persons who are Bosniaks in order to survive as minorities. Urban minorities reach out to ordinary members of the majority in the workplace, where there are opportunities for repeated interaction with others as professionals, allowance for individualism, and few expectations that they will form intimate ties with "others." These characteristics differentiate the workplace from the neighborhood, which is based on communal affiliations and on a tradition of strong ties with "others." Once they move toward the official public sphere, however, minorities become more cautious about inter-ethnic interaction. Ordinary minorities rarely approach local voluntary organizations, except in cases where they seek expert knowledge for mediated interaction with majority authorities. And minorities fail to see the practical benefits of participation in more mass-based civic associations.

The behavior of Bosnian minorities appears to contradict the assertions of some scholars of civil society who focus on the sprouting of formal, voluntary organizations as the key to building diverse and democratic post-conflict societies. According to these assertions, an individual must add participation in voluntary organizations to his or her everyday routine even though the

benefit of doing so may be unclear. This is not the case with work, which is already part of an individual's everyday routine and will at the very least bring in a salary. My findings suggest that a fruitful approach to rebuilding inter-ethnic trust in Bosnia is through support of heterogeneous workplaces. These are the urban sites where minorities can locate members of the majority for building inclusive identifications and engaging in reciprocity. Thus, one way the international community can assist the reconstruction of inter-ethnic trust is by promoting mixed work environments through financing and otherwise rewarding employers for non-discriminatory practices. More broadly, international actors seeking to promote inter-ethnic interaction and trust should pay more attention to the needs of minority individuals and the mechanisms that they find useful for cross-ethnic cooperation.

## References

- Alfaro, Michelle. 2000. *Refugee monitoring study: Minority returnees to the Republika Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Sarajevo: UNHCR, Office of the Special Envoy.
- Axelrod, Robert. 1985. *The evolution of cooperation*. New York: Basic Books.
- Bačević, Bjiljana, Stefica Bahtijarevic, Vladimir Goati, Goran Miles, Milan Miljevic, Dimitar Mircev, Dragomir Pantic, Nikola Paplasen, Niko Tos, and Marjana Vasovic, eds. 1991. *Jugoslavia na kriznoj prekretnici* [Yugoslavia at the critical turning point]. Beograd: Institut Društvenih Nauka [Institute of Social Sciences].
- Barth, Frederik, ed. 1969. *Ethnic groups and boundaries*. Boston: Little, Brown, and Co.
- Bell, Daniel. 1975. Ethnicity and social change. In Nathan Glazer and Daniel Moynihan, eds., *Ethnicity*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Bougarel, Xavier. 1996. Bosnia and Hercegovina – State and communitarianism. In D. Dyker and I. Vejvoda, eds., *Yugoslavia and after*. London: Longman.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1996. Smrt vreba iz komšiluka! [Death lurks from the neighborhood!] *arkzin*, no. 64:13.
- Brass, Paul. 1981. *Ethnicity and nationalism: Theory and comparison*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Bringa, Tone. 1995. *Being Muslim in the Bosnian way*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Burg, Steven L. 1993. Why Yugoslavia fell apart. *Current History* 92 (November): 357-63.
- Burg, Steven L, and Michael L. Berbaum. 1989. Community, integration, and stability in multinational Yugoslavia. *American Political Science Review* 83, no. 2 (June): 535-5.
- Burg, Steven L, and Paul S. Shoup. 1999. *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*. Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe.
- Bukvic, Nedim. 1991. *Economic brief for Bosnia and Hercegovina*. Sarajevo: Resident Mission of the World Bank in Sarajevo.
- Carothers, Thomas. 1999. *Aiding democracy abroad*. Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.
- Cohen, Lenard J. 1995. *Broken bonds*. 2d. ed. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press.
- Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina. 1995. In *The General Framework Agreement*, Dayton, Ohio: Proximity Peace Talks (November).
- Cox, Marcus. 1998. *Strategic approaches to international intervention in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Sarajevo: Centre for Applied Studies in International Negotiations.
- Cramer, Katherine, J. 1998. Making sense of one's place in the world: An investigation of the content and frequency of public discussion as a function of social diversity. PhD. diss. prospectus, University of Michigan.
- Cushman, Thomas. 1998. Patterns of trust and mistrust in post-war Bosnian society. Paper read at international conference, Bosnia Paradigm, 18-21 November, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- Dani, Anis, and Forster, Muzur, Dijipa, Lytle, Poggi. 1999. *A social assessment of Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Washington D.C.: World Bank, Europe and Central Asia Region, Environmentally and Socially Sustainable Development Unit (ECSSD).
- Demichelis, Julia. 1998. NGOs and peacebuilding in Bosnia's ethnically divided cities. A U.S. Institute of Peace special report (June). Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace.
- Djipa, Dino, Mirsada Muzur, and Paula Franklin Lytle. 1999. *Consultations with the poor: National synthesis report, Bosnia-Herzegovina*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.

- Donia, Robert, and John V. A. Fine. 1994. *Bosnia and Herzegovina: A tradition betrayed*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Drakulic, Slavenka. 1993. *How we survived communism and even laughed*. New York: HarperPerrenial.
- Feldman, Martha. 1995. *Strategies for interpreting qualitative data*. Vol. 33. Qualitative Research Methods Series. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications.
- Fenno, Richard. 1978. *Home style: House members in their districts*. Boston: Little, Brown, and Co.
- Filandra Sacir. 1998. *Bošnjačka politika u XX. Stoljecu*. [Politics of the Bosniaks in the twentieth century]. Sarajevo: Sejtarija.
- Finifter, Ada W. 1974. The friendship group as a protective environment for political deviants. *American Political Science Review* 68:607-625.
- Geddes, Barbara. 1990. How the cases you choose affect the answers you get: Selection bias in comparative politics. *Political Analysis* 2:131-150.
- Gibson, James L., and Amanda Gouws. 2000. Social identities and political intolerance: Linkages within the South African mass public. *American Journal of Political Science* 44, no. 2:272-286.
- Gitelman, Zvi. 1983. Are nations merging in the USSR? *Problems of Communism* (September-October): 35-47.
- Granovetter, Mark S. 1973. The strength of weak ties. *American Journal of Sociology* 78, no. 6:1360-1380.
- Hayden, Robert. 1993. *Constitutional nationalism in the formerly Yugoslav republics*. Washington, D.C.: National Council for Soviet and East European Research.
- Helms, Elissa. 1997. Understandings of national identity among Bosnian Muslim refugees in Pittsburgh. Unpublished manuscript.
- Hodson, Randy, Dusko Sekulic, and Garth Massey. 1994. National tolerance in the former Yugoslavia. *American Journal of Sociology* 99, no. 6 (May): 1534-1558.
- Huckfeldt, R. Robert. 1983. Social contexts, social networks, and urban neighborhoods: Environmental constraints on friendship choice. *American Journal of Sociology* 89, no. 3:651.
- Hugo, Graeme J. 1981. Village-community ties, village norms and ethnic and social networks: A review of evidence from the Third World. In Gordon F. De Jong and Robert Gardner, eds., *Migration decision-making*. New York: Pergamon Press
- Imamović, Mustafa. 1998. *Historija Bošnjaka* [History of the Bosniaks]. 2 izdanje [2d. ed.]. Sarajevo: Bošnjačka zajednica kulture: Preporod.
- International Organization for Migration (IOM). 1996. *CIS migration report 1996*. Geneva: Technical Cooperation Centre for Europe and Central Asia.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1999. *IOM returnee questionnaire*. 1999. Sarajevo: IOM Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- Jennings, M. Kent, and Richard Niemi. 1981. *Generations and politics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Laitin, David. 1998. *Identity in formation: The Russian-speaking populations in the near abroad*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Lijphart, Arend. 1968-9. Consociational democracy. *World Politics* 21:207-225.
- Laumann, Edward O. 1973. *Bonds of pluralism: The form and substance of urban social networks*. New York: John Wiley and Sons.

- Malkki, Lissa. 1995. *Purity and exile: Violence, memory, and national cosmology among Hutu refugees in Tanzania*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Massey, Garth, Randy Hodson, and Dusko Sekulic. 1999. Ethnic enclaves and intolerance: The case of Yugoslavia. *Social Forces* 78, no. 2 (December): 669-691.
- McGarry, John, and Brendan O'Leary, eds. 1993. *The politics of ethnic conflict regulation*. London: Routledge.
- Medjunarodni Forum Bosna [International Forum Bosnia]. 1999. Povratak prognanih i raseljenih kao uvjet opstanka Bosne i Hercegovine [The return of expelled and displaced persons as a condition of the survival of Bosnia and Herzegovina]. Sarajevo: Medjunarodni Forum Bosna.
- Milivojevic, Zdenka. 1994. National identity as political ideology. *Refuge* 14, no. 3:15-22.
- Mondak, Jeffery, and Diana Mutz. 2001. Involuntary association: How the workplace contributes to American civic life. Paper presented to the Midwest Political Science Association, April, Chicago, Illinois.
- Mutz, Diana, and Paul Martin. 1998. Mass media as social context: The future of communication across lines of difference. Paper presented to the Midwest Political Science Association, April, Chicago, Illinois.
- Nordlinger, Eric 1972. *Conflict regulation in divided societies*. Occasional paper 29. Cambridge, Mass.: Center for International Affairs.
- Pilkington, Hilary. 1998. *Migration, displacement, and identity in post-Soviet Russia*. London: Routledge.
- Putnam, Robert D. 2000. *Bowling alone*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1995. Bowling alone: America's declining social capital. *Journal of Democracy* 6, no. 1:65-78.
- Ragin, Charles. 1987. *The comparative method*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Ramet, Sabrina. 1992. *Nationalism and federalism in Yugoslavia*. 2d. ed. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Rieder, Jonathan, 1985. *Canarsie: The Jews and Italians of Brooklyn against liberalism*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Romann, Michael, and Alex Weingrod. 1991. *Living together separately: Arabs and Jews in contemporary Jerusalem*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Rundell, John. 1998. Tensions of citizenship in an age of diversity: Reflections on territoriality, cosmopolitanism and symmetrical reciprocity. In Rainer Baubock and John Rundell, eds., *Blurred boundaries: Migration, ethnicity, citizenship*. Aldershot Hants, England: Ashgate.
- Sekulic, Dusko, Garth Massey, and Randy Hodson. 1994. Who were the Yugoslavs? Failed sources of a common identity in the former Yugoslavia. *American Sociological Review* 59 (February): 83-97.
- Sieber, Joan E. 1992. *Planning ethically responsible research*. Applied Social Research Methods Series. Vol. 31. Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage Publications.
- Seligman, Adam. 1997. *The problem of trust*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Smith, Anthony, D. 1991. *National identity*. London: Penguin.
- Smootha, Sammy. 1994. *The orientation and politicization of the Arab minority in Israel*. Haifa: University of Haifa.
- Sell, Louis. 2000. The Serb flight from Sarajevo: Dayton's first failure. *East European Politics and Society* (winter): 179-202.
- Serbian Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. 1992. *Constitution of the Serbian Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina*. Pale.



- Srpsko Gradjansko Vijec [Serb Civil Council]. 1998. Rezultati: Ankete srpskih domacinstava i domacinstava mjesovitih brakova na podrucju Unsko Sanskog Kantona [Results: A survey of Serb inhabitants and inhabitants of mixed marriages on the territory of the Una-Sana canton]. Bihac: Srpsko Gradjansko Vijece, Biro za zastitu ljudskih prava [Serb Civic Council, Bureau for the Protection of Human Rights].
- Sudetic, Chuck. 1998. *Blood and vengeance*. New York: Penguin.
- Sweeney, Anna. 2001. See U.S. Department of State, Office of Research. 2001.
- Tajfel, Henri. 1978. Social categorization, social identity and social comparison. In Henri Tajfel, ed., *Differentiation between social groups: Studies in the social psychology of intergroup relations*. New York: Academic Press.
- Turner, John C., Penelope Oakes, S. Haslam, and Craig McGarty. 1994. Self and collective: Cognition and social context. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 20, no. 5 (October): 454-463.
- UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). 1998. A regional strategy for sustainable return of those displaced by the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. Paper presented to the UNHCR Humanitarian Issues Working Group, 26 June, Geneva.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1997. Population structure. Sarajevo: UNHCR, Office of the Special Envoy (October).
- UN Development Program. 1994. *Human development report*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- U.S. Department of State. 1994. *Constitution of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Washington, D.C. (March).
- U.S. Department of State. Office of Research. 2001. *Community bonds lead refugees home to Bosnia and Croatia*, by Anna Sweeney. Washington, D.C.
- United States Information Agency (USIA). 2000. *Macedonian Albanians' political influence gives them reason for optimism*. Washington, DC: Office of Research and Media Reaction.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1998. *Public opinion in Bosnia and Hercegovina*. Vol. 5. Washington, D.C.: Office of Research and Media Reaction.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1997. *Public opinion in Bosnia and Hercegovina*. Vol. 4. Washington, D.C.: Office of Research and Media Reaction.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1996. *Public opinion in Bosnia and Hercegovina*. Vol. 3. Washington, D.C.: Office of Research and Media Reaction.
- Varshney, Ashutosh. 2001. *Ethnic conflict and civic life: Hindus and Muslims in India*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Vinogradov, Amal. 1974. Introduction. *Anthropological Quarterly* 47, no. 1.
- Wahlbeck, Osten. 1999. *Kurdish diasporas*. Houndmills, England: MacMillan Press.
- White, Gordon. 1994. Civil society, democratization and development (I): Clearing the analytical ground. *Democratization* 1, no. 3 (autumn): 375-90.
- Woodward, Susan. 1995. *Balkan tragedy*. Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution.
- Yin, Robert. 1994. *Case study research*. 2d. ed. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications.