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Untangling Rape Causation and the Importance of the Micro Level: Elucidating the Use of Mass Rape During the Bosnian War

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ABSTRACT The widespread and persistent use of rape and sexual violence in armed conflict inevitably raises a fundamental question which numerous scholars have hitherto sought to answer: why do men (and some women) rape in war? Many existing causal theories operate at high levels of abstraction, due to their emphasis on macro structural factors. This article, in contrast, approaches the issue of causation from a different angle and poses a more specific question: how can we explain the widespread use of mass rape and sexual violence during the 1992-1995 Bosnian war? Based on 79 interviews conducted in Bosnia-Herzegovina between 2014 and 2015 with male and female survivors of these crimes, this research uses the interviewees' stories to identify and analyze prominent causal factors. It focuses on five factors in particular, namely revenge (personal, mirroring and event-triggered), humiliation, opportunism, group dynamics and entitlement. These factors are in no way unique to the Bosnian war. What makes this research novel, however, is that it explores the functionality and role of these causal factors within the specific micro context and conflict dynamics of the Bosnian war. It thus combines the macro and micro to create a new 'fusion' analysis of causation.

Introduction

In 1993, during the Bosnian war, N, a Bosnian Muslim (Bosniak), was raped by her Croat neighbour. The latter had joined the Croatian Defence Council (HVO). When the war began in 1992, the HVO and the Bosnian Army (ABiH) were allies, jointly fighting against the Bosnian Serb Army (VRS). By 1993, however, this alliance had broken down. Serious fighting ensued, particularly in what is now Central Bosnia Canton, and atrocities were committed on both sides. N was one of the many civilians who paid a high price. In 2013, her former neighbour stood trial in Sarajevo. In Bosnian courts, defendants who are accused of rape have the right to cross-examine witnesses. While in N's case this did not happen, she was angry that she did not have the right to question the accused. She wanted to ask her former neighbour, who was ultimately convicted of raping her, how he feels now about what he did. Most of all, she wanted to ask him *why* he did what he did.

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N's question forms part of a much larger question that many scholars have sought to answer: Why do men rape in war?¹ This, in turn, raises the more fundamental issue of how we should study and analyze rape causation. According to Henry (2016, p.52),

The theorization of wartime rape ultimately should entail the critical examination of dominant discourses or representations of both victims and perpetrators, as well as the underlying (but potentially diverse) structural conditions that lead to, or contribute to, violence, and which in turn contribute to problematic representations in judicial, political, and social contexts.

Structural conditions, from militarism and patriarchy to gender inequalities and socio-cultural context, have been heavily emphasized within existing scholarship, and particularly within feminist writings on rape (see, for example, Brownmiller 1975; MacKinnon 1994; Card 1996; Morris 1996; Nordstrom 1996; Pankhurst 2003; Sjoberg 2015). These structural theories usefully elucidate the factors that make women *vulnerable* to rape in warfare. However, they are insufficient to explain the use of rape in a *particular* conflict, the huge variations in wartime rape (Wood 2006, 2014) or the extreme levels of violence and brutality that often accompany acts of rape in war.² Structural explanations, in short, essentially provide a 'causal periphery' perspective, which means that in and of themselves they are not enough. To understand the use of rape in war, a 'causal core' perspective is also required (Fiss 2011, p.397).³ This causal core perspective can be likened to a zoom lens which allows us to identify and focus in on more direct and specific causes of wartime rape.

Both perpetrators and survivors⁴ are a fundamental part of this causal core perspective. The men (and some women) who rape in war can potentially provide us with unique insights into their actions and the motives behind those actions. Such perpetrator-focused research, however, is extremely rare (see, in particular, Baaz and Stern 2008, 2009; Cohen 2013), a fact which attests to the enormous difficulties inherent in gaining access to those who rape and engaging them in dialogue. In contrast, research on survivors – which also presents significant challenges – is far more common and typically utilizes the stories of survivors to explore and understand the impact of rape and its devastating effects on human lives (Stiglmayer 1994; Skjelsbaek 2006; De Brouwer and Chu 2009; De Reus 2012; Kelly et al. 2012). This article is also survivor-centred. It is focused on men and women who suffered rape and sexual violence during the 1992-95 Bosnian war, and it draws on the author's semi-structured interviews with 79 survivors across BiH. What it does differently is that it instrumentalizes the stories of these survivors to develop a new empirical causal core perspective on the use of rape and sexual violence during the Bosnian war.

Based on the interview data, the article identifies and explores five causal factors that help to explain the mass rapes and other sexual abuses committed during the Bosnian conflict, namely revenge, humiliation, opportunism, group dynamics and entitlement. Of course, such factors are in no way specific to the Bosnian war. Mukamana and Brysiewicz (2008, p.381), for example, discuss how revenge motivated some of the rapes perpetrated during the Rwandan genocide in 1994. The critical point, however, is that ‘...wartime rape cannot be fully understood outside the specific context in which it takes place’ (Bos 2006, p.999). What makes this research novel, thus, is that it uses the interview data to explore the operationalization of more generic causal factors within the particular micro context of the Bosnian war. Ultimately, it is hoped that this analysis will help some rape survivors – like N – to better understand what happened to them and why.

The article is divided into three sections. The first section discusses the interview data on which the article is based. The second section develops the article’s central argument: that the complex issue of war rape causation requires a contextually-sensitive approach focused on the micro level and conflict dynamics. It does so by examining some of the gaps within existing scholarship on war rape, and specifically within extant literature on the use of rape in the Bosnian war. The third section, which constitutes the core of the article, is empirical and applied. Utilizing the approach advocated in section two, it extrapolates from the interview data some of the key factors that help to elucidate the widespread use of rape and sexual violence in BiH during the nineties; and it discusses and analyzes those causal factors within the micro context of interviewees’ individual stories.

Fieldwork in BiH

It has been 21 years since the Bosnian war ended, following the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords in November 1995. While countless books and articles have been written about this war, there has been little research on its long-term consequences. More specifically, there is a critical dearth of research centred on the needs and coping strategies of rape survivors two decades on (Medica Zenica and Medica Mondiale 2014, p.15). My recent fieldwork in BiH⁵ sought precisely to address this lacuna.

Working with rape survivors necessarily raises significant ethical issues. As Campbell et al. (2009, p.608) pointedly underline, ‘For survivors, telling their stories means revisiting what is likely one of the worst experiences of their lives; it is not simply a series of questions and answers’. Hence, there is always the risk of re-traumatizing survivors, and accordingly the interview process must be handled with great care and sensitivity. For example, I always refrained from asking interviewees

direct and intrusive questions regarding their experiences. Instead, they were asked at the start of the interview if they could briefly tell their story. Some interviewees greatly struggled to talk about the past, preferring instead to talk about their current problems – in particular health issues.⁶ Every rape survivor is an individual, however, and many interviewees told their stories in considerable detail.

It was the richness of this primary data, and the fact that many of the interviewees were still trying to make sense of what had happened to them, that fostered the basic idea behind this article: to utilize the interviewees' stories to explore the complexities of rape causation within the contextual dynamics of the Bosnian war. In her research with survivors in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Maedl (2011, p.129) sought to illuminate the instrumentality of rape as a weapon of war and to provide a 'unique insight into the victims' personal perspective on sexual violence perpetrated by armed groups within the DRC'. Maedl explicitly asked the 25 interviewees about the perpetrators' motives for committing rape. In this research, in contrast, causation and motives were themes that developed organically from the interviews themselves. Directly asking survivors about the possible reasons for the widespread use of rape in the Bosnian war yielded very limited answers. Indeed, interviewees typically just shrugged and said '*Ne znam*' (I don't know). As they recounted their experiences, however, clear causal themes began to emerge.

Over a period of 12 months, I interviewed 79 survivors in BiH. Ten of these interviews took place during a scoping visit to BiH in August 2014, and the remaining 69 interviews were carried out between October 2014 and September 2015. I conducted all of the interviews in Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian. Interviews typically lasted between two and four hours. Many research participants did not wish for their interviews to be recorded. One reason for this is that some of them had testified, or would shortly be testifying, in court as protected witnesses, and hence they were deeply fearful of their identities being revealed. When recording was not an option, I made comprehensive notes both during and immediately after the interview.

Of the total 79 interviewees, 67 were women and 12 were men. The majority of interviewees (34) were now in their mid- to late-fifties. However, illuminating the fact that women and men of all ages were subjected to rape and sexual violence during the Bosnian war, two interviewees were now in their seventies, 14 were in their sixties, 18 were in their forties and 11 were in their late-thirties. Fifty-seven interviewees were Bosnian Muslims (Bosniaks), 15 were Bosnian Serbs, six were Bosnian Croats and one was Macedonian (she had moved to BiH during the 1970s). The ethnic composition of the interview sample thus reflects the fact that the largest number of rapes

were committed by Bosnian Serb soldiers against Bosniak women (United Nations 1994: §251). Yet, what the sample also demonstrates is that such crimes were not exclusively perpetrated by one side. The gender composition of the sample, moreover, draws attention to the neglected reality that both men and women were subjected to rape and sexual violence during the Bosnian war.

Among the 79 interviewees, all of whom were sexually violated and abused by men, some were raped in their own homes, in neighbours' homes or in local buildings such as schools. More than half of them, however, were raped in camps. This is consistent with the fact that 'Eighty percent of the rapes [committed during the Bosnian war] are said to have occurred in detention camps' (Engle 2005, p.785). The male interviewees suffered sexual violence and torture in six main camps, namely the Čelopek camp in Zvornik, the Batković camp near Bijeljina, the Luka camp in Brčko, the Lora camp near Split in Croatia and the Drmeljevo and Nepek camps in Velika Kladuša. The female interviewees were detained and raped in camps including Omarska near Prijedor in north-west BiH, Sušica in Vlasenica in eastern BiH, Viktor Buban in Sarajevo, the Luka camp in Brčko and the Dretelj and Čelebići camps in Hercegovina. The length of time that interviewees' spent in these camps ranged from 24 hours to almost three years in one particular case.

Because the use of rape and sexual violence during the Bosnian war was not confined to any one particular area, I travelled across BiH to interview survivors. Interviews were conducted in Sarajevo; in central BiH (Vitez, the villages of Ahmići and Dubravica, Vareš, the village of Stupni Do, Jajce and the municipality of Kiseljak); in north-east BiH (Tuzla, Srebrenik, the village of Divič, Bijeljina and the nearby village of Janja); in eastern BiH (Goražde); in Brčko District (Brčko and Brezovo Polje); in the Posavina area of northern BiH (Modriča and Bosanski Šamac); in north-west BiH (Bihać, Kozarac and Velika Kladuša) and in Hercegovina (Konjic, Jablanica, Mostar and Bijelo Polje, Trebinje and Bileća). One interview took place in Zagreb in Croatia.

Interviewees were selected in three main ways. Firstly, I worked closely with a Bosnian women's NGO, *Snaga Žene*, during the duration of my fieldwork. *Snaga Žene* is a highly-respected NGO that assists, *inter alia*, war rape survivors from all ethnic groups across BiH.⁷ My collaboration with this NGO thus provided invaluable opportunities to meet and interview survivors. Secondly, during my fieldwork I contacted numerous *udruženje logoraša* (associations of former camp inmates) across BiH, some of which had male and female survivors of rape and sexual violence among their members. Although not all of these associations were willing to help, others were extremely supportive, particularly those in Trebinje and Brčko, and facilitated interviews with survivors who were willing to share their stories. Thirdly, snowball sampling was used, particularly in the early

stages of the fieldwork. For example, an interviewee in Trebinje, where I commenced my fieldwork in October 2014, provided a contact in Višegrad; and an interviewee in Tuzla gave me the contact details of a survivor in Vareš. The interviewee in Vareš, in turn, made it possible for me to undertake a further three interviews in the town, as well as an interview in the nearby village of Stupni Do.

Over the years, many survivors in BiH have given statements and interviews to police, journalists, researchers, etc., and inevitably they have grown tired of telling their stories, particularly when they do not gain anything from doing so. Moreover, some of them are extremely distrustful of foreigners, assuming that the latter conduct research and write books to make money from people's suffering. Hence, finding survivors who were willing to tell their stories was never easy. The fact that I worked closely with *Snaga Žene* greatly facilitated the process of gaining access to rape survivors and securing their trust. Because *Snaga Žene* is based in the city of Tuzla, which is now home to large numbers of internally-displaced Bosniaks from other parts of BiH – most notably eastern Bosnian towns such as Srebrenica, Zvornik and Vlasenica – I had greatest access to Bosniak rape survivors.

Finding Bosnian Serb interviewees was more difficult. One reason for this is that the largest and most successful NGOs that provide help and assistance to rape survivors – such as *Snaga Žene*, *Vive Žene* (also in Tuzla), *Medica* (in Zenica) and *Žena žrtva rata* (in Sarajevo) are located in the BiH Federation. In Republika Srpska, where Bosnian Serbs constitute the majority, there is far less organized help available for survivors. This, in turn, means that it is considerably harder to find ways of approaching Bosnian Serb men and women.

Establishing contact with Bosnian Croat survivors was the most challenging. On two occasions, I contacted the head of the Croatian Camp Survivors Association, based in central BiH, to request his assistance in locating Croat survivors (some have relocated to Croatia and those who have remained in BiH are mainly concentrated in central BiH and in Hercegovina). On both occasions, he insisted that Croat women will not speak about their experiences because they are ashamed. Yet, the reality is that almost all interviewees, regardless of their ethnicity, described what happened to them as deeply shameful. *Stid* (shame), *sramota* (disgrace) and *poniženje* (humiliation) were the three words that interviewees most commonly and consistently used when telling their stories. On another occasion, in November 2014, *Snaga Žene* arranged for a group of Bosniak women from Srebrenica to meet a group of Bosnian Croat rape survivors in Hercegovina, to encourage inter-ethnic understanding and female solidarity. Seizing the opportunity to speak to one of the Bosnian Croat

women (X) who led her own NGO, I asked X if she would be willing to facilitate access to some of the rape survivors in her organization. X claimed that only one member of her NGO was a rape survivor and that this individual was now living abroad. I subsequently found out, however, that not only were three of the women who were with X that day themselves rape survivors, but that she too was in fact a survivor. Through the head of *Snaga Žene*, I established contact with X several months later and we arranged that I would travel back to Hercegovina and speak to three or four members of her NGO. Unfortunately, two days before the interviews were scheduled to take place, X called to say that all of the women had changed their minds. She offered no explanation and simply said ‘*Drugi put*’ (Another time).

Theorizing Rape Causation and the Critical Importance of Context

Macro Explanations of Rape in War

Rape has always accompanied war and armed conflict (Farwell 2004, p.389; Leatherman 2011, p.1). In an effort to elucidate this continuity across time and space, existing scholarship on war rape has accordingly placed a strong emphasis on macro causes, such as militarism, patriarchy and gender relations (Brownmiller 1975; Turshen 2000; Farwell 2004; Leatherman 2011; Morus 2012; Henry 2016). This macro focus is useful for highlighting broad historical trends, cross-cultural patterns and enduring structural violence, yet it can only take us so far. Fundamentally, continuity in the recurrence of wartime rape is only part of the story. The other crucial part is the context in which war rape takes place, and this is an endlessly shifting context of fluctuation and movement. The complexities of causation must accordingly be approached in a way that recognizes both the inherent fluidity of war (Kalyvas 2008, p.1045) and the fact that every armed conflict has its own particular dynamics (Kalyvas 2003, p.475). Hence, while macro causal theories can help to explain the persistent use of rape *in war*, they are far more limited in explicating the use of rape in a *particular war*.

Socialization and male attitudes towards women, for example, are undoubtedly relevant for illuminating the use of rape in war. To over-emphasize such factors, however, risks creating overly blunt and generalized causal theories. Particularly illustrative is Brownmiller’s (1975, p.32) claim that men rape in war in order to ‘vent their contempt for women’. This argument constitutes part of a wider feminist narrative on war rape which, in Gottschall’s (2004, p.131) summation, quintessentially holds that ‘While men may fight on different sides and for different reasons, in one sense they are all warriors on behalf of their gender – and the enemy is woman’. Such assertions gloss over the important fact that men are also subjected to rape and sexual violence in war (see, for

example, Bourke 2007; Gettleman 2009; Sivakumaran 2007, 2010); they foster the dangerous notion that all men are would-be rapists; and they are fundamentally acontextual. As such, they cannot explain the highly diverse ways in which rape is deployed in war (Wood 2006).

This variation, in turn, is linked to the polyvalent utility of war rape. It is an intrinsically *useful* tool of warfare precisely because it can serve a myriad of different purposes, from sowing fear (and thus accelerating the ‘ethnic cleansing’ of a particular area) and facilitating male bonding to disempowering enemy males and destroying their morale (Clark 2014). The multi-dimensional functionality of war rape thus underscores that there is more to this heinous crime than gender. It is a dynamic interplay of factors, from gender and ethnicity to religion and culture, that underpins the targeting of victims and the level of damage inflicted. As Snyder et al. (2006, p.193) summarize,

...women’s experience of rape in war, like that of the abuse of women’s human rights more generally, is always determined by the intersection of a variety of factors, such as age, race, class, religion, ethnicity, and nationality...Efforts to focus on one identity, such as gender or ethnicity, oversimplify the ways in which different women experience the abuse of human rights within complex social contexts where multiple variables intersect.

This intersection of multiple variables draws attention to another important limitation of macro explanations of war rape. Existing scholarship places a strong accent on the strategic value of rape. Carlsen (2009, p.479), for example, maintains that ‘The fulfillment of strategic objectives motivates sexual violence in the DRC’, adding that soldiers utilize rape ‘as a means of sowing terror and instilling fear in communities’. In a similar vein, Mezy (1994, p.585) underlines that ‘Rape is a very effective strategy of war and represents an efficient way of destroying whole communities: the threat of rape terrorizes populations into voluntarily leaving their homes and the victims become outcasts’. This emphasis on strategy is useful for highlighting the multi-dimensional utility of rape in war. However, this utility is inextricably linked to context, which once again brings to the fore the vital significance of the micro level and local war kinetics. Rape is committed by individuals, often acting in small groups, and their reasons for committing rape might have nothing to do with wider strategic goals. They may simply be acting opportunistically and/or in response to conflict-related shifts and developments. In the absence of contextual sensitivity, we thus return to the problem of highly-generalized causal theories that emphasize macro commonalities rather than micro specificities. A pertinent example is Sharlach’s (2000, p.101) claim that:

In East Pakistan, the former Yugoslavia, and Rwanda, rape was one component of a campaign of genocide or forced expulsion of a population. Soldiers may rape women before murdering them; they may attempt to dilute an ethnic community’s bloodline by

raping and impregnating its women; or they may intend for the mass rapes to demoralize the surviving members of a community.

In other words, attributing the use of rape in war to the pursuit of broad strategic ends is problematic. Although war rape can certainly serve major strategic goals, those goals are not static and may change and shift as a conflict progresses. It is thus essential to situate the relationship between causation and war strategy within the specific micro context of war and its local dynamics. Focusing on rape as a weapon of war, in short, critically neglects the fact that rape may also be deployed non-strategically. As Boesten (2010, p.101) pertinently asks, 'If we only consider the weapon-of-war thesis...how could we understand the continuous rape of a woman who has already been tortured to death? Or the rape of almost dead women, literally at the edge of their graves?'

To demonstrate the fundamental importance of bottom-up causal analysis focused on local context, this article constitutes a novel micro study of the use of rape and sexual violence during the Bosnian war. The rapes committed in BiH have been extensively written about (Stiglmayer 1994; Allen 1996; Salzman 1998; Boose 2002). Detailed empirical research, however, remains rare. More fundamentally, existing scholarship on war rape and sexual violence in BiH, despite its importance, has neglected to explore causation at the micro level. This article addresses that gap.

Scholarship on the Bosnian War

Scholarship on the Bosnian war has overwhelmingly concentrated on the use of rape by Serbs (see, for example, Stiglmayer 1994; Salzman 1998; Hansen 2001). Writing during the war, for example, MacKinnon (1994, p.9) remarked that 'Muslim and Croatian women and girls are raped, then often killed, by Serbian military men, regulars and irregulars in a variety of formations, in their homes, on hillsides, in camps...'. Although this strong Serb-centric focus is consistent with the empirical reality that rape was disproportionately committed on the side of Serb forces,⁸ it has limited the causal explanations which existing literature provides. Fundamentally, it has helped to marginalize the micro level in two key ways. The first is that it has deflected attention from the fact that Bosnian Muslim and Bosnian Croat forces also perpetrated rape, albeit not to the same extent as Serb forces (Engle 2005, p.798; Skjelsbaek 2006, p.374). For example, Bosnian Croat HVO soldiers raped Bosnian Serb women in, *inter alia*, the Posavina area⁹ in northern BiH and in the Dretelj camp near Čapljina in Hercegovina (Balkan Transitional Justice 2014). HVO soldiers also raped Bosniak women in central Bosnia;¹⁰ Bosniak soldiers committed rape and sexual violence against Serb women and men in the Čelebići camp near Konjic;¹¹ and Bosniak soldiers raped Croats in towns such as Vareš (Buljagić 2013).

A particularly sensitive aspect of the Bosnian war that has been critically overlooked to date is the use of rape by Bosniak soldiers against fellow Bosniaks in the Krajina area of BiH. In September 1993, Fikret Abdić, a Bosniak politician and the owner of the *Agrokomerc* conglomerate in Velika Kladuša, declared the establishment of the Autonomous Province of Western Bosnia (APWB) in opposition to the official Bosnian government in Sarajevo. Abdić formed his own army, the National Defence of the APWB, which fought against the Fifth Corps of the ABiH in Velika Kladuša. Regarding anyone who remained loyal to the Bosnian state as a traitor and enemy, Abdić's *Autonomaši* – in collaboration with Serb rebels from Serbia and Croatia – arrested large numbers of Bosniaks, both soldiers and civilians (Mujagić 2013, p.216), and sent them to camps. Between 1993 and 1995, there were eight camps in the municipality of Velika Kladuša, of which the two largest were Nepek (2,383 civilians were held in this camp) and Drmeljevo (1,500 civilians and captured soldiers were detained here) (Mujagić 2013, p.310). Prisoners were subjected to inhumane treatment, and both Serb soldiers and the *Autonomaši* committed acts of rape. Unfortunately, because this intra-ethnic aspect of the Bosnian war is rarely spoken about,¹² particularly in Velika Kladuša which remains deeply divided,¹³ there is a lack of data on the number of rape cases.¹⁴ The APWB fell in 1995, and in 2002 a Croatian court sentenced Abdić to 20 years' imprisonment – later reduced to 15 years – for war crimes. He was released from prison in 2012 and still enjoys significant popular support; his nickname 'Babo' is scrawled in graffiti around the town of Velika Kladuša, further highlighting the continuing existence of intra-Bosniak cleavages.

The fact that literature on the Bosnian war focuses overwhelmingly on the use of rape by Serb forces has thus created a critical disconnect between causal theories and the reality of what was happening on the ground. This is not to downplay the importance of extant scholarship. The key point, however, is that it provides an incomplete causal picture.

The second way in which the strong emphasis on Serb rapes has limited existing causal explanations is that it has contributed to making war strategy – and Serb policy – the macro framework within which causation is studied and analyzed. Salzman (1998, p.354), for example, has claimed that 'Serbian governmental and military powers appear to have utilized systematic rape as a weapon of war to serve their overall objective of "ethnic cleansing", a euphemism for genocide'; and Russell-Brown (2003, p.355) contends that "The "genocidal rapes" committed in Bosnia were designed in large part to have the effect of impregnating the victim so that she would have a child that would be identified as being a member of the rapist's/enemy's ethnicity'. This is not to suggest that the use of rape and sexual violence in the Bosnian war did not fulfil some

strategic purposes. However, the complexities and nuances of causation cannot be adequately explored and discerned using only a wide macro lens. As Boesten (2010, p.127) argues, ‘Sexual violence does not “only” serve strategic purposes imposed and cultivated from above...’. Moreover, ‘Serbs’ are not a homogenous group, and uncritically attributing to them very broad and seemingly fixed objectives in the inherently fluid and interactional context of war is problematic. The use of a micro lens, in short, is essential for illuminating ‘the emotional dynamics of the local situation’ (Collins 2008, p.101).

A Micro Analysis of Rape Causation in the Bosnian War

Five key causal themes emerged from my semi-structured interviews with 79 survivors in BiH. These are revenge, the desire to humiliate, opportunism, group dynamics and entitlement. The broadness of these themes means that they cannot be regarded as specific to the Bosnian war. Weitsman (2008, p.563), for example, maintains that ‘In most militarized conflicts, rape serves as a tactic to intimidate, degrade, humiliate, and torture the enemy’. Similarly, the relationship between revenge and rape has been discussed vis-à-vis both war and peacetime rapes (see, for example, Scully 1994; Wood 2006; Mullins 2009). However, rather than approaching these themes as macro causal factors with a generic cross-contextual application, this research focuses on their specific micro operationalization within the particular context of the Bosnian war.

Revenge

Revenge is the most prominent theme that emerged from my interviews with rape survivors in BiH. According to Elster (1990, p.862), revenge is ‘the attempt, at some cost or risk to oneself, to impose suffering upon those who have made one suffer, because they have made one suffer...’. This definition, however, is arguably too narrow, owing to the fact that it posits a direct nexus between the person seeking revenge and the object of that revenge. Particularly in the context of war, revenge often seeks out vicarious targets or scapegoats. Wood (2006, p.310), for example, notes that ‘As the Soviet army moved westward toward Germany, propaganda posted and distributed along the way as well as official military orders encouraged soldiers to take revenge on and punish Germans broadly speaking, not just soldiers’. The use of rape in war particularly exemplifies this vicarious logic. Revenge is commonly exacted through the rape of those who are most vulnerable and accessible, not the most culpable.

Three types of revenge can be drawn out from the interview data to help explain the use of rape and sexual violence during the Bosnian war, namely personal, mirroring and event-triggered revenge.

Personal revenge is essentially what Elster defines; it is the idea of seeking revenge against someone for something that they have done. Only two cases of personal revenge emerged from the interview data. In the first case, a Bosnian Croat interviewee recounted how, in 1992, she was imprisoned in a house with four Bosnian Serb women in Odžak municipality in the Posavina area of BiH. She was confined for three months and described how Bosnian Croat soldiers came to the house most nights and raped the women. The first time that she was raped, there were four perpetrators dressed in black uniforms. They were members of the *Vatreni konji* (Fire Horses), a military brigade in Odžak and part of the HVO. The men took turns to rape her and she begged them to kill her and end her suffering. They refused to do so, explaining that they wanted to enjoy her. They further maintained that she needed to be punished for her betrayal in marrying a *četnik*¹⁵ (author interview, Modriča, 24 June 2015).

In the second case, a Bosniak interviewee from Bihać was arrested by a group of *Autonomaši* in Velika Kladuša. They accused her of collaborating with the ABiH, raped her and detained her in the Drmeljevo camp. She had gone to Velika Kladuša to stay with a friend prior to the establishment of the APWB, after fighting intensified in Bihać. She insisted that the *Autonomaši*'s allegations against her were entirely false, but explained that her husband had been a combatant in the Fifth Corps (author interview, Bihać, 3 December 2014). In other words, this was not a straightforward case of personal revenge. The interviewee was targeted, *inter alia*, because of what the soldiers believed she was doing, as opposed to what she had actually done. The fact, moreover, that her husband was fighting against the *Autonomaši* suggests that the latter may have been punishing her for this. Indeed, the vulnerability of women in war means that they may be raped as revenge for the actions of their husbands, brothers or other male relatives. In such cases, the revenge is personally-motivated but perpetrated against a vicarious or substitute target.

A Bosniak interviewee from Vlasenica, for example, claimed that she was the first woman to be raped in the Serb-run Sušica camp during the war.¹⁶ She explained that prior to the war, her husband had been having an affair with a Serb woman in Vlasenica, which was a widely-known fact in the town, and that the Serb soldier who violently raped her had explicitly referred to this (author interview, Tuzla, 29 October 2014). To take a second poignant example, a Bosniak interviewee from Srebrenica recounted how on 12 July 1995, a day after the fall of Srebrenica, three masked Serb soldiers came to the United Nations compound in Potočari to take her away for 'questioning'. They took her to a nearby house and repeatedly asked her about the whereabouts of her eldest brother. The latter had been fighting alongside Naser Orić, the senior commander of Bosnian Muslim forces in eastern BiH (including Srebrenica). After the soldiers raped her, one of

them removed his mask. She knew him and he told her that what had just happened was pay-back for what her brother had done to Serbs in and around Srebrenica (author interview, Tuzla, 20 January 2015).¹⁷

A second type of revenge can be discerned from the interview data. If, as Wood (2006, p.325) observes, 'Sexual violence is sometimes said to occur in retaliation for sexual violence previously suffered...by co-ethnics', these retaliatory dynamics were at work during the Bosnian war. More specifically, there were clear cases of mirroring revenge, when one side in the conflict purported to justify its actions by 'mirroring' what the other side was doing. The following two examples illustrate this phenomenon. A Serb interviewee was raped in Odžak municipality in May 1992 by six soldiers from the aforementioned *Vatreni konji*. She pleaded with the first soldier to stop, but he told her that he was only doing what the 'Četniks' were doing (author interview, Modriča, 12 January 2015).

The second example relates to a Bosniak interviewee in Jajce who had a particularly absorbing story. During most of the Bosnian war, Jajce was under Serb control, and many Bosniaks fled the town early in the conflict. Never believing that the town would fall, however, the interviewee chose to stay. In September 1995, the HVO liberated the town and a group of HVO soldiers moved into the interviewee's largely empty apartment building. One of them, R, came to her apartment to ask if anyone had mistreated her. She described how, after that first encounter, R regularly visited her, sometimes with other HVO soldiers, to ask whether she needed anything. In the statement that she gave to the cantonal prosecutor in Travnik in October 2013, which she allowed me to read, the interviewee emphasized that: '*U tom periodu R... je bio prema meni fin*' (In that period R... was nice to me) and that '*...prema meni je bio pristojan u ponašanju*' (he was dignified in his behaviour towards me). She used to make coffee for the soldiers and sometimes she would cook for R.

After several weeks, R asked her to go with him to an apartment that he had taken occupancy of, saying that she would be safer there. When they arrived at the apartment, however, he asked the interviewee to go to the bathroom and wash herself. She knew at this point that something bad was going to happen. R forced her to drink some Rakija, a strong brandy, and then pushed her into the bedroom and raped her. In her statement to the prosecutor, she described how, during the rape, R insulted her, telling her that she portrayed herself as an honest and dignified woman despite what Serbs had done to her. Serb soldiers had not raped the interviewee, but R appeared convinced that they had. While he was seemingly thus mirroring, in his mind, Serb behaviour, it appears that he also wanted to use the interviewee specifically to get back at Serbs. She recalled how after the rape,

she heard R talking to some HVO soldiers who had entered the apartment. He told them that they would rape her again, kill her and then throw her into the rubbish dump outside her apartment building, leaving journalists to find her body and think that Serbs were responsible (author interview, Jajce, 3 February 2015).

The interviewees' stories also illuminated a third type of revenge which this article terms event-triggered revenge. As the name suggests, this type of revenge is a response to specific events. Again, two particular examples can be used to show how event-triggered revenge was part of the complex causal nexus of war rape in BiH. A Croat interviewee in the town of Vareš was raped by two Bosniak soldiers from the Second Corps of the ABiH. On 25 November 1993, the soldiers forced their way into her home and, after searching for money, they took her outside, called her an '*ustaša*'¹⁸ and hit her over the head. They told her that they were avenging the HVO's attack a month earlier on Stupni Do, a small Bosniak village four kilometres south-east of Vareš (author interview, Vareš, 3 November 2014).¹⁹

Turning to the second example, a Bosniak interviewee living in the mainly-Croat village of Dubravica, in central BiH, was taken by HVO soldiers to the local school on 17 April 1993. Large numbers of Bosniak men, women and children were detained in the school during this time. The interviewee stressed that she was initially well-treated and given adequate food and drink. A week after she was taken to the school, however, everything changed. That night, two HVO soldiers entered the hall where she and many other women were being held. Warning the women to be careful, the two men claimed that due to ABiH crimes committed that day,²⁰ the HVO soldiers running the camp were angry and drunk. The interviewee recounted how later that night, at around 1 a.m., another two HVO soldiers entered the hall. They repeatedly called for 'Suada' to identify herself. None of the women answered and the interviewee, after a couple of minutes, stood up to tell the soldiers that there was nobody in the hall named Suada. The soldiers told her to step out into the corridor with them and proceeded to ask her whether there were any young girls in the hall. She explained that there were three, and was immediately instructed by the two soldiers to go and get them. Unwilling to obey, the interviewee re-entered the hall and attempted to hide; one of the women concealed her under her bedding. After the interviewee failed to reappear with the three young girls, the two soldiers went back into the hall and began to look for her. When they found her, they ordered both her and the woman who had tried to hide her to go outside with them. One of the soldiers raped the interviewee and the other raped her 'accomplice' (author interview, Dubravica, 5 February 2015). This is an interesting illustration of how different types of revenge can operate in tandem. In this case, there was both event-triggered revenge and personal revenge;

the two women were raped not only in revenge for ABiH crimes that day, but also in revenge for their own personal insolence in disobeying the two HVO soldiers.

These examples reveal how different types of revenge contributed to the use of rape and sexual violence during the Bosnian war. The examples of event-triggered revenge and particularly mirroring revenge also powerfully demonstrate how violence can quickly become a ‘tipping phenomenon’. As Hardin (1997, p.155) explains, once it reaches a certain level, violence ‘is often self-reinforcing’. In other words, in BiH the conflict itself, and the shifting dynamics within that conflict, provided justifications – in the eyes of the perpetrators – for the use of rape and sexual violence. Macro explanations of causation fundamentally miss this crucial point.

The Desire to Humiliate

Within extant scholarly literature, it is often emphasized that rape is utilized in war as a way of humiliating the enemy – and specifically enemy men. Snyder et al. (2006, p.190), for example, argue vis-à-vis the Bosnian war that ‘the mass war rapes can be understood as an element of communication – the symbolic humiliation of the male opponent’; Bergoffen (2009, p.317) notes that a woman’s raped body ‘carries, and is intended to carry, a message to the men of her community—“You are not men. Like your women who are now ours, you too are subject to our power”’; and Meger (2010, p.130) adjudges that rape has been such an effective weapon in the DRC conflict precisely because it exposes men’s inability ‘to protect “their” women, striking at their masculine identities’.

While there is no doubt that rape has wider community ramifications, it is important not to lose sight of the direct victim and the operationalization of humiliation at this individual level. In the trial of Ranko Češić at the ICTY, the Trial Chamber underscored that ‘...rape is an inherently humiliating offence’, adding that ‘...humiliation is always taken into account when appreciating the inherent gravity of this crime’ (Prosecutor v. Češić 2004, §53). It is a crime that not only disempowers but debases, a physical and emotional invasion that strikes at the core of an individual’s sense of dignity, respect and self-worth. The denial of the right to say no is a concomitant denial of personhood. The person violated thus becomes a mere object, ‘something to be used by others as a thing’ (Bergoffen 2009, p.312). The sense of humiliation therein imposed is long-lasting and profound, often enduring years after the physical act of rape. Frequently describing their experiences as deeply humiliating, many interviewees maintained that they are no longer the same person that they were before they were raped.²¹

While the crime of rape is intrinsically humiliating, it is often committed in ways that further increase the victim's sense of humiliation. In the Čelebići judgement, for example, the Trial Chamber noted apropos of Hazim Delić, a Bosniak, that he subjected one of his Serb victims 'not only to the inherent suffering involved in rape, but exacerbated her humiliation and degradation by raping her in the presence of his colleagues' (Prosecutor v. Delalić et al. 2008, §1262). Similarly, in its sentencing judgement against Ranko Češić, a Bosnian Serb, the ICTY Trial Chamber discussed a sexual assault in which two brothers were forced to perform sexual acts on each other in the Luka camp in Brčko. According to the trial judges, '...the humiliation suffered by the victims was exacerbated both because they were brothers and because guards were present, watching and laughing' (Prosecutor v. Češić 2004, §54).

The interview data similarly reveals how intrinsic and exacerbated humiliation often jointly underpinned acts of rape committed during the Bosnian war. The interviewees' stories highlighted three particular ways in which aggravated humiliation was achieved. The first relates to the types of rape committed. Not all interviewees disclosed how they were raped, and I never asked them to reveal such deeply personal information. Some interviewees, however, did provide detailed accounts of their experiences, a common theme of which was the prevalence of oral and vaginal rape combined. Three Serb interviewees in Modriča, however, described how they were orally, vaginally and anally raped. When *Snaga Žene* was preparing these women for the process of testifying in the State Court of BiH, and when the Prosecutor came to visit them in their homes the day before they testified, all three struggled to say that they were anally raped. They felt deeply ashamed. If, as Lindner (2001, p.44) emphasizes, '...the act of humiliation entails a painful downward push at its core', in the case of anal rape this 'downward push' is not just etymological but literal; the victim is pushed face down, unable to see what is happening behind her. A Macedonian interviewee who moved to BiH during the 1970s also described how her rapists – four Bosniak soldiers from the Green Berets – violated her orally, vaginally and anally. This was deeply humiliating for her but her tormentors went even further, putting their penises into her nostrils, ears and belly button – and laughed as they did so (author interview, east Sarajevo, 26 June 2015).

The second important point is that rape was often committed during the Bosnian war in circumstances that were deeply humiliating for victims. We can thus speak of contextual humiliation. A Serb interviewee in Trebinje, for example, spent three months during the war in Dretelj, a camp near Čapljina run by soldiers from the Croatian Defence Forces (HOS). Whenever the HOS commander, Blaž Kraljević, entered the camp, the interviewee recalled, the prisoners were

made to raise their hands, to say '*Bog*' (God) – a Croat greeting – and sometimes to sing Ustasha songs. Explaining that the women in the camp were often ordered to strip, she described how, on one occasion, she was made to undress, before being beaten and forced to perform oral sex on one of the HOS soldiers. By the time that she was released from the camp in August 1992, as part of a prisoner exchange, she felt dead inside and devoid of any feelings. She had reached the stage where nothing that happened to her mattered anymore (author interview, Trebinje, 6 October 2014). A male Serb interviewee who was imprisoned in the Lora camp near Split in Croatia revealed that he was made to have oral sex with a fellow prisoner, a Serbian Orthodox priest. Unable to speak about this, he produced the statement that he had given to the Bosnian police (author interview, Bileća, 23 April 2015).

A Bosniak interviewee, who was imprisoned in a house in the village of Liplja in the municipality of Zvornik, disclosed how Serb soldiers particularly humiliated her by tearing off her headscarf before they raped her, a powerful symbolic gesture that denigrated her faith (author interview, Tuzla, 27 November 2014). A Bosniak interviewee from the village of Divič said very little about what he personally experienced during his month in the Čelopek camp in Zvornik in 1992. However, he described some of the many abuses and indignities to which the men in the camp were subjected, and emphasized that fathers and sons were made to perform sexual acts on each other (author interview, Divič, 23 August 2014).²² For a Bosniak interviewee from Brezovo Polje, what exacerbated her sense of humiliation was the fact that her rapist took obvious pleasure in having sex with her. After raping her in a house in Caparde in the municipality of Kalesija, he lit up a cigarette and told her: '*Kako je lijepo kada cura je nevina*' (How nice it is when a girl is a virgin) (author interview, Brezovo Polje, 16 April 2015). Finally, a Bosnian Croat interviewee living in a small village in the municipality of Kiseljak explained that when she was raped by a Bosniak soldier, what made the experience especially humiliating was that she was menstruating at the time. This bloody rape made her feel like an animal, she said (author interview, Kiseljak municipality, 19 March 2015).

The third way in which heightened humiliation was achieved was through the frequent use of verbal abuse as a corollary to the perpetration of rape. Many interviewees described how the men who sexually violated them had taunted them and called them offensive names. A Bosniak interviewee who was raped in her apartment in Zvornik, for example, detailed how Serb soldiers repeatedly called her a '*Balijska majka*'²³ (author interview, Tuzla, 26 October 2014); and similarly an interviewee in the village of Divič told the author that he and the other Bosniak men held in the Serb-run Čelopek camp were often called '*Balije*' (author interview, Divič, 23 August 2014). In

Modriča, a Serb interviewee recounted how the Bosnian Croat soldiers who raped her had called her a '*četnička majka*' (chetnik mother) (author interview, Modriča, 27 October 2014); and a male Serb interview in Bileća near Trebinje reported how, during his time in the Lora camp in Croatia, HVO soldiers frequently called him a chetnik and *vojvoda* (a war leader), even setting his beard alight on one occasion (author interview, Bileća, 23 April 2015).

The fact that gratuitous humiliation frequently accompanied the commission of rape during the Bosnian war suggests that perpetrators often deliberately set out to humiliate their victims. According to Schick (1997, p.136), 'It doesn't suffice for humiliation that a person is disempowered. It must be too that his disempowerment is brought home vividly to him'. Looking for ways to increase an individual's sense of humiliation functions precisely to 'bring home' his/her disempowerment. While existing literature on rape and sexual violence in war, both in BiH and more generally, places a strong emphasis on the strategic use and value of these crimes, the above examples clearly show that rape and sexual violence in warfare can also serve 'a number of psychological aims and purposes' (Groth 1979, p. 13), such as control and dominance, which may be unrelated to war strategy.

Opportunism

War offers what Collins terms a 'moral holiday'. He defines this as 'a free zone in time and space, an occasion and a place where the feeling prevails that everyday constraints are off; individuals are protected by the crowd and are encouraged in normally forbidden areas' (Collins 2008, p.243). By its very nature, therefore, war fosters criminal behaviour, by providing unique opportunities – to make money, to accumulate power, to acquire status, to ignore normal societal codes of behaviour – that would otherwise not exist. This environment, in turn, can foster opportunistic rapes. In her research on the Rwandan genocide, for example, Mullins (2009, p.726) notes that 'Opportunistic rapes were those that were a product of the widespread chaos and disorganization of the on-going genocide, as they were seemingly neither controlled nor organized'. What emerged from my interview data in BiH is that not only were some rapes clearly opportunistic, but also that opportunistic behaviour often accompanied rape and sexual violence.

In sharing their stories, interviewees frequently described how, prior to being raped, they had their money, jewellery and other valuables taken away from them. According to a Serb interviewee in Trebinje, for example, a group of four HOS soldiers took her and her mother to a military clinic in Mostar in June 1992. After locking them in a room with two other Serb women, the soldiers later

returned and demanded that all of the women hand over their valuables. That night, two of the soldiers came back, took the interviewee – the youngest in the group – into a separate room and raped her (author interview, Trebinje, 8 October 2014). Similarly, a Serb interviewee who was raped in Zenica told the author how four Bosniak soldiers came to her home one night in July 1992. They called her a chetnik and searched the house for money and anything of value. After seizing a number of items, two of the soldiers took it in turns to rape her in her bathroom. Her two children were downstairs (author interview, Janja, 5 November 2014). A Bosniak interviewee from Brezovo Polje, who was one of the several busloads of women who were taken to Caparde in June 1992 and subsequently raped, explained how Serb soldiers ordered all of the women detained in Caparde to hand over any gold and money that they had with them (author interview, Brezovo Polje, 17 April 2015).

In her research in the DRC, Maedl (2011, p.144) found that ‘...rapes rarely happened as isolated offenses’. This was similarly the case in BiH. What cannot be established from the interview data is whether perpetrators’ primary intention was to rape or to steal and enrich themselves. What the data does suggest, however, is that in lieu of the term ‘opportunistic rapes’, it may be more appropriate to speak of ‘spectrum opportunistic rapes’, to highlight the fact that rape and other opportunistic behaviours may go hand in hand.

Group Dynamics

According to Neill (2000, p.43), ‘...when wars erupt, the rules we lived by before the fight no longer apply...Therefore, whatever dark side there is to being human that allows us to accomplish those goals is permitted to see the light of day...’. Group membership arguably facilitates the emergence of an individual’s dark side; groups offer security and anonymity, and thereby lessen individual inhibition. It is not surprising, therefore, that there was very often a group dimension to the rapes committed during the Bosnian war. Indeed, the interview data strongly supports May and Strikwerda’s (1994, p.138) claim that ‘The interactions of men, especially in all-male groups, contribute to a pattern of socialization that...plays a major role in the incidence of rape’.

The aforementioned interviewee who was raped in her home in Zenica was taken upstairs by one of the four Bosniak soldiers. She described how he pushed her into her bathroom, told her to suck his penis – threatening to kill her if she refused – and then vaginally raped her. At this point, a second soldier knocked on the bathroom door and asked his colleague if he had finished. The first soldier exited the bathroom while the second soldier entered and proceeded to rape the interviewee. A third

soldier then knocked on the bathroom door and shouted '*Pokret!*' (Move). This was the cue for all of the soldiers to leave (author interview, Janja, 5 November 2014). In a second example of group dynamics, a Bosniak interviewee in Vareš shared with the author her story of how one night in 1993, an HVO soldier knocked on her door. He asked her if there were any men in the house and instructed the interviewee, her mother and sister to hand over their identity cards. He was shortly joined by a further two HVO soldiers, one of whom took the interviewee into an adjoining room and raped her (author interview, Vareš, 13 November 2014). Her mother and sister were forced to listen to her screams, powerless to do anything to help.

When there is a group dimension involved, rape can become a form of entertainment. Particularly illustrative in this regard, a Serb interviewee in Modriča described in some detail how she was raped in secession by six HVO soldiers. The first soldier entered the room, told her to remove her clothes, raped her (orally, vaginally and anally) and then ordered her to put her clothes back on. Each of the rapes followed an identical pattern and each time that she was instructed to get dressed, the interviewee prayed that this would be the end of her suffering (author interview, Modriča, 12 January 2015). For her part, a Bosniak interviewee from Zvornik recounted how Serb forces quickly took control of the town in 1992. Like many other Bosniaks from Zvornik, she headed for Tuzla where she lives today. In November 1992, however, she made the decision to briefly return to her apartment in Zvornik to collect some personal belongings and documents. There were soldiers everywhere, she recalled, and a lorry full of reservists was parked in front of her building. As she was about to enter her flat, a Serb soldier approached her from behind, grabbed her hair and pushed her into the kitchen. He ordered her to remove her clothes and proceeded to rape her. She spent the next three days imprisoned in her apartment and described how a group of soldiers came and went as they pleased. They mocked her, were verbally abusive and took it in turns to rape her. Just ten minutes into the interview, she lifted up her blouse and showed the author the numerous purple scars under her breasts from where the soldiers had stubbed out their cigarettes on her skin, laughing and joking as they did so (author interview, Tuzla, 26 October 2014).

Further lending support to this notion of rape as entertainment, interviewees often noted that the men who raped them had been drinking and smelt strongly of alcohol. This is significant because drunkenness and reduced inhibition facilitate a process which Collins (2008, p.120) terms 'going down into the tunnel', whereby perpetrators enter 'a hermetically sealed zone of socially shared emotion, a special reality that...overpowers all other moral sentiments at the moment...'. Once inside this 'tunnel', individuals give little thought to the possibility of being held to account (Collins 2008, p.243). They are thus able to take pleasure in the crimes that they commit. This 'enjoyment

factor' underscores the simplicity of reductively viewing rape simply as an expression of power and control. It also exposes an important social dimension of war rape and sexual violence that is completely unrelated to military strategy.

Entitlement

According to Turshen (2000, p.810), 'Behind the cultural significance of raping "enemy" women lies the institutionalization of attitudes and practices that regard and treat women as property'. As part of this property theme, what clearly emerged from my work with survivors in BiH is that some perpetrators clearly believed that it was their right and entitlement to choose a woman with whom to have sex, regardless of the woman's wishes.²⁴ Two particular stories, both relating to the rapes committed in Caparde, powerfully highlight this. The two interviewees allowed the author to read the statements that they had given to a local prosecutor, and much of the information below is taken from these statements.

A Bosniak interviewee from Brezovo Polje in Brčko District was put on a bus with other women and children and taken to Caparde in June 1992. Busloads of women arrived and they were all led into a building which was part of a furniture company. After all of them had handed over whatever money valuables and money they had in their possession, the Serb soldiers began to separate the older women and children from the younger women. The interviewee was 19 years old at the time. During her first night in Caparde, a soldier whom she believed was the commander gestured for her to go over to him. As she did so, another soldier approached and told her not to worry about anything as he was going to look after her. This second soldier (N) proceeded to take her to a nearby abandoned house. They went inside and he told her to sit down on a sofa, reiterating that she should not feel afraid. She sat down, thinking that nothing bad was going to happen to her. N talked to her for two or three hours, telling her his name and where he was from. He also informed her that the man whom she correctly assumed to be the commander was his uncle. That day, another soldier had expressed an interest in the interviewee and had said that he wanted to 'be with her'. N, however, had stepped in to inform this soldier that he himself would be with the interviewee. The commander, as N's uncle, agreed that N could have the interviewee for himself. Sharing all of this with the interviewee, N further recounted to her how, prior to the arrival of the Bosniak women from Brezovo Polje, he had 'chosen' a Bosnian Croat woman to have sex with.

At this point, the interviewee heard a woman's scream from the room next door. N exited the room that he and the interviewee were in, locking the door behind him, and returned ten minutes later. He

sat back down on the sofa next to the interviewee and told her that she had to accept what he was about to do to her because it was war and everything happens in war, including rape. She reminded N that he had promised to look after her. He agreed that he had said this and explained that what he had meant was that he would 'save' the interviewee from the other soldier who had wanted to have sex with her, claiming that the soldier was violent. After N raped the interviewee, he stayed with her in the room and made further conversation with her, asking her questions about herself and her family. He remarked that the two of them were roughly the same age and mentioned that he had a younger sister. At daybreak, he returned the interviewee to the main building from which he had taken her (author interview, Brezovo Polje, 16 April 2015).

The second interviewee, also from Brezovo Polje, was taken to the same (empty) furniture building in Caparde. After the older women and children were allowed to leave, the younger women who remained behind were told that they had some work to do. That evening, one of the Serb soldiers pointed to the interviewee, who was in her early 30s, and told her to go with him. They went outside in the direction of some abandoned houses. Another Serb soldier and a Bosniak woman from Brezovo Polje, whom the interviewee knew, were with them. As the group approached the houses, the two soldiers stopped, as though they were deciding which of them would have which woman. Once they had made their choice, the taller of the two soldiers took the interviewee in one direction. The other soldier and his 'woman' went in the opposite direction towards a military vehicle. The interviewee described how the taller soldier took her hand and said that he had chosen her. In her statement to the prosecutor, she added: '*On mi je rekao da ako neću, on mene može vratiti, ali da ću onda morati ići sa nekim drugim*' (He told me that if I didn't want that [to be with him], he could take me back [to the main building], but that in that case I would then have to go with someone else [another soldier]). They continued walking and entered a nearby house.

They went into a small sitting room and the soldier moved a cupboard in front of the door. He told the interviewee his name, age and where he was from. He further disclosed to her that she was not his first Muslim woman and said that he had selected her because he liked the look of her. After this, he ordered her to remove her clothes (he was dressed in a camouflaged uniform and had a gun) and pushed her onto a mattress on the floor. He raped her four times, vaginally and anally, '*i radio šta mu je god palo na pamet*' (and did to me whatever occurred to him). Once he had finished, he explained to the interviewee that he would not return her to the furniture building that night, in order to ensure that other Serb soldiers would not take her away for sex. He took her back to the building in the morning (author interview, Brezovo Polje, 2 September 2015).

In both of these examples, the two soldiers who committed rape appeared to believe that they were entitled to ‘choose’ a woman. The fact that they chatted to the interviewees and made everyday conversation with them before and after raping them further suggests that they did not see anything wrong in what they were doing. That both men were keen to ensure that other soldiers would not get ‘their’ women, moreover, highlights an important linkage between rape and corporal ownership. The crime of rape originated as a property offence,²⁵ and the interviewees’ stories attest to the persistence of a powerful rape-property nexus.

Conclusion

This article has adopted the novel approach of utilizing interviews with rape survivors to provide new insights into the use and causes of rape and sexual violence during the Bosnian war. Arguing that too many existing accounts of war rape operate at high levels of generality and thus gloss over the particularities of context, this research has sought to untangle the complexities of causation through a specific focus on the micro level and the local dynamics of the Bosnian war. Based on substantial interview data, it has identified and analysed five particular causal factors that help to explain the use of rape and sexual violence during the Bosnian war, namely revenge (personal, mirroring and event-triggered revenge), the desire to humiliate (by aggravating the humiliation that is intrinsic to the crime of rape), opportunism, group dynamics and a sense of entitlement.

It is important to reiterate that this article developed out of fieldwork that sought to explore the long-term consequences of the rapes and sexual violence committed during the Bosnian war. Causation was not the focus. Rather, causal themes naturally emerged from interviewees’ stories. The fact, however, that some interviewees barely spoke about the war and chose to talk about their current problems and challenges means that not all 79 interviews yielded information about causation. It is therefore important to acknowledge the limitations of the interview data. It cannot tell us, for example, whether the causal themes discussed are representative of all rapes in BiH; and similarly it does not allow us to quantify the causal significance of factors such as revenge and opportunism. Yet, what the data does strongly indicate is the need for further detailed empirical research on war rape causation, both in BiH and beyond.

Although it is critical of macro approaches, this article is not suggesting that we should abandon the search for generic and universal factors that can help to elucidate the use of rape and sexual violence in war. Rather, what it has aimed to show is that every conflict is unique, and hence we must address the complexities of causation in a way that recognizes this uniqueness. What this

research has thus delivered is a ‘fusion’ analysis that brings the macro and micro together by examining how causal factors which are not specific to the Bosnian war operated in the particular micro context of that war. Ultimately, micro research on rape causation should inform and facilitate the development of macro theories as a way of further fusing the two levels of analysis. This is an important challenge that lies ahead.

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Notes

¹ It must be acknowledged that although it is overwhelmingly men who rape in war, it is not exclusively so (see, for example, Cohen 2013).

² Based on their work in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and specifically South Kivu, for example, Mukwege and Nangini (2009, p.1) maintain that, 'The purely destructive and sadistic behaviour perpetrated by different armed groups signals a new pathology in South Kivu that we classify as rape with extreme violence (REV)'.

³ This core-periphery distinction is most frequently used in management and organizational research.

⁴ This article uses the more empowering term 'survivors' rather than 'victims'. Research by Medica Zenica and Medica Mondiale (2014, p.124), involving 51 participants in BiH, revealed that many women object to the term 'victim', viewing it as disempowering.

⁵ This research was conducted as part of a nine-month Leverhulme Research Fellowship (2014-2015).

⁶ According to recent research by Medica Zenica and Medica Mondiale (2014, p.76), for example, only 6.1% (three) of the rape survivors who took part in the study assessed their health as good, while 57.1% (28) described their health as bad.

⁷ What makes *Snaga Žene* particularly distinctive among NGOs in BiH is the strong emphasis that it places on occupational and horticultural therapy. Adopting a holistic approach to the healing process, it provides survivors with opportunities, *inter alia*, to grow, harvest and sell lavender, aronia, fruit and vegetables – activities that can have a profoundly positive impact on their physical and psychological well-being. See <http://www.snagazene.org/>

⁸ In its final report, a United Nations Expert Commission, which was established by the UN Security Council in October 1992 to investigate human rights abuses being committed in BiH, found that '...the largest number of reported victims have been Bosnian Muslims, and the largest number of alleged perpetrators have been Bosnian Serbs' (United Nations 1994, §251).

⁹ During fieldwork in BiH, I followed a trial at the State Court of BiH in Sarajevo involving four former HVO soldiers who stood accused of raping Serb women in Odžak municipality. In December 2015, one of the defendants was convicted (of raping one Serb woman) and sentenced to a prison term of six years. The other defendants were acquitted. The defendant who was found guilty is now on trial in relation to other charges of rape.

¹⁰ At the ICTY, the first case to focus solely on the issue of sexual violence was the trial of Anto Furundžija. He was the commander of the 'Jokers', a unit of the HVO in central BiH. Finding that Furundžija aided and abetted the rape of Witness A, the Trial Chamber sentenced him to 10 years' imprisonment for violations of the laws or customs or war (Prosecutor v. Furundžija 1998).

¹¹ In the Čelebići trial, Hazim Delić – a Bosniak soldier – was convicted of raping two Serb women, one of whom was interviewed for this research in October 2014. The trial also highlighted the use of sexual violence against Serb men. The Trial Chamber found, for example, that on one occasion, Esad Landžo, also a Bosniak soldier, '...placed a burning fuse cord directly against [prisoner] Vukašin Mrkalić's bare skin in the genital area, thereby inflicting serious pain and injury upon him' (Prosecutor v. Delalić et al. 1998, §1039).

¹² According to Mujagić (2013, p.420), it is especially difficult for survivors to come to terms with the fact that their rapists were fellow Bosniaks.

¹³ A male interviewee explained that during the war, he fought for several months in the Fifth Corps of the ABiH, while his brother fought in Fikret Abdić's army. Today, the two brothers live just a few metres from each other in the village of Nepek, in the municipality of Velika Kladuša. However, as a result of the war, they no longer speak to each other or have any form of relationship (author interview, Nepek, 29 November 2014). Such cases, moreover, are common in Velika Kladuša, where the intra-ethnic character of the fighting tore entire families apart.

¹⁴ The author interviewed seven rape survivors in Velika Kladuša in late 2014, including two men.

¹⁵ The Chetniks were a nationalist movement established during the Second World War. The word chetnik (*četnik* in the local languages), however, is often used extremely loosely and derogatively to refer to Serb extremists.

¹⁶ In its sentencing judgement against Dragan Nikolić, the commander of the Sušica camp, the ICTY noted that ‘Many of the detained women were subjected to sexual assaults, including rape. Camp guards or other men who were allowed to enter the camp frequently took women out of the hangar at night. When the women returned, they were often in a traumatised state and distraught’ (Prosecutor v. Nikolić 2003, §24).

¹⁷ Orić stood trial for these crimes at the ICTY. In 2006, he was found guilty, on the basis of superior criminal responsibility, of violations of the laws or customs of war. Two years later, however, the Appeals Chamber overturned his conviction. It found that ‘Where an accused is charged with command responsibility pursuant to Article 7(3) of the [ICTY] Statute, as in the present case, the Prosecution must prove, *inter alia*, that his subordinate(s) bore criminal responsibility and that he knew or had reason to know of his/their criminal conduct. The Trial Chamber made no findings on either of these two fundamental elements’ (Prosecutor v. Orić 2008, §189).

¹⁸ During the Second World War, Croat right-wing extremists formed themselves into the Ustasha, a fascistic movement responsible for the murders of thousands of Serbs, Jews and Roma. However, the word is often taken out of its historical context and used as a way of denigrating Croats.

¹⁹ On 22-23 October 1993, Ivica Rajić, an HVO commander, ordered the forces under his control to attack Stupni Do. According to the ICTY, ‘HVO commanders and soldiers under Ivica RAJIĆ’s command forced Bosnian Muslim civilians out of their homes and hiding places, robbed them of their valuables, wilfully killed Muslim men, women and children and sexually assaulted Muslim women...’ (Prosecutor v. Rajić 2006, §49). Thirty-seven Bosniaks – men and women, children and the elderly – were killed in the attack and the village was largely destroyed. In 2005, as the result of a plea agreement, Rajić pleaded guilty to grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions. He was sentenced to 12 years’ imprisonment in 2006 and granted early release in August 2011.

²⁰ Jasmin Čoloman, a former soldier in the ABiH, stood trial at the State Court of BiH, accused of killing three Croat civilians (and wounding nine) in the Croat village of Pocuica on 24 April 1993. In July 2015, Čoloman was acquitted. The presiding judge in the case explained that while the crimes themselves were proven, Čoloman’s involvement in them was not (Ucanbarlić 2015).

²¹ According to research by Medica Zenica and Medica Mondiale (2014, p.75), 70.2% of respondents said that 20 years on, their experience of being raped continues to profoundly affect their lives.

²² According to the ICTY trial judgement against Mićo Stanišić and Stojan Župljanin, both former senior figures within Republika Srpska, in the Čelopek camp ‘Two pairs of fathers and sons...and two cousins were made to perform sexual acts on each other, including intercourse and penetration by a broom handle. At one point the paramilitaries “assisted”’ (Prosecutor v. Stanišić and Župljanin 2013, §1599).

²³ There is no direct English translation for the term ‘*balijska majka*’. *Majka* means mother and *Balija* is a derogatory term used to describe Bosnian Muslims.

²⁴ Fogelman describes the use of ‘entitlement rapes’ during the Holocaust. According to her, ‘...the typical German assumption was that a Jewess would be willing to pay with her body for any act of kindness’ (Fogelman 2012, p.21).

²⁵ According to Brownmiller (1975, p.17), ‘The historic price of woman’s protection by man against man was the imposition of chastity and monogamy. A crime against her body became a crime against the male estate’.

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