



FORGOTTEN TRAUMA

A case Study of Yugoslavian Pre-War Migrants

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Abstract

Before the outbreak of the Yugoslavian Civil War, numerous Yugoslavian's left the country to work elsewhere. During the war, these Yugoslavian pre-war migrants were forced to witness their country fall apart whilst living away from their homeland. Despite the life-changing impact the war had on their lives, primarily in the form of identity trauma, a form of trauma that sees an individual's national and personal identity shattered as a result of witnessing a traumatic event, there are currently no studies that have analysed their experiences with the war and its traumatic consequences. As such, Yugoslavian pre-war migrants do not have a clear place within the academic (war-)trauma literature. This thesis is the first step in establishing that position. I have attempted to do this by comparing the experiences of Yugoslavian pre-war migrants, which I obtained via four interviews as there was no previous literature discussing said experiences, to a number of current discussions and theories surrounding (war-)trauma. This comparison has been structured according to the traumatic process, a concept that refers to the three stages an individual goes through when experiencing trauma, the initial encounter, the short-term effects, and the long-term consequences. The goal of the comparison was to determine how the experiences of Yugoslavian pre-war migrants fit into the study of (war-)trauma and how they can add to it. My results show that their experiences are very much in line with what has already been established in the academic literature. However, they also point out several crucial shortcomings in the literature, and lastly, their experiences also open up a number of new avenues for further study.

Key Words: (war-)trauma, Yugoslavian pre-war migrants, traumatic process, identity trauma

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Preface

My father grew up in Laktaši, a small village located in Republika Srpska, one of the two political entities of Bosnia Herzegovina, the other being the 'Federation of Bosnia and Hercegovina'. He left Laktaši in his twenties and settled in the Netherlands as an immigrant worker in 1972. Here he would meet, and later marry, my mother. Together they would often travel to Yugoslavia and his hometown. During their trip to Yugoslavia in the summer of 1990, my parents found the once united nation in a state of ethnic turmoil. Fearing what these ethnic tensions might spiral into, my parents left early, and not long after, the country erupted into civil war. In recent years, my parents have, bit by bit, told me their stories of the hopelessness, anger, and anguish they felt during the war. The hopelessness, as one of their best friends, was stuck in Sarajevo during the four-year-long siege (1992 – 1996). The anger of not being able to do more than sent him milk for his newborn child whilst they waited for any news from him. And, the anguish when one night he called and told them that he had bought a gun, not to shoot the besieging Serbians, but as a means to kill himself and his family if the Serbians were to take the city, not wanting his family to be captured, tortured, and killed by them. To this day, this event, and many more like it, have left deep mental scars on both my parents. However, my parents were not the only ones who suffered traumatic experiences as a result of the Yugoslavian Civil War; many of their closest friends did so as well.

Even though my parents were the ones who had their lives directly impacted by the civil war, their experiences with the war influenced me as well. Looking back now, this probably started at the centre of our family's discussions, the dinner table. Growing up, my parents would have long conversations about topics discussed in the news, but, whenever said topic had anything to do with international politics, which was often, my dad would become irritable. As I grew older, this became somewhat of a running joke at the dinner table, and I did not think much of it. Coincidentally, the Yugoslavian Civil War was not a common topic of discussion during these years, as both of my parents found it hard to talk about, and even when they did talk about it, my younger self did not understand the complex emotional and historical background needed to comprehend the impact the war had on them. It was not until last year, my third year of university, that I, influenced by my study of history and international relations, had begun to grasp the reasons and context behind the conflict and my parent's trauma.

The catalyst for my growing understanding was a short essay I wrote for one of my courses wherein I discussed the heritage of the civil war in Yugoslavia. As a result of this essay, my interest in the Yugoslavian Civil War grew, and conversations about it with my parents slowly became commonplace. Thus, when the time came to choose a topic for my bachelor's thesis, my goal was obvious, I wanted to fully understand the Yugoslavian Civil War and its impact on the lives of my parents and their closest friends. However, upon starting the process of coming up with a specific research question, I was confronted with the fact that the traumatic experiences of Yugoslavian pre-war migrants—Yugoslavian migrants that left to work/live in another country before the start of the civil war—was a topic that had no representation within the academic literature surrounding (war-)trauma. As such, this thesis is not just my self-indulgent search for understanding, but also the first step in introducing the forgotten trauma of the Yugoslavian pre-war migrants to the study of (war-)trauma.

Important to note here is that one, it is very likely that there are other groups of pre-war migrants with experiences similar to those of Yugoslavian pre-war migrants. Unfortunately, the (war-)trauma literature does not discuss them either. Two, due to this lack of previous literature, there was no existing term to describe the group I have dubbed pre-war migrants. I came up with the term 'pre-

war migrants' to serve as a counterpart to the existing term 'post-war migrants.' It applies to people that leave their native country in order to work and/or live in a different country, hence the migrant part, only to later be witness to a (civil) war unfold in their country of origin whilst working and/or living in their new country. And three, throughout the entirety of this paper, the term 'Yugoslavian pre-war migrants' refers only to Yugoslavian migrants that left the country before the start of the Yugoslavian Civil War in 1991, but after the end of the Second World War, in order to avoid any confusion about the specific group of pre-war migrants this thesis focusses on.

Introduction

When discussing (war-)trauma, the academic literature tends to focus on the experiences of refugees and how they impacted their mental health and lives. These studies have shown that following a war, many refugees suffer from trauma-induced conditions such as PTSD, depression, and anxiety.¹ Despite their well-established position and representation within the academic literature, refugees are not the only group that experiences trauma as a result of war. As indicated by the event narrated in the preface, Yugoslavian pre-war migrants are another group that is deeply affected by war and war trauma. However, contrary to refugees, there have thus far been no studies that have examined how Yugoslavian pre-war migrants, or any other pre-war migrants, experience war and what kind of trauma they suffer as a result. This lack of a clear distinction is problematic and has resulted in a general disregard for the experiences of pre-war migrants with war and war trauma. This disregard becomes even more problematic when taking into consideration that the experiences of pre-war migrants with war and war trauma are intrinsically linked to them witnessing a war from a different country, possibly resulting in their experiences being wholly or partially different from that of refugees. Thus, my thesis aims to fill this gap in the existing literature by answering the question, **what position do Yugoslavian pre-war migrants occupy in the study of (war-)trauma?** By examining their experiences, my thesis establishes Yugoslavian pre-war migrants as a 'new' and distinct group within the academic literature surrounding (war-)trauma that should be analysed separately because their experiences can provide new and unique insights into the study of (war-)trauma. Furthermore, by integrating Yugoslavian pre-war migrants into the study of (war-)trauma, this thesis opens the way for other groups of pre-war migrants to also be studied and included in the field of study.

Method, Chapters, Sources, and Structure

Since the goal of my thesis is to integrate Yugoslavian pre-war migrants into the study of (war-)trauma through an analysis of their experiences during the Yugoslavian Civil War, I decided that the best way to achieve this was by comparing said experiences to the current (war-)trauma literature. As such, my study highlights what research into the experiences of Yugoslavian pre-war migrants, and subsequently other pre-war migrants, can add to the study of (war-)trauma, and, in doing so, I show how the puzzle piece 'Yugoslavian pre-war migrants' fits into the larger picture of (war-)trauma literature.

Method

To reach this goal, I went through three steps of research. I started by reading literature regarding (war-)trauma so that I had a baseline of knowledge that could help me understand the experiences of Yugoslavian pre-war migrants. This baseline was primarily built around the definitions of the trauma-related concepts the 'Traumatic Event' (TE), Acute Stress Disorder (ASD), and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), given by the American Psychiatric Association (APA). However, due to the lack of literature regarding pre-war migrants and their traumatic experiences, resulting in me being unsure about what aspects of (war-)trauma were relevant to my study, this initial study was very unrefined. To counteract this, I decided to gather my own data by conducting interviews with Yugoslavian pre-war migrants. Thus, following my first broad dive into the academic literature, I

¹ Example of such studies include, V. Papageorgiou et al. (2000). War trauma and psychopathology in Bosnian refugee children. *European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*. V.9, N.2. and, A. A. Thabet et al. (2007). Exposure to war trauma and PTSD among parents and children in the Gaza strip. *European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*. V.20, V.10.

reached out to a number of Yugoslavian pre-war migrants with the question if they would be willing to help me with my thesis by doing an interview for me about their experiences with the Yugoslavian civil war and its impact on their lives.² Even though the first interview I conducted was pretty rough around the edges, as it was based only on my general understanding of (war-)trauma, it did provide me the insight into the experiences of Yugoslavian pre-war migrants that I needed in order to specify my literature study. From here on, I went through a process of conducting interviews, structuring my data, collecting literature that could explain my data, refining my interview questions in order to better reflect my growing understanding of the traumatic experiences my correspondents endured, and, ultimately, creating an academic framework based on said literature that I could compare my data to, and that I could thus use to determine the position of Yugoslavian pre-war migrants in the field of (war-)trauma studies. The literature I collected included papers I had already read in my first literature study and more niche studies whose relevance only became apparent after I knew what Yugoslavian pre-war migrants went through during the war. My first interview also showed me that I would need to extend my literature study beyond the confines (war-)trauma because understanding why certain events were traumatic also required an understanding of Yugoslavia's social, cultural, and political structures before and during the war.³ The final stage of my research was comparing the experiences of Yugoslavian pre-war migrants and the academic literature I found to be most applicable to those experiences.

I have laid out the entire process of my research in this thesis. Beginning with an analysis of the literature I used to construct my academic framework. This framework, which I have dubbed the 'traumatic process' (TP), consists of a foundation, the APA's definition TE, ASD, and PTSD, and a selection of relevant studies that add to this foundation by examining the more in-depth aspects of the experiences of my correspondents. Following the explanation of my framework, the second chapter is an analysis of my interviews. Herein I highlight the most important traumatic experiences brought to light during the interviews. I also explain why these events were so traumatic with the aid of the literature discussed in chapter one and some additional sources covering the

² Originally my plan was to conduct upwards of ten interviews, but, during my first two interviews it became clear that that would be unrealistic. Firstly, I had intended for the interviews to, at most, take about an hour, so that I could conduct multiple interviews in one day. However, the first two interviews would both take longer than three hours to complete. Secondly, I had severely underestimated the mental and emotional toll that interviews would have on me. Before starting my interviews, my father warned me that the war was still a very painful subject for Yugoslavian pre-war migrants. As such, the interviews would bring back a lot of painful memories and strong emotions in my correspondents, which could make the interviews incredibly intense. As befitting of a good son, I did not listen to my father, and assumed I could handle it. Yet, listening to my correspondents recount their traumatic experiences took me a lot more energy, both mentally and emotionally, than I had expected. At the time, I could not pinpoint why the interviews had cost me so much energy. However, knowing what I now know of trauma, it was probably due to the interviews focussing on the personal experiences of people I was connected to through nationality. Furthermore, my correspondents put into words all that my parents had gone through but had never fully discussed with me, making each event they recounted hit that much more closer to home, as I began to understand the full extent of not just their, but also, my parents' trauma. Finally, time was also an issue, due to me having classes and my correspondents having to work during the week. As such, the only time we could meet up for interviews was during the weekends. All of this resulted in it taking about one month to complete four interviews, with six correspondents, and structuring all the acquired data. Even though I had more interviews lined up, I decided that conducting more interviews would take too much time and energy, time and energy that was better spent on writing my thesis. Regarding representation, six correspondents seems to be too small a sample size to be representative of an entire group. However, I made sure to include men, women, and people from different ethnic background to ensure representability. Furthermore, as stated by all of my correspondents, the experiences they went through during the war, and the consequences of those experiences, were shared by all Yugoslavian pre-war migrants they had made contact with during, and after, the war (see appendices I - V). This includes my other correspondents, as they have all known each other since the war and have talked about it extensively amongst themselves (See Ch. 2 and appendices I - V). As such, despite being small in number, my interviews are representative of the experiences of Yugoslavian pre-war migrants.

³ Despite the literature I read regarding the social, cultural and political context of Yugoslavia before, during and after the civil war being essential to understanding the experiences of my correspondents, I do not discuss them in my first chapter. The reason for this is that the first chapter focuses solely on the (war-)trauma literature I use to explain the experiences of my correspondents, and subsequently, to determine the position of Yugoslavian pre-war migrants within the field of (war-)trauma studies, and literature surrounding the context of the civil war does not belong to this group.

social, cultural, and political context of Yugoslavia. The final chapter of my thesis is dedicated to comparing the existing literature and my findings to determine how, and why, Yugoslavian pre-war migrants fit into the current academic landscape of (war-)trauma. The rest of this introduction presents more comprehensive overviews of each chapter to explain my approach to this thesis more clearly.

Ch. 1

In the first chapter, I discuss and explain my academic framework, or the traumatic process. As mentioned above, this framework consists of two parts, a foundation, and the more in-depth building blocks. I based the foundation on the APA's definitions of the 'Traumatic Event', Acute Stress Disorder, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. To this foundation, I, over time, added additional studies and theories that I had found to be relevant to my case study. These include papers by Neria & Sullivan, and Silver et al., both of which discuss the connection between exposure to traumatic events via the media and the development of ASD/PTSD-related symptoms.⁴

After my initial literature study, it became clear to me that there are three distinct phases an individual goes through when experiencing trauma, which I later dubbed the 'traumatic process', and that these phases can be defined by one of the earlier mentioned (war-)trauma-related concepts. The first phase of the traumatic process is **exposure to a traumatic event**, with its cornerstone the TE. The second phase is composed of **the short-term emotional responses** to witnessing a traumatic event, and it is defined by ASD. The final phase consists of **the long-term emotional consequences** suffered as a result of witnessing a traumatic event, with PTSD as its defining aspect. To successfully explain my academic framework, I go over all three phases and discuss both the APA's definition of each corresponding cornerstone and the most relevant current studies and theories surrounding each phase that are applicable to the experiences of Yugoslavian pre-war migrants with said phase.

Ch. 2

Following the explanation of my academic framework, the second chapter focuses on the experiences of my correspondents with the civil war and the trauma they suffered as a result of it. As no other research has examined their experiences, I had to find another way to get the information I needed. I decided on conducting interviews with six Yugoslavian pre-war migrants. The data from these interviews is the basis for the representation of the experiences of Yugoslavian pre-war migrants with the civil war and the following trauma in this thesis, making the interviews a vital part of my research. Through an analysis of my data, it became apparent that the overarching themes, **the outbreak of the Yugoslavian Civil War, the poisoning portrayal of the war in the media, and the impact of said trauma on how my correspondents saw themselves as part of the Netherlands**, had the most considerable impact on my correspondents' emotional responses to the civil war. The primary reason behind the importance of these events is that they are closely connected to **'identity trauma'**. This is a seemingly new and unique form of trauma that refers to my correspondents' involuntary loss of their personal and national identity at the same time. It plays a central role in the traumatic experiences of my correspondents because it is present in every stage of their traumatic process. Furthermore, most of the 'smaller' traumatic events fit within one of these overarching themes, making them effective categories, and lastly, the effects of these three themes were the most visible during the interviews and in my data.⁵

⁴ Y. Neria & G.M. Sullivan. (2011). *Understanding the Mental Health Effects of Indirect Exposure to Mass Trauma Through the Media*. Found at: [Understanding the Mental Health Effects of Indirect Exposure to Mass Trauma Through the Media \(nih.gov\)](#) and, R. C. Silver et al. (2013). Mental- and Physical-Health Effects of Acute Exposure to Media Images of the September 11, 2001, Attacks and the Iraq War. *Psychological Science*. V.24, N.9.

⁵ Appendices I - V.

Aside from these three categories, I also discuss several short- and long-term consequences, which did not precisely fit into one of my broader categories. However, they were still important to positioning Yugoslavian pre-war migrants in the academic literature, as they either added to or strayed from the literature. On top of that, they also help paint a more complete picture of what my correspondents went through during the war. I decided to discuss these findings separately, as they were more general consequences of witnessing a traumatic event, meaning that they could be added to all of the categories or none of them. Thus, I decided to group all these findings into one category to avoid repetition or oversaturation of short paragraphs. The exact approach to the interviews is discussed in chapter two.

Ch. 3

As the literature discussed in the first chapter was not specifically designed to explain the experiences of Yugoslavian pre-war migrants, their ability to explain my findings was good, but not perfect. By analysing why the existing literature surrounding (war-)trauma, as presented in chapter one, is only partially compatible with the experiences of Yugoslavian pre-war migrants, as presented in chapter two, a number of similarities and differences between both come to light. These similarities and differences serve as the indicators of how the study of Yugoslavian pre-war migrants fits into and how it adds to the existing literature, and they are the focus of the final chapter of my thesis. In this chapter, I discuss the most critical findings from my comparison of the first two chapters. These findings are categorized according to the two levels of my academic framework, starting with an analysis of how my data compares to the APA's definitions of TE, ASD, and PTSD, followed by the comparison between my data and the academic literature discussed in chapter one. These categories are further sub-divided into findings in support of the established literature and findings that contrast them. Thus, through these categories, I present my arguments as to how Yugoslavian pre-war migrants fit into the study of (war-)trauma and why they should be included in the study. Finally, as I could not find any literature discussing identity trauma, hence it being seemingly unique, I also attempt to determine how it fits into the (war-)trauma literature based solely on the experiences of my correspondents.

Structure

In order to create a clear common thread throughout my thesis, and because it is the foundation of my research, all of the chapters are, in one way or another, structured according to the chronological order of the traumatic process. Chapter one embodies this to a tee, starting with the initial encounter, followed by the short-term emotional response, and ending with the long-term emotional response. In chapter two, I have taken a slightly different approach, as it is organised around the three central themes mentioned earlier. However, the analysis of each category is still ordered according to the traumatic process. Chapter three is structured similarly to chapter two, as it is built around the two levels of the traumatic process, according to which I have grouped my arguments for Yugoslavian pre-war migrants to be included in the study of (war-)trauma. And, once again, each of these themes is set up according to the traumatic process.

Ch.1 Defining and Discussing the ‘Traumatic Process’

In this chapter, I explain all three phases of my academic framework by discussing how the APA has defined each corresponding cornerstone and how certain studies in the current academic landscape surrounding each phase are relevant to my study.

1.1 The ‘Traumatic Event’

The first phase of the traumatic process occurs when an individual is exposed to a so-called ‘traumatic event’. This traumatic event/moment is the catalyst for an individual’s short (ASD) and long-term (PTSD) trauma. In the fifth edition of their Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder (DSM-5), the American Psychiatric Association (APA) has defined the TE as ‘**an event that exposes an individual to threatened death, serious injury or sexual violence**’.⁶ Such experiences include, but are not limited, to natural disasters, serious accidents, acts of terrorism, combat/war, and rape.⁷

Research has shown that there are many factors related to encountering a traumatic event that can shape an individual’s perception of that event and his/her subsequent trauma. However, in my framework, I only considered the three I found to be most relevant to my case study. Firstly, an individual can be exposed to a traumatic event directly or indirectly. Direct exposure occurs when an individual is a witness to a traumatic event first-hand. On the other hand, indirect exposure can occur by witnessing a traumatic event indirectly, for example, through the media, by learning of a loved one who experienced a traumatic event, or through repeated confrontation with aversive details of such an event through conversation.⁸

It is essential to distinguish between direct and indirect exposure because how an individual is exposed to a traumatic event has consequences for the later development of ASD/PTSD. The general patterns of how direct or indirect exposure translates to the further development of ASD/PTSD are presented in studies by Zimering et al. and Neria & Sullivan. The 2006 study by Zimering et al. discusses the ramifications of indirect or direct exposure to 9/11, and the 2011 study by Neria & Sullivan discusses the connection between mass media and trauma. In their study, Zimering et al. show that the rates of PTSD were higher in relief workers that were directly exposed to 9/11 when compared to people who were indirectly exposed to the event.⁹ Their theory is further elaborated upon by Neria & Sullivan, who show that, whilst it is true that direct exposure comparatively leads to more long-term consequences, indirect exposure, generally speaking, still leads to high rates of ASD.¹⁰ Seeing as my correspondents were exposed largely indirectly to the civil war, as two of them would go back to Yugoslavia during the war to help Western relief operations, it would lead to an

⁶ C. Benjet et al. (2016). *The epidemiology of traumatic event exposure worldwide: results from the World Mental Health Survey Consortium*. Found at: [The epidemiology of traumatic event exposure worldwide: results from the World Mental Health Survey Consortium \(nih.gov\)](#).

⁷ American Psychiatric Association. (2020). *What is Posttraumatic Stress Disorder?*. Found at: [What Is PTSD? \(psychiatry.org\)](#).

⁸ C. Benjet et al. (2016). *The epidemiology of traumatic event exposure worldwide: results from the World Mental Health Survey Consortium*.

⁹ R. Zimering et al. (2006). Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in Disaster Relief Workers Following Direct and Indirect Trauma Exposure to Ground Zero. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*. V.19, N.4.

¹⁰ Y. Neria & G.M. Sullivan. (2011). *Understanding the Mental Health Effects of Indirect Exposure to Mass Trauma Through the Media*. Found at: [Understanding the Mental Health Effects of Indirect Exposure to Mass Trauma Through the Media \(nih.gov\)](#).

incorrect analysis of my findings in chapter two if I applied the patterns of direct exposure to the experiences of my correspondents.¹¹ This is why it is important to distinguish between direct and indirect exposure.

Even though two out of my six correspondents were exposed directly to traumatic events, my data showed barely any significant difference between my correspondents' short- and long-term emotional responses because, as discussed in the introduction, the emotional consequences mentioned in my data are shared by all of my correspondents. Due to this lack of difference, my literature study only focuses on the literature surrounding indirect exposure to traumatic events, as that was the dominant way my correspondents were exposed to the war.

Aside from direct or indirect exposure, case studies by Breslau et al., Sledjeski et al., and Neuner et al. have shown that individuals that have been exposed to multiple traumatic events are more vulnerable to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).¹² Lastly, in their 2002 study on disaster victims, Norris et al. show that the intensity of a traumatic event, determined by the severity of the emotional response, as well as the individual's perception of the circumstances surrounding said event, which can be influenced by gender, prior experiences, and personality characteristics, also plays a crucial role in the development of further trauma.¹³ These aspects of exposure to indirect trauma are relevant because my correspondents were witnesses to multiple traumatic events throughout the war, and the context surrounding these events played a crucial role in them being traumatic. In the next chapter, I discuss these events and their connection to the literature more in-depth.

1.2 Short-Term Emotional Response

The short-term emotional responses experienced by an individual following the exposure to a traumatic event is the second phase of the 'traumatic process'. This immediate development of trauma is referred to by the American Psychiatric Association as '**Acute Stress Disorder**' (ASD).¹⁴ Its symptoms are identical to that of PTSD. For example, an individual might re-live the traumatic event through involuntary, reoccurring nightmares and memories or avoid anything related to the event.¹⁵ However, its duration is much shorter, lasting between three days to one month after witnessing a traumatic event.¹⁶ Even though shorter, ASD still has a severe impact on an individual's daily life. One of the more telling stories of how the war impacted the daily lives of my correspondents came from one of my correspondents who mentioned not sleeping for an entire day out of fear for the life of his mother, who was traveling to her hometown through an area where snipers were active. Immediately following this sleepless night, he would go through a short period, one to two weeks, of barely sleeping at night due to nightmares regarding the safety of his mother.¹⁷ Whilst the APA's

¹¹ Appendices I - IV.

¹² N. Breslau et al. (1999). Previous Exposure to Trauma and PTSD Effects of Subsequent Trauma: Results From the Detroit Area Survey of Trauma. *American Journal of Psychiatry*. V.156, N.6; and, E. M. Sledjeski. & B. Speisman. & L. C. Dierker. (2008). *Does number of lifetime traumas explain the relationship between PTSD and chronic medical conditions? Answers from the National Comorbidity Survey-Replication (NCS-R)*. Found at: [Does number of lifetime traumas explain the relationship between PTSD and chronic medical conditions? Answers from the National Comorbidity Survey-Replication \(NCS-R\) \(nih.gov\)](#); and, F. Neuner et al. (2004). Psychological trauma and evidence for enhanced vulnerability for posttraumatic stress disorder through previous trauma among West Nile refugees. *BMC Psychiatry*. V.4, N.34.

¹³ F. Norris et al. (2002). 60,000 Disaster Victims Speak: Part I. An Empirical Review of the Empirical Literature, 1981-2001. *Psychiatry*. V.65, N.3.

¹⁴ American Psychiatric Association. (2020). *What is Posttraumatic Stress Disorder?* Found at: [What Is PTSD? \(psychiatry.org\)](#).

¹⁵ American Psychiatric Association. (2020). *What is Posttraumatic Stress Disorder?* A full list of the symptoms of PTSD, as defined by the APA, can be found on page 13.

¹⁶ American Psychiatric Association. (2020). *What is Posttraumatic Stress Disorder?*

¹⁷ Appendix I.

explanation of ASD is a good baseline. Several specific connections between exposure to a traumatic event and the subsequent development of ASD need to be brought up because they are closely tied to the three most common ways my correspondents were exposed to traumatic events. These three, indirect, ways were, **through the media**, primarily via TV and newspaper, as both Dutch and foreign news outlets provided coverage of the war, through **conversations with refugees** who came to the Netherlands during the war, and through, although often limited, **communications with family members/friends** that were still in Yugoslavia.¹⁸ The story recounted in the preface is an excellent example of the latter.

The consequences of exposure to traumatic events through the media are well documented in the academic literature. The 2011 study by Neria and Sullivan, which researched the effects of indirect exposure to mass trauma via the media on an individual's mental health following the September 11 terrorist attacks, provides a solid basis to argue for a direct, causal connection between exposure to traumatic events through the media and the development of symptoms of ASD/PTSD.¹⁹ Their study showed that, following the terrorist attacks, people who were indirectly exposed to the event experienced severe initial but not extended increases in the development of symptoms.²⁰ Whilst Neria & Sullivan's study provides solid proof of the connection between media and the development of ASD. It does so only for 24-hour television news. They focused on 24-hour television news because, according to Neria & Sullivan, the advent of 24-hour television news caused indirect exposure to mass violence via the media to become more widespread. Thus they saw it as the primary form of media that exposed individuals to traumatic events.²¹ However, in order to fully explain why my correspondents experienced the media as traumatic, examining how newspapers can lead to trauma is also necessary.

A study conducted by Silver *et al.* in 2013, which discussed the mental- and physical health effects on the American population following exposure to media images of the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the Iraq War, would build upon the work of Neria & Sullivan. Firstly, their study strongly suggests that aside from 24-hour television news, other forms of media could also lead to psychological stress, most notably static images in newspapers of harm being done to other people.²² Following the September 11 terrorist attack and during the Iraq war, newspapers began featuring images of these events frequently and prominently. According to Silver *et al.*, these images of war, destruction, and pain would lead to immediate psychological stress. Furthermore, they also noted that continued exposure to such images could result in consequences beyond ASD because repeatedly witnessing such traumatic events can result in a long-term accumulation of psychological stress and cause PTSD.²³ Secondly, their study suggests that understanding the context of the images is also important. For example, in their research, the images of violence were closely related to those exposed to them, American people watching harm being done to Americans. As such, the images began to relate to their national identity. The aspect of 'harm being done to other people' was no

¹⁸ Appendices I, II & IV.

¹⁹ Y. Neria & G.M. Sullivan. (2011). *Understanding the Mental Health Effects of Indirect Exposure to Mass Trauma Through the Media*. Found at: [Understanding the Mental Health Effects of Indirect Exposure to Mass Trauma Through the Media \(nih.gov\)](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/21488881/).

²⁰ Y. Neria & G.M. Sullivan. (2011). *Understanding the Mental Health Effects of Indirect Exposure to Mass Trauma Through the Media*.

²¹ Y. Neria & G.M. Sullivan. (2011). *Understanding the Mental Health Effects of Indirect Exposure to Mass Trauma Through the Media*.

²² R. C. Silver *et al.* (2013). Mental- and Physical-Health Effects of Acute Exposure to Media Images of the September 11, 2001, Attacks and the Iraq War. *Psychological Science*. V.24, N.9.

²³ R. C. Silver *et al.* (2013). Mental- and Physical-Health Effects of Acute Exposure to Media Images of the September 11, 2001, Attacks and the Iraq War.

longer applicable. Instead, it became 'harm being done to my own people'. Thus the images hit closer to home as they concerned their fellow Americans.²⁴

Lastly, indirect trauma can also be experienced via conversation. Studies by K. Badger et al. and Clark & Gioro have shown that professional helpers who work with clients with PTSD often experience a change in their own behaviour, be it numbed feelings, fearfulness, withdrawal, or nightmares.²⁵ Despite their situation not being entirely comparable to the situation of pre-war migrants, as medical helpers encounter their clients in a professional setting whilst pre-war migrants share stories between each other and refugees in an unprofessional setting. It is reasonable to assume that similar stories of war and everything that comes with war would have a similar impact on the psyche of professional helpers and pre-war migrants.

1.3 Long-Term Emotional Consequences

The final phase of the traumatic process consists of the long-term effects an individual can suffer as a result of witnessing a traumatic event.²⁶ The APA defines long-term as longer than a month after exposure to the event. Among the most commonly diagnosed conditions are anxiety and depression. However, by far the most infamous and widespread condition is PTSD.²⁷ PTSD was officially classified by the American Psychiatric Association in 1980, in the third edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder (DSM-3).²⁸ Since then, it has been defined as **'a psychiatric disorder that may occur in people who have experienced or witnessed a traumatic event such as a natural disaster, a serious accident, a terrorist act, war/combat, or rape or who have been threatened with death, sexual violence or serious injury.'**²⁹ PTSD is most commonly associated with combat veterans. However, according to the APA, it can occur in anyone, no matter your job, ethnicity, nationality, culture, or age. The only prerequisite of PTSD is exposure to a traumatic event.³⁰

Individuals who have PTSD have intense, disturbing thoughts and feelings that are linked to their traumatic experiences long after the event has passed. Symptoms of PTSD include, but are not limited to, recalling the traumatic events through nightmares and flashbacks, having extreme emotional responses of fear, sadness, and anger when confronted with anything to do with said event, and feeling detached or estranged from other people. On top of that, sensory triggers, like sounds or images, might remind an individual of his/her traumatic event, causing a strong negative reaction.³¹

The APA has sorted all these symptoms of PTSD into four categories, intrusion, avoidance, alterations in cognition and mood, alterations in arousal and reactivity.³² They define these as follows:

²⁴ R. C. Silver et al. (2013). Mental- and Physical-Health Effects of Acute Exposure to Media Images of the September 11, 2001, Attacks and the Iraq War.

²⁵ K. Badger & D. Royse & C. Craig. (2008). Hospital Social Workers and Indirect Trauma Exposure: An Exploratory Study of Contributing Factors. *Health and Social Work*. V.33, N.1. and, M. L. Clark & S. Gioro. (1998). Nurses, Indirect Trauma and Prevention. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*. V.30, N.1.

²⁶ American Psychiatric Association. (2020). *What is Posttraumatic Stress Disorder?*. Found at: [What Is PTSD? \(psychiatry.org\)](https://www.psychiatry.org/what-is-ptsd).

²⁷ M. Fazel. & J. Wheeler. & J. Danesh. (2005). Prevalence of serious mental disorder in 7000 refugees resettled in Western countries: a systemic review. *The Lancet*. V.365, N.9467.

²⁸ N. Breslau (2009). The epidemiology of Trauma, PTSD and other posttrauma disorders. *Trauma, Violence & Abuse*. V.10, N.3.

²⁹ American Psychiatric Association. (2020). *What is Posttraumatic Stress Disorder?*.

³⁰ American Psychiatric Association. (2020). *What is Posttraumatic Stress Disorder?*. Found at: [What Is PTSD? \(psychiatry.org\)](https://www.psychiatry.org/what-is-ptsd)

³¹ American Psychiatric Association. (2020). *What is Posttraumatic Stress Disorder?*.

³² American Psychiatric Association. (2020). *What is Posttraumatic Stress Disorder?*.

- *Intrusion*: Re-living the traumatic event through repeated and involuntary memories, dreams, flashbacks, and nightmares.
- *Avoidance*: Individuals may avoid people, places, activities, objects, and situations that may trigger memories of the traumatic event. They may also try to avoid remembering the event by refusing to speak about what happened and how they felt.
- *Alterations in cognition and mood*: This category includes symptoms like negative thoughts and feelings that result in distorted and ongoing beliefs about oneself or others (i.e., 'no one can be trusted', 'I should have done something'). These distorted beliefs subsequently result in wrongly blaming others or themselves about the cause of the event. Other symptoms include ongoing fear, horror, anger, guilt, shame, less interest in activities previously enjoyed, feeling detached, and not being able to experience positive emotions.
- *Alterations in arousal and reactivity*: People may be irritable, have angry outbursts, behave in a self-destructive way, be overly careful of their surroundings, have problems concentrating and sleeping.

A good example of a symptom of PTSD present in my data is the continuous feeling of distrust towards the media. According to my correspondents, this is the result of the biased, incorrect, and politically driven representation of the Yugoslavian Civil War in both Western and Yugoslavian media. To this day, they do not accept a lot of what is said in the media. Instead, they react to it pessimistically, seeing the media as nothing more than a tool of the government to spread their specific political agenda, similar to how they feel it was employed during the civil war.³³ This is but one of many symptoms of PTSD experienced by my correspondents that fit into the APA's description. In the next chapter, I address such examples more in-depth.

Even though the APA's definitions of the symptoms of PTSD are widely accepted and used, there is an ongoing debate in academic circles surrounding the universality of (war-)trauma, PTSD, other trauma-related disorders, and possible treatments.³⁴ H. Kienzler explains the two main positions in this debate in her article 'Debating war-trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in an interdisciplinary arena'. For simplicity's sake, I will refer to these positions as universal and non-universal throughout the rest of my thesis. The universalists believe that PTSD is a 'universal and cross-culturally valid psychopathological response to traumatic distress, which may be cured or ameliorated with (Western) clinical and psychosocial therapeutic measures'.³⁵ Opposite to the universalists stand the non-universalists who argue that 'Western discourse on trauma only makes sense in the context of a particular cultural and moral framework (Western) and, therefore, becomes problematic in the context of other cultural and social settings'.³⁶ This is an important distinction to discuss because of one significant finding in my data that is only supported by the non-universalist side in Lynn Jones' book on Bosnian children who grew up during the Yugoslavian civil war.

In her book, Lynne Jones discusses her theory that not everyone that shows symptoms of PTSD requires or wants treatment.³⁷ It directly opposes the universalist approach that views anyone who has PTSD as a damaged individual in need of (western) healing strategies.³⁸ When conducting my interviews, it became clear that a duality similar to the one presented by Jones was also appearing in

³³ Appendices I - IV.

³⁴ H. Kienzler. (2008). Debating War-Trauma and Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in an Interdisciplinary Arena. *Social Science & Medicine*. V.67, N.2.

³⁵ H. Kienzler. (2008). Debating War-Trauma and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in an Interdisciplinary Arena. *Social Science & Medicine*. V.67, N.2.

³⁶ H. Kienzler. (2008). Debating War-Trauma and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in an Interdisciplinary Arena.

³⁷ L. Jones. (2004). *Then They Started Shooting: Growing Up in Wartime Bosnia*. 1st edn. Cambridge(Massachusetts): Harvard University Press.

³⁸ H. Kienzler. (2008). Debating War-Trauma and Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in an Interdisciplinary Arena.

my own data. On the one hand, all of my correspondents showed symptoms of PTSD, but, on the other hand, most of them did not believe they had PTSD, and as such, they were not open to the idea of receiving treatment.³⁹ Only my third correspondent was aware of her symptoms. However, she did not want to receive treatment as her faith in the West had plummeted due to the war. Whilst I did not directly discuss why my other correspondents did not partake in any form of official psychiatric treatment, outside of them not believing they had it. It is very likely that if they did believe they had PTSD, their reaction to receiving treatment would be similar to that of my third correspondent, as their faith in the West was also gone after the war.⁴⁰

In this chapter, I discussed all three phases of my framework. Starting with the cornerstone of each phase, followed by an analysis of the literature relevant to my case study. The first paragraph examined the TE and addressed the three factors that have influenced how my correspondents perceived the events they witnessed during the war, distinguishing between direct and indirect exposure to a TE, repeated exposure to trauma, and the intensity of the event they witnessed. The following paragraph examined several theories that addressed the connections between the three most common ways my correspondents were exposed to TE, the media, conversation with refugees and family/friends who were still in Yugoslavia, and the short-term emotional responses to said events. The final paragraph focussed on the long-term consequences of exposure to a TE. It was centred primarily around the APA's definition of symptoms of PTSD, as many of my correspondents' experiences fit into it. In the next chapter of my thesis, I build on this framework by analysing my interviews and linking the most important findings to the literature discussed in this chapter.

³⁹ Appendix V.

⁴⁰ Lack of faith in politics is a consequence of my correspondents' loss in the media, in chapter 2 this discussed in more detail.

Ch.2 Interviews and Data Analysis

2.1 Goal

The purpose of the conducted interviews was to uncover how Yugoslavian pre-war migrants experienced the Yugoslavian civil war and its traumatic consequences while living somewhere else, in this case, the Netherlands. To do this, I used four questions, based on the three stages of the traumatic process, as the basis of each interview. These questions were:

- How did you experience the Yugoslavian Civil War?
- Do you have any examples of events that stuck with you?
- How did you react to these events, if question 2 was answered, or the civil war in general in the short-term?
- How did these events, if question 2 was answered, or the war in general influence you long term?

2.2 Method and Structure

In this project, I gathered my data via four interviews I conducted with Yugoslavian pre-war migrants. There were other ways in which the necessary information could have been collected aside from interviews, such as questionnaires. However, interviews seemed to be the best option as the subject of trauma is very personal and requires a level of sensitivity and empathy that questionnaires do not allow.⁴¹ Furthermore, according to Hay, interviews allow the researcher to properly structure the experiences of his/her correspondents as it grants them the ability to explain their actions and feelings extensively.⁴²

I chose to do the semi-structured interviews. I decided on this, more conversational, approach following the advice of my father, who noted that the subject is still very painful to many Yugoslavian pre-war migrants and that it was previously only discussed in the company of those whom they trusted, primarily friends and family who knew what they had gone through during result of the war. As such, he noted that it would be best to give them a lot of freedom during the interviews and show my interest in and understanding of their experiences to make them feel comfortable and thus willing to answer my questions.⁴³ Semi-structured interviews allow for both of these requirements. Firstly, they do not consist of a strictly formalized list of questions. Instead, they focus on open-ended questions, thus turning the interviews into a format akin to a conversation and giving my correspondents the freedom to speak their minds without interrupting the structure of my interview. Furthermore, this approach also gave me the opportunity to ask questions that arose from the answers given by the correspondents.⁴⁴ I also made sure to have a number of more specific backup questions, which could be used if the conversation were to come to a halt. Throughout the process of interviewing, I updated these questions quite regularly to stay in line with my growing understanding of my correspondent's experiences with the Yugoslavian civil war.⁴⁵

⁴¹ A. Bhattacharjee. (2012). *Social Science Research: Principles, Methods, and Practices*. 2nd edn. Florida, USA: University of South Florida.

⁴² I. Hay. (2016). *Qualitative Research Methods in Human Geography*. 4th edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

⁴³ This statement by my father also supports my claim from chapter 1, regarding the reasoning behind my correspondents' unwillingness to receive any form of official psychiatric treatment, as it heavily suggests that their distrust of the West extended beyond media and politics.

⁴⁴ I. Hay. (2016). *Qualitative Research Methods in Human Geography*.

⁴⁵ A full list of these specific question can be found in my appendix V.

In order to uphold the ethical responsibility of the interviewer, I made sure to inform each correspondent what was expected of him/her, I guaranteed their anonymity, and I asked if they were comfortable with me recording the interviews; which they were not, so I made written notes instead. I also told them that whatever they told me would remain between us and would not be shared outside of this anonymous essay. Lastly, I gave my correspondents the opportunity to read my paper before I handed it in, allowing them to assess if my representation of their experiences was correct and if they agreed with the included information being made 'public'.⁴⁶ As my correspondents were not comfortable with recording the interviews, there are no transcripts to refer to. Instead, I have included my notes of each interview as appendices. Furthermore, I have also included a list of exchanges I had with my correspondents after the interviews regarding specific questions that popped during my research or that only came up during a later interview.⁴⁷

Throughout the process of interviewing and reading literature, I made sure to create a feedback loop between the information I got from the interviews and the relevant literature. In doing so, I made sure that the conclusions I reached were based on both my own findings and the already established literature. This approach is based on the idea of 't Hart et al. that qualitative research should transition from the unique -the experiences of my correspondents- to generalisations -my conclusions- in a logical and methodological way.⁴⁸

As stated in the introduction, I have divided the majority of traumatic experiences witnessed by my correspondents into three overarching themes, the outbreak of the war, the poisoning representation of the war in the media, and the consequences of their trauma on how they saw themselves in the Netherlands. Due to their importance, as they are closely connected to identity trauma and have the most visible short- and long-term consequences, each category is analysed in its own paragraph. Herein I go over the corresponding findings from the interviews, most notably being the role of identity trauma in said theme, according to the phases of the traumatic process. I also assess why these events were so traumatic based on the literature I read or on something that was mentioned in the interviews. Aside from these three more prominent themes, I also discuss several short- and long-term consequences that were not specifically tied to any of these themes. Instead, they are more 'general' emotional responses to the war, and they aid in creating a complete picture of what my correspondents went through.

2.3 The Outbreak of the War and 'Identity Trauma'

When asked, the first event my correspondents referred to as being traumatic was the outbreak of the Yugoslavian Civil War. The outbreak of the war was such a shock because none of them had initially expected the war to break out, and, more importantly, it shattered their perception of Yugoslavia and themselves.⁴⁹ Interestingly, my correspondents were well aware of the rising ethno-nationalistic ideologies in the years following Tito's death. Because, according to my correspondents, in the years before the war, these rising ethnic tensions began to influence every aspect of their daily lives in Yugoslavia.⁵⁰ From family members developing a hatred for other ethnic groups to conflicts at universities between teachers from different ethnic backgrounds about what to teach and how to teach, particularly in cases where university staff wanted to infuse their teachings with specific ethnic

⁴⁶ I. Hay. (2016). *Qualitative Research Methods in Human Geography*. 4th edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

⁴⁷ Appendix V.

⁴⁸ 't Hart et al. (2016). *Onderzoeksmethode*. 9th edn. Amsterdam: Boom.

⁴⁹ Appendices I - IV.

⁵⁰ Appendices I - IV.

ideologies.⁵¹ However, they had expected it just to blow over, as they also saw that a large part of the population, themselves included, still believed in the ideal of a united Yugoslavia. This belief in unity came from the value people put on being Yugoslavian. They saw Yugoslavia as a victor of the Second World War, as a nation that had managed to successfully walk the line between the Eastern and Western political blocks during the cold war, and as a nation strong because of its unity under Tito, in short, they were proud to be Yugoslavian.⁵² This feeling of pride in Yugoslavia's national identity is why my correspondents, and many other Yugoslavians, linked their personal identity to the national identity of Yugoslavia.⁵³ Due to this connection between national and personal identity, it is not hard to see why the outbreak of the war meant so much more to my correspondents than just the destruction of their homeland. The fall of Yugoslavia had shattered not only their country but also their identity. A correspondent from my third interview put it best, "*it felt as if we had lost our country not just physically, but also emotionally*".⁵⁴ What made their loss even worse was that in place of Yugoslavia had come a collection of smaller nations, each linked to new ethno-nationalistic identities. As these identities had lost the ideals so important to Yugoslavia, my correspondents could not, and would not, identify as them, leaving them with no official identity following the war.⁵⁵ This feeling of losing their identity signifies that my correspondents have identity trauma.

Identity Trauma in Context

In order to explain the origin of my correspondents' identity trauma, I must briefly discuss the two factors that, based on my interviews, are the foundation for their development of identity trauma. These factors are the perception of identity in Yugoslavia and the political history of Yugoslavia.⁵⁶

To understand how identity was, and still is, perceived in Yugoslavia, we must think of identity not as a fluid reflection of oneself, as we do in the West. Instead, we should try and perceive identity as a rigid system of all-encompassing ideas, beliefs, and traditions that come hand-in-hand with whatever nationality you identify as.⁵⁷ A good example to illustrate this difference is religion. In the West and in Yugoslavia, under Tito's rule, you can/could generally identify as any nationality whilst being Muslim, Catholic, or any other belief. However, following the civil war, your religion was defined by your nationality in Yugoslavia. This meant that being Croatian equalled being a Roman Catholic, and identifying as Serbian indicated that you followed the Serbian-Orthodox doctrines, despite what you had previously believed, and no exceptions were made.⁵⁸

An analysis of Yugoslavia's political history also provides some perspective on why my correspondents could not identify with the 'new' nations that arose from the war. Yugoslavia was a nation built on a collection of other nations, each with its own national identity built on the perception of identity discussed above.⁵⁹ During Tito's reign, it was attempted to slowly combine these identities into a new nationality - 'Yugoslavian' - under the motto of 'Brotherhood and Unity'.⁶⁰

⁵¹ Appendices II & III.

⁵² Appendices I - IV.

⁵³ Appendices II, III & V.

⁵⁴ Appendix III.

⁵⁵ Appendices I - IV.

⁵⁶ Appendices II & III.

⁵⁷ This assessment is based on V. Perica. (2002). *Balkan Idols: Religion and Nationalism in Yugoslav States*. 1st edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press. & D. Sekulic. (1997). The Creation and Dissolution of the Multinational State: the Case of Yugoslavia. *Nations and Nationalism*. V.3, N.2. and, K. Nikolić. & I. Dobrivojević. (2017). Creating a Communist Yugoslavia in the Second World War. *Balkanica XLVIII*. P. 243-267. and, appendix II.

⁵⁸ V. Perica. (2002). *Balkan Idols: Religion and Nationalism in Yugoslav States*.

⁵⁹ D. Sekulic. (1997). The Creation and Dissolution of the Multinational State: the Case of Yugoslavia. & K. Nikolić. & I. Dobrivojević. (2017). Creating a Communist Yugoslavia in the Second World War.

⁶⁰ H. K. Haug. (2012). *Creating a Socialist Yugoslavia: Tito, Communist Leadership and the National Question*. 1st edn. Camden: Bloombury Publishing.

However, when he passed away, so did his attempts to unite the Balkan into a single nationality, and the old national identities, with their rigid views on identity, came to the forefront again.⁶¹ As such, my correspondents who had grown up with, and identified as, Yugoslavian were now disillusioned with these 'new' national identities, and consequently 'new' Yugoslavia as a whole, as they rejected everything their Yugoslavia had stood for, from religious tolerance to the idea of a united Yugoslavia.

For these reasons, I believe my correspondents did not want to identify as any of the new nationalities, as that would mean accepting everything their Yugoslavia had stood against and thus betraying their identity. It was also for these reasons why it was so devastating for them not to be able to officially identify as Yugoslavian, as it served as a constant reminder that their Yugoslavia and all it stood for was no more. Furthermore, it also explains why they felt like they had to adopt a new identity if they wanted to be a part of Yugoslavia after the war because if they did not, they would be more foreign in their country of origin than in the Netherlands. In short, it is these two factors that are the foundation for my correspondents' identity trauma.

Short- and Long-Term Consequences of Identity Trauma

Not only is identity trauma the context that explains why the outbreak of the civil war, and the other traumatic events discussed in this chapter, were experienced as traumatic by my correspondents, but it is also the most enduring emotional consequence of these events. A great example of the enduring nature of their identity trauma is that they continued to identify as Yugoslavian during and immediately after the war. Even now, despite four of my correspondents having a new passport, only as a way to travel within Yugoslavia and be accepted in society, they still view themselves as Yugoslavian first and whatever identity they adopted after the war as a distant second. They will simply never not feel Yugoslavian, and some of them even hold on to the hope that one day Yugoslavia might be whole again.⁶²

This example indicates to me that my correspondents were never able to truly move on and built a new identity for themselves and that they are unable to accept that the identity they want to have no longer exists. It is as if they are still internally fighting a never-ending desperate battle for the spirit of a destroyed nation. Unfortunately, it is impossible to say with any certainty why my correspondents still cling to their Yugoslavian identity, as we did not discuss during the interviews. However, it is very likely that the pride they felt for being Yugoslavian still remains, but instead of linking it to the physical country, they link it to the ideal of the country, causing them to hang on to their old identity.⁶³

2.4 Media and Trauma

Following the outbreak of the war, the loss of their identity and the horrors of the war would also begin to worm their way into their daily lives through Dutch newspapers and international tv-news.⁶⁴ The impact of the media on my correspondents' traumatic experiences occurred on two levels, one, through the events reported in the media, and two, through the biased representation of the war in the media.

⁶¹ M. Somer. (2001). Cascades of Ethnic Polarization: Lessons from Yugoslavia. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. V.573, N.1.

⁶² Appendix III.

⁶³ Appendix V.

⁶⁴ Appendices I - IV.

Going into the interviews, I was well aware of the impact exposure to horrific events via the media could have on an individual.⁶⁵ As such, it was no surprise to find that my correspondents referred to the media as a source of great frustration and pain.⁶⁶ However, what was surprising was in what way they experienced it as traumatic. Naturally, witnessing what was happening in Yugoslavia, through images and reports, was a cause of great pain and worry for all my correspondents. Especially so since many of them came from, or had visited, cities and regions that were constantly in the news, causing my correspondents to constantly worry about family members or friends that were still there.⁶⁷ As such, the violence became a lot more personal. For example, one of my correspondents was in Srebrenica shortly before the infamous ethnic cleansings took place.⁶⁸ Furthermore, these reports and images also resulted in feelings of powerlessness for my correspondents, as they could see their people suffering but were unable to do anything about it.⁶⁹ However, through the interviews, it became apparent that the traumatic impact of the media coverage of the war extended beyond fear for the safety of their loved ones and witnessing horrific acts of ethnic violence. For they still wanted to believe in a united Yugoslavia, and they still wanted to identify as Yugoslavian. Yet, now they were constantly confronted with the situation that directly opposed these beliefs and that had split their nation, and their identity, apart, forcing them to re-live their identity trauma over and over.⁷⁰ As a result of continuous exposure to the war, some of my correspondents stopped watching the news entirely, and others began to avoid anything to do with the war.⁷¹

In the previous chapter, I mentioned that refugees and family members were one of the three main contributors to my correspondents being exposed to traumatic events. However, as the reasons for these events being perceived as traumatic are identical to the reasons why the media was a source of trauma, repeated exposure to horrible details of the war, fear of friends and family, and continued confrontation with the loss of their identity, I have decided not to dedicate an entire paragraph to this aspect of their traumatic experiences as it would be repetitive.⁷²

Another reason for the Western media being seen as a great source of pain by my correspondents was the one-sided way it covered Yugoslavia's situation, resulting in the acceptance of the ethnic division of Yugoslavia within Dutch society.⁷³ As a result, my correspondents were often confronted with the question 'what is your nationality?', which, understandably, was a hurtful question as Yugoslavian was no longer an option, and they did not want to identify as one of the other nationalities that they did not identify with. On top of this, the question also came with a lot of prejudice because the Serbians were seen as the main instigator and 'bad guys' of the war.⁷⁴ According to my correspondents, this was primarily due to how the Western media had represented the conflict.⁷⁵ As such, one of my correspondents had no nationality he could openly identify as, for Yugoslavia no longer existed, and he did not want to say he was Serbian because that brought

⁶⁵ See Ch. 1 analysis of Y. Neria & G. M. Sullivan. (2011). *Understanding the Mental Health Effects of Indirect Exposure to Mass Trauma Through the Media*. Found at: [Understanding the Mental Health Effects of Indirect Exposure to Mass Trauma Through the Media \(nih.gov\)](#). and, R. C. Silver et al. (2013). Mental- and Physical-Health Effects of Acute Exposure to Media Images of the September 11, 2001, Attacks and the Iraq War. *Psychological Science*. V.24, N.9.

⁶⁶ Appendices I - IV.

⁶⁷ Appendices I - IV.

⁶⁸ Appendices III.

⁶⁹ Appendix I - IV.

⁷⁰ Appendices I - IV.

⁷¹ Appendices I & IV.

⁷² Appendices I & III.

⁷³ Appendix I - III.

⁷⁴ Appendix IV.

⁷⁵ Appendices III - IV.

prejudices with it.⁷⁶ Said correspondent put it best "suddenly it felt as if everyone had an opinion of you and where you came from".⁷⁷

As indicated above, the Western media pushed a specific narrative of what was happening in Yugoslavia, a narrative that portrayed the war as unavoidable, the Serbian as the main 'bad guys', and the separation of Yugoslavia as a necessary solution to the ethnic divisions.⁷⁸ This made my correspondents feel as if the West had given up on Yugoslavia. They felt abandoned, and, even worse, as if the West wanted Yugoslavia to split up.⁷⁹ However, it was not just the Western media that was promoting this specific narrative. In the years leading up to the war, news outlets within Yugoslavia did the same. Only their narratives were constructed around the ethnic group it represented, Serbian newspapers supporting Serbian ethno-nationalism, etc. As such, my correspondents see the Yugoslavian media as one of the instigators of the civil war.⁸⁰

Short- and Long-Term Consequences of Exposure via the Media

As discussed earlier, exposure to media had a number of immediate consequences, fear for the safety of their loved ones, adding to their already existing identity trauma, and even instilling feelings of powerlessness. However, how the media represented the civil war had a completely different effect on my correspondents, as it led to them losing all faith in the media.⁸¹ This loss of faith in the media was the follow-up to their initial feelings of betrayal and abandonment by the West and blaming the ethnically biased Yugoslavian media for the outbreak of the war. Even today, my correspondents still do not trust anything said in the media because they see it as just as faulty/biased as the representation of the Yugoslavian Civil War was.⁸²

Their loss of faith in the media is also the direct cause of my correspondent's loss of faith in politics because they saw the narratives pushed by the media as an extension of the political system behind it.⁸³ The fact that one of my correspondents was denied entry onto a tv-show because the politician, who was a guest before him, did not like his views on the war is a good example of this.⁸⁴ Their loss of faith in politics was further worsened by their feeling that the civil war was just some political game played on a scale they could not influence, again confirmed by my previous example. They believed that following the Cold War, the West and the East did not want a strong independent nation, or at least free from major influence, in between their two political blocks, for this would show other countries that that was also an option. As such, they felt the division of Yugoslavia was just a political game played by the larger political powers. Yugoslavia was basically another stage of the Cold War.⁸⁵

2.5 Trauma and Isolation

Witnessing the outbreak of the war and all the other traumatic events my correspondents were exposed to during the war was made even more difficult by the fact that they were forced to watch it all unfold from the sidelines in the Netherlands.

⁷⁶ Appendix IV.

⁷⁷ Appendix IV.

⁷⁸ Appendices III - IV.

⁷⁹ Appendices I, II & III.

⁸⁰ Appendices II - III.

⁸¹ Appendices I - IV.

⁸² Appendix I - IV.

⁸³ Appendices I - IV.

⁸⁴ Appendix II.

⁸⁵ Appendix I - II.

One of the things my correspondents described as being incredibly traumatic was witnessing the war unfold whilst living in a country that did not experience the war as painfully as they did. This resulted in a feeling commonly associated with ASD/PTSD, isolation.⁸⁶ My correspondents described this feeling of isolation as the war being the single most important aspect of their daily lives, from working/talking with refugees to constantly following the news for any updates on the war, transforming their days into a constant crawl of exposure to horrific events, whilst the rest of the Netherlands continued uninterrupted with their lives.⁸⁷ As such, my correspondents felt as if they were the only ones truly experiencing the horrors of the war in a country where nobody else did. According to my first correspondent, this feeling of isolation still permeates in Yugoslavian pre-war migrants to this day.⁸⁸

What added to this feeling of isolation was the lack of understanding in the general Dutch population about what the war actually meant to my correspondents, aside from just witnessing their country fall apart. According to my correspondents, this was the result of how the war was presented, causing people to have a very one-sided perception of the war. As such, my correspondents felt that they were also the only ones who understood the devastating effect of the war on their identity.⁸⁹ Thus, their feelings of isolation were only deepened by their identity trauma.

2.6 Short-Term Emotional Responses

Aside from the responses discussed in the previous paragraphs, all my correspondents also experienced (other) symptoms of Acute Stress Disorder (ASD), which were not specifically tied to one of the three previously discussed categories. Firstly, nightmares were common experiences for all my correspondents.⁹⁰ Secondly, even though all my correspondents initially followed the news, some were not able to stomach it anymore after some time, due to an overload of exposure via conversations and mass media, and tried to avoid anything to do with the war as it was too painful.⁹¹ Thirdly, one of my correspondents also mentioned that the enjoyment of living started to disappear. Everything had become gloomy due to the war.⁹² One example he mentioned of this was his painting style. Before and after the war, his paintings were full of colour and joy, but his painting took on darker tones during the war and expressed his disillusion with and fears of the war.⁹³ Finally, there was also a common theme of feelings of powerlessness among my correspondents. This was the result of them being forced to watch the war go on from afar, whilst they could do nothing to change it, nor help their friends and family that were stuck there.⁹⁴ Two would go back to try and help, but once there, they realized that no matter what they did, it would have no impact. Once again, they felt powerless. One of my correspondents highlighted this by explaining how they would protest by laying in the streets to block the tanks from passing, but instead of stopping, the tanks would simply turn around and use a different route. This made them realize their action had no impact. They could not stop nor influence the war.⁹⁵ These are just some of the examples of the short-term traumatic

⁸⁶ A good example of this feeling of helplessness was highlighted earlier in the story of my parents and their friend in Sarajevo told in the preface.

⁸⁷ Appendices I, II & III.

⁸⁸ Appendix I.

⁸⁹ Appendix I.

⁹⁰ Appendices I - IV.

⁹¹ Appendix I.

⁹² Appendix I..

⁹³ Appendix I. The painting on the front page was one he made during the war, the horrific things he had witnessed and feared are clearly visible, similarly a sign of alterations in cognition and mood.

⁹⁴ Appendices I - IV.

⁹⁵ Appendix II & III.

effect the civil war had on my correspondents' daily lives, but they still manage to paint a stark picture.

2.7 Long-Term Emotional Responses

Although my correspondents do not believe they have PTSD, nor do they want to undergo treatment, all of them showed symptoms of PTSD aside from the ones already discussed. First and foremost, the frustration and pain of all the traumas they were exposed to is still deeply embedded into their psyche. This became readily apparent during the interviews because my correspondents would become increasingly emotional the longer the interview lasted and the more events and feelings they remembered or recounted.⁹⁶ The most telling example of this occurred during my last interview, wherein I interviewed a husband and wife. Throughout the interview, the husband would repeatedly avoid answering my question.⁹⁷ This shows that he has never been able to overcome the horrible things he experienced during the war. He just buried it deep within himself and never let it out.

Whereas feelings of powerlessness were common shortly following the war, these feelings would slowly fade away over time and be replaced by feelings of guilt and self-doubt. The questions 'Could I have done more?' and 'Who would I have been, had I stayed and fought, would I have accepted that Yugoslavia was no more?' haunt my correspondents to this day.⁹⁸ The latter question was so painful for my correspondents because they had seen what the war had done to the people who had stayed, and they were constantly aware of the fact that they might have done the same, thus betraying the Yugoslavian identity they still hold onto to this day.⁹⁹ For example, some of their own family members had begun to develop feelings of hatred towards other groups.¹⁰⁰

One of the more interesting findings regarding the long-term consequences of the war was that my correspondents did not harbour any feelings of ill will towards any ethnic group following the war.¹⁰¹ This is in stark contrast to what D. Sekulić. & G. Massey. & R. Hodson's study on the ethnic nature of the civil war, and my correspondents, have said about refugees or people who stayed in Yugoslavia, as they mention that these people did often have negative feelings towards one or more ethnic groups.¹⁰² Whilst it was not directly discussed in the interviews, a possible reason for this can still be drawn from my interviews. In the interviews I and III, my correspondents mentioned how the people they interacted with during the war that had been directly exposed to the combat of the civil war, primarily refugees and soldiers, had developed strong negative feelings towards other ethnic groups. As such, it is very likely that my correspondents do not harbour feelings of hatred towards other groups because they were never directly involved with the violence of the conflict.¹⁰³ Their position of neutrality was further strengthened by the fact that the ethnic divisions did not resonate with any Yugoslavian pre-war migrant they came into contact with because they still wanted to believe in the ideals of Yugoslavia. As such, they lived in their own neutral bubble in the Netherlands.¹⁰⁴ The oddity of this situation was explained best by the wife of one of my correspondents. She mentioned that during, and after the war, Yugoslavian pre-war migrants, who were now 'officially' from different ethnic groups, would often have dinner together. This created a

⁹⁶ Appendices I - IV.

⁹⁷ Appendix IV.

⁹⁸ Appendix I.

⁹⁹ Appendix I.

¹⁰⁰ Appendix III - IV.

¹⁰¹ Appendix I - IV.

¹⁰² Appendix I. and D. Sekulić. & G. Massey. & R. Hodson. (2006). Ethnic Intolerance and Ethnic Conflict in the Dissolution of Yugoslavia. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. V.29, n.5.

¹⁰³ Appendix III - IV.

¹⁰⁴ Appendix III - IV.

weird dichotomy wherein a war was raging in Yugoslavia to carve out new ethno-nationalistic borders, whilst in the Netherlands, Yugoslavians from different ethnic backgrounds were sharing dinner.¹⁰⁵

In this chapter, I discussed the most severe traumatic events my correspondents were exposed to, why these events were so traumatic, and what kind of trauma they suffered as a result of it. Through an analysis of the outbreak of the war, the impact of the media, and the effect the war had on how my correspondents perceived themselves in the Netherlands, I highlighted both the importance of identity trauma on the traumatic process of my correspondents and some of the more event-specific consequences. Lastly, I discussed a number of consequences of the war that were not directly tied to either of the three major traumatic events. In the following chapter, I compare the experiences laid out in this chapter to the literature discussed in the first chapter in order to determine how Yugoslavian pre-war migrants fit into the academic study of (war-)trauma.

¹⁰⁵ Appendix IV.

Ch.3 Positioning Yugoslavian Pre-War Migrants in (War-)Trauma Literature

In the previous two chapters, I have explained my academic framework and examined the experiences of my correspondents. In this chapter, I combine them both by comparing my data to my academic framework in order to establish the position of Yugoslavian pre-war migrants in the field of (war-)trauma studies. I start by addressing the very definitions that have served as the cornerstones of my framework. I show how my findings point out their shortcomings, and I also suggest how they can be altered or perfected. This is followed up by an analysis of my findings that support the definitions of the APA. Secondly, I compare the more specific literature to my findings, covering what theories could use the experiences of Yugoslavian pre-war migrants to strengthen their arguments and point out a number of new avenues of study that my data opens up.

3.1 The Insufficiencies of the APA's Definitions

Traumatic Event

The APA defines a TE as 'an event that exposes an individual to threatened death, serious injury or sexual violence'.¹⁰⁶ However, my study strongly suggests that this definition is sorely lacking for a number of different reasons. Firstly, the APA's explanation does not specifically acknowledge that an individual can be exposed to a traumatic event directly and indirectly. This is problematic because previous studies by Zimering et al. and Neria & Sullivan have already confirmed the significant differences in the development of ASD and PTSD between people who were exposed to a TE directly or indirectly, thus suggesting the APA's definition to be insufficient.¹⁰⁷ Most notably, indirect exposure leading to a relatively large initial spike of ASD-related symptoms, but only to a comparatively small number of cases of PTSD.¹⁰⁸ Thus, excluding any mention of these trends from their explanation of TE makes it lack the necessary nuance to explain how different forms of exposure lead to different short- and long-term consequences.

Furthermore, my data suggests a third possible trend because, as seen in chapters one and two, despite two of my correspondents experiencing the war directly, all of them went on to have ASD and PTSD, and there was no discernible difference between the long- and short-term emotional responses between any of my correspondents.¹⁰⁹ This is at odds with Zimering et al.'s and Neria & Sullivan's theory that indirect exposure leads to lower rates of PTSD when compared to direct exposure.¹¹⁰ As such, my finding opens up the possibility that indirect exposure could, under certain

¹⁰⁶ C. Benjet et al. (2016). The epidemiology of traumatic event exposure worldwide: results from the World Mental Health Survey Consortium. Found at: [The epidemiology of traumatic event exposure worldwide: results from the World Mental Health Survey Consortium \(nih.gov\)](http://www.nih.gov).

¹⁰⁷ See Ch.1. and, R. Zimering et al. (2006). Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in Disaster Relief Workers Following Direct and Indirect Trauma Exposure to Ground Zero. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, V.19, N.4. and, Y. Neria & G.M. Sullivan. (2011). *Understanding the Mental Health Effects of Indirect Exposure to Mass Trauma Through the Media*. Found at: [Understanding the Mental Health Effects of Indirect Exposure to Mass Trauma Through the Media \(nih.gov\)](http://www.nih.gov).

¹⁰⁸ See Ch.1. and, R. Zimering et al. (2006). Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in Disaster Relief Workers Following Direct and Indirect Trauma Exposure to Ground Zero. and, Y. Neria & G.M. Sullivan. (2011). *Understanding the Mental Health Effects of Indirect Exposure to Mass Trauma Through the Media*.

¹⁰⁹ See Chs.1, 2, & Appendices I - IV.

¹¹⁰ See Ch.1. and, R. Zimering et al. (2006). Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in Disaster Relief Workers Following Direct and Indirect Trauma Exposure to Ground Zero. and, Y. Neria & G.M. Sullivan. (2011). *Understanding the Mental Health Effects of Indirect Exposure to Mass Trauma Through the Media*.

circumstances, lead to rates of PTSD similar to direct exposure, but it is hard to say for certain what these conditions are without any further research. However, I believe that, for my correspondents, it was the severity of their identity trauma because it was the driving force behind their traumatic process, and, as established by Norris et al., context is one of the main factors in determining the severity of one's trauma.¹¹¹ On top of that, identity trauma seems to be the long-term consequence my correspondents suffer from the most, as in my interviews, it was the stories involving identity trauma that visibly affected my correspondents the most.

The **second** and **third** shortcomings go hand-in-hand. Not only does the APA's explanation not take into consideration that the personal context surrounding an event plays a vital role in determining whether it would be traumatic to someone. They also neglect to mention that said context can result in events being experienced as traumatic even if the individual does not suffer any physical harm as a result of the event. For example, due to their personal connection to Yugoslavia, each of my correspondents experienced the biased international news reporting on the war, and the following misunderstandings and prejudices in the Netherlands towards Yugoslavian people, as traumatic, even though they did not suffer any physical harm from these reports, misunderstanding or prejudices.¹¹² Norris et al.'s and Silver et al.'s studies back up this finding.¹¹³ Together with these studies, my data provides significant evidence to support my theory that the criteria set by the APA for what events can be traumatic needs to be broadened. Primarily because the APA seemingly limits itself to events that cause physical harm, such as threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence, which is just not inclusive enough.¹¹⁴

Taking both these points into consideration, I suggest that going forward, the TE is defined as 'an event that exposes an individual to severe mental or physical harm, based on an individual's perception of said event'.

Acute Stress Disorder

One of the shortcomings in the APA's definition of the TE is also present in their definition of ASD. They do not acknowledge personal context surrounding a TE as a determining factor in developing ASD symptoms. This is highlighted by the fact that, if it was not for the personal context, my correspondents would not have lost their faith in media and politics. Instead, they would have been able to continue their lives like the rest of the Netherlands. Thus, a better way to describe ASD would be 'the immediate development of trauma-related symptoms following exposure to a TE, these symptoms are shaped by the personal context surrounding the TE'.

Aside from this criticism, my findings do not necessarily contrast with how the APA defines ASD because my correspondents did indeed develop symptoms attributed to PTSD during and immediately after the Yugoslavian Civil War. However, my findings do bring into question one ASD/PTSD-related symptom and heavily suggest the lack of another.

One of the findings discussed in the previous chapter is that my correspondents lost their faith in politics and media, as they perceive the Yugoslavian and Western media as major causes for the

¹¹¹ F. Norris et al. (2002). 60,000 Disaster Victims Speak: Part I. An Empirical Review of the Empirical Literature, 1981–2001. *Psychiatry*. V.65, N.3.

¹¹² See Ch.2. & Appendices I – IV.

¹¹³ See Ch.1. and, F. Norris et al. (2002). 60,000 Disaster Victims Speak: Part I. An Empirical Review of the Empirical Literature, 1981–2001. and, R. C. Silver et al. (2013). Mental- and Physical-Health Effects of Acute Exposure to Media Images of the September 11, 2001, Attacks and the Iraq War. *Psychological Science*. V.24, N.9.

¹¹⁴ American Psychiatric Association. (2020). *What is Posttraumatic Stress Disorder?*. Found at: [What Is PTSD? \(psychiatry.org\)](https://www.psychiatry.org/what-is-ptsd).

outbreak and acceptance of the civil war, respectively.¹¹⁵ Furthermore, they believe that the war was just a political game played at levels that they could not influence.¹¹⁶ However, whilst the role of the media in the outbreak of the civil war is a well-discussed topic in the academic literature with plenty of evidence to support the claims of my correspondents.¹¹⁷ My correspondents' belief that the civil war was a deliberate political game played by the West, the East, and Serbian/Croatian nationalists in order to break an independent nation sounds like a conspiracy.¹¹⁸ Initially, I interpreted it as such, assuming it was a case of 'wrongly blaming others or themselves based on distorted thoughts about the cause of the event', a symptom of ASD/PTSD defined by the APA.¹¹⁹ However, as I conducted more interviews, and all of my correspondents kept repeating this belief, I was forced to change my mind and accept that maybe there was some truth to it. Especially so, when I found articles implying that the war was premeditated and orchestrated by the Croatian/Serbian nationalist.¹²⁰ Unfortunately, an in-depth study into the causes of the war is outside the scope of this thesis. However, this finding does open up a possible new angle of research into the civil war, and, if proven to be true, would shift the way in which we would perceive the traumatic events experienced by Yugoslavian pre-war migrants. It would also bring into question the APA using '*distorted thoughts about the cause or consequences of the event leading to wrongly blaming self or other*' as a symptom of PTSD, as it could lead to wrongfully assuming someone has misconceptions about the cause or consequence of an event based on what is commonly accepted as the truth despite them not being wrong.

As explained by my second correspondent, being a Yugoslavian meant a lot to Yugoslavian pre-war migrants. They saw themselves as victors of WW2, and in the following Cold War, the nation had managed to balance itself between the Eastern and Western political blocks. Furthermore, Yugoslavia was a union of different people, another source of great pride for correspondents.¹²¹ As such, the start of the civil war had forcefully and suddenly stripped all of these beliefs, ideas, and pride about their nation away and left them with no identity. Instead, they were forced to adopt a new identity they did not identify with.¹²² During the war, their identity trauma was worsened by the media and conversations with refugees.¹²³ However, it was not just a short-term response to the civil war. As Yugoslavia is still divided, my correspondents carry their loss of identity to this day.¹²⁴ Aside from being present in their short- and long-term trauma, it was also the reason why certain events were experienced as traumatic by my correspondents. For example, repeated confrontation with the fact that they had lost their identity was one of the reasons why they began to feel isolated during the war. It was also the reason why the question "what is your nationality" was, and still is, such a painful question.¹²⁵

Seeing as the loss of their identity played such a crucial role in the experience of my correspondents with the traumatic process, it is a severe shortcoming not to see this represented at all in the APA's

¹¹⁵ See Ch.2. & Appendices I - IV.

¹¹⁶ See Ch.2. & Appendices I - IV.

¹¹⁷ See Ch.2. and, D. Žarkov. (2007). *The Body of War: Media, Ethnicity, and Gender in the Break-up of Yugoslavia*. 1st edn. Durham: Duke University Press. and, P. Kolstø. (2016). *Media discourse and the Yugoslav conflicts: Representations of self and other*. London and New York: Routledge.

¹¹⁸ Appendices I, II & III.

¹¹⁹ American Psychiatric Association. (2020). *What is Posttraumatic Stress Disorder?*. Found at: [What Is PTSD? \(psychiatry.org\)](https://www.psychiatry.org/what-is-ptsd).

¹²⁰ D. Sekulić. & G. Massey. & R. Hodson. (2006). Ethnic Intolerance and Ethnic Conflict in the Dissolution of Yugoslavia. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. V.29, n.5. and, V. Perica. (2002). *Balkan Idols: Religion and Nationalism in Yugoslav States*. 1st edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

¹²¹ See Ch.2. & Appendix II.

¹²² See Ch.2. & Appendices I - IV.

¹²³ See Ch.2. & Appendices I - IV.

¹²⁴ See Ch.2. & Appendices I - IV.

¹²⁵ See Ch.2. & Appendix IV.

list of PTSD symptoms. It is paramount for this to be included in the future, for not only is it a necessity in order to fully understand the experiences of Yugoslavian pre-war migrants during and after the Yugoslavian Civil War, but it might also help explain the experiences of other groups throughout history that went through something similar as my correspondents.

It was hard to decide to which phase of the traumatic process I should attribute identity trauma, as it shows itself in every facet of my correspondents' traumatic experiences. However, I chose to put it here because the start of the Yugoslavian Civil War made it undeniably clear to them that there was no more hope for a united Yugoslavia, and as an immediate response to this, they felt they had lost their identity as Yugoslavians.¹²⁶

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Just like in the previous paragraph, the context criticism aimed at the APA's definition of TE carries over to their definition of PTSD. However, whereas in the previous paragraph, the consequences of this shortcoming were focused on the immediate emotional response, in this chapter, this criticism applies to the shortcomings' long-term consequences. An example of this is the fact that, based on their personal circumstances, my correspondents did not harbour any negative feelings towards any particular group in Yugoslavia following the war. This contrasts with any research covering the war thus far, as it only suggests that the war has led to increased ethnic divisions in Yugoslavia.¹²⁷ Furthermore, my two criticisms of ASD also apply here, as identity trauma and the consequences of my correspondents' distrust of media and politics are also an important part of their PTSD. Thus, the best way to alter the APA definition of PTSD is to add, 'what symptoms are developed as a result of witnessing such an event depends on an individual's personal context surrounding said traumatic event'.

The other criticism that can be used against the APA's definition of PTSD is that it assumes that anyone with PTSD is damaged and in need of Western treatment. However, as discussed in chapter one, my data and Lynn Jones' work suggest that this is not the case.¹²⁸ On the contrary, my data shows that people can reject Western treatment for a number of different reasons, from not believing they have PTSD to not trusting the West in general.¹²⁹ With further research, it could be proven that this is a reoccurring theme, where people who have negative perceptions of the West are unwilling to accept Western psychological treatment.

Aside from this, my data does not suggest anything else wrong with the APA's definition of PTSD. On the contrary, many of the long-term consequences experienced by my correspondents fit into the PTSD-related symptoms defined by the APA.

3.2 Findings that Support the APA's Definitions

Aside from pointing out how the APA's definitions of TE, ASD, and PTSD are flawed, my data also highlights aspects of these definitions that are applicable to my findings, particularly most of the symptoms of ASD/PTSD. It is important to point these symptoms out, as they can be used as a more specific starting point for future studies. Thus, avoiding an initial phase of conducting a literature study without really knowing what to look for. Theme-specific examples include the media causing

¹²⁶ See Ch.2. & Appendix I.

¹²⁷ D. Sekulić. & G. Massey. & R. Hodson. (2006). Ethnic Intolerance and Ethnic Conflict in the Dissolution of Yugoslavia. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. V.29, n.5.

¹²⁸ L. Jones. (2004). *Then They Started Shooting: Growing Up in Wartime Bosnia*. 1st edn. Cambridge(Massachusetts): Harvard University Press.

¹²⁹ See Ch.1. & Appendix V.

my correspondents to fear for the safety of their families, the media instilling in them feelings of powerlessness/guilt, my correspondents losing faith in politics and media due to the representation of the war in the media, and lastly, my correspondents feeling isolated due to their experiences during the war. Some more general examples of symptoms of PTSD found in my data are nightmares, avoiding anything to do with the war, less enjoyment in life, and feelings of guilt.¹³⁰

3.3 The Academic Literature and Yugoslavian Pre-War Migrants

When comparing my findings to the established theories surrounding the traumatic event and ASD discussed in the first chapter, it becomes clear that my data fits in with the majority of the mentioned literature.

Firstly, throughout the entirety of chapter two, and even earlier in this chapter, I have provided examples that highlight why adding Yugoslavian pre-war migrants to the study of (war-)trauma would give additional proof to support Norris et al.'s and Silver et al.'s theory that understanding personal context is of great importance when determining why a specific event was traumatic to someone.¹³¹ My correspondents experiencing the biased representation of the war in the media as traumatic is the ideal example of this because on its own, it is hard to understand why they experienced the reporting as traumatic. However, upon understanding their identity trauma and the impact the one-sided representation had on their daily lives, it becomes clear why it was so traumatic to them. Another example of context mattering is my first correspondent, who, due to an overload of exposure to traumatic events via the media and conversation with refugees, friends, and family, started to avoid anything to do with the war.¹³² This perfectly fits with Breslau et al.'s, Sledjeski et al.'s, and Neuner et al.'s theory that being exposed to repeated traumatic events increases an individual's to develop symptoms of PTSD.¹³³

Secondly, the ASD section of my framework focussed on the connections between mass media and trauma, and conversations and trauma. As shown in chapter two, my data fits into both of these categories. Mass media and conversations with refugees and family were the three leading ways my correspondents were exposed to traumatic events.¹³⁴ Mass media did so through the TV, as was established by Neria & Sullivan, images, in line with Silver et al.'s findings, and through their representation of the war.¹³⁵ Whereas the first two support existing literature, the third one adds a seemingly new perspective to trauma studies, namely trauma through written text. As stated by my correspondents, newspapers were traumatic because of what they said and how they said it, hence

¹³⁰ Ch.2., & Appendices I – IV. & American Psychiatric Association. (2020). *What is Posttraumatic Stress Disorder?*. Found at: What Is PTSD? (psychiatry.org).

¹³¹ F. Norris et al. (2002). 60,000 Disaster Victims Speak: Part I. An Empirical Review of the Empirical Literature, 1981–2001. *Psychiatry*. V.65, N.3. and, R. C. Silver et al. (2013). Mental- and Physical-Health Effects of Acute Exposure to Media Images of the September 11, 2001, Attacks and the Iraq War. *Psychological Science*. V.24, N.9.

¹³² Appendix I.

¹³³ N. Breslau et al. (1999). Previous Exposure to Trauma and PTSD Effects of Subsequent Trauma: Results From the Detroit Area Survey of Trauma. *American Journal of Psychiatry*. V.156, N.6; and, E. M. Sledjeski. & B. Speisman. & L. C. Dierker. (2008). Does number of lifetime traumas explain the relationship between PTSD and chronic medical conditions? Answers from the National Comorbidity Survey-Replication (NCS-R). Found at: Does number of lifetime traumas explain the relationship between PTSD and chronic medical conditions? Answers from the National Comorbidity Survey-Replication (NCS-R) (nih.gov); and, F. Neuner et al. (2004). Psychological trauma and evidence for enhanced vulnerability for posttraumatic stress disorder through previous trauma among West Nile refugees. *BMC Psychiatry*. V.4, N.34.

¹³⁴ See Ch.1. & Appendices I – IV.

¹³⁵ Y. Neria & G.M. Sullivan. (2011). Understanding the Mental Health Effects of Indirect Exposure to Mass Trauma Through the Media. Found at: Understanding the Mental Health Effects of Indirect Exposure to Mass Trauma Through the Media (nih.gov). and, R. C. Silver et al. (2013). Mental- and Physical-Health Effects of Acute Exposure to Media Images of the September 11, 2001, Attacks and the Iraq War.

representation.¹³⁶ This means that they were traumatized by the words written, by how these words created a biased vision of the war, and how these words were ultimately accepted as the truth in Dutch society. As such, textual trauma is a crucial aspect of the traumatic experiences of my correspondents, and it needs to be included in the study of (war-)trauma. A possible way to do this would be to study newspapers written during the war and analyse what words are used and how they are used to describe the war. In doing so, a more complete understanding of how the media was traumatic to Yugoslavian pre-war migrants can be gained.

Badger et al.'s and Clark & Gioro's studies on how conversations can affect professional helpers who continuously work with patients who have PTSD also perfectly fits with the effects conversations with refugees and other Yugoslavian pre-war migrants had on my correspondents, as they had similar long-term consequences I.E, feelings of fear, and nightmares.¹³⁷

Lastly, as the APA's explanation of PTSD and its symptoms fit very well onto the experiences of my correspondents, I have already mentioned almost everything I wanted to say in the previous paragraph. However, my data does add one more possible option for further study to Lynne Jones's theory because most of my correspondents did not believe they have PTSD, despite showing symptoms. This brings up the question as to why they did not believe they had it, did they not recognize the symptoms? Or was there another reason why they did not want to admit/say they had PTSD? Furthermore, I could only link my data to one non-universalist approach, but it is possible that it can be connected to more. Therefore, this is another future study that could provide new and important insights into (war-)trauma studies.

3.5 Identity trauma

As mentioned in my introduction, identity trauma is a form of trauma seemingly unique to Yugoslavian pre-war migrants, and it refers to the involuntary and forceful loss of one's personal and national identity at the same time. Throughout this thesis, I have shown that it is the key component of my correspondents' traumatic process because it influences each of the three phases. It was the immediate response to the outbreak of the civil war, it was the context that made the media a traumatic event, and it is one of the long-term consequences my correspondents live with to this day. However, if we want to determine how exactly it fits into the larger puzzle of (war-)trauma, we need to establish if it is indeed unique to Yugoslavian pre-war migrants or if it can be used to explain the traumatic experiences of other groups as well. To do this, we need to move away from the specific way in which it applies to Yugoslavian pre-war migrants, as it is not very likely that it is suitable in this specific way to the experiences of other groups of people, as they have their own personal context that influences what they find traumatic. As such, I have, based on my data, reduced identity trauma down to three more usable, fundamental feelings that are the hallmarks of determining whether an individual suffers from identity trauma similar to Yugoslavian pre-war migrants or not,

1. National identity is tied to personal identity.
2. Feeling like you lost your personal identity due to a traumatic event.
3. Feeling like you have to change your identity as a result of said event.
4. Not wanting to/not being able to change your personal identity despite said event.
5. Constantly feeling like you are being reminded of your lost identity.

¹³⁶ Appendices I – IV.

¹³⁷ Appendices I – IV. and, K. Badger & D. Royle & C. Craig. (2008). Hospital Social Workers and Indirect Trauma Exposure: An Exploratory Study of Contributing Factors. *Health and Social Work*. V.33, N.1. and, M. L. Clark & S. Gioro. (1998). Nurses, Indirect Trauma and Prevention. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*. V.30, N.1.

This fundamental form can more easily be applied to other groups to determine whether or not their experiences are similar to that of Yugoslavian pre-war migrants, thus establishing whether its unique to them or not.

In this chapter, I discussed how the data from my interviews compares to the existing literature I used to explain it. The first two paragraphs focussed solely on the connection between the APA's definitions of TE, ASD, PTSD, and my findings. The most significant takeaways from these paragraphs are that the APA does not seem to acknowledge the importance of context and identity trauma, my data fits very well onto the symptoms of PTSD defined by the APA, and there might be a potential pattern wherein certain circumstances result in indirect trauma causing PTSD rates as high as direct trauma. The second to last paragraph focused on comparing my data to the academic literature discussed in chapter one. As eluded to in my introduction, my data fit well with these papers, but it also introduced a new angle of study, trauma through words. Finally, the last paragraph gave form to identity trauma, a form of trauma seemingly exclusive to Yugoslavian pre-war migrants, and attempted to make it applicable to the traumatic experiences of other groups. In short, Yugoslavian pre-war migrants need to be added to the study of (war-)trauma because not only do they add a whole new perspective to the study. They also open up the way for new and interesting studies to be conducted. The most obvious, not yet mentioned, of course, being a comparison between pre-war migrants and refugees in order to determine how their experiences with war and trauma differ.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have laid out my attempt at understanding the trauma my parents went through during the Yugoslavian civil war and, subsequently, my attempt at positioning the forgotten trauma of Yugoslavian pre-war migrants in the study of (war-)trauma. To visualize my progress, I looked at my research as a puzzle piece that I had to fit into the larger puzzle of (war-)trauma studies. Before starting my research, there was no puzzle piece for Yugoslavian pre-war migrants. With the start of my research, a puzzle piece was beginning to take form, but it was very rough. My first step in refining this puzzle piece was connecting the experiences of Yugoslavian pre-war migrants to the American Psychiatrists Association's definitions of the 'traumatic event', Acute Stress Disorder, and Post-traumatic Stress Disorder because their explanations of these concepts are the foundation of our (Western) understanding of trauma. I was able to do this by comparing the data from my interviews to these definitions. Through my comparison, it became clear that the explanations given by the APA were not a perfect fit for the experiences of my correspondents, as there were certain aspects of these experiences that were not covered by the APA's definitions. The most notable being the APA's disregard for the importance of context in determining what events can be experienced as traumatic and their failure to acknowledge identity trauma as a form of PTSD. At this point in my research, my puzzle piece had begun to look like a puzzle piece. However, it still did not fit into the larger puzzle smoothly, as more sources were needed in order to fully explain my findings. Thus, for the second phase of my research, I connected my data to previous (war-)trauma studies by comparing the experiences of my correspondents to said literature. From this comparison came several significant findings, such as the central role identity trauma, a form of trauma unique to Yugoslavian pre-war migrants, played in the traumatic process of my correspondents and the massive influence mass media had on their trauma and lives.

So? Has this thesis crafted a puzzle piece that perfectly fits into the puzzle of (war-)trauma studies? No, but it has established Yugoslavian pre-war migrants as a 'new' and distinct group within the field of (war-)trauma studies by providing it with a solid foundation that is rooted in the (war-)trauma literature. Upon this foundation, future studies can be built. There is a clear outline of the puzzle piece now. However, it will need to be further refined by continuously conducting more in-depth studies into specific aspects of the traumatic experiences of Yugoslavian pre-war migrants. Possible examples include a study that compares how Yugoslavian pre-war migrants and refugees experienced the civil war to more clearly divide the two and highlight what makes them unique. Alternatively, a study that seeks to properly explain why Yugoslavian pre-war migrants held onto their Yugoslavian identity after the civil war also adds to our understanding of what Yugoslavian pre-war migrants went through as a result of the war.

And lastly, the most important question, am I able to understand the trauma of my parents, and specifically my father, and their closest friends better after having nosedived into the study of (war-)trauma? Yes, yes, I am. The most telling confirmation of this came during the last days of writing my thesis when I reached out again to my correspondents to ask if they were in agreement with my assessment of their experiences. They answered by saying that upon reading my thesis, the emotions they had felt as a result of the events I described came back again. Furthermore, they also agreed with my analysis of their experiences. Some even mentioned coming to new realisations about what they had gone through. For example, my fifth correspondent mentioned that she had never been able to really put her finger on the role of identity in the trauma of her husband, and my thesis had helped her to get a better understanding of it. In short, in the eyes of my correspondents, I had adequately explained and assessed their situation. My thesis had reached them.

Despite everything I learned whilst writing this thesis, there was one realization that truly struck me, and it is probably the most simple realization that could have struck me. No matter what happens, the one thing that will always be a part of my father, and his closest friends, is the Yugoslavian civil war and the emotional scars it left on them. The war will always be a part of their identity.

Discussion

This thesis was the first step in introducing Yugoslavian pre-war migrants into the study of (war-)trauma. As such, as explained in the introduction, I had no real idea where to start my study. On the one hand, this was beneficial, as it gave me a lot of subjects to talk about in my interviews and a lot of research to do when not interviewing. On the other hand, it was also fairly restrictive, as, well, I had a lot of ground to cover in order to create a foundation upon which further research could be built. This meant that I had to make a number of concessions regarding the literature I discussed as I simply could not mention everything I had read in the limited space of one thesis. A large part of these concessions was made, for example, in my removal of a 'complete' historical overview of Yugoslavia and the civil war, in favor of the much-reduced paragraph, it is now. Furthermore, one of my correspondents also gave me a collection of Dutch and Yugoslavian newspaper articles and other primary sources regarding the Yugoslavian civil war he had collected over time. This was the second concession I made, as I had wanted to do a full analysis of all of these primary sources to show exactly what my correspondents meant when they said that the media had represented the war biased. However, my interviews had already provided me with more information and work than I could cover in one thesis, and, as such, I did not get to analyse all these primary sources. However, the fact that they are available does keep the door open for any further in-depth study into the representation of the Yugoslavian civil war in the Dutch media.

There are also a number of other reservations about my thesis that need to be addressed. First and foremost, my selection of correspondents. As the Yugoslavian civil war is still an incredibly sensitive subject for Yugoslavian pre-war migrants to talk about, I needed a way to convince my correspondents to help me by doing interviews. Herein I decided to follow my father's advice and let him do the invitations as they would be more willing to accept interviews if someone they knew was asking, and even then, there was a chance they would not accept.¹³⁸ The best example of this sensitivity was my third correspondent. When my father initially called her to ask if she would be willing to do an interview about the war, she immediately hung up. It took my father a week of explaining what it was for and showing her what I had done up to that point to convince her to do the interview. However, this does not mean that I had no influence on whom I did the interviews with. I made clear to my father that I needed pre-war migrants and a mix of men, women, and different ethnic backgrounds to get as wide a range of correspondents as possible to guarantee proper representation. Whilst these different aspects of my correspondents do not come to the forefront in this thesis, as I decided to focus on other aspects such as the connection between mass media and trauma, they do provide interesting angles for future studies. For example, one could conduct a study to see if there are differences in traumatic experiences between men and women or Croatian and Serbian.

Secondly, I should have maintained a tighter grip on my interviews, especially since I chose to use a semi-structured/more conversational approach. Not necessarily a super tight grip like a questionnaire, but I feel that I should have steered my correspondents more at certain points during the interviews to get more useful information out of them instead of going along with their admittedly very interesting, but ultimately, semi-relevant stories. Even though all the interviews still provided me with a lot of information, I may have missed some important/helpful information as a result of my more conversational approach.

¹³⁸ See Ch.2.

Thirdly, identity trauma is very likely not as unique to Yugoslavians as I made it out to be in this thesis. During my first literature studies, I had found no articles regarding identity trauma. Thus, I assumed it to be a form of trauma unique to my case study. However, two days before I had to hand in my thesis, I stumbled upon two sources discussing identity trauma whilst searching for sources that discussed Yugoslavia's political history, I. A. Kira. (2001). Taxonomy of trauma and trauma assessment. *Traumatology*. V.7, N.2., and, Brison, S. J. (1995). Outliving Oneself: Trauma, Memory, and Personal Identity. *Gender Struggles: Practical Approaches to Contemporary Feminism*. 1st edn. Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. P. 137-165.. Unfortunately, due to time constraints, I could no longer conduct a full literature study of the subject as that would have most likely resulted in me having to turn around the entire structure of my thesis. As such, it remains up to further research to analyse and compare the identity trauma of Yugoslavian pre-war migrants I have attempted to define in this paper, and the explanations of identity trauma currently floating around in the field of (war-)trauma studies.

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Appendices

This is a list of all the notes I took during my four interviews.

Appendix I

The correspondent was in Apeldoorn during the war.

Left Yugoslavia in 1972.

Already began to feel the conflict coming in 1988-1989, due to a conversation with a bus driver, who mentioned that typical Yugoslavian sayings were no longer used, people began to feel less Yugoslavian, and nationalism was becoming more and more influential. However, he still held on to the hope that the war would blow over, as he held on to the ideals of unity Yugoslavia had stood for under Tito. He only realized the gravity of the situation after Slovenia declared independence in 1990, as this showed him that Yugoslavian unity was no more. This was also the moment he realized the war was most likely inevitable. His fears were confirmed when the Brijuni Agreement was signed, which basically closed any change for renewed unity.

Witnessed the war primarily via media, although he did miss the 'official' outbreak of the war, as he did not want to believe it would actually happen. Following the outbreak of the war, he began following it closely.

He began to interact with Yugoslavian refugees after the war spread to Croatia in 1991.

He befriended a number of Croatian refugees that had come to the Netherlands. These people had gravitated towards him, as my correspondent was a Yugoslavian in the Netherlands, thus a familiar face, and would tell him their stories of the war.

Later in 1991, his mother came to the Netherlands, which indicated to him that the situation in Yugoslavia was even worse than he had imagined, as she wouldn't have left otherwise.

He felt as if she had come here to tell him not to get involved with the war and most certainly not to go back to Yugoslavia. He never thought of joining the war afterward.

His mother left when the war moved to Bosnia-Herzegovina so she could protect her home. Luckily, the war never spread to his hometown.

During the war, he would also call his mother and friends to make sure they were safe and to ask if he could do anything to help. However, these conversations with his friends and family, as well as the conversations with refugees, would only make him worry more because they reminded him of how bad the situation was, how little he could do to change it, and that his nation/identity had been destroyed.

At the start of the war, it felt as if homeland and identity were torn apart.

He was, and still is, proud of his Yugoslavian identity so the outbreak of the war tore his identity apart. As such, he felt betrayed by the West, as they had 'recognised' Slovenia with the Brijuni Agreement, thus inciting the conflict.

He believes that the West should have continued to support Yugoslavia in order to avoid the war.

All Yugoslavian pre-war migrants that were in Apeldoorn shared this sentiment.

This sentiment was further strengthened by the media showing the atrocities committed during the war, as these atrocities were a constant reminder of how Yugoslavia was no more and how the West had betrayed them.

As a result of all of this, he felt that the West had wanted Yugoslavia to break up from the get-go, and he has never truly understood why. However, he believed that it was an attempt by the Eastern and Western political blocks to show that being a strong independent country was not an option, as the only groups within Yugoslavia they had supported were the ones that wanted to divide it.

This perspective of the war gave him feelings of hopelessness and powerlessness, as it meant that the war was played out completely beyond his reach, it was nothing more than a political game to those in power.

Critical of the terminology used by media after the 'independence' of Slovenia, in particular when it regarded Muslims, Serf, Croats, or another ethnic group in Yugoslavia because Yugoslavia was only mentioned when it was negative. For example, if someone had committed a crime, he was Yugoslavian, thus cultivating a negative perception of Yugoslavia in the Netherlands. This made him feel as if the West had already given up on Yugoslavia. Thus they pushed negative narratives and the idea that a separation of the different ethnic groups was the solution. This again made him feel betrayed.

It also made him believe that the media was nothing but an outlet for political ideas. This resulted in him losing faith in Western (and Yugoslavian) politics. In his eyes, the war had only been about political power.

During the war, it was present in every aspect of his daily life, primarily through CNN and Dutch news/programs.

Images and reports brought feelings of helplessness because he saw the conflict unravel but could do nothing to stop it or change it.

Furthermore, witnessing the war gave him the feeling that 'those are my people being hurt', again a constant reminder that Yugoslavia was no more, but also helplessness and powerlessness.

Especially so, since he had friends in places such as Sarajevo and Mostar that were constantly in the news for the atrocities committed there.

Ultimately, the pain of watching his homeland fall apart would become too much, and he began to avoid anything to do with the war.

All these feelings were shared by other migrants and refugees he talked with.

He lost his innocence and naivety as a result of the war.

He used painting as a way to deal with the pain.

The war was incredibly traumatic.

His desire to enjoy life decreased and he began to see everything as rotten and corrupt, in particular those who had the power to positively impact the war, politicians etc. He saw them all as people that only cared for money and influence, and not for the amount of suffering they would unleash in order to get it, as they let the war happen. This ultimately caused him to lose all faith in politics and media.

During the war, he slept very poorly. He had nightmares about friends and family who lived in Yugoslavia. These worries he carried with him during the day as well. Correspondent 2 told a story of how correspondent 1 had spent a night awake as his mother was traveling across an area with snipers, and that following said event correspondent 1 suffered from nightmares for about three weeks.

What hurt the most was living here with no war, but witnessing it anyway through the media, as it gave him the feeling that he and the other migrants/refugees were the only ones living the war in an otherwise peaceful nation. These feelings didn't dissipate after the war, still a feeling of isolation from those who had not experienced the war as he had.

He talked to multiple people who fought in the war, always questioned who he would have been if he had joined the war, would he share their feeling of 'its either you or me' and have killed people. This resulted in self-doubt and a fear of what he would have been, had he joined the war.

Contrary to the refugees he talked with, my correspondents harbored no ill feelings towards any group involved with the war, be it Croat, Muslim, or Serb.

He still holds onto hope for Yugoslavia, as he believes that a majority of the people are still in favour of a united Yugoslavia.

Appendix II

The correspondent is a history/philosophy teacher, and when I asked him to explain his experiences with the war, he began the interview by basically giving me a rundown of the entire history of Yugoslavia before the civil war. Highlighting how it was a nation built on other nations and national identities that originated before the Austro-Hungarian occupation of most of the Balkan. He went on to discuss how said history formed the national identities of the countries we see nowadays, mostly through religious influence. I.E., Austro-Hungarian territories were becoming more Catholic due to that being the main religion in the Empire. He then went on to discuss how more recent history, post-WWII, had shaped the ideal of a united Yugoslavia. This recent history made him proud to be Yugoslavian because they were the victors of WW2 and because they were a strong and united nation that had managed to stay largely free of both Western and Eastern political dominance during the cold war. It was because of this last statement that he believed the Yugoslavian civil war was a ploy by Eastern and Western political powers to crush the strong nation, as they wanted no other nation to get the idea that you could exist without submitting to the influence of East or West. It was this pride that made him connect to the identity of Yugoslavia.

Originally came to the Netherlands around 1980 as a tourist, then decided to stay and started working.

Before leaving Yugoslavia, he was a high-school teacher.

Stays in the Netherlands until 1988-89, then went back to Yugoslavia to fulfill his one year of military service.

Following this mandatory service, he immediately went back to the Netherlands as he had seen signs of the rising ethnic tensions and feared their consequences.

These signs included increasingly nationalistic narratives being pushed in the Yugoslavian media, which would he believed ultimately turned into ethnic cleansings of the military elite, so only Serbian served in the Serbian army etc.

However, he had noticed the signs even when he was a teacher, for there had been ongoing conflicts between teachers with different ethnic backgrounds that wanted to pass on their ethnic beliefs through their teaching. As such, there were regular discussions about what to teach and how to teach it.

This did not feel right to him, as it made him feel as if he had to adapt to these new ethnic perceptions of teaching in order to fit in, which he did not want, as he perceived himself as a Yugoslavian and did not want to identify with any of the 'new' nationalistic perspectives.

To cope and better understand the rising ethnic tensions, he began following the news and writing for newspapers.

Despite all this, he still hoped the war would not come to pass, as he also saw that a lot of people in his circle still believed in the same ideals of Yugoslavia as he did.

Upon returning to the Netherlands, he noticed that these ethnic tensions had begun to permeate within Dutch society as well. In particular, an increased interest from Dutch people in his own ethnic background.

He had family all throughout Yugoslavia, and as tensions grew, his fear for his family's safety increased. He did have contact with them, but this did not help. It only made his fears worse as he heard of their struggles.

During the war, Mostar, his hometown, would be divided between a Croatian part (West), and a Serbian part (East), spread between these two areas was a large community of Muslims.

His mom stayed behind with his brother, who served in the Yugoslavian army.

As the Yugoslavian army came closer to Mostar, his family hid in shelters, and the sporadic nationalistic riots plaguing the city decreased. (Note to self: this is still very early on in the war)

As the war continued, ethnic tensions between the common folk would begin to flow over. This is significant, as earlier in the war, the conflict was mostly fought between small groups of nationalist extremists.

He went to Yugoslavia to help but could not deal with what he witnessed. It was not just about the horrific things he saw and how they affected him (he showed me a collection of pictures of Mostar in ruins and of its suffering civilians. He had taken these pictures when he was in Mostar during the war.), but also about the things he did not see/experience. When going to Yugoslavia, he had an image of what was happening based on Western news reports, but the situation was completely different when arriving. For example, he expected to find a starved civilian population, which he did, but only in Mostar, in Sarajevo, there was food aplenty. He expected to get shot, but that never happened. These experiences muddled his perception of Western media.

So instead of fighting, he, once again, started doing research and collecting data in order to come to terms with the war.

Every day he was afraid for the lives of his family, spurred on especially by what he had seen in Mostar and the report and images he read/saw when he got back to the Netherlands.

He was addicted to the news, but also became increasingly frustrated with said news as it represented the conflict very poorly.

He was also frustrated by Dutch politics and how they dealt with the war.

News also made him more afraid of the situation in Yugoslavia, as suddenly it seemed as if all the suffering in the world was taking place there.

This resulted in feelings of stress and powerlessness, in particular when the news reported on what was happening in Mostar. He was forced to watch and could do nothing to aid his family there.

He shared the feeling that he was the only one suffering from the war in a country that lived peacefully again, leading to feelings of isolation. These feelings of isolation were worsened as most of his traumatic experiences were related to the loss of his identity, the fear for his family and the powerlessness he felt at not being able to help them in any way, but nobody in the Netherlands understood this due to poor representation in the media.

After coming back to the Netherlands, he started working with refugee children from Yugoslavia. This made him feel as if he could finally do something to help his people.

He began integrating Yugoslavians into Dutch society, as that would give them options in the future.

He was frustrated again with Dutch politics when priests came to monitor what Yugoslavian people came in.

He felt as if the west purposefully chose to make religion the focal point of the war.

He also came to realise that his opinion did not matter in the big picture. The only thing that mattered was what narrative politicians wanted to push, which was portrayed by the media. He came to this conclusion after he was invited to do a televised interview, but was taken from the show last minute as a politician, who was on the show before him, did not want my correspondent to voice his opinions which contrasted with the politicians. Similarly to correspondent 1, he also lost his faith in politics in media following the war. Again, feelings of powerlessness, he began to feel as if he did not matter, the only ones that mattered were people with actual political power, and they decided how the world would be shaped, including the outbreak of the civil war.

This was further supported by the fact that after the war, the people he had seen as one of the instigators of the war, namely the extreme Croatian, Serbian etc., nationalists, were awarded high governmental positions.

The war never left him. Feelings of anger and powerlessness remain with him. Despite this, he mentioned not believing he has PTSD.

Shared the feeling that the war tore his identity apart, split between wanting to stay Yugoslav but being forced to adopt a new identity if he wanted to belong in Yugoslavia after the war. This feeling was worsened during the war by the images shown in the media. Everything he saw at the time that was connected to the war reminded him of how his country and identity did no longer exist.

He hoped that he could change the war by writing about it, but, ultimately, he came to realize that it did not matter.

Also experiences a loss of naivete and innocence, especially towards Europe. A result of his experiences with NGOs and humanitarian organisations in Yugoslavia, which he saw as only being there to make money.

He was also frustrated about the way refugees were treated, specifically the fact that families would be split apart.

When his mother came to live in the Netherlands, his fear was finally gone.

The images he saw in newspapers and on TV have left deep mental scars.

Appendix III

This interview was conducted with two of my correspondents at the same time.

Correspondent 3

Shocked that Yugoslavia was represented as a Muslim-dominated country in the Western media, she felt that there was a clear lack of proper research being done.

Hans van den Broek, Dutch minister of Foreign Affairs, was seen as a terrible influence in Dutch news as he pushed for the split of Yugoslavia, and as such, she believed the Dutch media did so as well.

She described the feeling of losing her country not only physically, but more importantly, emotionally. Everything she believed Yugoslavia to stand for disappeared with the start of the war, yet she continues to hold on to these ideals to this day, hoping that maybe Yugoslavia can be made whole again one day.

She comes from a mixed family, dad Croatian and mother Serbian.

The Yugoslavian identity was ingrained in her family, as they had followed Yugoslavian traditions for as long as she can remember. Even after the war, she held on to the Yugoslavian identity and traditions. Also proud to be Yugoslavian. (this feeling was echoed by correspondent 3, who also came from a mixed marriage and was raised primarily as a Yugoslavian)

Contrary to my previous interviews, she did not feel anger, more sadness. This sadness comes from her losing everything as a result of the war, she was set up for the future, but the war took that away from her by destroying her country.

Shortly before the start of the war, her husband was called to serve in the Yugoslavian army. However, neither she nor her husband saw a reason to fight because whom would they be fighting? Their own people? They saw the war as a war between fellow Yugoslavians, not as a war between different nationalities. Neither of them could stomach the idea of fighting in the war. Also, she was afraid for her husband's safety if he were to go to war, so they left to start a new life in the Netherlands.

However, she only stayed there for two weeks. After that, she felt she had to do something to stop Milosevic. So, she left, with her husband, to aid the UN in Yugoslavia as a translator. She was also active in the anti-government (Milosevic) movements and would demonstrate against the war by laying in front of tanks, only for the tanks to turn around and take a different route. This instilled feelings of powerlessness within her.

They were not shot at during the war, but she was forced to watch what the war had done to her country. For example, during her trips in jeeps, she would pass villages that were burnt to the ground. This shocked her to her core, for how could this happen in the Yugoslavia she had believed in?

One of the most jarring examples of this came when during one of these trips she visited Srebrenica and helped the people there. She was broken when she heard of the horrific massacre committed shortly after she left.

Another example she mentioned was a conflict she had with a Serbian whilst on a jeep. The Serbian no longer believed in the unity of Yugoslavia, as he had seen too many atrocities committed against Serbians by people from other ethnic groups. This made her realize how deep the chasm between ethnics groups had become.

During this time, she also talked to refugees, and, similar to correspondents numbers 1 and 2, these conversations were incredibly traumatic to her. From families that were forced to separate as they

had married someone from another ethnic background to people who had lost their livelihoods due to the war.

She was exposed to her most severe traumatic event when on a jeep trip with a young, barely 13-15-year-old boy. She asked him why he was going to the front, and he answered, 'because everything else is gone'. In short, these conversations showed her that her people had lost everything due to the war, and during her trip she was forced to watch her ideal of Yugoslavia die over and over again.

She sees Hans van den Broek as the reason why the Dutch population began to believe that it was best if Yugoslavia split up. This made her feel as if the war was just a game being played by politicians, a game that caused untold suffering amongst her people. Furthermore, the representation of the Serbian as the only bad guys in the war was shocking to her because she had seen horrific acts committed by all Yugoslavians during her trips to Yugoslavia. This made her feel even more assured that the war, and its representation, were premeditated plans by the West.

She was appalled by the barbarity of what she had witnessed whilst in Yugoslavia.

The worst part was, you were forced to choose a side, you could no longer stay Yugoslavian, you had to adopt a new identity if you wanted to fit in. As such, during, and after, the war she felt lost in Yugoslavia, as the identity and traditions she had grown up with were no longer visible in any of the new countries that arose from the civil war, which she would have to identify with. So, she decided to stay in the Netherlands.

A feeling of powerlessness was overwhelming. She began to doubt whether she was crazy for believing that the media was purposefully spreading lies and hatred or whether everyone was crazy for not believing the media was doing it. She would forever ask herself if she could have done anything to stop the war from happening.

She still hopes that one day Yugoslavia can be united again, despite the massive influence ethno-nationalism hold in Yugoslavia, especially now with the speed at which ideas can spread over the internet.

Information was the crucial point of the war. Media spread information of the war, but spread a biased perspective of that information. This also happened in Yugoslavia, as the media was the original spreader of nationalistic rhetoric before the war. Thus, she sees the Yugoslavian media as a central player in the outbreak of the war as they spread the nationalistic ideals. (Correspondent 4 agreed to this statement by saying that the media where he lived, Croatia, had become increasingly nationalistic in the years leading to the war.)

PTSD primarily in the form of feelings of powerlessness and guilt and, again, that loss of innocence and a growing carefulness around people. Furthermore, she also lost her faith in media and politics as a result of the poor representation of the conflict in the media and her belief that the media was naught but a way for the government to spread its beliefs. As such, she also lost her belief in the government. She felt the war was just a game being played by those in power. She also lost her materialism, as the war had forcibly destroyed all the possessions she had left in Yugoslavia. She also gained a new perspective on death as just another part of life. However, does not want to be treated for PTSD, never even considered it, which was agreed to by correspondent 4. Lastly, she became less trustful and more distant. This was a result of the feeling that she was the only one, aside from other pre-war migrants and refugees, who had understood the war and what it had meant to her.

Acute reaction included nightmares, no more trust in people, not even in the Netherlands (would remain over time).

The story she used to highlight her trauma was a story that saw her husband leaving unannounced with an earlier bus, resulting in her fearing for his safety as someone might have done something to him. These were fears she did not have before the war.

Correspondent 4

Angry for the life that the war had denied him.

Beliefs that, in general, the Yugoslavian people did not want a war, only specific nationalistic groups wanted it. However, they would, over time, be turned due to the media. (correspondent 3 agreed with this)

He sees the Yugoslavian politician and media as the greatest villain of all. The politicians' ethnically biased stories became increasingly dominant in the media and as such, they would slowly poison the general populous. Thus, he sees politics and media as the main causes of the civil war. To this day, he does not trust politics and media as a result of this.

He first became aware of the severity of the ethnic divisions when some of his family members became increasingly Croatian nationalistic and began hating Serbians.

Was also called to serve, but he continuously struggled with the feeling that he would fight against his people (Yugoslavs) but for his country (Croatia). Also felt that he was forced to choose between being a Yugoslav or a Croat.

Mentioned that people that had married someone from a different ethnic group before the war, were forced to divorce after the war, as marrying someone from another ethnic group was no longer allowed.

He mentioned that the split of Yugoslavia was felt most in Yugoslavia, as here in the Netherlands, the idea of separation had never caught on with other Yugoslavian pre-war migrants.

Also believes that the war was a game played by larger political powers, powers that wanted to grow their influence in Yugoslavia. For example, aside from Eastern and Western players, the Mujahadin were also fighting in the war to spread their influence, which they successfully did as the Muslim faith was far stronger after the war than before it.

He was very afraid of getting PTSD, as he had a lot of nightmares following the war. However, these nightmares were not necessarily about the war itself but more about the consequences it would have on the daily life of him and his closest family/friends. He was also very afraid of what the future would bring, as he had nothing when he first arrived in the Netherlands that could help him build a new future. He had to start from scratch. Similar experiences with lack of faith in people and media, small hope that internet could reunite Yugoslavia. He, does not believe he has PTSD, nor does he want to be treated for it if it would turn out he had it.

Appendix IV

This interview was also conducted with two of my correspondents at the same time. They are husband and wife.

Correspondent 5

They had settled in the Netherlands long before the start of the war, around the same time as my first correspondent, roughly the 1970's. She brought up a story that indicated to her that the war was coming. She told me that during their last visit to Yugoslavia before the war, one of their family members had started to sing Serbian songs but was quickly reminded that that was no longer allowed.

When the war began, they had just gotten their first child. As such, the focus of their lives was on said child and not the war. It would only be when they realized how severe the war was that their focus began to shift.

One of the things she found the most jarring was how the war was raging in Yugoslavia whilst here in the Netherlands, the ethnic separation was not visible amongst Yugoslavian pre-war migrants. She illustrated this with the example of Yugoslavian pre-war migrants often eating together, despite them coming from different ethnic backgrounds.

Furthermore, she was shocked by the way the war was represented in the media, with the Serbian always being the bad guy and the division of Yugoslavia been seen as positive. This was incredibly traumatic because her husband was Serbian and Yugoslavia, and now they were constantly bombarded with negative news about Serbians and the idea that the breakup of Yugoslavia was a good thing for the nation overall.

For a very long time, she held on to the feeling that she had to defend the nationality of her husband, as he was 'Serbian'. The question, 'where are you from' was a frequently asked and painful question, as she did not know how to answer it, Yugoslavia was no more and Serbian came with a lot of prejudices. It came to a point where she felt almost ashamed to admit they came from Yugoslavia. These prejudices is what she found to be most painful, as suddenly everyone had an opinion of you. Feelings of frustration remained after the war, but she believes she does not have PTSD. She blamed the one-sided perspective of the war given by the media for people not understanding how severe of an impact the war had on their lives, and that as a result of this, people did not understand how hurtful it was to ask what her, and her husbands, nationality was. This general lack of understanding caused them both to feel isolated from those who had not understood them. This is a pattern very similar to my other correspondents.

Correspondent 6

Did not go back to Bosnia, despite having thought and talked about it. Did feel very loyal to, and proud of Yugoslavia. Also agreed with my second correspondent's notion of pride in Yugoslavia and linking national to personal identity.

Most difficult thing during the war was the fact that his family was still in Yugoslavia, with no food and little to no electricity. On the rare occasions he could contact them he learned of their predicament, and that one family member left to fight on the frontlines, ultimately he would survive, but this news still made him worry for his family. Furthermore, it also instilled within him feelings of powerlessness, as he could do nothing to aid his family.

Did not follow any Yugoslavian media, only Dutch media. One-sided reporting was traumatic and the horrific images he saw were traumatic, yet he watched anyway. The media deepened his feelings of powerlessness, as he was forced to accept that he could not only do nothing to help his family, but also nothing to stop or change the war. At this point, correspondent 5 remarked that the war became too much for him, and that he started avoiding anything to do with the war.

Also felt that he could not remain Yugoslavian, and that he had to adopt a new identity to fit in. Forced to choose, despite not wanting to. The feeling that he no longer had a nationality was very difficult for him and he would not take a new passport once the war was gone.

Did have nightmares, thought they would pass, but they remained for a long time, although they would eventually pass. Also, did initially not believe the war would break out. Was shocked when it did. Incredibly scared for the safety of his family.

Correspondent also mentioned having lost faith in politics and media as a result of how they had portrayed the civil war. However, he maintains his belief that he does not have PTSD. This correspondent was an interesting case as he avoided answering most of my questions throughout the interview and his wife ended up answering most questions for him. However, this only served as evidence of the contrary because through his avoidance, he indicated to me that the pain of his trauma was still so real that he could not bring himself to talk about it. My belief was echoed by his wife.

Appendix V

This appendix includes my in-depth questions and several exchanges I had with correspondents after I had conducted my interview with them.

In-depth questions

What do you see as the root of the conflict?

What role did nationalism and ethnicity play in the war?

How did the war impact your perception of Western people?

How did you experience the war when the country you lived in did not experience it the same way?

Do you feel as if the West betrayed Yugoslavia? If so, why, and did that belief carry over into your view of the world?

How did you perceive the Western media's reporting on the war?

Did you have any friends or family in Yugoslavia during the war? If so, how did that shape your experiences during the war?

Did you ever feel like you wanted to go and help/fight?

How did the war influence your daily life?

Post-Interviews Exchanges with my Correspondents

During the process of writing my thesis, I would repeatedly reach out to my correspondents to ask questions that popped up regarding my study that had not, or minimally, been discussed during the interviews.

1). During a meeting with my supervisor, he asked me whether or not my correspondents had received treatment and, if not, if they wanted to. At that point, I was not sure, as it was only briefly discussed during my third interview. As such, I reached out to my correspondents again to ask them how they felt about treatment. None of them believed they had PTSD, and as such, they did not want treatment for something they did not believe they had. Only correspondent 3 had a different answer. She was well aware of her symptoms of ASD/PTSD because her work as a translator had gotten her involved with psychiatric institutions as she translated for Yugoslavian refugees who needed treatment during and after the war. However, despite this connection to psychiatric institutions, and her awareness of her symptoms, she did not want to get Western treatment as she did not want to discuss her experiences of the war with someone whose perception of the war was 'tainted' by the Western media because she believed that such a person could never understand what she had gone through during the war.

2.) Following my second interview, I went back and asked my first correspondent whether or not he shared my second correspondent's connection between personal and national identity, which he did. Following the second interview, I would specifically ask whether or not correspondents linked national to personal identity due to pride.

3.) In the last week of working on my thesis, I sent it to all my correspondents to give them a final look at my work and give them the ability to check if they were okay with what I had said, and how I had said it. I was thrilled to hear that they all agreed with my explanations and conclusions. Especially with regards to my assessment of their identity trauma, as that was a 'new' form of trauma that I was trying to give shape based on their experiences.

	Entry test BA thesis 2020-2021, period 2
	Fill out each field , even if incomplete.
	SUBMIT Monday 9 November 2020 at the latest with supervisor in Word, not PDF (Blackboard)
Date submission	09/11/2020
Name	Niko Skenderija
Supervisor	Paschalis Pechlivanis
7,5 / 15 EC	15 EC
Introduction of theme (max. 100 words)	Experiences of war shape people's life, be it the loss of loved ones or physical/mental trauma. Due to circumstances such as time and place these experiences can greatly differ from person to person. The goal of this research paper is to uncover these differences between migrant workers and refugees in the case of the Yugoslavian civil war.
Clear and delineated research question (max. 50 words)	<p>How did the perception of and experiences with the Yugoslavian civil war differ between refugees and migrant workers from Bosnia Hercegovina in the Netherlands?</p> <p>Subquestions (primarily serve as a foundation for my interview questions) could include topics like, trauma, the role of religion and the extent to which they were able to process the war afterwards.</p>
Relation with existing literature (relevance and historiography) (max. 100 words)	Most of the research which covers the Yugoslavian civil war focusses on either the outbreak or the consequences of the war. As such, little attention is given to individual experiences of the war, and the research that does cover this topic looks primarily at refugees of the war from all across Yugoslavia. My thesis looks to expend this field of research by including migrant workers, who left former Yugoslavia before the war, as an important party that suffered greatly from the war. On top of that my thesis will also specifically look at migrant workers and refugees from Bosnia Hercegovina, instead of former Yugoslavia as a whole.
Explanation of method (max. 100 words)	My thesis will consist of both a literature study and qualitative research. The literature study will provide the necessary background for my interview questions. These questions will focus on how the respondent experienced the war, these could include aspects such as religion and which area they lived in. The qualitative research will focus on conducting interviews. I will use the skills I obtained in the course 'kwalitatieve onderzoeks methode' (GEO2-3053) in order to carry out this research. Important steps in this process are creating a topiclist and transcribing and coding all the interviews.
Schedule for period 2 (and period 3 if applicable)	Period 2 , plan and prepare interviews, write introduction, method and the first chapters of necessary background W1: hand in entry test W2: Start writing theoretical framework/historiography W3: Continue on from week 2 W4: Finish theoretical framework and start working on the topiclist for the interviews W5: Continue on with topiclist/finish it if possible

	<p>W6: Work on method -> start planning interviews</p> <p>W7: Conduct interviews if possible, and work on background chapters, tie in with theoretical framework/historuigraphy -> also work on result chapter when sufficient data has been gathered, and transcribe interviews.</p> <p>W8: same</p> <p>W9: same</p> <p>W10: Reflect on process thus far</p> <p>Period 3, write chapters covering the different experiences. Interviews will be conducted depending on when the respondents are available, so this can be in period 2 and 3.</p> <p>W1: continue on with w7 from period 1</p> <p>W2: same</p> <p>W3: same</p> <p>W4: Finalize all the interviews</p> <p>W5: finish working on results chapter and move to conclusion</p> <p>W6: work on final version</p> <p>W7: Friday at noon hand in BA thesis</p> <p>W8: Tuesday 6 April, 5pm, hand in final version of thesis.</p>
Short list of relevant literature	<p>These sources are primarily aimed at providing the necessary background information upon which I will base my interviews questions (topiclist).</p> <p>Caytas. J.D. (2012). The Role of Identity in the Outbreak of the Yugoslavian Wars. Found at:</p> <p>Isakovic. Z. (2000). Identity and Security in Former Yugoslavia.</p> <p>Maynard. J.L. (2015). Identity and Ideology in Political Violence and Conflict. St. Anthony's International Reviews. Vol. 10, No. 2.</p> <p>Velikonja. M. (2003). The role of Religions and Religious Communities in the Wars in Ex-Yugoslavia 1991-1999. Found at:</p> <p>Knezevic. B. & Olson. S. (2014). Counseling People Displaced by War: Experiences of Refugees from the Former Yugoslavia. The Professional Counselor. Vol. 4, No. 4.</p> <p>O'Loughlin. J. (2010). Inter-ethnic friendships in post-war Bosnia-Herzegovina: Sociodemographic and place influences. Ethnicities. Vol. 10, No. 1.</p>
Primary sources (be specific)	<p>The main aspect of my essay is a number of interviews, between 6 to 10, half of which will be with refugees and the other half will be with migrant workers. As my main question suggest, the focus of the interviews is on their perception of and experiences with the war. In doing so I also hope to see an outline of how and why their views on the war differed.</p> <p>As the corona virus is currently restricting travel and social life/interaction is controlled/limited, all of the respondents will be acquaintances of my parents. This will allow me to conduct and setup</p>

	<p>the interviews online or via phone call, thus avoiding any possible issues with corona. As of the handing in of this entry test I already have eleven potential respondents. However, more can be found if necessary, as these individuals are just the ones my parents are closest to. All of the respondents are from Bosnia Hercegovina and currently live in the Netherlands. Five of them are refugees from different ethnic/religious groups. Some are even of a mixed background or are married to someone in another ethnic group, which could provide some unique perspectives. The other six are migrant workers who moved to the Netherlands before the war. These are also people with different ethnic/religious background, from non-religious, to Muslim or Catholic.</p> <p>Other primary sources include a New York Times article from 1991 discussing the war and its ethnic nature. Engelberg, S. (1991). Brutal Impasse: The Yugoslavian War A Special Report; Yugoslavian Ethnic Hatreds Raise Fear of a War Without an End. New York Times. December 23, 1991. This article will help me in painting a picture of the way the war was perceived in the West, which might have influenced the migrant workers, and will provide a basis on which to build my interviews.</p> <p>Another primary source that will be of use in my thesis is a document of the UN titled 'Items relating to the situation in the former Yugoslavia'*. This document describes all the processes and steps taken by the UN during the Yugoslavian-civil war and can thus be used another brick with which to build my thesis.</p> <p>*found at: https://www.un.org/en/sc/repertoire/93-95/Chapter%208/EUROPE/93-95_8-21-YUGOSLAVIA.pdf</p>
Below for supervisor	
Graded by	
Date	
Fail / pass	
Comments	