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WORKSHOP: War and Identity in the Balkans and the Middle East

WORKING PAPER

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Title: WHO ARE BOSNIAN RAPE-VICTIMS? Victimized Cautiousness & Narrative
Fetishism in Post-War Identity Construction

Date: 10 April 2018



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The research about war-related rapes in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 90s over the course of last two decades have not contributed only to massive evidence of testimonies and popularization of the topic on the global scale. Moreover, it contributed to overall understanding of war rape as socio-political phenomena, clarified some ethno-sexual and ethno-gendered correlations and even drafted legal and moral directions to counter and prevent war crimes committed specifically against women in the future combats. What has not changed much in all those years and legal/medical/social efforts in the field, are the discursive wars over the naming of the crime of rape and individuals who survived; as well as the lack of constructive agreement on visual and narrative imaginary accompanying the public discussion about it. The attention that scholars are paying to arguing the most ‘correct’ or less ‘contested’ portrayals of people affected by those crimes, seems as important as the issue itself. I myself have experienced several challenges in terminology, linguistic shortcomings and stereotypical representations, what have led me as well to the cautious use of ‘speaking for others.’ As a type of narrative practice that has been employed in most of the knowledge production we have on display today in the contexts of Bosnian war rapes, *speaking for others* played an important role during or immediately after the war, when the individuals affected were experiencing severe trauma and shock. In most cases, survivors were immersed into searching for shelter and displaced or missing family members, voicing the crimes, hence, was not necessarily their main mission, neither had the survivors the much-needed strength and courage to stand loudly against denial and intentional actions of disguising the war atrocities. First media reports and testimonies shared (Fisk 1993; United Nations Security Council 1993; Bloor 1994; Aziz 1995; Simons 1994; Goodman 1997) were soon after the war replaced by extensive studies of the more complex and conceptual explanations of occurrence of rape in conflict (Stiglmayer 1994; Slapšak 2000; Žarkov 2007; Skjelsbaek 2012); diverse social and political applications have come into play and visual and narrative representations of survivors have been created. Surprisingly or not, the very initial imaginary of particularly *female Muslim survivors* (Allen 1996; Vranić 1996) has become an important political and ideological construct and it is now the *reflection of* but even more the *direction for* all survivors, who are being trapped in failures of legislative and administrative efforts to ensure prosecutions and establish compensation payments in post-war Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The present social status of the survivors of war rape has been deeply intertwined with the knowledge produced and disseminated over past years. The narrative on the rape-in-war



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survivors tell us not only ‘how we think about them’ but they also: “change both the ways that *they think about themselves* [author’s emphasis] and the ways that others think about *and act towards them*” (Fairbairn & Fairbairn 2013, 5). Narratives, even those with ‘good intentions’ of awareness raising, may fuel the conflict by offering very particular, limited editions of images and storylines, characters and events. Giving one set of testimonies the prime spot in the narrative and ignoring the others may purify one group and its allies and ‘pollute’ the enemies (Jacobs 2004, 24), what in real life manifests in concrete (material) benefits. In the following paper, I claim that preoccupation by our own academic exercise in forming the discourse that would respond to justice and historical truth of female survivors of Bosnian war rapes, eventually led to the limited evidence of diverse post-war identities of all those who survived rapes and sexualized violence during the war. Despite rich evidence and academic knowledge, we in fact fail to answer ‘who are the Bosnian rape victims’ by continuously providing same, yet very stereotypical, unambiguous and therefore insufficient representations. As this text aims will try to demonstrate, the existing ‘answer’ excludes all those survivors that might not identify under the very monopolistic, victimizing and socially desired category. It also excludes the great diversity of post-war reconstruction processes that indicate other than victimhood and social death. In everyday life the discrepancy between the constructed identity of the survived victims of war-related sexualized violence and their own positioning toward it, might generate several obstacles, including successful healing, overall recovery and rebuilding of physical and mental worlds. Combining narrative analysis of selected sources and observations from my field work research that I have started in 2011, I argue, that for the post-war society to bring justice for the survivors and enable constructive approach toward healing (as individuals) and reconciliation (as collective), scholars must do their part in deconstructing the representations that involve fixation of (victimized) identity and attachment of this identity to the individuals, specifically to female survivors.

First such attempts have happened through several linguistic interventions that aimed to clean the terms of pejorative meanings and connotations of and powerlessness. Gloria Steinman, a writer and feminist activist, believes that first linguistic replacement must be done by the terminology of ‘sexual violence’ itself. She proposes to replace it with the term ‘sexualized violence’ (in Wolfe 2012) as “there is nothing sexual about violence. Sex is about pleasure. Violence is about pain.” Hence sexual in her views is primary something (self)gratifying, related to consensual, and pleasurable physical attraction among individuals. Such explanation



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demand reading with several critical restraints, especially when understanding sexuality in historical, heteronormative and patriarchal pre-war contexts as is the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Violence has historically constituted the cultures of sexualities hence it seems artificial to divide those two as they would function as separate social and cultural practices (for more see: Močnik 2017). A clear distinction between sexuality and violence has been drawn by several other feminist scholars (see for instance: Seifert 1994, Nikolić-Ristanović 1995; Rejali 1996, Olujić 1998; Jalušič 2004), rooting the origins of rapes in hate and misogyny. Cathy Winkler (2002) defined rape as the experience of social death where by taking the control over the body the attackers somehow murder the victim and annihilate her existence. To highlight the fact that rape survivors are *still people, persons, humans*, although the rape experience might ‘murder their souls’, and dehumanize them, Winkler proposes to use ‘people raped’ instead of ‘raped people.’ As survivors frequently experience something called ‘second rape’ (Williams 1984; Campbell & Raja 1999) and what comes in responses of society like blame, pressure of self-guilt, denial, and ostracism, ‘raped people’ only furthers the stigmatization and the responsibility of survivors to carry the legacy of collective crimes on their own shoulders. Adding adjective after the noun moves the focus away from the socially assigned *features* (and roles and behaviors that survivor is expected to follow) to *action* committed – it is a fact that the crime occurred to the person; however, this fact does not necessarily narrow down all identity layers of this person to the one of the survivor. Nusreta Sivac, survivor herself, explains this discrediting practice in the documentary *Calling the Ghosts* (Jacobson and Jelinčić 1996):

Generally it bothers me when someone says raped women (...) raped women – that hurts a person to be marked as a raped woman, as if you had no other characteristic, as if that were your sole identity (in Jacobson and Jelinčić 1996).

The meaning construction that labels the group of people under the »sole identity« with »no other characteristics« (Hesford 1999, 213) prevents survivors to move on with their post-war life in a fluid interaction of many other stories that surround her war rape experience. Survivors’ identities are not constructed only from their self-perception but from the point of view of others too. Internalizing the dismissive and hateful representations and perceptions from the society sustains survivor’s isolation and delusional idea of the world, where only the circle of individuals who experienced the same, is worth trusting and safe.



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In the late 1970s, Kathleen Barry was one of the first theorists to critically address the concept of female victims, underlining that “more than victims, women who have been raped or sexually enslaved are survivors” (Barry 1979, 39). Still today, the discourses surrounding victims and the image of rape in our society legitimate the position of women survivors as being unavoidably and eternally shamed by the community, rejected by their families and intimate partners, and unable to establish and stabilize a normal life again.

If experience of being a raped woman is lived as shame, despair, and degradation, then the production of that experience is already constructed into the practice of raping (Gordon 1977, 19).

Thus, victimhood is not just “descriptive” but also “prescriptive” (Sharratt 2011, 29); with homogenizing *raped women* under the victimhood umbrella, we reject not only the stories of resistance, but also the diversity of the individual woman’s experiences, as well as varied and contextualized factors that influence their reactions, understandings and recovery from trauma.

Moral imperatives of purity (Heru 2001; Helms 2013), innocence, (Marcus 1992; Helms 2013), destruction (Engle 2008), and eternal suffering are the behavioral and interpretive instructions that dictate the identity of victims. The innocence of the victims indicates women as collective in terms of ‘collateral damage’ (Helms 2013, 33) and this collectiveness is built up on the *ethos of compassion* (Fassin 2005): it is only those who have gone through exceptionally difficult circumstances, but they are not responsible for the harm they have experienced, and they deserve the sympathy of others (Leisenring 2006, 308). To challenge those narratives, Liz Kelly in her book “Surviving Sexual Violence” (1988) suggested using the term survivor as oppose to victim to emphasize the damaging baggage of victimhood in recognition of ‘helpless’ and ‘powerless’ individuals. Surviving, on the other hand, supposedly implies person’s active (political) engagement. It involves will, initiative and action and is viewed by many to be more positive because it emphasizes qualities such as agency, coping, resistance, decision making, recovery, and survival (Dunn 2005; McLeer 1998). Jennifer Dunn (2005) believes that women survivors’ identity connotes attributes – like strength, struggle, courage, and agency – all positively recognized and valued by society. Following this premise quite few scholars confronted early studies with the criticism toward *collective victimhood* (for more see: Simić 2012, Helms 2013), especially with regards to female survivors. Elissa Helms in her book, *Innocence and Victimhood* (2013) challenges essentialist representations by offering an insight into spectrum of female-led agency and activism, to confirm how images of victimhood are strategically employed to increase the sympathy of (international) audience and consequently



gaining the attention in survivors' seek for justice and financial reparations. And she is not alone in countering the idea of women as solely passive and powerless targets of sexualized violence: Birgitte Sorensen (1998, iii) in her study of women and post-conflict reconstructions shows how "women probably contribute more than government authorities or international aid to reconciliation, reviving local economies and rebuild social networks." By moving away from the mainstream conventional representation of women as silent and powerless victims, we can find strong evidence (see: Cockburn, Hubić & Stakić-Domuz, 2001) of their involvement in projects initiated and driven by them and/or in activities in which they work in equal roles alongside men (Jordan 2003, 239). However, this narrative shift from 'passive victim' to 'active survivor' is yet another simplification. The power feminism that nowadays replaces the victim feminism (Schneider 1993, 394), creates polarization where survivors who do self-identify as victims and self-reproduce the victimhood narratives become demonized. On the other hand, 'voicing' and advocacy is glorified and assigned superficial powers in achieving justice and social change:

Portrayal of women as *solely* victims or agents is neither accurate nor adequate to explain the complex realities of women's lives (...) both /women's victimization and agency) fail to take account of the oppression, struggle, and resistance that women experience daily in their ongoing relationship. Gender subordination must be understood as a systemic and collective problem – one in which women experience both oppression and resistance (Schneider 1993, 389- 396).

Turn toward different agencies and advocacy against victimhood resulted in rethinking of 'responsibility' in collective and more conceptual terms, ie. through big ideological structures such as patriarchy and nationalism (Jalušič 2004; Žarkov 2007; Helms 2013). However, blaming patriarchal context and/or nationalistic politics for rapes and sexualized violence prevents the actual war criminals from the prosecution and hence holding actual individuals accountable for the crimes committed. It creates socio-political circumstances where one easily excuses their actions by being tricked into unexpected agendas of chaotic war machinery. "Patriarchy," says Leisenring (2006, 391) "does not exist as a monolithic entity separate from human actors and actresses, impervious to any attempts to change it, secure in its role as an immovable first cause of misogynist phenomena such as rape."

Similarly, we can observe this turn in endeavor to represent individual survivors through collective victimhood/survivorship. Individual experience and the legacy of the rapes in war have largely been reduced to ethno-nationalistic and gender rhetoric, referring to a large, depersonalized community, where sexuality and particularly gender have become presented as



constitutive elements in broader socio-political identities, and the sexualized violence in war as a symbolic rape of the body of a specific (ethnic) *community* (for more see: Browniller 1996; Stiglmeier 1996; Seifert 1996; Žarkov 2008). This configuration of different institutional and social players does not acknowledge all different backgrounds, cultural, ethnic, religious, economic, class, and the sexual layers of a woman's identity, because they have become important solely as *collective beings* that have experienced one, collectively defined, understood, and represented type of crime. To some extent this homogenous imagined community was needed "to garner public sympathy and counter previous discourses that blamed the victim" (Lamb 1999, 311), to attract larger audiences, to map the dimension of the crimes, to build up the agency for resistance and resilience. On the other hand, as in Anderson's *imagined communities*, abstracting the subjects within historical and socio-economic relations, symbolical and metaphorical uses of victimhood have turned away the concrete social contexts of the women survivors, their specific historical and contemporary realities, and their individual values, behavioral patterns and beliefs.

Despite the criticism, the imagery of victimhood and representations of rape survivors' identity has rarely changed over the course of the last two decades. The random quick browse over the recent internet offers – surprisingly? – the set of expected features. But this long-term presence of the monolithic, homogenous dominant narrative on female victimhood has (un)intentionally dragged in also those survivors who might not necessarily agree on the socially imposed ideas. I could notice a type of peer-pressure in the groups I worked with, where I could witness the 'leading voice', a strong woman speaking on behalf of the others also physically present in the same room. Among others, I can recall a moment, when during our research session one of the women was triggered by her memories. In a storytelling circle of 12 women, she stopped the conversation shouting out:

You cannot do this [activity]with us. We are vulnerable group, and with us you can only play fun games where we feel relaxed and positive. We survived many bad things, and you must be careful when working with us (personal field notes 2013).

Following this intervention, we continued our discussion about survivors' understanding of the term 'victim of sexual violence.' Women started to talk over one another, mostly referring to the specific nature of the past events that had happened to each one of them. Nevertheless, they agreed on the idea of them as 'one, united group':



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This, what unites us, does not unite any other group. We were hurt very deeply and we can only understand each other. I can tell you a million times what I have been through, but you will never be able to feel how I feel. T. [referring to the participant sitting next to her] does not need my explanation. She was there, she felt it, she knows what I feel. I do not need to talk about it” (personal field notes 2013).

Such *victimized cautiousness*, if paraphrasing Benedict Anderson, is formed on a presumed ‘collective experience’ (Engle 2005, 959) of rape and sexual abuse, perceived and interpreted by all the women in the same way. As stated earlier, experiencing sexual crimes during the war might be only one among all war memories and as such not necessarily even the most significant aspect of it: degradation and humiliation, not to mention the traumatic and emotional significance of losing (or witnessing the torture of) family members very often accompany the testimonies of survivors. As the rape story has such a central spot in this built *togetherness*, other layers of survivors’ traumatic experiences are often not even worked through. Consequently, it is challenging to lead the evidence on healing and recovery; one cannot simply isolate one traumatic moment from the rest in her efforts to move on.

Survivors’ identity construction is also spatial; whereas they would often claim to be survivors, or ‘heroes’ when in closed and trustworthy spaces, they would often take over the image of eternal victim when entering the public space. One such example would be a survivor, that shared her testimony publicly in *Women’s Court*¹ in front of some 100 people. While in a closed group of other survivors she was the ‘strongest one’, encouraging and offering the support to the other members of the group, in public, on the other hand, her testimony clearly followed the rules and expected patterns of established public narratives about survivors. The recognized concept of victim as helpless and passive is therefore consciously used in strategic agency of fighting against the political denial and ignorance. In this way, the concept and identity of victim is beneficial and in fact not very *powerless*; it is a strategy to acknowledge the horrific effects and legacy of rapes as war crimes and if it is the only language understood by both, wider public and political bodies, to work actively on reparations, it is as well empowering and – active. We need to keep in mind that such (self-) narrated identity of victim is therefore not necessarily also the one that women live.

“Totalizing narrative of victimization” (Simić 2012, 133) has launched what Joel Best calls a “victim industry;” different state-run institutions, medical professions, academia, the mass

¹ Women's Court, Feminist Approach to Justice was for the first time organized in the context of former Yugoslavia this year, 2015, May 7th-10th in Bosnian Cultural Centre, Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina. More: <http://www.zenskisud.org/> (last accessed 8 March 2018).



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media, have been providing “considerable institutional support” (Best 1997, 14) for the ideologically powerful and financially profitable phenomena of victimization. Elissa Helms writes how the dominant Western feminist response to the mass rapes of Muslim women in Bosnia was ‘culturalized’ in Orientalist terms, and thus, they have reinforced the image of women as victims (Kapur 2002; Simić 2012) and “Orientalist assumptions about gender oppression” (Helms 2013, 6). Testimonial narratives have usually been constructed not only from dichotomous West/East perspective, but also in hierarchical lines where *the subject*, i.e. the women survivors *have learned* to accommodate the narrative of what has been expected. “In this manner, a repetitive and stylized model of victim was constructed, and the vast diversity of situations and narratives remains invisible or is occluded” (Jelin 2012, 86).

Over times the therapeutic narrative and “learned helplessness” (Walker 1977), i.e. individualized and medicalized position of survivors postponed the urgency of political and social agency and led the social process of victimization where survivors, indeed, became entrapped in the set of behaviors that direct them to be unable to act and respond. A master narrative of helpless survivors employs a certain authority over our moral imagination and if in the beginning it was used to make sense of the survivors’ experiences and traumatic legacies, today it informs them in taking over the new identities. One of the accompanying aspects of learned helplessness is also so called ‘conspiracy of silence’ that has reinforced rather than overcame the patriarchal connotation of silencing women to legitimize female sexuality as shameful, with a sense of guilt, embarrassment, and subjected to power control. The pattern how this paradigm of ‘silenced rape victims’ is being reproduced is strangely contradictory by itself: as the evidence of survivors’ who speak out has been increasing over the years, the narrative of them *being silenced* is getting stronger and emphasized as well. As this silence is almost never understood as conscious act of resilience and/or resistance but rather manifest of social repression, survivors’ trauma endlessly recapitulates itself by slowing down the healing process of “work of mourning” (Freud 1917). Silence offers to the society (more than to survivors!) the position of *comfort discomfort*, without embracing the need for radical transformation of certain dogmatic ritual and practices, where politics of rapes present one of the most important pillars in maintaining the unequal gender and sexual power relations. While work of mourning is an active translation and in some sense ritualization of the loss and shock, the eternally silenced and victimized position of survivors, on the other hand, creates a narrative fetishism, that releases both, survivors and the surrounding society from “the burden of having



to reconstitute one's self-identity under 'posttraumatic conditions' (Santer 1992, 144). Narrative fetishism insists on the *inability* to 'work through,' to move on, it postpones the 'after' trauma life by holding on to this very moment. During the informal conversation (notes from fieldwork, 2013), one of the woman survivors would express her concern by being stuck in 1993:

They keep calling me to testify, different people. I am tired of being called. It feels I cannot start living, because I am just waiting for another call. I cannot forget and move on if one keeps recalling this day back.

Furthermore, she explained that she would like to be something else but a victim, and when I asked her what this would be, she gave very unclear response. It was, indeed, very challenging for her to imagine her life in the aftermath of the war without constantly referring to its the legacy. But it is not only the individual trauma and post-traumatic symptoms that they suffer either physically or psychologically and prevents survivors to move on. Complete transformation of the socio-political system that to a large extent still relies on international intervention and financial support is a very important yet under addressed aspect of successful overcome of those fixed collective identities. The narrative fetishism of collective victimhood and silence of rape survivors is therefore not only a survivors' individualized strategy, but serves as an operational umbrella for diverse bureaucratic and political interests in the current state of negative peace that perpetuates post-war Bosnia-Herzegovina. We could lead a complex separate discussion on what the successful work of mourning as opposed to narrative fetishism would mean in reformulation and reconstitution of identity of war rape survivors in such context.

Testifying, and 'breaking the silence' promises to transform a victim to survivor, which eventually brings the moral victory over the perpetrators' unprosecuted crimes. However, while these narratives are or can be empowering – or at least have been reproduced with the intention to empower and *give the voice* – they also might leave other important stories and narratives unheard and aside (Simić 2012, 136). Search of alternative narratives and counter-stories can be demanding and challenging as it can risk the harmful reception of the broader society, such as dishonoring the survivors, devaluing their suffering, or even as an attempt to deny the crimes. Going beyond "protectionist and conservative discourse" (2002, 5) in today's socio-political context of Bosnia-Herzegovina might be perceived as rude and offensive, re-traumatizing, or harmful for survivors and their families in other ways. As Olivera Simić (2012,



137) has noticed in her attempts to challenge the “unending victims” discourse, “the insistence on the need to ‘unpack’ the construction of the Bosnian woman’s identity becomes a dangerous and thankless task.”

I have experienced this challenge of searching for counter narratives by my research on social construction of sexual pleasures of women survivors (Močnik 2017). The research aimed to challenge the established moral imperatives of shame, responsibility, guilt and sexual taboos. With the commonly accepted framework of the innocent and pure women rape survivors, the past representations of survivors and sexuality are framed as *matter of violence* and *nonconsenting* and hence openly expressing sexual desire might imply women survivors being *dirty* and *vulgar* or even responsible for crimes. When the body, in our case the archetypal abused *body of Bosnian woman* (in Žarkov 2007; Simić 2012; Helms 2013), is that determined by socially prescribed images, there is no room left “for examination of agency or for the articulation of sexuality and sexual desire as positive and life-affirming” (Kapur 2012, 10). The possibility of consensual sex between rape survivors and their partners (potentially perpetrators or/and survivors themselves) seems inexistent. Stories of consensual, non-violent sex, and women’s sexual autonomy (both in times of war and peace) are largely excluded and ignored from the dominant narratives (Engle 2008, 951). Olivera Simić describes her struggle in an international feminist conference to break down the stereotype where sex in war equals rapes and abuse. “War is destructive,” she writes, “but it does not stop lives being lived. The living continues to have ordinary sexual desire (Simić 2012, 135).” In support of her argument, she refers to her field work research about consensual sex and “sex for fun” (Simić, *ibid*) between UN peacekeepers and local women. Karen Engle (2008, 956), in her text *Judging Sex*, similarly provides several excerpts from testimonies, showing an evidence of consensual inter-war sexual relationships between battling side, and even in captivity. Furthermore, Slavenka Drakulić, in *As if I am not there* (1999), devotes part of her story to the relationship between the “Captain,” the detention camp commander, and one of the prisoners from the “women’s room.” The example from my own research on more textured perspective about women survivors’ sexuality after the war suggests a path of moving away from the polarized victim versus survivor narrative. As in cases mentioned above, it was not exceptional in my own field research to come across with the testimonies, where women would report to suffer from PTSD but would at the same time express also a joyful and appreciative relationship with their body as sexually desirable *object*. However, when heated conversations following Angelina Jolie’s



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representation of (semi)consensual inter-war love and sex relationship between protagonists of her movie *In the Land of Blood and Honey* have overtaken national media covers, understanding of inter-war sexuality other than rapes and sexual violence has become almost non-negotiable. “The only love in a concentration camp could have been between a mother and her child,” says Bakira Hasečić, the leading voice in presenting women rape victims in this case. The movie in fact offered different readings of historical truth, but it was the public discussions that once again confirmed the dominant and totalizing narrative of the women survivors, and moreover of Bosnian women as only victims (Simić 2012, 131). Peter Beaumont writes how Jolie’s movie “divides Bosnian rape victims” (2010), who claim that “Bosnia’s raped” have been monopolized by the single voice of Bakira Hašečić, that should not “talk in our [victims’] voice.” However, Beaumont also finds women who state “we are all Bakira” (ibid). What makes this statement correct is the fact, that is extremely challenging to reach survivors outside of the organized and institutionalized circle like non-governmental organizations that tackle with the issues of legacy on different levels. This leads us to conducting a research or collecting the (same) evidence mostly from this, highly controlled and ‘guarded’ spaces. Under such circumstances and as I have elaborated elsewhere (see: Močnik 2017), a researcher is often subjected to rules and a ‘good will’ of gate-keepers links to survivors and collections of testimonies. The effective search for alternative narratives is therefore almost impossible and any deconstruction of comforting collective victimhood might be perceived as betrayal, ‘working against’ or even threatening.

This is not to say that existing mainstream representations about rape survivors are nothing but the narrative appropriations of social realities of those individuals. Neither is my intention here to deny destructive and long-lasting psychosocial effects of war rapes. Rather the idea of this text was to emphasize the exclusivist repercussions of one prevailing and socially desirable story that creates certain heroism exclusively for those who can fit into this categorization while excludes the rest: survivors are being praised for breaking the silence and speaking out; testifying as such is a heroic act and consequently those who decide to keep silent are being finger-pointed and blamed. Trauma shared can serve as a source of building the community and empowering the individual experiences by giving the form of socially acknowledge voice. On the other side relating to others can come with a heavy price, especially when individuals must suppress other, non-conventional or non-traditional expression of their self-hood. For instance, we have zero or very little knowledge about intersectionality of identities among



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survivors, particularly from the perspective of class, gender (beyond binary), sexuality (beyond heterosexual) but also patterns of geographical population distribution (specifically differences between urban and rural).

At the end - does the diversity of stories even matter? Or should we be satisfied to have enough evidence that rapes during the war in Bosnia in 90s did in fact happen and that the persons responsible for crimes should be prosecuted. In terms of crime prosecution, the evidence is now big enough and any further cross-examination and calls to testify for those who have already shared their stories, all contribute to re-victimization and 'second rapes' of survivors. If one has to testify numerous times, it increases the feelings of (social) mistrusts that those events did happen and that survivors are telling the truth. On the other hand, if we are to continue investigating the phenomena of war rapes with the objective to deconstruct harmful and disempowering narratives, we need to seek for more underdetermined and contested understanding of surviving a war rape that is importantly shaped also by individual emotional introjections and projections. In feminist studies and beyond, we came to an agreement that there are many masculinities, femininities inside of non-binary gender identifications, which theoretically oppose the generalization of rape survivors identities. For this, we need to create a constructive discursive (scholarship) and empirical (agency) platforms, where multiple experiences and emotional legacies of war rapes will be acknowledge and taken into consideration.

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