“It starts to burn a little”: Intergenerational Transmission of Experiences of War within a Bosnian Family in Sweden

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Abstract: This study builds on recent findings that emotions are crucial to the transmission of experiences of mass political violence between generations. In such work, the familial setting, as distinct from the individual psychological domain or collective sociocultural contexts, has been receiving increasing scholarly attention. Drawing on a larger project on the families formed by Bosnians who moved to Sweden during the 1990s war,[1] this article develops a new method to analyze the interfamilial dynamics of communicating meanings. This method combines analysis of the emotions with which participants characterize certain facts – whether in semi-structured interviews or in children’s drawings – with the dynamic reflexivity common to both participant observation and psychotherapy. The analysis demonstrates how certain facts and feelings may be transmitted unchanged, while others become transformed or are lost in the process of intergenerational transmission.

The study of communication within family is an important arena, one that exists “between the individual memory and the larger frame of collective remembrance,” as Astri Erll has convincingly argued.[2] Most studies of familial transmission, however, focus on broad institutional and state settings. They often turn their analytic lens toward incongruences between individual or familial transmission and institutionalized transmission, where the more idiosyncratic experiences and memories of individuals are not always in keeping with the

[1] The project “Intergenerational Transmission of Experiences of War among Bosnians in Sweden – A Study in Psychological Anthropology” was financed by the Swedish Bank’s Tercentenary Fond (Riksbankens Jubileumsfond) and the fieldwork was carried out in 2014-2015.

[2] Astri Erll, “Locating Family in Cultural Memory Studies,” *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 42, no. 3 (2011): 303–318, 315; Carol A. Kidron, “Silent Legacies of Trauma: A Comparative Study of Cambodian Canadian and Israeli Holocaust Trauma Descendant Memory Work,” in *Remembering Violence: Anthropological Perspectives on Intergenerational Transmission*, ed. Nicolas Argenti and Katharina Schramm, 193–228 (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2010), 221.

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public ones, and in fact often stand in sharp contrast.[3] Take, for instance, studies of the aftermath of massive political violence, and the transmission – or the very impossibility of articulating – traumatic experiences to the next generation. Within the discipline of anthropology, one of the most sensitive and nuanced considerations of such phenomena, Nicolas Argenti and Katharina Schramm's collection, *Remembering Violence*, [4] shows how communities and culture are implicated in the transmission of the "unspeakable." In such analyses, the intricacies of interfamilial dynamics – comprising not only the relations between the family members, but also the less obvious forces that make the family members affect each other in profound ways – seem often to be left out of the frame.

In this study, I wish to turn the focus away from the dynamics between familial experiences and shared, public ones, and toward interfamilial dynamics in their own right. This article explores which memories of mass political violence are – and are *not* – communicated between generations in a family setting and the processes through which that communication occurs. Focusing in depth on one family, it examines the dynamic relationship between a father's narrative of his war and postwar experiences and other family members' accounts of his experiences, which, following Welzer, I call re-narrations of the war.[5]

Both White and Kidron have shown that in the process of transmission of narratives about past political violence to those who have not experienced it themselves, it is emotions that make the narratives meaningful.[6] Those hearing the narratives always make meaning in their own contemporary contexts, and when the narratives are integrated by those without personal experiences "the re-narrations are de- and recontextualized,"[7] as Welzer has put it. For example, in

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[3] Good examples are to be found in Sabine Marschall's study of South African monuments (Sabine Marschall, *Landscape of Memory: Commemorative Monuments, Memorials and Public Statuary in Post-Apartheid South-Africa* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010)), Geoffrey White's study of U.S. memorials (Geoffrey White, "Landscapes of power"), and Carol Kidron's study of Israeli school-orchestrated travels to sites of the Holocaust in Europe (Carol A. Kidron, "Survivor Family Memory Work at Sites of Holocaust Remembrance: Institutional Enlistment or Family Agency?" *History & Memory* 27, no. 2 (2015): 45–73.).

[4] Nicolas Argenti and Katharina Schramm, *Remembering Violence.*

[5] Harald Welzer, "Re-narrations: How Pasts Change in Conversational Remembering," *Memory Studies* 3, no. 1 (2010): 5–17.

[6] Geoffrey White, "Landscapes of Power: National Memorials and the Domestication of Affect," *City & Society* 18, no. 1 (2006): 50–61; Carol A. Kidron, "Survivor Family Memory Work."

[7] Welzer, "Re-narrations," 15.

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research focused on understanding why German families often obliterate their members' Nazi pasts, Welzer observed that re-narration tends to be congruent with the current moral values of the re-narrators and their social setting. This congruence is attained by shifts that include mixing the facts from narrations in ways that make sense to the re-narrator and omitting and forgetting ambiguous material.[8]

In my earlier research[9] about how the memories of survivors of the Bosnian war are transmitted, I showed that a daughter's re-narration mingled the facts of her parents' narrative about their experiences of the Bosnian war, with her current general, global, and historical knowledge, which was characteristic of a young woman born and raised in Sweden. This facilitated the unaltered transmission of the emotion that her parents expressed in their narratives, at the same time as a considerable magnification and globalization of the facts. My aim now is to examine more closely *how* emotions work and what happens with them in relation to the facts to which they are attached. Further, I inquire into how intergenerational dynamics influence these factual and emotional clusters of content in narration and re-narrations.

My aim is also to develop a method by which to proceed in such an inquiry. The work that has probably received the most scholarly attention in this regard is Marianne Hirsch's *Family Frames*,[10] in which she introduced the term 'post-memory' in an analysis of familial photography. However, Hirsch's methods, developed as they were to work with photographs and public literary and artistic works, are not a good fit to my material, which is comprised of individual narratives of past events, narrated and re-narrated by different family members. Such material demands more nuanced tools than the concept of postmemory affords. For example, the emotional meanings in my material go in several directions between different family members and different generations, while in Hirsch's work, they are by necessity uni-directional: from the photography, to the onlooker and interpreter.

Within the family context, Dan Bar-On in *Fear and Hope*, is among those who have shown that a psychodynamic awareness of emotional nuances in narratives can reveal new insights into the phenomena of intergenerational

[8] Welzer, "Re-narrations," 8–9.
[9] Ivana Maček, "Transmission and Transformation of the Sarajevan Siege," in *From Sarajevo to Troy: Civilians under Siege*, ed. Alex Dowdall and John Horne, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, forthcoming).
[10] Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

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transmission that are not always explicit.[11] Specifically, in Bar-On and his team's research with three generations in the families of the Holocaust survivors in Israel, the main characteristics of such a psychodynamic approach are openness – in both interview processes and later analysis – to the non-verbal communication that often occurs via silences, omissions, slips of the tongue, distortions of facts, and illogical or contradictory statements, body-language (including voice quality), as well as via the researchers' own associations and emotion-laden responses. It is this repertoire of nuanced psychodynamic methods on which I have drawn in the interviews and analysis alike, in order to investigate the continuities, losses, and changes in the facts and emotions that family members transmit.

Method

Research design and data

The study design involved interviewing parents and children in families in which at least one parent had experienced the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the 1990s, while their children, who had been born in Sweden, had no personal experience of the war.[12] The study, conducted in accordance with The Swedish Research Council's (Vetenskapsrådet) Ethical Guidelines, included twenty families in total. Semi-structured informal interviews with all members of a family were conducted in their homes, with each member separately, except with younger children who preferred to have their parents present. Five of the younger children made a drawing that they explained to me, sometimes as a complement to being interviewed and sometimes as an alternative. All interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and thematically analyzed with focus on the factual and emotional content. The central research question was: What was narrated, and how was it narrated? In other words, which emotions were tied to which facts in the narration?

I chose one family as my case study because I was intrigued by the relatively simple, yet striking, work that a child made when asked to make a

[11] Dan Bar-On, *Fear and Hope: Three Generations of the Holocaust* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995).

[12] That these families originated in Bosnia and live in Sweden is important, but not the focus of this study. Although there is a considerable body of research on Bosnians who migrated to Sweden during the 1990s because of the war, none has been concerned with intergenerational transmission. The main themes in this literature have been these migrants' employment experiences, development of small businesses, cosmopolitanism, transnationalism, integration into the local Swedish context, as well as the meaning of psychiatric disorders and the negotiation of a sense of normalcy.

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drawing of war. This family consisted of Edin (the father), Johanna (the mother), and two boys, Joar and Hugo, aged six and eight, respectively at the time of the interviews in 2015.[13] The material analyzed here consists of: Edin's narrative; Johanna's re-narration and her narratives of her own experiences of visiting postwar Bosnia and Herzegovina together with her husband; and their older son Hugo's drawing of the war and brief explanation of it.

As this is a case study of a single family, some remarks on its typicality are in order. This family was a bit different from others in that the mother was Swedish and, like the children, had not herself experienced the war. Further, the children were younger than average, and Edin's narrative did not include episodes of shooting and shelling which were present in most of the other families' narratives. Otherwise, the factual and emotional content of his narrative and other family members' re-narrations were quite characteristic of the project materials on the whole.

As I myself had done anthropological fieldwork in Bosnia during the war (in the besieged Sarajevo),[14] my interlocutors knew that I had experienced the war, albeit from a different position than themselves. For Edin, this fact connected us through common experience, including the non-nationalistic attitude which we rather quickly identified ourselves as sharing. For the children, I occupied a position similar to their father. That I come from former Yugoslavia, albeit from today's Croatia, have lived in Sweden since 1990, and have a Swedish-born son who is just a few years older than Hugo, also made our life experiences similar. I believe that these commonalities opened doors that would otherwise have remained closed and facilitated meaningful associations to the material in my analysis.

Analytic strategies

Interpretations of children's drawings in relation to mass political violence have mostly focused on their themes, forms, colors, spatial organization, and the

[13] These names are pseudonyms that reflect the Swedish names of children and their mother, and the Bosnian name of their father. Like many other prewar Bosnians, Edin was a fierce opponent of nationalism, and as his dream, discussed below, will show, he did not think that religion, ethnicity, or nationality defined a person in any important way. However, during the war, ethnonational identity did matter, and one of the few ways of determining it was through names. Because this experience had informed Edin's choice of names and surnames for his children, I chose to reflect their ethnonational identity in their pseudonyms.

[14] Ivana Maček, *Sarajevo Under Siege: Anthropology in Wartime* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).

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relative sizes of motifs. Sometimes children's explanations of their drawings are also elicited and analyzed.[15] Recent research has shown that it is difficult to find any objective way to interpret children's drawings. For example, some research has shown that children draw negatively charged figures smaller and positively charged figures larger.[16] But others have found, as in a study of Croatian school children's drawings in the aftermath of the 1990s war, that the size of the figures is not necessarily tied to their emotional charge.[17] This divergence should come as no surprise, as meanings in all symbolic communication, including drawing, are both shared and individual. Today, psychodynamic therapists work together with the child on the dynamic interpretation of a drawing, avoiding any objective interpretation of its symbolism.

In my method, I have combined factual and emotional analysis of the material with psychodynamic inquiry, avoiding presumptions about the given meanings of themes, forms, colors, spatial organization, or relative sizes in the drawings. I have treated the drawings as re-narrations, in which the facts and emotions from parents' narration can be traced and continuity and change analyzed. In order to interpret Hugo's drawing, I have used my own associations as a way of putting questions to the material, in a way that resembles how psychodynamic therapists use their associations to ask patients questions in order to better understand patients' inner worlds. My overall aim, however, was not to arrive at a therapeutic understanding of a child's psyche, so much as to understand the relation between Edin's narrative and Hugo's drawing. After identifying some central themes and emotions in Edin's narrative, I asked whether any of these could be seen in Hugo's drawing and, if so, with what continuities and changes. Conversely, after identifying some outstanding themes and emotions in the drawing, I looked for them in Edin's narrative.

I traced this family dynamic between experiences, narration, and re-narrations of all family members. Edin's account tells of his and Hugo's visit to his Bosnian hometown in 2014, as well as an episode that occurred in the boy's daycare center. In these parts, we will see that his account can be seen as a re-narration of boy's experiences. Similarly, Johanna's account will be seen not only as a re-narration of Edin's experiences of war, but also a narration of her own

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[15] See, for example, G. Hildreth, "War Theme in Children's Drawings," *Childhood Education* 20, no. 3 (1943), 121–127.

[16] E. Burkitt, M. Barrett, and A. Davis, "The Effect of Affective Characterizations on the Size of Children's Drawings," *British Journal of Developmental Psychology* 21, no. 4 (2003): 565–583.

[17] R. P. Jolley and A. Vulic-Prtoric, "Croatian Children's Experience of War is not Reflected in the Size and Placement of Emotive Topics in their Drawings," *British Journal of Clinical Psychology* 40, no. 1 (2001): 107–110.

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experiences of visiting Bosnia with him. Further, in other episodes she re-narrates her children's experiences of their father's explanations of elements of war, some of which he had not mentioned in his narrative. Thus, I do not simply interpret the father's account as the authoritative narration and other family members' accounts as re-narrations.[18] Rather, I see them as dynamically related in a process of familial remembering, explaining, and becoming aware of the war in general, and of the father's experiences of it in particular. Moreover, it will be seen that in Edin's narrative the passage of time brings dynamic changes in his own facts and emotions.

The transmission of emotions from the father's narrative

In order to interpret Hugo's drawing (Figure 1, next page) in relation to Edin's narrative, I begin by identifying the most outstanding emotions in the narrative.

Chronologically, Edin's narrative includes the war and postwar period, including his two journeys with his sons, in 2014 with Hugo and in 2015 with Joar, to his Bosnian hometown after the war. The dominant emotions in his narrative about the war period were strong fear and deep existential sadness, while the dominant emotions in his narrative about the postwar period were this deep existential sadness, as well as controlled anger. The narrator himself identified the change from fear to anger in the emotional content of his dreams:

> I dream quite a lot. I often dream that it's war. But it's no longer the dream that it was at first, that they chase me and that I hide. [...] I wake up, I'm sweaty, they were really nightmares, they were strong. [...] At the start it was that feeling, fear, fear, fear, something will happen, where shall I hide, hiding, hiding, running. I don't know exactly when that moment came, I can't, I can't remember, but I know that I started dreaming that I don't run, that I want to fight. And to beat them properly. [amused laugh] But I don't know whom I am beating. Only those that chase me. That is, not any national . . . I'm not . . . I'm not religious. [...] I'm atheist. I'm born in the group that I'm born in. I consider myself a Bosnian . . . by national belonging, in the same way as they'd been Serbians or Croats or Slovenes if [they'd been] born in these countries.

[18] Jo Warrin, Yvette Solomon and Charlie Lewis, "Swapping Stories: Comparing Plots: Triangulating Individual Narratives within Families," *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 10, no. 2 (2007): 121-134, have come to a similar conclusion in their research of storytelling in family contexts.

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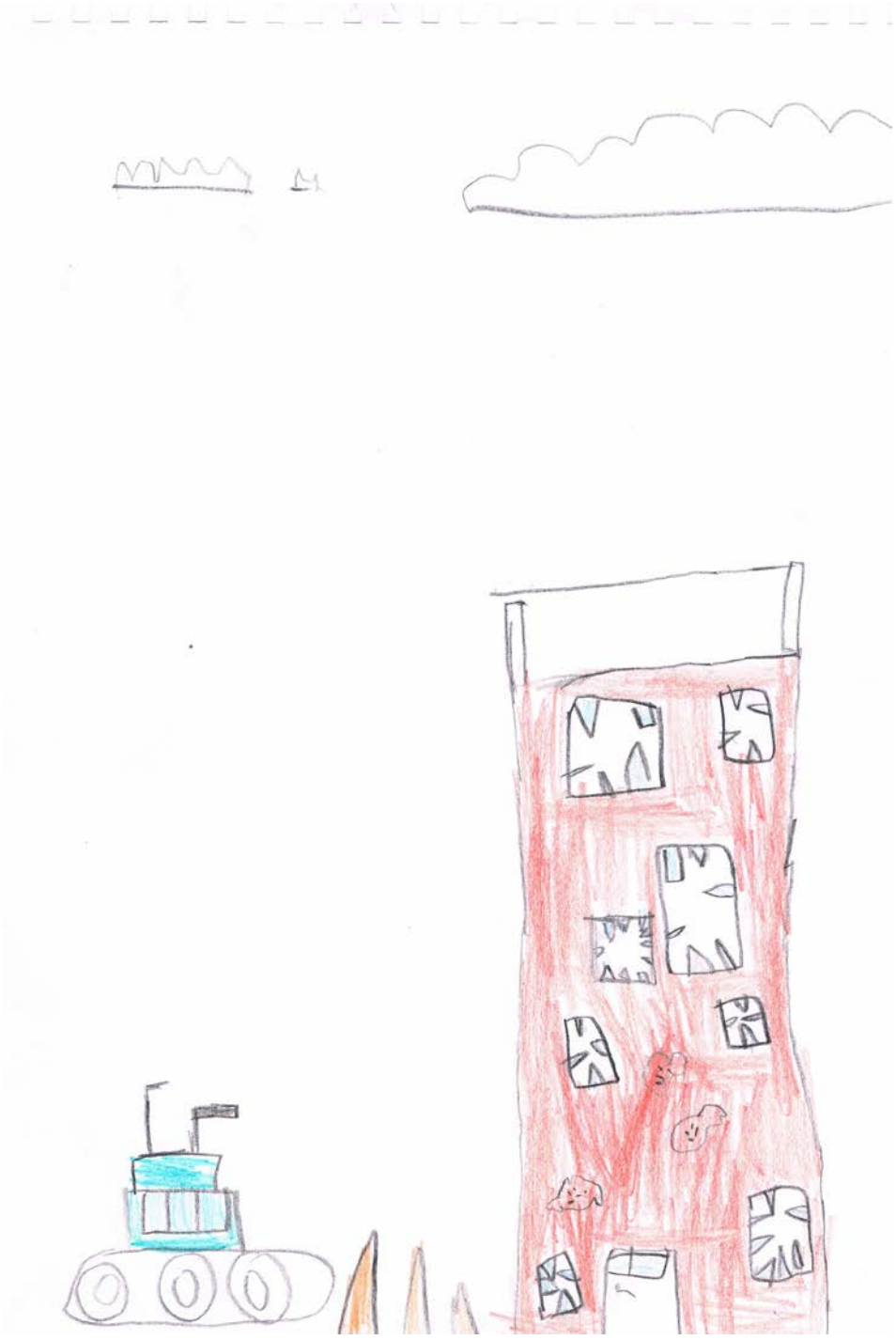

Figure 1. Hugo’s drawing of the war.

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Let us now take a look at Hugo's drawing and see if we can perceive in it the three major emotions – fear, sadness, and anger – that were present in Edin's narrative. The relatively simple drawing consists of four figures: the red house, the green tank, the orange fire, and the white clouds. When Hugo completed his drawing, Johanna asked him what it was. He explained in a careful, but also slightly bored tone of someone listing obvious facts that it was "a red house,[19] and a tank." "And fire," added Edin. "Mm hmm, it burns a bit," Hugo said more hesitantly. His parents began to ask him about the drawing: Did he see any destroyed houses when he was in Bosnia with Daddy? "I don't know," Hugo said. "Whose house is it?" Edin asked. "I don't know," Hugo said. "Ah, it is only a house. An ordinary house," Edin concluded, and continued, "Many windows . . . Was there any fire from the tank? Or is it the house that is burning?" "Mm hmm," Hugo confirmed. "The house?" checked Edin. "It starts to burn a little," Hugo answered. The explanation drew to a natural close: as Johanna went to see to something in the kitchen, Edin concluded this little session by saying, "Great, son," whereupon I thanked Hugo and said that his drawing was very nice.

We do not learn much from Hugo's description, except that this was no particular house – not Edin's house, and not the only destroyed house that they had seen during their visit in 2014, as Edin explained to both me and Johanna. Further, we learn that while the house "starts to burn a little," it was not the green tank to the left that had shot and caused the fire, however.

At this point in the interpretation, I will use my own associations to relate the drawing to Edin's narrative. Of all the striking emotions in this narrative – strong fear, existential sorrow, and controlled anger – the one that stands out most clearly to me in the drawing is anger. To me, the house looks angry: it is red, the broken windows look like mouths with teeth in children's drawings of monsters, and it has just caught fire. This interpretation is my own, based on my individual, sociocultural, and generational understanding of symbols. At this point, a psychotherapist would ask the child more about the house, trying to establish whether it was indeed angry and how it related to the child's inner world. The child would answer or do something, and the dynamic process of understanding the child's psyche would continue. However, as noted earlier, my aim is not to understand Hugo's psyche, but rather the relation between Edin's narrative and Hugo's re-narration. At this point I turned to Edin's narrative and asked whether

[19] The boy used the Swedish word *hus*, which means "house." However, for children of his age, *hus* is a synonym for "building", "house", and "home." In translating, I use the English term that seems to fit best the content of the words used in different places in the interviews.

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my interpretation was relevant. Specifically, I asked what the instances of anger in his narrative are, and whether the theme of the house exists?

The anger in Edin's narrative exists only in retrospect, when he thinks about the past: Why had he and his family even imagined that the war and the situation in their hometown would get better and that they could perhaps stay? They should have left at once and all together. He is also angry when he is reminded of the good life that everyone had led in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In his account, he expresses subdued anger once when the teachers in his son's daycare centre asked him to tell a little boy in the group, who was behaving like a hoodlum, that war was not cool. He thought that he should say something to scare him slightly, but not too much. He asked the boy,

> "So why do you like war?" He said, "They shoot a lot." And I say, "Look, I'll tell you now, I need to go to work, but I'll tell you something. Imagine the war starts. Imagine that the war starts. And you have to leave all your toys at home.[20] You also need to leave your dearest, that, that, that doll, the teddy bear. And perhaps your mom and dad cannot come with you," and I see it's not the same any more. Total silence, and he swallows hard. "It is not like that, it is not cool, not cool" [I say]. And I ask, I ask the teachers later when I came to fetch my son. They said they were quiet [he laughs], they were quiet for a long time. They were quiet for a long time.

The anger here is very contained and constructive, addressed in an age-appropriate way to the little boy who thinks firing shots in war is exciting. "House" is presented more intimately, as a home, that you have to leave – among other most important things like your favorite teddy bear and your parents – because of the war. That is bad. That makes children cry. War is not good. And shooting is not cool.

Subdued anger was also present in Edin's narrative when I asked whether he had somewhere to stay during his visits to his Bosnian hometown, and he told me what had happened to the house where he had grown up. The tenor of his voice was one of clear resolution, with an attempt at indifference expressed through total rejection, and yet with an undertone of subdued anger: "No. Nothing. I don't have any connection to Bosnia and Herzegovina. We sold the house twelve years ago. The man who bought our house tore it down, built a new one, larger."

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[20] The father uses the term *kod kuće*, Bosnian for "at home", rather than *u kući*, which would mean "in the house" in this context.

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In both these episodes, anger and the family home are copresent. The overarching theme is of "having to leave" because of the war. Being forced to leave because of ethnic cleansing is a dominant theme in Edin's narrative of his war experiences and is most often connected with a deep sense of loss – as he put it, a sense "that nothing will ever be the same again." Thus, his sorrow is also connected to anger and the symbol of the house, although it is not explicitly present in the house in Hugo's drawing. In this case, the sorrow is lost in re-narration; indeed, the parents have taken a conscious decision to avoid transmitting negative emotions to their sons.

In his narrative, Edin suggests that the reason it had taken such a long time for him and his family to realize that they had to leave and never come back, which in retrospect caused anger, was that there had been no "direct war" in his hometown. There had been raids in which he was terrified, there had been arrests in which he was beaten and humiliated, and there had been an organized exodus, facilitated by the Red Cross, which by many Bosnians was recognized as one of the strategies of the ethnic cleansing. It was because of this type of organized ethnic cleansing that he managed to leave his hometown in April 1993. He said that, at the time:

> the organized ethnic cleansing had started. [You pay] 300 [German] marks, you sign over everything [that you own], and you go. [...] On the 11th, the bus, and that feeling, I mean, I slept over at my uncle's. I know that I didn't sleep at all and I know that my mother cried all night and I know that we got up in the morning, [we drove in a] Yugo 55 through an empty town to that suburb where the Red Cross collecting center was. [deep sigh] So, from there buses, masses of people, and that feeling. [pause] That feeling that nothing will ever be the way it used to be. And that's the same feeling that I have even today when I go there. That it's not: this is it, but it's *not* it.

Perhaps the non-shooting tank in his older son Hugo's drawing can be understood in terms of this lack of "direct war" in Edin's narrative. Another reason why there is no shooting in Hugo's drawing might be Edin's clear disapproval of excitement about firearms and shooting, and his consequent description of the horrors of war in terms of making children imagine how it would be to leave their own home. Being forced to leave and the loss of his previous life are central themes in Edin's narrative, and somehow Hugo understood and integrated them in his depiction of the war, drawing a burning building despite not showing shooting.

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Transformations in the meanings and emotions attached to a fact

Looking at the emotions in the narrative contributed to our perception of the anger in the drawing re-narration, which in turn was connected to the house in the drawing. Looking in turn at the theme of the house or home in the narrative, we saw that when it was connected to anger it always appeared alongside a central narrative theme of the loss of life as it once had been, to which was attached an existential sorrow.

Now, if we examine the theme of house (and home) in Edin's narrative of his and his younger son Joar's visit to Bosnia in 2015, we will see Edin transform the anger in his narrative into interest in Joar's identity work. Immediately after he told me about the sale and demolition of his childhood home, a palpable reminder of ethnic cleansing, Edin continued in a more matter-of-fact tone: "I have of course shown this to the children. And they saw the picture because I published an article in the newspaper and I showed them how the house looked before and how it looks now." Then he told me that on the final night of their recent visit, Joar had asked to see Edin's house once more before they left. Although Edin had told him that this was not his house, for Joar, the house that stands there now was nevertheless his father's childhood home. While telling me this, Edin changed his tone to one more emotionally engaged and warmer.

Thus, we see the process of emotional change caused by intergenerational dynamic: although, for Edin, his old home caused anger and was tied to a loss of identity, for his younger son Joar, it was a means to create identity. More importantly, this example shows that not only do parents' experiences and narratives affect their children, but also that the intergenerational dynamics works both ways: the children's lives affect the factual and emotional values of narratives of parents. This is often forgotten or neglected in analysis of intergenerational dynamics of adverse experiences.

The theme of the house is central in yet another episode in Edin's narrative, this time of his older son Hugo's experiences during their visit to Edin's hometown during the war in Ukraine in 2014:

> "When will the war there stop?" [he asked.] "I hope it will stop soon," I tell him. "Why is that?" [he asked.] "Well, it is not good, you know, that, that people leave their homes." "But why?" [he asked.] "Would you, and what, and what would you say if the war happened in our place?" [I said] "It won't," you know, he says, "Sweden has many soldiers, it will not happen there, right?" [he asked.] "No, I don't think it will." Then he comes the next day and says, "But what do you think, daddy, if there was a war [in Sweden],

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our house could not, like, be destroyed, right?" "No, it could not. How could it be destroyed?" [I assured him].

Here, Edin's explanation of why a war is bad is the same as it had been in the daycare centre episode: it is because in wartime, people need to leave their houses, their homes. But Hugo does not seem so concerned about the prospect of having to leave the family house they live in. What feels really threatening to him is the possibility of the house being destroyed. In his experience, having to leave one's house is not especially threatening; people do, after all, move. The house would have to be destroyed in order to meet the criterion for being a horror of wars. Once again, we see how a fact can be magnified in a re-narration in order to communicate the correct sentiment within the context of children's contemporary lives.

The exchange about the war in Ukraine also points to how, in the intergenerational transmission, an abstraction and depersonalization of the house occurs. The house in the older son Hugo's drawing of war is not Edin's old house, which had been left during the war, and later sold, demolished, and replaced by a new house. It is not the one and only destroyed house that the boy had seen during his visit to Bosnia, either. It is "just a house," a generalized house that through its destruction represents Edin's sentiment that war is exceedingly bad. Moreover, destroyed houses seem to be an important part of the war for Hugo. As Edin told me, both Hugo and Joar looked for war-destroyed houses during their visits to Bosnia. Every time they saw an unfinished house – of which there were plenty – they asked whether it was destroyed in the war.

Both the boy and the father connect the war in Ukraine, another European locality, to their own experiences and imaginations. The war in Ukraine is positioned as relevant to the understanding of war in general and, in particular, to the war in Bosnia that Edin has experienced. It becomes a means by which the narrator can transmit his experiences to his son, and thus the global and abstract phenomena become a way to make the narrator's experiences meaningful to the next generation.

Creating content in the face of ambiguous emotions

Looking further into the dynamics among Edin's narration of the war, Johanna's re-narration of how Edin educated their sons about the war, the older son Hugo's re-narration of war in his drawing, and Edin's narration of their joint visit to Bosnia, we see that emotional and factual content is lost when Edin is either ambiguous or withholding the emotional content from his explanations. In these instances, Johanna and the boys fill this gap with their own emotions.

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Ambiguity

In the passage of the interview in which Edin described his and Hugo's visit to Bosnia during the war in Ukraine, he also describes Hugo's questions about soldiers and flags. According to Edin, Hugo had asked whether there were nice and good soldiers, or they were all bad. In Edin's narrative of the war, all the soldiers were people he had known: an old neighbor, a friend, a new neighbor, even his own uncle, a policeman, was a sort of soldier in his narrative. And indeed, they all figure as either helpful (good) or harmful (bad). Again, we see the de-personification and generalization in Hugo's question, which is about soldiers in general. But there are no soldiers in his drawing re-narration; it actually has no people at all.

The explanation of this absence may lie partly in Edin's ambiguous attitude and unclear answer to the questions about good or bad soldiers. Edin explained, "Well, now, when these questions come, again I, like [pause] how much can I, how can I explain that to him so that he understands. Is it too early, is it not too early? I need to mention it, but I need to mention it in a way, I do not want to spit on other people. Somehow I protect them in that situation." These ambiguous and avoidant answers do not seem to make sense to the children and do not take a prominent place in their re-narrations. The same, we may surmise, happened when both sons asked about the three different sorts of flags that they saw so abundantly displayed in their father's former hometown: "'What flag is this one?' [one son asked.] 'It is Serbian.' [I answered.] 'But why a Serbian one here [in Bosnia]?' Then I tell him, 'There are three large groups that live here, they want to put up their flags,' and so. Of course, the battle on *Kosovo polje*[21] passes in my head [laughter]. How to explain all to him, six hundred years of [Ottoman] rule? No way, but [pause] I think that it's after all a, a way for me to protect them from it."

In his effort to protect his sons from nationalist ideologies, Edin fails to convey explanations that make sense to them. The fact that Hugo's re-narration is void of both soldiers and flag, despite his interest in both and his correct perception that they are relevant to his father's past, tells us that the ambiguous material will probably be lost in the re-narration, as Welzer[22] has similarly noted.

[21] *Kosovo polje*, now in the Republic of Kosovo, is the place where, in 1389, a battle between Serbian and Ottoman troops was fought. It has become the most prominent Serbian national symbol because the Serbs lost the battle, and were consequently ruled by the Ottoman Empire for the following five centuries.
[22] Welzer, "Re-narrations".

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Lack of emotion

In this case study, Edin, like most of the parents in the larger study, has attempted to protect his children from the most burdensome emotions associated with his experiences, as well as to give a nuanced picture of the war and its different political factions."[T]hey should not inherit an emotional experience, rather they should only have it narrated for them," explained Johanna, and Edin stressed that he had firstly resolved his inner feelings himself, "I have [done] that, that type of posttraumatic work on my own," he said, and later explained: "My wife often criticizes me for not talking to them ever, like [pause] about these things. They have asked me, like, but I never have, I hadn't even [talked about war] to my wife when we started dating, I have never made it important. 'Come on, tell me how,' [she'd ask] and I'd tell her. But I never start talking about it myself. I wanted to finish some processes first [on my own]."

He also emphasized that there are other things, which have nothing to do with the war, that are more important to teach to the children: "Somehow there are many other things that are more interesting. And which I want to teach to my children. Not that I, I do not want to give them a gun, what good is a gun to them? He will learn about gun in games and that and. And why should I tell him, 'He is a bad man, he is from Eritrea, or she is stupid, she is a lesbian,' and so." Edin said that he wanted to teach his sons about "what is good, [and] what is bad," as well as "work habits."

Most often, this protectiveness has resulted in parents narrating the facts of their experiences, without any emotion or moral judgement. An example of this kind of communication of unemotional content is an episode in Johanna's re-narrative in which she speaks of a bullet. We have seen that in Edin's narrative of war there had been no "direct war": no shooting, no shells exploding, no bullets whistling past, not even explosions or fire. Nor does the drawing re-narration include any acts of shooting or ammunition. The fire in it does not come from Edin's narrative, at least not literally. Significantly, all other re-narrative drawings made by children in the larger study included bullets or traces of shooting and explosions. In older children's re-narratives, traces of the shell explosions and bullet holes in houses and pavements that they see during their postwar summer visits to Bosnia and Herzegovina are presented as important and palpable connections with their parents' experiences of war.[23]

[23] Ivana Maček, "Skam, skuld och upprättelse," in *Krig och Fred. RJ:s årsbok 2016/2017*, ed. Jenny Björkman and Arne Jarrick, 151–167 (Göteborg and Stockholm: Makadam förlag, 2016).

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In Johanna's re-narration she describes how Edin showed a bullet to their children: "[He] has saved a bullet . . . And then he showed it to the children [pause] and then I get like this [a frightened sound], and he is like as if he would have taken out a piece of paper, like, 'Here is a bullet that was in the war, there, inside, is the gunpowder.' 'Mmmm. Can I get some more food?' [was the only response from the children]. I mean, that is how they relate to things."
The emotionless way in which their father presented one of the more fascinating objects and symbols of war caused a different reaction in his children than in his wife. For the children, the bullet did not seem significant because their father did not attach any emotion to it, thus confirming Carol Kidron's finding that emotions are an essential element of intergenerational transmission.[24] There were other families in which parents' narratives presented shooting and shelling as terrifying, and this emotion was manifest in their children's re-narratives. But here, the bullet was presented as if it were "a piece of paper," just another ordinary object. Meanwhile, the mother reacted from her own position and experiences: when she described her frightened reaction to the bullet, I connected it to Swedish culture and its ideology of nonviolence. The mother in this family, in my eyes, expressed these cultural and political values in her embodied reactions.

All re-narration is done in the moral and historical context of the re-narrator, as Welzer has pointed out. We have seen that emotionally meaningless facts and objects in the narration easily disappear in re-narrations. Further, I suggest that when a fact or an object has emotional or moral significance in a re-narrator's context, even though it had originally been presented without emotions, it will become imbued with re-narrator's own emotions and values rather than lost. Thus, the meaning and emotional value of certain objects and facts in the narration can be changed upon re-narration.

In this episode, we can also see how Johanna's emotions change when she considers her children. When speaking of their reactions to the bullet, she is no longer frightened, but rather fascinated and pleased by the effects that her husband's presentation of the bullet had on them. The children, in their turn, ignored Edin's emotionless narration about the bullet, rather than adding their own emotional (and moral) value to it, probably because it was not meaningful enough in their own world. This indifference on children's part, changed Johanna's emotions in her re-narrative. Thus, we can see how the interpersonal dynamic changes emotions toward the same objects or facts when the next generation is being considered. In this case, the fear turned into positive emotions

[24] Kidron, "Survivor Family Memory Work."

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of interest or fascination and satisfaction. We have seen similar change in Edin's narrative when he considered what the site of his old house in Bosnia means to his son: his anger over the loss changed into interest in Joar's identity work. Thus, the emotions tied to an object or event in a narrative can change, even within that narrative, because of intergenerational family dynamics. Considering a fact from one's own perspective is different from considering it from the perspective of one's child.

Conclusion

In this article, I have combined analysis of facts and emotions in interview material with a psychodynamic mode of inquiry. The result was an analytic method that dynamically traced the linked emotional and factual content in the narrations and re-narrations of various family members.

Perhaps one of the most interesting findings of the study is that the emotional content of narratives can be correctly understood by children, more or less consciously, and present in their re-narrations, more or less explicitly. There is a certain intergenerational continuity in the emotional content of re-narrations in this family, even though the facts can be mixed up and the moral values changed.

The analysis also generally confirms Kidron's finding that emotions are essential to the intergenerational transmission of memories of mass political violence. Emotionless material in the original narrative has a tendency to vanish upon re-narration. However, this study identifies some exceptions to this general tendency. In cases where a re-narrator's contemporary sociocultural context ascribes strong value to these facts and objects –, to a bullet, for example, emotionlessly presented facts or objects can become filled with re-narrators' own emotional content. Here, the emotional and moral value of the transmitted thematic content is changed. This point confirms and extends Kidron's analysis of how cultural and religious values inform intergenerational transmission, as well as Welzer's findings that re-narrations strongly tend to be formed to fit the re-narrator's contemporary moral context.[25]

Further, this study also shows that in a family setting some emotions that are not verbally communicated may nonetheless be communicated and understood. The parents in this case study had a clear intention to protect their two sons from the heavy emotional content of their father's war experiences. The strongest emotions in the father's narrative are fear, sorrow, and anger. He did not

[25] Kidron, "Silent Legacies of Trauma"; Kidron, "Survivor Family Memory Work"; Welzer, "Re-narrations."

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consider himself to have communicated any of these openly to his sons. Nevertheless, the older son's re-narrative drawing captured the anger and, indirectly, through the theme of the house and home that had to be left forever, the sorrow of losing a way of life and the sense that nothing would ever be the same again.

Another significant finding is that this family's re-narrations tend to depersonalize the individual experiences in the narrative into general and public phenomena. The meaningful relationships that characterize most of this family's original narratives have a tendency to be lost in re-narration, giving them a rather abstract character. However, we have also seen the dynamic process of investing global images of war, whether these be drawn from the war in Ukraine referenced during Hugo's visit to Bosnia or from the generic war that Edin speaks of at the daycare centre, with personal experiences in a local context in order to make them concrete and personally meaningful to children. Thus, intergenerational communication involves a dynamic process of personalization and localization of the global and, conversely, globalization of the local and personal, as when Edin projects his experiences of losing a home in his explanation why the war in Ukraine is not good.

Finally, one of the most fascinating shifts of emotional content within narration occurred when it involved the passage of time, as well as when the role of narrator shifted from the position of a parent to the position of the children. . In the two episodes presented here, the negative emotions of anger and fear that parents associated with an episode shifted to positive emotions of interest and satisfaction when they narrated their children's experiences pertaining to the same episode. Thus, importantly, the intergenerational dynamics of transmission of parents' adverse experiences can go both ways. In this family, it was not only the father's burdensome past that was partly transmitted to the children and his wife. His children's lives and their perspectives on his narrative played a substantial role in transforming the emotional content that he associated with it.

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