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Storytelling and Reconciliation: Shifts in Frames and Discursive Narratives in Listeners of the Initiative “My Story” in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Doctoral Thesis

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Abstract
In Bosnia and Herzegovina, two non-governmental organizations have been running the initiative “My Story” within which three war victims, one Bosniak, one Serb and one Croat, tell their wartime stories and their way to reconciliation in public testimonies in a side-by-side, live setting to an audience of young people or ordinary citizens. The aim of the initiative is to promote reconciliation in the listeners. This doctoral dissertation integrates several disparate fields in order to create an analytical framework for inferring attitude shifts from the discursive narratives recalled by the listeners, and from the frames that connect the single narratives to broader societal discourses within these discursive narratives. Three public testimonies were analyzed and interviews with eighteen listeners from the three Bosnian nations were conducted, some of which were interviewed by phone about four months later to check for further attitude changes. The interview material was analyzed inductively by the means of thematic discourse analysis in order to identify the underlying discursive narratives that were then regrouped into dimensions or factors of reconciliation and classified into positive and negative based on current theories of reconciliation. Analysis has revealed that judging from discursive narratives in the interview material, some respondents have experienced positive shifts in prejudice, hate, admission of ingroup guilt, a decrease in blaming and competitive victimhood, rehumanization, increase in willingness to research information about the outgroup and in willingness to engage in intergroup contact. Some minor evidence documents possible shifts in forgiveness and trust. These shifts represented positive changes in the rehumanization, forgiveness, trust, positive ingroup image, competitive victimhood, delegitimization dimensions of reconciliation or related categories, and some other items of the willingness to reconcile. In a second phase, the narratives were reanalyzed by the means of frame analysis for the presence of frames that connected them to larger discourses. Two master frames emerged: the frame of otherization that shifted into one of similarization, and the frame of exclusive victimhood that shifted into inclusive victimhood. The master frame of otherization included the categories of power, initiative and ontological asymmetry, while the frame of exclusive victimhood encompassed frames of emotional exclusion, asymmetric morality, ingroup exclusive entitlement to the truth and information asymmetry. This study thus brings an innovative contribution to the conceptualization of discursive narratives in the form of a typology and the description of shifts of those related to reconciliation, and especially in the form of a taxonomy of frame shifts within discursive narratives, a contribution never attempted before.
1. I hereby declare that this thesis has been written by me and that all the sources used in this thesis are duly indicated and listed in the bibliographical references.

2. I declare that this thesis has not been submitted in satisfaction of the requirements for another university degree.

3. I agree on making this thesis accessible for study and research purposes.

In The Hague, 14 July 2019

Mgr. Hana Oberpfalzerová
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1 Introduction

How to deal with a violent past? How to look into the eyes of your neighbor who was torturing your father in a concentration camp? How to forgive the soldier who shot the grenade that killed your favourite cousin? How to talk to people from the former adversary nation without getting into heated debates about the war? And will the young generations overcome the negative attitudes of their parents and bring reconciliation and lasting peace to the country?

These and many similar questions have been haunting the minds of Bosnian people since the end of the 1992 - 1995 war until today. These questions are, however, in no way unique to Bosnia. People in conflict zones across the world have been asking exactly the same, trying to deal with many of the same issues. In my dissertation, I am looking at the storytelling initiative called “My Story” run by Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and the Caritas of the Bishop’s Conference in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Caritas) that aims at promoting reconciliation in the story listeners. These public testimonies consist of three war victims – one Bosniak, one Serb and one Croat – telling their stories of wartime suffering and their way to reconciliation in a side-by-side setting, after which the audience can ask questions and discuss their reactions. The testimonies I have observed took roughly 1,5 hours, sometimes more, with a minimum of caa. 15 minutes per story. I have conducted an interview study of the listeners’ shifts in conflict-related attitudes, beliefs, emotions and narratives and frames into positive ones.

In order to get a complete range of the obstacles to reconciliation that needed to be addressed in this research, I based my thesis on the theoretical framework of intractable conflict. Intractable conflicts are severe, violent and long-lasting conflicts that are extremely resistant to all attempts at their resolution. Among them are conflicts such as the ones in Kashmir, Northern Ireland, Cyprus, Sri Lanka or the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Bar-Tal (2007, pp. 1432 – 1433) offers an overview of the basic characteristics of intractable conflicts. He departs from Kriesberg’s four criteria according to which intractable conflicts are protracted, i.e. they last at least one generation, violent, they are perceived as irresolvable and they demand extensive investment of material and psychological resources (Kriesberg 1993, 1998c). He then adds the following characteristics: intractable conflicts are total (involving “essential and basic goals, need and/or values” (Bar-Tal, 2007, p. 1433), they are perceived as zero-sum in nature (each group considers its goals as essential for its survival.
and refuses to do compromises) and they are central (constantly involving the society members).

Among the key factors of intractability are basic human needs (Burton 1990, see Coleman 2004, 208), polarized, zero-sum identities denigrating the Other (Zartmann 2005, 50 – 51; Crocker, Hampson and Aall 2005a, p. 7; Kelman 2004; Coleman 2000) the rejection of the other’s “claims regarding fundamental human rights, recognition and minimal living conditions” (Kriesberg, 1998, 334 – 335; Kelman 2004); elite manipulation (Brown 2001, as cited in Crocker, Hampson and Aall 2005a, p. 7); indiscriminate violence, trauma and desire for revenge (Kriesberg 1998, 334 – 335; Coleman 2000), demographical changes, resources, power, superimposed conflicts, global norms (Kriesberg 2005, 79); lack of contact leading to prejudice (Coleman 2000, 534 – 541; see also Pettigrew and Tropp 2011) and strong negative emotions (Coleman 2000, 534 – 541; Coleman 2004; Retzinger and Scheff 2000). Ethnonationalist ideology and inciting fear and hatred are also important (Kriesberg, 1998, 335 – 336; see also Crocker, Hampson and Aall 2005a; Bar-Tal 2007; Bar-Tal 2013).

At the same time, many intractable conflicts are intrastate ones. There are two fundamental problems with intrastate conflicts. Firstly, they tend to repeat (Hartzell, 1999; Licklider, 1995). Secondly, in intrastate conflicts, a diplomatic solution between two states is not possible, and therefore the relations between the former adversary parties have to be transformed as to allow for their coexistence (Kelman, 2008, pp. 15 – 16; Kelman, 1999; Lederach, 1997). The theoretical framework of my dissertation is therefore based on the claim that in order to reach stable peace in a post-conflict country, reconciliation must be reached first (Boulding 1978; Bar-Siman-Tov, 2004). This is particularly true for intractable conflicts (Kelman, 2004, p. 112; Bar-Tal, 2000).

I classify the conflict in Bosnia as an abeyant intractable conflict (Crocker, Hampson and Aall 2005a, p. 13), i.e. a conflict that is not “ripe” (a mutually hurting stalemate has not been reached) and “frozen”, i.e. “gone into remission”, in which violence is prevented, but so are political solutions (Crocker, Hampson and Aall 2005a, p. 11). Firstly, the conflict is deeply rooted in remote history (Volkan, 2002). Secondly, the warring parties never reached a mutually hurting stalemate that would precipitate a final solution of the underlying disputes. Instead, the Dayton Peace Agreement was forced upon the parties by the USA, establishing an international protectorate to enforce its respect and intervene in politics when the complicated system proved dysfunctional. The “fundamental existential conflict” continues,
only with “more peaceful means” (Burg, 2005, p. 200). Several other authors also classify the conflict in Bosnia as intractable (Kriesberg, 1993; Kriesberg, 1998, 335; Bar-Tal, 2013, 40; Burg 2005, 183). Therefore, along along with Petrović (2010), I apply Bar-Tal’s (2013) theoretical framework of intractable conflict to it. This framework will be the most suitable to analyze the intergroup attitudes, beliefs, emotions and narratives that stem from this specific type of conflict as, according to my experience, it mirrors the Bosnian everyday reality the best.

The extreme nature of intractables conflict puts so much strain on the society members that they develop strategies for coping with living in such conflicts. These strategies have been classified by Daniel Bar-Tal into a theoretical framework that he calls the socio-psychological structure of intractable conflicts. This infrastructure will be explained in detail in chapter 4.3, however for the reader’s basic understanding, I summarize it here. This infrastructure consists of three basic types of components that are the collective memory, the collective emotional orientation and the ethos of conflict. The latter consists of societal beliefs that present the ingroup in positive light and delegitimize the outgroup. These beliefs concern several areas, however the three that were reflected in my research data are the societal beliefs delegitimizing the opponent, those about the positive ingroup image and those presenting the ingroup as a victim. Particular societal beliefs then compose narratives, which represent the foundations of both collective memory and the ethos of conflict (Bar-Tal, 1998 and 2013). Bar-Tal argues that this socio-psychological infrastructure prevents reconciliation and that its constitutive negative beliefs, narratives and emotions must transform into positive ones in order for reconciliation to happen (Bar-Tal, 2000 and 2013).

In my dissertation, I look at how this socio-psychological infrastructure of intractable conflicts (Bar-Tal, 2013) can undergo shifts in the aftermath of the above-mentioned storytelling events. The initiative “My Story” is a project run by two non-governmental organizations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Catholic Relief Services and the Caritas of the Bishops’ Conference of Bosnia and Herzegovina. I classify it as an unofficial truth project, an initiative similar to truth commissions but smaller, less ambitious and run by the initiative of civil society organizations. Still, unofficial projects are part of the truth-telling mechanism of transitional justice (Bickford, 2007). “My Story” will be described in more detail in chapter 2.2.5., where I argue that along with other unofficial truth projects, it represents a local-liberal form of peacebuilding (Richmond, 2009) as it is a bottom-up project that focuses on promoting reconciliation among the local population and is culturally sensitive, among other
reasons. To describe the initiative in brief, a group of war victims was trained in dealing with their traumas, in forgiveness and nonviolent communication, and a group of these war victims tell their stories in public testimonies in order to change peoples’ attitudes (Bubalo, 2019). More precisely, I focus on a very specific population of listeners which is young people who did not live the war (unless as very small children). I argue that young people in Bosnia who are the future leaders of tomorrow are currently still being socialized into negative attitudes by their parents, teachers (Kosić and Livi, 2013, p. 4) and school books (Banarovicé, 2001; Torsti, 2007), among others. That said, reconciliation happens overtime (Chapman, 2009, p. 156), which can be due to the coming of generations less burdened by the conflict that their parents and ancestors lived in person. Indeed, trauma is known to prevent reconciliation (Pham, Weinstein and Longman, 2004) and in this sense, several respondents in this research argued that reconciliation in Bosnia will happen “when the old generations die” (Jovan, 2014). The question is, will the new generations have better attitudes or those inherited from their parents? I believe that for this reason, research on attitude change of young people is extremely important, and this study brings an important contribution to the specifics of this process in this particular age group.

More precisely, the aim of this dissertation is to not only to find and describe the attitude shifts occurring in the listeners of this initiative, but by doing this, also contribute to the literature on discursive narratives. As conceptualized by Svarstad, a discursive narrative is “a narrative of a case that is produced according to the way the discourse frames the issue (Svarstad, 2009)” (Tumusiime and Svarstad, 2011, p. 242). In intractable conflicts, hostile and biased discourse is part of what makes the conflict-related narratives so difficult to change. At the same time, the socio-psychological infrastructure of intractable conflicts consists largely of narratives (Bar-Tal, 2013). Thus, I consider that to approach reconciliation in ethnic conflict from a theoretical point of view that unites both these perspectives is a very interesting and innovative one. Moreover, I would like to pinpoint that the theoretical and conceptual accounts of discursive narratives are very scarce and do not focus on ethnic conflict as such, therefore my research in this area is quite unique.

Not only is my aim to observe, describe and classify discursive narratives in the listeners’ accounts and classify them into negative and positive, and thus register possible shifts in different dimensions of reconciliation that the latter represent. More importantly, I aim at contributing to the conceptualization of discursive narratives by creating a typology of negative and positive discursive narratives and observing shifts in the frames that connect
broader societal discourses to the single narratives contained within them (Svarstad, 2009, as cited in Tumusiime and Svarstad, 2011, p. 242). In chapter 6.5, I inductively reanalyze all the discursive narratives outlined in chapter 6.4. and merge the underlying frames into a number of categories falling under two master frames that are otherization (Jamal, 2008; Afshar, 2013) and exclusive victimhood (Noor et al., 2012; Cohrs, McNeill and Vollhardt, 2015) thus creating my own taxonomy of frame shifts in discursive narratives. At the same time, the negative frames are assigned their positive counterparts that appeared in the listeners’ positive discursive narratives. I show how the single frame shifts entail a shift of the master frames into those of similarization (Moghri, 2012, p. 4) and inclusive victimhood (Adelman et al., 2016), which signal that the new narratives are connected to new, more positive discourses (see Svarstad, 2009, as cited in Tumusiime and Svarstad, 2011, p. 242). The analytical framework I have created can serve for inferring listeners’ attitudes in similar storytelling events, hence a methodological contribution of my thesis.

Also, I have managed to connect literature from several different fields of research into a single analytical framework for inferring attitude shifts from discursive narratives. These disciplines are conflict studies, sociology, social psychology and literature on discourse, narratives and storytelling. Furthermore, I have described a rare storytelling initiative with some unique features and created a systematic account of empathy in storytelling (Davis, 1996) and made several other contributions to storytelling literature such as rare insights into the acknowledgement of collective guilt, the gradual character of attitude change, and a focus on a population of young people.

From the methodological point of view, I have conducted eighteen interviews with Bosniak Serbian and Croat story listeners, data which I analyzed by the means of thematic discourse analysis in order to first identify the underlying discursive narratives. I then classified these narratives into negative and positive thanks to the theories of attitude change, reconciliation, and storytelling and reconciliation underlying this thesis. Finally, I assigned each of the type of discursive narratives to single dimensions of reconciliation represented by the overarching dimensions of reconciliation that I use in this thesis. These dimensions are rehumanization, trust and forgiveness adopted from Petrović (2010) and the elements of delegitimization, positive ingroup image and victimization beliefs (Bar-Tal, 1998 and 2013) and willingness to engage in intergroup contact and to acquire alternative information (Shnabel et al., 2009). The second major step in this research was to re-examine the discursive narratives inductively by the means of frame analysis, in order to capture the underlying frames present
in the discursive narratives. The thematic analysis has also allowed for the identification of a number of key themes that were reframed during the attitude shifts. In chapter 6.5., I have also identified some interesting connections between themes that were quite remarkable and not entirely to be expected, such as the role of the genocide in Srebrenica in the lack of empathy for Serbs. An important aspect of my dissertation is that it firmly anchored in empirical data of a concrete ethnic conflict, i.e. Bosnia and Herzegovina. This allows for the creation of an analytical framework and a taxonomy of frame shifts that are highly relevant to this particular conflict, while also containing a connection to the broader conflict theories and concepts. I believe that my taxonomy of frame shifts has also allowed for discovering some interesting underlying dimensions of the attitude change involved in reconciliation.

One important aspect that needs attention at this point is toward whom the discursive narratives and frame shifts in this research are addressed. This focus results largely from sampling. Studying reconciliation is studying a sort of miracle and to witness a case of attitude change is an extremely rare and precious occasion. It cannot be expected that attitude change will occur in the majority of all listeners at any public testimony in any given context. The public testimonies in this research were conducted within the project PRO-Future which continued some of the activities of the extinct CPT project. This project works with a number of municipalities and in which different peacebuilding activities are intertwined and overlap with those conducted by other organizations. Therefore, it happened that the attitudes of the young Serbs in the Serbian town and those of the young Bosniaks and Croats in the Bosniak-Croat town were very positive as these young people were already involved in contact programmes and other peacebuilding activities. Only the public testimonies in the ethically mixed town with Bosniak majority and those to which Franjo and Josip assisted had an audience with partly negative attitudes that could have been subject to major change. For this reason and also due to the somewhat lower trust in the public testimony in the Serbian town as I will explain later, no major attitude shifts were registered in the Serbian respondents in this research. Therefore, most negative discursive narratives and frames target Serbs as they are pronounced by Bosniak respondents, and those pronounced by Franjo and Josip target both Serbs and Bosniaks. The negative discursive narratives that Serbs pronounced were analyzed (if present at all), however most of them except for minor variables such as increased empathy or willingness to acquire alternative information did not shift into any positive counterparts. For this reason, the violence committed by Serbs is the major target of the respondents in this research, while the focus on the reverse is relatively minor due to the
character of the data. Because of this, the context chapter, the analysis and the interpretation put a higher accent on the Bosniak and Croat narratives. This is, however, by no means of intention but rather a coincidence: I have written my dissertation with a mind fully open to the three nations’ needs and narratives and there is no intentional bias against the Serbs.

Before finishing this short overview introduction, I would like to explain how this research came to be. “Why Bosnia and why this initiative?”, you may ask. I chose to do my doctoral research on Bosnia and Herzegovina as the country is a live conflict theater whose language I can fluently speak. I have learnt the Bosnian language during my high school years, I have many friends in that country and I have visited it numerous times during summer holidays. I was deeply fascinated by the strength of the negative ethnic attitudes of many people, but also by the greatness and humanity of the people who did not start to hate the Other as result of the war and who live normal, neighborly lives with members of the former enemy nations. Thanks to my knowledge of the language and my sincere interest in the reconciliation in Bosnia, in 2011 I happened to assist to the very second testimony of “My Story” held in Sarajevo and I was so lucky as to be accepted by the initiative coordinators Goran Bubalo from CRS and Suzana Božić from the Caritas to conduct this research. This is a major achievement since Bosnian non-governmental organizations are overwhelmed by requests for data and collaboration by foreign researchers. The majority of the results of this research have been published in the impacted *International Journal of Conflict and Violence* (Oberpfalzerová, Ullrich and Jeřábek, 2019) and presented in several scientific conferences. Notably, this research has been discussed with some of the authors of the key theories of this research, such as Masi Noor, Nurit Shnabel, Johannes Ullrich, Ifat Maoz, Linda Tropp and, notably, Daniel Bar-Tal, as well as the transitional justice expert Arie Kacowicz. In 2015, I spent six months at the Department of Social Psychology of the University of Zurich under the mentorship of prof. Johannes Ullrich, Phd. thanks to being selected for a SCIEX fellowship awarded by the Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities. This research has been a very difficult, yet extremely interesting and enriching journey that has made me more understanding of what happens in the hearts and minds of people who survived a war and who are living in intractable conflict. I believe that the findings of this research nicely document “My Story”, an interesting storytelling initiative, so that it can serve as a model of peace intervention can work a difficult conflict setting ridden by fratricidal mass atrocities, thus showing one small-scale, feasible way of bringing reconciliation closer not only in Bosnia, but hopefully also in other similar post-conflict settings. Also, I am hoping that my
analytical framework containing for inferring changes in conflict-related attitudes, beliefs, emotions and narratives will be useful to researchers and practitioners alike.

The Roadmap of This Thesis

Due to the highly complex research design, I would now like to introduce the reader to the structure of this dissertation in order to facilitate the understanding of the chapters and their interconnections.

First of all, chapter 1 represented a general introduction summarizing the main points of the whole dissertation that will be made further in the text. The second chapter is a combination of the contextual chapter on the ethnic conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina with the explanation of the relevance of this research to the discipline of international relations. I first present the causes and context of the ethnic conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina, after which I discuss the concepts of liberal peacebuilding and transitional justice in general as well as in the context of post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina. After that, I present an overview of critical peacebuilding and the main point it reproaches to liberal peacebuilding, a debate that I end by presenting “My Story” as one possible form of the broader concept of liberal-local hybrid form of peace that Richmond (2009) calls for. In chapter three, I present a literature review that highlights the main contribution of my thesis in the light of current academic research and interconnections between disciplines, as well as an overview of other storytelling initiatives and the research on their effects. Chapter four represents the general theoretical framework of this thesis, consisting of chapters on discourse and discursive narratives, conflict-related attitudes, beliefs, narratives and of Bar-Tal’s socio-psychological infrastructure of intractable conflict (2013) and finally, of my conceptualization of the dimensions of reconciliation as I refer to them in this research. In chapter five, the methodological chapter, I present my research design, data and analytical techniques.

Chapter six represents the main empirical chapter. It first presents the initiative “My Story” in more detail, after which (6.2.) I present my own analysis of the three fundamental components of the storytelling. Chapter 6.3. presents a general overview of the respondents and their background, as well as the context of the storytelling events. Chapter 6.4. is the chapter in which discursive narratives are described and categorized. This categorization is done by concepts that represent either dimensions of reconciliation as I conceptualized it in my analytical framework, or by concepts that represent known variables leading to reconciliatory attitudes as they appear on scientific literature. Chapter 6.5. builds on the
previous chapter and analyzes the discursive narratives for frame shifts, after which an analytical table with the overall taxonomy and the main underlying discursive narratives is presented. Chapter seven consists of the discussion of my findings. It composes the discursive narratives into one broader narrative of attitude change, relates the single findings back to the dimensions of reconciliation in the analytical framework, and discusses the broader meaning of the findings regarding discursive narratives and frame shifts. Chapter 8 represents a general conclusion summarizing the results of this research.
2 Storytelling as A Liberal-Local Hybrid Form of Peacebuilding and Its Importance in Bosnia and Herzegovina

This purpose of this sub-chapter is to provide the and disciplinary an empirical context for my dissertation. The chapter presents the conflict in Bosnia, the reconciliation process and the existing liberal peacebuilding intervention and it argues in favor of the integration of a liberal-local hybrid form of peace. It ends the debate explaining why I believe that “My Story” is important to reconciliation and represents such a form of peacebuilding. The chapter is empirically rich and shall also serve as the context to data interpretation in my thematic discourse analysis.

2.1 Ethnic Conflict and Reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Inerethic relations before the war

Bosnia and Herzegovina is inhabited by three constitutive nations – the Bosniaks who are Muslims, the Serbs who are orthodox Christians, and the Croats who are Catholic. There are also minorities of Jews, Albanese, those who declare themselves as Yugoslavs, and others. Bosnian Serbs and bosnian Croats had not always thought of themselves as such, having their fatherland in Serbia and Croatia, respectively. Since 1991, the population structure has changed somewhat until the 2013 census: Bosniak Muslim population grew from 43,5% to 50.1%, the Serb population shrunk from 31,2 % to 30,8% and the Croat population from 17,4% to 15,4%. The results of the census are highly disputed, especially by the Serb authorities who refuse any power redivision (Recknagel, 2016). The emergence of three distinct identities among people who speak the same language was the result of “a long process of nationalist competition between Serbia and Croatia” that started in late 19th century. In this process, the Orthodox and Catholic Bosnians were convinced by the nationalists “that they should think of themselves as Serbs and Croats” (Malcolm, 1996, p. 235). Between 1992 and 1995, a fratricidal war raged in Bosnia and Herzegovina, returning people against each other who had been living together for centuries, sometimes in peace, sometimes not as the Balkans was object of interest of different neighboring powers, such as
Turkey or Austria-Hungary (Malcolm, 1996). I am going to briefly present the history that preceded the war in order to argue about its roots.

After the fall of the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires, a kingdom eventually renamed Yugoslavia was created (Malcolm, 1996). However, during World War II, its nations were divided between the different warring sides and perpetrated unspeakable crimes against each other. One of the most famous ones is the torture and massacre of a large number of Serbs in the concentration camp of Jasenovac held by the Croat Ustahas (Gagnon, 1994). After the war, Yugoslavia was reunited under the name of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Its leader Marshall Tito refused to deal with the past by reopening it and instead “swept the controversies under the carpet” in order to promote the all-Yugoslav idea of “Brotherhood and Unity” (Bašić, 2006, p. 357–358). Indeed, the idea seemed to work. While the existence and identity of different nations within Yugoslavia was recognized (Hodson, Sekulic and Massey, 1994, p. 1542), while a decentralization of the state into federal republics was eventually achieved (Hodson, Sekulic and Massey, 1994, p. 1541). People lived side-by-side and very often, they did not even know who was of which nationality (Oberschall, 2000, p. 989). The rate of ethnically mixed marriages was quite high and grew in time (Bromlei and Kashuba, 1982 and Petrović, 1986a, p. 239, as cited in Botev and Wagner, 1993, p. 29). Regarding Bosnia in particular, Mahmutčehajić (2000) argues that the country has a tradition or tolerance and peaceful coexistence (see also Malcolm, 1996, p. 168).

However, in the 1980’s, the Yugoslav nations were put under strain by a severe economic crisis that led to hyperinflation and disaccords among the republics, which created conditions for the future dissolution of the state (Sekulic, Massey and Hodson, 1994, p. 88; see also Burg, 2005, p. 187). The external Soviet threat disappeared and the underlying interethnic grievances came to the surface (Burg, 2005, p. 188). By the first free elections in 1990, the centralistic efforts of Serbs who wanted to preserve the integrity of Yugoslavia were confronted with fierce opposition and decentralizing tendencies in some other republics, especially Slovenia and Croatia, calling for a confederation, however the ultra-conservative communist leader Slobodan Milošević and his wing won the Serbian elections over the moderate, reformist wing of communism in 1990 (Gagnon, 1994, p. 153 - 156). Indeed, most newly elected leaders in the republics were nationalists that did not share the idea of the common state anymore (Burg, 2005, p. 191). Eventually, in June 1991, Slovenia declared her independence, leading to a short war with the Yugoslav National Army (Burg, 2005, p. 193).
Competing explanations of the war

There are several explanations of the war, the primordialist and the instrumentalist account being most prominent. The primordialist approach sees the war as a result of ancient hatreds between ethnic groups, hatreds based on essentialized identities (Kaplan 1994, as cited in Oberschall 2007, p. 11). Although this thesis could be supported by the key role of religion (Perica, 2002) and intergenerational traumas (Volkan, 2002) in the three nations’ identities, the primordialist account can easily be criticized. First of all the ethnic identities in the former Yugoslavia were originally not essentialized, as people were only imposed strict national identities by the nationalists based on their religion in the modern age, as mentioned above (Malcolm, 1996, p. 235). At the same time, Perica (2002) stresses that the identities, although largely constituted by religion, were largely socially constructed. Secondly, I have shown above that the ethnic relations in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Mahmutcehajic, 2000) as well as in former Yugoslavia (Oberschall, 2000, p. 989) were traditionally good. People were celebrating each others’ holidays together and did not even know each other’s nationality (Oberschall, 2000, p. 989). Also, as mentioned, intermarriage was common (Bromlei and Kashuba, 1982 and Petrović, 1986a, p. 239, as cited in Botev and Wagner, 1993, p. 29). The relations were friendly, at least on the surface, but people had not forgotten the interethnic injustice and violence (Basic, 2006). However, in the end, ordinary people were generally not nationalist and only turned against each other when manipulated by their elites (Burg and Shoup, 1999, p. 69; Oberschall, 2000).

The second key account of the war is an instrumentalist one. According to a field of literature, the war was caused by manipulative Serbian elites (Gagnon, 1994; Kaldor, 2013; Oberschall, 2000). The instrumentalist field of literature views the origin of the violence in the opening of the country to democratic electoral competition. In order to preserve their power, the conservative communists chose to mobilize their voters through a strategy using “aggressive Serbian nationalism, … accompanied by increasingly vehement media demonization not only of Albanians, but also of Croats, as well as an active campaign to portray Tito's Yugoslavia as specifically anti-Serbian” (Gagnon, 1994, p. 151; see also Oberschall, 2000). Indeed, according to Jack Snyder, „traditional cultural networks based on a common religion or language provide convenient channels to mobilize backers“ (Snyder, 2000, p. 271, as cited in Paris, 2004, p. 162). The “appeals to ethnic unity and communal fears” were indeed the easiest political strategy in former Yugoslavia, (Paris, 2004, p. 162). Thus, the case of Yugoslavia seems to confirm Mansfield’s and Snyder’s (1995a, 1995b)
argument that in partly democratized countries, leaders whose position is threatened due to free elections tend to abuse nationalist mobilization to gain political support, which can lead to armed conflict. According to the instrumentalist account, ordinary people, beginning with the Serbs, were mobilized for war by manipulative elites. Namely, Milosevic based his propaganda on historical traumas, also called *chosen traumas*, or victimizing events of particular significance to a group that are intergenerationally transmitted. For Serbs, they stem mainly from the battle of Kosovo (1389) after which their land was subjected to a centuries-long Ottoman occupation. Milosevic woke up again the fears of Serbs of a Muslim domination, which was a key mobilizing factor for the war (Volkan 2002; see also Oberschall, 2000). The Milosevic regime started portraying Bosnian muslims as Islamic fundamentalists seeking to “impose an Islamic state and to perpetrate genocide against the Bosnian Serbs” (Gagnon, 1994, p. 163). Also, the importance they give to the remembrance of the massacres of Serbs in the concentration camp of Jasenovac (Kolstø, 2011; Boban, 1990; Dedijer, 1987; Mirkovic, 2000) can be classified as such as well, in my opinion. In Bosnia, the leader of the nationalist Serbian Democratic Party Radovan Karadzić also spoke publicly in favor of ethnic cleansing of Bosniaks, warning of their extermination in case of a war (Burg and Shoup, 1999, p. 65). Regarding the Serb perspective it must be acknowledged that Serbs were driven by fear, due to the ethnic manipulation and due to the simple loss of their former dominant position in the Yugoslav state. They feared losing their national unity, also by the fear of losing their prestigious position, fear of a wrongly diabolized, fanatical Muslim enemy (White, 1996) determined to establish an Islamic state (Malcolm, 1994, p. 221, as cited in White, 1996, p. 121, cfr. Volkan, 2002). Therefore, the Serbs portrayed themselves as innocent in front of a powerful, diabolical enemy and framed the war as a defensive one (White, 1996, p. 121 – 123).

As to the onset of the war, Milosevic wanted all Serbs to continue to live in one state. It is also under this pretext that Serbian nationalists in Croatia provoked local conflicts with the Croatian police in Croatia, pressuring Croats to leave areas of Croatia with Serb majority, which culminated into the February proclamation of the autonomy of Krajina from Croatia (Gagnon, 1994, p. 156 - 157). At the time, the Serbs in Croatia were being supported and armed by the Yugoslav army, while the government in Zagreb was lacking in such material (Gagnon, 1994, p. 156). Milosevic’s pressure for a tighter federation further escalated the conflict in the country (Gagnon, 1994, p. 157). Facing demonstrations against his regime in Serbia, Milosevic allied with Šešelj’s “Četnik“ militia who started terrorizing Serbs and non-
Serbs in Krajina (Gagnon, 1994, p. 159). After in June 1991 Slovenia and Croatia declared their independence, the Yugoslav National Army controlled by Serbs tried to keep the new countries within Yugoslavia by force. After the short war in Slovenia, it pulled into Croatia where it joined the Serb guerillas in Croatia and participated in terrorizing the population in Slavonia and Krajina (Gagnon, 1994, p. 160). These attacks “killed any support in Slovenia and Croatia for a continued Yugoslavia, even among those who had advocated it” (Gagnon, 1994, p. 161). In Krajina, “almost the entire non-Serbian population were killed or driven out, and Serbian dissenters were silenced and repressed” (Gagnon, 1994, p. 164).

To conclude the debate on paradigms, I personally support the instrumentalist account of the war. On the other hand, I also partly tend to agree with Majstorovic (1997) who argues that the war in Bosnia was co-caused by manipulative elites, but that historical traumas played a role as elements of essentialized identities that were used by the elites in ethnic mobilization.

Course of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Even before the beginning of the war, the Serbs had their territorial goals and considered a separation of the Serb-dominated municipalities of Bosnia and Herzegovina and their union with the neighboring countries. On the 24 October 1991, a body representative of the Serbs called “The Assembly of the Serbian Nation in Bosnia and Herzegovina” was created and with the increase of hostilities, it moved from Sarajevo to Pale. On the 10 November 1991, a plebiscite was held in which Serbs were meant to decide whether to remain part of the federal Yugoslavia. Out of about 1,350,000 voters, 96,4% voted for an independent Serbian state that could either remain part of Yugoslavia or unite with Serbia. After this, a number of Serbian autonomous regions (oblast) was created. On 9 January 1992, the new Republic of the Serb People of Bosnia and Herzegovina was proclaimed that was meant to unite all Serb territories in the country. It adopted its own constitution the following month, however for the moment, it stayed within the former Yugoslavia (Antić and Kecmanović, 2016, pp. 284 – 285). This internationally unrecognized republic was declared on 66 percent of the “Serbian Autonomous Regions” controlled by the leading nationalist Serbian Democratic Party (SDP). At that time, “SDP leader Radovan Karadzic declared at this time that Bosnia would never again be undivided” (Gagnon, 1994, p. 163). In early March 1992, the central authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina declared a referendum on independence of the republic. 93 percent of those voting voted in favor, representing 63 percent of the total population, mainly Bosniaks and Croats, but also some Serbs living in areas not controlled by the SDP
(Oberschall, 2007, p. 109; Burg and Shoup, 1999, p. 117). The day after the referendum and after a shooting at guests of a Serbian wedding, Serbs put up barricades in Sarajevo in order to push for a resolution of the future status of Bosnia and Herzegovina before independence was declared. The demands, initially accepted, were declined by Izetbegovic following civilian protests against JNA intervention and terror (Burg and Shoup, 1999, p. 118). All in all, the Serbs viewed the referendum an called an „illegitimate act of Muslim-Croat powers“ and largely boycotted it (Antić and Kecmanović, 2016, p. 285 – 286). In reaction, on 7 April 1992 they declared the the independence of the Republic Srpska (RS) (Oberschall, 2007, p. 109; Gagnon, 1994, p. 163; Antić and Kecmanović, 2016, p. 285 – 286). As an objection to the referendum on the independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbian guerrilla forces started massacring Croat and Muslim civilians (Oberschall, 2007, p. 109). At the same time, Bosnian Croats, too, aspired at their own entity and although they did not wish for the war, they were preparing for it. Therefore, Bosniaks under the leadership of Alija Izetbegovic from the Party of Democratic Action (SDA) were the most neutral and the least prepared for the war (Marijan, 2016, p. 206). Thus, Bosnia and Herzegovina became object of interest of both Serbian and Croat nationalism. On 12 May, the Assembly of the Republic of Srpska of Bosnia and Herzegovina declared six „strategic goals“ as to the territorial division of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Antić and Kecmanović, 2016, p. 286). Although Serbs claim that they wanted to remain part of former Yugoslavia, they eventually rejected Bosniak (Muslim) leadership (Antić and Kecmanović, 2016, p. 299). After the onset of the war, in July 1992, Bosnian Croats under the leadership of Mate Boban from the Croat Democratic Party (HDZ) declared the independence of the Bosnian Croat republic (Herceg-Bosna), supported by the president of Croatia Franjo Tudjman. Moderate croats were marginalized, and only Izetbegović was a leader promoting relative tolerance in a unified Bosnia and Herzegovina (Burg and Shoup, 1999, p. 66 - 67).

After the ceasefire in Croatia and before the end of 1991, the JNA redeployed its forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina, so practically occupying the country “by stealth, without resistance”, as a JNA general said (Oberschall, 2007, p. 107; see also Marijan, 2016, p. 207; Čekić, 2004). It supported Bosnian Serb forces with manpower and military supplies (Burg and Shoup, 1999, pp. 74 – 75). After the occupation, large-scale massacres of population by Serbian guerrilla forces started, especially in areas controlled by SDP, and the territorial holdings of Serbs increased largely. The main guerrilla forces participating in this were Arkan’s Tigers who flew into Bosnia from Krajina, the “White Eagles” of Mirko Jović, and
Šešeljs “Četniks”. They were, though, joined by local Serb forces. However, both Malcolm (1996) and Oberschall (2000) say that the massacres and ethnic cleansing was mainly committed by Serbian football hooligans (Oberschall, 2000, p. 997) and “young urban gangsters in expensive sunglasses from Serbia, members of the paramilitary forces raised by Arkan and others” (Malcolm, 1996, p. 252). Very soon, non-Serb, mainly Muslim, population was forced to flee from many areas, such as Bijeljina, Zvornik, Višegrad or Foča through large-scale killings and atrocities (Malcolm, 1996, pp. 236 – 238; see also Toal and Dahlman, 2011).

From the beginning of the war until early 1993, Bosniaks and Croats held a military alliance and fought together against the Serbs. Their disagreements eventually led to first clashes that triggered a Bosniak-Croat war that made each one of the three nations make war against the other two (Marijan, 2016). Thus, the main warring parties were represented by the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina on the Bosniak side, the Croatian Defence Council (Hrvatsko vijeće odbrane, HVO) and the Army of Republika Srpska (Vojска Republike Srpsке, VRS) and some of their factions and allied militias. Malcolm says that the ethnic cleansing and military conquests were achieved not only local Serb forces, but mainly by the Yugoslav federal forces, for which reason he calls it a “coordinated invasion of Bosnia planned and directed from Serbian soil” (1996, p. 238). This is coherent with the view of Bosniak and Croat historians who see the war as a Serbian aggression (Čekić, 2004; Marijan, 2016; Kasapović, 2014; for further reading also Pušek and Nazor, 2018). Čekić (2004) views the war as a long-planned Serbian nationalist project. Moreover, the Serbs owned the weaponry of the former Yugoslav army and some weapon industries. To stop the flow of arms into Bosnia, international community imposed an arms embargo on the country, which for the Bosnian forces meant basically “a sentence to death“ (Malcolm, 1996, p. 243). Thus, according to General Divjak, Bosniak forces were a „‘self-mobilization‘ of people in defence of their cities, as reservists and volunteers rallied into patriotic leagues, local militias, and police units that were short of weapons, ammunition, traine officers, even uniforms (Magas and Zanic, 2001: 158)” (Oberschall, 2007, p. 109). Serb forces also engaged in war crimes and ethnic cleansing of non-Serb population (Oberschall, 2007, p. 109; Čekić, 2004). The term „ethnic cleansing“ was eventually adopted by the international community to designate this war strategy (Malcolm, 1996, p. 246; Toal and Dahlman, 2011). However, eventually, all three nations including the Bosniaks and Croats also got engaged in ethnic cleansing (Tuathail and Dahlman, 2005). The creation of Greater Serbia and Greater Croatia at the expense of
Bosnian Muslims and their territory eventually became the political goal of Milošević and Tudjman, respectively (Burg and Shoup, 1999, p. 198). Some of the major crises of the war entail the siege of Sarajevo by Serb forces for most of the war, the massacre of civilians at the Markale marketplace in Sarajevo in 1994 which is ascribed to Serb shelling, the Serb attacks on the enclaves of Srebrenica, Žepa and Goražde and (Burg and Shoup, 1999, pp. 140 – 158) and the fratricidal Muslim-Muslim conflict in the Bihac area between the Bosnian army and the local politician and entrepreneur Fikret Abdic (Oberschall, 2007, p. 112).

In October 1992, the first serious attempt at ending the conflict came to be. The EEC and UN negotiators Lord Owen and Cyrus Vance proposed a peace plan based on division of Bosnia into cantons controlled by one nation each and with unclear borders, with the central government retaining decision power only in defence and foreign affairs. According to Malcolm, not only the Serbs were unhappy with the lack of connectedness of their territory with Serbia (Malcolm, 1996, p. 247; Oberschall, 2007, p. 111), but mainly, the plan incited ethnic competition, thus contributing significantly to the breakdown of the Muslim-Croat alliance (Malcolm, 1996, pp. 247 – 248). Indeed, after the introduction of the Vance-Owen plan in early 1993, the occasional Muslim-Croat clashes escalated into an open conflict between the parties, accompanied by ethnic cleansing by their militia. Malcolm stresses that this was a clear consequence of the Vance-Owen plan (Malcolm, 1996, pp. 248 – 249). He adds that „the combined effects of the arms embargo and the Vance-Owen plan had fatally weakened the military resistance of the Serbs“ (Malcolm, 1996, p. 249). After this, the international community drew the Owen-Stoltenberg plan that was based on dividing Bosnia and Herzegovina into three „mini-republics“, reflecting the territorial gains in the battlefield, thus rewarding war and aggression (Malcolm, 1996, p. 253). The Bosniaks rejected the plan as it would confined them in a miniature „buffer“ state (Monnesland, 1997, pp. 397 – 406; Woodward, 1995, pp. 302 – 12, as cited in Oberschall, 2007, p. 112). Following the failure of the plan, Croat leaders finally decided for the annexation of Croat territories of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Croatia. Thus, Croat forces flew into Bosnia and Herzegovina, „disguised as the HVO“ (Oberschall, 2007, p. 112).

The EC and EN eventually constituted a Contact Group that proposed a peace plan based on division of Bosnia and Herzegovina into two entities. The plan was accepted by Bosniaks and Croats but rejected by the Serbs. After this, the Serbs focused instead on more military conquests, which eventually culminated in the Serb takeover of the UN-protected enclaves of Žepa and Srebrenica, accompanied by massacres and genocide of thousands of Bosniaks,
mainly men and boys (Oberschall, 2007, pp. 112 – 113; Čekić, 2004). Eventually, the NATO launched air-strikes against Serb forces (Oberschall, 2007, pp. 112 – 113) and Serb military losses in Croatia coincided by moves by external actors brought the three warring parties to the negotiation table (Oberschall, 2007, p. 114). This was, however, done in a situation when the conflict was not “ripe” for resolution and the underlying issues had not been addressed (Burg, 2005). In 1995, the Dayton Peace Accords were signed by the three parties. They divided the country into the Croat-Muslim Federation with 51 percent of the territory, and the Republic of Srpska consisting of 49 percent of the territory, plus the special district of Brčko. This largely reflected the state of the respective military gains at time when the negotiations started (Oberschall, 2007, p. 119; Banac, 2009, p. 469). Moreover, to prevent future fighting, Bosnia and Herzegovina became a de facto international protectorate in which the Office of the High Representative plays a key role (Bagatskyi, 2016). The country was subjected to a project of liberal peacebuilding in the form of economic liberalization and free elections. According to critics, the latter were held too soon, thus leading to the electoral victory of the same nationalist parties that led their nations to war (Paris, 2004). These parties are since then still in power.

Controversies and Reconciliation

The 1992 – 1995 war in Bosnia is until today object of major controversies. People from Bosnia, and former Yugoslavia more widely, disagree on the origins and course of the conflict and call it different names. It is common knowledge that “the Serbs perceive the conflict as a civil war, the Bosniaks as a foreign aggression of Serbia and Croatia and the Croats as a foreign aggression by Serbia” (Kasapović 2015, p. 37). The Bosniak and Croat narratives, which are basically coherent with the one of the international community and portray the beginning of the war as an aggression of Serbia on the newly independent state of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Čekić, 2004; Marijan, 2016; Kasapović 2015). On the other hand, Serbs the Serbian historians Antić and Kecmanović (2016) refer to the war as a civil war, and Serbs in general tend to highlight that it was a defensive one (White, 1996).

According to a death toll established by the Research and Documentation Center (IDC) in Sarajevo, the war in Bosnia claimed the lives of 105,000 victims, of which 65% were Bosniaks, 21,7% Serbs, 8,5% Croats and 4,8% other nationalities (Halimović, 2011). These numbers are however fiercely disputed by the Serbs and the director of the IDC is accused of blowing up the number of Bosniak victims (for example Filipović, 2012). Bosnia is also a
prime example of competitive victimhood, a situation in which every nation thinks it is the greatest victim of the war (Noor et al., 2012):

“While NATO and the EU have secured peace in the country, there remains a lack of agreement on the state and a joint vision for its future. The lack of a joint vision on the state can also be observed by the existence of different narratives about victimhood. The three main groups in Bosnia all consider themselves as victims of the war and of the Dayton Peace Agreement. Therefore, the above described concept of “competitive victimhood” can be observed and has resulted in three different narratives about the reasons, the duration, and the consequences of the violent conflict” (Keil, Bates and Noor, ca. 2014., p. 4).

The nations are strongly prejudiced against each other, the worst prejudice being directed against the Serbs whom Bosniaks and Croats deem aggressive and nationalist (Skoko 2011, p. 16, see also Šalaj, 2009). Especially the Bosniaks feel generally very little emotional empathy for the Serbs (Brown and Cehajic, 2008, p. 354) which has been also confirmed in this research. Also, Bosnian nations tend to deny each other’s identity. The denial of the existence of separate nations (Bosnian Muslims being islamicized Serbs or Croats) is well known, but they also deny war crimes (Obradovic-Wochnik, 2013; Raković, 2005), blame the other nations for the war and they deny the existence of the other’s language (Raković, 2005). Ordinary people of the three nationalities also tend to deny the guilt of their nations for war crimes, unwilling to accept the truth established by the International Criminal Tribunal for The Former Yugoslavia (ICTY). They come up with different narratives about what really happened. For example, they tend to deny that the massacre in Srebrenica was genocide (Clark, 2009b, pp. 476 – 478) and that it was a revenge for the killing of 3,500 Serb civilians in the area around Srebrenica by Bosniak militia prior to the famous massacre (Selimovic, 2010, p. 55). The three nations tend to relativize each other’s suffering (Selimovic, 2010, p. 54 – 55) and develop narratives of collective innocence, seeing every individual from the other group as guilty (Selimovic, 2010, p. 58). The Republic of Srpska is being called by Bosniaks a “genocidal state”, which gives rise to different political claims undermining its legitimacy (International Crisis Group, 2009, p. 6). These narratives are not being adequately challenged by the ICTY (Selimovic, 2010) and the potentially beneficial effects of transitional justice are counteracted by a series of obstacles so that it only contributes to reconciliation in a limited measure (Oberpfalzerová, 2012). The current state of affairs in Bosnia can therefore not be called reconciliation but rather only a “negative peace” as to the
political level (Clark, 2009a). Negative peace is a situation in which there is peace of arms but no positive relationships or cooperation (Galtung, 1996). On the other hand, on the level of ordinary Bosnians, reconciliation seems to be happening (United Nations Development Program, 2015, p. 22):

“In the FBiH, a majority believes reconciliation between the peoples has either already taken place or is possible within five to ten years. Most people express little or no objection to interacting with individuals of any national group as friends, neighbours or co-workers. Insofar as they have a problem with others, it is as organised groups with political ideologies they find threatening, not as people. Even here, there are signs of growing flexibility. By large margins, people tend to believe their chosen political leaders should be more ready to compromise than they are now.”

Despite this, there have been rumours about a possible new war and 37.5% of Bosnians believe that there may be violence in the future. However, 13.5 percent Bosniaks, 12.6 percent Croats, 64.9 percent Serbs said they would not take up arms in a new conflict (Tuliković, 2013).

The three nations deeply distrust each other (Hakanson and Sjöholm, 2007; Mooren and Kleber, 2001; Šalaj, 2009). The Croats are striving for a third entity (United Nations Development Program, 2015, p. 14) and the Serbs seek the unification of the Republic of Srpska with Serbia. Some Serbs, under the guidance of Milorad Dodik, strive for the independence of the Republic of Srpska, which would lead to the breakup of Bosnia as a unified country. Dodik’s party threatens to hold a referendum on independence in 2018 (Brunwasser, 2016). However, a political solution of the conflict in Bosnia is improbable as people keep voting for nationalist parties that had led the war. Keil, Bates and Noor (n.d., p. 4) observe:

“Most Bosnians vote for “ethnic parties” i.e. parties that clearly identity with one of the ethnic groups. This has caused different and opposing forms of identification, in which Bosnian Serbs feel much closer to Serbia than Bosnia and Herzegovina, and in which Croats feel ignored, neglected and discriminated, because of existing structures and their re-interpretation in contemporary Croatian discourses on the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina.”
To conclude, the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina had its roots in ancient history, to which the wartime atrocities only added new wounds and traumas. Each nation has its own truth about the war, thus preventing reconciliation. Addressing these serious obstacles is fundamental for achieving a lasting peace in the country. The relevance of this reality to post-conflict peacebuilding will be discussed in detail in the next sub-chapter.

2.2 Weaknesses of Liberal Peacebuilding in Regards of Reconciliation

In this section, I am going to position storytelling in the field of post-conflict peacebuilding and so link it to the discipline of international relations, all by highlighting the relevance of the debate in the light of the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina. First of all, I am going to present the concept of liberal peacebuilding and discuss the successes and failures of its application in Bosnia, including the approach of transitional justice that accompanies it. Secondly, by pinpointing the weaknesses of these two approaches in the light of the paradigm of critical peacebuilding, I will explain how storytelling can be positioned within the paradigm of critical peacebuilding and address the blind spots that liberal peacebuilding leaves unaddressed.

2.2.1 Reconciliation as The Final Stage of Post-Conflict Peacebuilding

Peacebuilding is a concept that does not have one single meaning. Newman (2009, p. 27) summarizes: “Until recently, rather intuitive definitions were considered to be adequate: Boutros-Ghali (1995), for example, described peacebuilding as the “institutionalization of peace” and for Kofi Annan it is the achievement of a “lasting peace” (Annan, 2004).” On the other hand, proponents of narrow definitions are content with a definition of peacebuilding as the maintenance of a ceasefire (Newman, 2009, p. 27).

Peacebuilding often aims at state- or nation-building in post-conflict countries, which involves activities in various sectors, such as “security, humanitarian relief, governance, economic stabilization, democratization and development” (RAND Beginner’s guide to nation-building, as cited in Newman, p. 29). Sometimes, peacebuilding is accompanied by coercive measures, such as the exclusion of extremists from the political process in Bosnia. These measures can, however, create local grievance and threaten the support of the
international peacebuilding intervention (Newman, 2009, pp. 33 – 34). More intrusive measures can lead up to a suspension of sovereignty, where matters of competency of the national government are handled by the international community, as happened in Bosnia. This approach clashes, however, with the principles of sovereignty and the right to self-determination (Newman, 2009, p. 36).

Traditionally, the peacebuilding process consisted of two phases: conflict settlement (a formal ending of the conflict through a peace agreement) and conflict resolution (resolution of the underlying contradiction). Recently however authors have started to add a third stage, the post-conflict reconciliation (Kelman 2004, p. 113; Rouhana 2004; for an overview see also Oberpfalzerová, 2013). Reconciliation is the ultimate goal of peacebuilding (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Miall, 2011, p. 246) and a consequence of a successful conflict resolution (Kelman, 2004, p. 112). Bar-Tal and Bennink (2004, p. 12) further specify the crucial difference between conflict resolution and reconciliation: “Reconciliation goes beyond the agenda of formal conflict resolution to changing the motivations, goals, beliefs, attitudes, and emotions of the great majority of the society members regarding the conflict, the nature of the relationship between the parties, and the parties themselves. These changes take shape via the reconciliation process, promote the peace as a new form of intergroup relations, and serve as stable foundations for cooperative and friendly acts that symbolize these relations”.

More importantly, reconciliation also represents a condition for stable and lasting peace (Boulding 1978) as it has the capacity to build it by transforming the relations of the former adversaries into sincere and peaceful ones (Bar-Tal and Bennink, 2004, p. 12, see also Lederach 1997).

Reconciliation is a very multi-faceted concept that can be examined on many levels including the psychological, the sociological or the theological one. Therefore, there is no single definition of reconciliation. The only agreement is on the fact that reconciliation requires a transformation of relationships between the former adversaries. We will briefly review the main conceptions of reconciliation and some of the key definitions.

As to the definition of reconciliation, the core of the concept includes a transformation of the relations between the former adversaries into peaceful and friendly ones (Ackermann, 1994; Kriesberg, 1998a; Gardner-Feldman, 1999; Kelman, 1999a; Bar-Tal, 2000b; Bar-Tal, Bennink, 2004).

This dissertation adopts Jeong’s definition (2005, p. 156):
“Reconciliation can be generally defined as a process of mutual accommodation comprised of acknowledgement of past wrongdoing and contrition from the perpetrators in exchange for forgiveness offered by the victims. As a critical first step, guilt needs to be recognized with the acceptance of responsibility for atrocities or other events symbolizing intercommunal and interpersonal relations. Since reconciliation invites actions of both victims and offenders, the process of apology and forgiveness comes as all sides are better able to humanize each other.”

Definitions of reconciliation can be divided into weak and strong. While strong reconciliation entails a full-fledged transformation of the relationships, weak reconciliation considers a constructive interaction that enables ending the violence sufficient (Ross, 2004). Similarly, Ernesto Verdeja (2009, p. 12) classifies approaches to reconciliation from a “minimalist” one that conceives reconciliation as respect of law and renouncing violence, to a “maximalist” approach that entails repentance by perpetrators and forgiveness by victims, as Jeong’s definition suggests. An example of “maximalist” reconciliation can be the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Kriesberg (1998b, cit. in Hermann 2004, p. 44) defines reconciliation in minimalist terms as a “process of development of a peaceful/concilatory accord between former rivals”.

Reconciliation can be furthermore viewed as an outcome or as a process (Bar-Tal and Bennink, 2004). Reconciliation as a process can last for long years or even tens of years and “it encompasses psychological changes of motivations, goals, beliefs, attitudes, and emotions, which are reflected in structural changes; these, in turn, facilitate the process of reconciliation“ (Bar-Tal, Bennink, 2004, p. 23). This is a very slow process: „Although some of the structural changes can be decided and implemented relatively quickly, the psychological changes do not occur in the same way. They take place via the slow psychological processes of information processing, unfreezing, persuasion, learning, reframing, re-categorization, and formation of new psychological repertoire“ (Bar-Tal, Bennink, 2004, p. 23). Reconciliation as an outcome corresponds approximately to the term “stable peace” which is characterized by acceptance, trust and positive attitudes (Bar-Tal and Bennink, 2004, p. 15).

I adopt the lens of the so-called socio-emotional reconciliation that entails psychological changes and healing of the population, as opposed to the concept of instrumental reconciliation which focuses on structural changes and political processes. However, in conflicts that have no clear victor, such as the war in Bosnia, socio-emotional reconciliation
can bring more harm than good as the parties will keep blaming each other. In such cases, instrumental reconciliation, a separate coexistence and the recognition of each side’s truth are a more adapted option (Nadler 2001). On the other hand, structural changes can facilitate psychological changes, but they cannot bring about reconciliation by themselves (Bar-Tal, Bennink, 2004, p. 17).

Reconciliation happens on many levels, however the most important are the societal (or group) level and the individual level (level of individuals) (Nadler, Malloy and Fisher, 2008, p. 3). While the aim of reconciliation at the societal level is to “renew a lapsed social contract” between government and citizens (Stephan, 2008, p. 370), the goal of reconciliation at the individual level is „to alleviate the suffering that people have experienced during the conflict and provide them with the will and the means to move forward toward peaceful coexistence“ (Stephan, 2008, p. 372). The steps to reach this goal include meeting the basic psychological needs for recognitions, respect, acceptance and security (Burton, 1986, as cited in Stephan, 2008, p. 372), taking pride in one’s own identity, intergroup trust (Bar-On and Kassem, 2004), reducing the level of negative emotions, processing of grief, promotion of forgiveness and reconciliation, redressing injustices, and reduction of stress (Stephan, 2008, p. 372 – 373). Besides the socioemotional reconciliation, there is also another approach which is called the trust-building reconciliation, which is based on letting the past go and bringing the parties together through cooperation (Nadler and Saguy, 2004, p. 32).

As mentioned above, the importance of identity in intractable conflict is crucial (Zartmann 2005, 50 – 51; Crocker, Hampson and Aall 2005a, p. 7; Kelman 2004; Coleman 2000). Reconciliation can also be understood as identity change (Kelman, 2004, p. 119).

Group identity (with focus on ethnic identity) is defined by Kelman as follows:

“One can speak of a group identity (focusing here primarily on an ethnic or national identity ) as the group's definition of itself-its conception of its enduring characteristics and basic values, its strengths and weaknesses, its hopes and fears, its reputation and conditions of existence, its institutions and traditions, its past history, current purposes, and future prospects.” (Kelman, 1998, pp. 16).

In protracted social conflicts, ingroup identity sometimes comes to include the negation of the identity of the rival party as a central component of ingroup identity. Reconciliation goes beyond mere conflict resolution by changing the identity of the parties by removing this negation. This implies “a degree of acceptance of the other’s identity – at least in the sense of
acknowledging the legitimacy of the other’s narrative without necessarily fully agreeing with that narrative” (Kelman, 2004, p. 119). A transcendent identity can eventually be developed alongside the opposing sides’ particularistic identities. What is fundamental to reconciliation is the revision of identity and the accommodation of the identity of the other. Then a positive interdependence of both identities can be created. The new relationship is internalized and integrated into the parties’ identities. New attitudes develop in place of old ones and they become integrated into the groups’ identities as well. Working trust is transformed in personal trust (Kelman, 2004, p. 120).

Reconciliation can be reached through dealing with the past which is based on reopening the past and confronting it (Teitel, 2000; Hayner, 2001) or through forgetting, which aims at overcoming the past with the passage of time by avoiding talking about it (Connerton, 2011; Rigby, 2001). Yet another approach practiced by ordinary people is silence, which entails avoiding speaking about the past without forgetting it (Eastmond and Selimovic, 2012). This approach appears to be the option of choice of many Bosnians who wish to have good neighbourly relations. The point of both forgetting and silence is that reopening the past shall avoid conflict (Eastmond and Selimovic, 2012).

Based on my fieldwork and on Volkan’s work on the role of chosen traumas in the ethnic mobilization for the war in Bosnia (Volkan, 2002), I agree with the view that dealing with the past instead of forgetting is a necessary precondition for reconciliation. I believe so as „coming to terms with the past is a political and psychological imperative for any post-conflict society which strives towards a democratic future, based on the rule of law and respect for human rights“ (Čehajić-Clancy, 2012, p. 237). I also agree with Daniel Bar-Tal in his claim that in order to reach reconciliation in an intractable conflict, the societal beliefs that represent the socio-psychological infrastructure of the conflict must transform into peaceful and legitimizing ones, called ethos of peace (Bar-Tal, 2000). The socio-psychological infrastructure will be explained in detail in the theoretical chapter.

I see reconciliation as a state of intergroup relations dominated by the ethos of peace (Bar-Tal, 2000), absence of hate and prejudice, trust, acknowledgement of ingroup misdeeds and, agreeing with Cehajic (2012), also by feeling collective guilt (Jeong, 2005, p. 156). I also agree that „the acceptance of collective responsibility is (...) a precondition for re-establishing a just and inclusive society based on truth, justice and reconciliation“ (Čehajić-Clancy, 2012, p. 337). Part of this acceptance is „collective responsibility, as the moral response to
commission of atrocities” (Čehajić-Clancy, 2012, p. 237). Acceptance of collective responsibility then „forms the initial psychological basis for emotions that can be felt in relation to one’s group actions such as guilt, shame or empathy“ (Čehajić, 2012, p. 238).

However, I believe that the people in Bosnia and Herzegovina have suffered unspeakable atrocities, and therefore nobody has the right to impose on them the duty to forgive. Therefore, I suggest that forgiveness represents rather an aim towards which the society should be heading over the next decades, rather than a precondition of reconciliation.

2.2.2 Liberal peacebuilding

The approach adopted by the international community in order to stabilize postwar Bosnia and Herzegovina is the approach of liberal peacebuilding. I am now going to discuss the concept and its strengths and weaknesses in general and in regard to the situation in the country of my focus.

After the end of the cold war, the framework called liberal peacebuilding (Newman, Paris, & Richmond, 2009; Call & Cousens, 2007, p. 2; Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Miall, 2016, pp. 154 - 155) has prevailed as a mainstream policy used the international community in order to establish peace in post-conflict settings. This approach is rooted in the paradigm of liberal internationalism. According to Roland Paris, “the central tenet of this paradigm is the assumption that the surest foundation for peace, both within and between states, is market democracy, that is, a liberal democratic polity and a market-oriented economy... in other words, pacification through political and economic liberalization“ (Paris, 1997, p. 56; see also Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Miall, 2016, pp. 154 - 155 ). Liberal internationalism draws from “democratic peace theory”, heavily based on the ideas of Immanuel Kant and Woodrow Wilson. According to this line of thinking, “consolidated democracies do not go to war with each other because democracies have institutional constraints upon leaders that make going to war with other countries more difficult; and, because such countries are interdependent economically and in terms of trade, going to war may disrupt economic/trade relations” (Newman, 2009, p. 39, see also Rasmussen, 2003; Mitchell, Gates and Hegre, 1999; Marshall and Cole, 2008, pp. 3 and 12, as cited in Newman, 209, p. 39). The core of liberal peacbuilding rests in the promotion of electoral democracy, i.e. holding elections even shortly after the conflict, and promoting liberal market economy in post-conflict countries. According to Paris, the “success” tended to be proclaimed two or three years after the creation of such policy, with the exception of the Bosnian mission (Paris, 2004, p. 175).

The central tenets of liberal peacebuildings are generally accepted, but they are also being challenged. Critics of the model claim that the approach exacerbates conflict and further destabilizes post-conflict countries (Newman, 2009, p. 39). Paris, who is supportive but critical of liberal peacebuilding, defines five “pathologies of liberalization”. These weaknesses of the approach stem from the social competition that marketization and democratization exacerbate (Paris, 2004, p. 159). Firstly, liberal peacebuilding can lead to “bad civil society”, or a society in which hatred, intolerance, prejudice and extremism prevail and can be preached freely (Paris, 2004, pp. 159 – 161). Secondly, “ethnic entrepreneurs”, or manipulative opportunistic local leaders, exploit intergroup fear and distrust in order to gain political support of their own group members. This leads to the ethnic polarization of the post-conflict democratic system (Horowitz, 1985, pp. 188, as cited in Paris 2004, pp. 161-162). Thirdly, elections become “a focal point for harmful competition” by polarizing the electorate and exacerbating existing societal conflicts, weakening the democratization process and even they can even lead to large-scale violence (Paris, 2004, p. 163). Fourthly, newly elected leaders sabotage the democratic transition “so that they will never again face a democratic challenge” (Walzer, 1996, as cited in Paris, 2004, p. 164). Fifthly, the dangers of economic liberalization consist in the fact that economic liberalization demands structural adjustment in order to obtain loans, which entails very high social costs for some groups, further disadvantaging the poor. Besides that, structural adjustment does not always result in economic growth (Paris, 2004, p. 166). Such inequalities can even lead to social unrest and violence (Walton and Seddon, 1994, as cited in Paris, 2004; see also Chandler, 2010, p. 140; Pugh, 2005). In former Yugoslavia, austerity measures contributed to the violent breakup of the country (Paris, 2004, p. 167). Altogether, the pathologies of liberalization are making peace in post-war countries very fragile due to the persistence of underlying societal conflicts, lack of natural “conflict dampeners” including “a tradition of nonviolent dispute resolution”, and a lack of “effective governmental institutions that might otherwise help to contain and manage the pathologies of liberalization” (Paris, 2004, p. 168).

Special attention must be dedicated to the second and third pathology of liberalization, i.e. “ethnic entrepreneurs” and harmful competition. The risk of conflict is neither highest in established democracies nor authoritarian regimes, but rather in partial democracies, or in societies in democratic transition (Goldstone et al., 2009; Mansfield and Snyder, 1995a,
1995b), especially when elections are “ill-timed or poorly designed” (Newman, 2009, p. 31). This because of factionalism and also because “party systems are weak and political participation is more likely to flow through networks rooted in traditional identities or other parochial interests” (Goldstone et al., 2009, p. 19) and the election results tend to reflect wartime allegiances (Newman, 2009, p. 31). The highest risk of conflict exists in states that combine “factionalized competition with open contestation” (Goldstone et al., 2009, p. 20).

Following on the point just mentioned, Mansfield and Snyder suggest that partial democracies (that are typically characterized by weakened state institutions) are vulnerable to nationalist mobilization by manipulative elites left from the old regime, who use these tactics in order to win the elections and so keep their power (Mansfield and Snyder, 1995a, 1995b). They “mobilize mass allies, often through nationalist appeals, to defend their threatened positions and to stake out new ones. However, like the sorcerer’s apprentice, these elites typically find that their mass allies, once mobilized, are difficult to control. When this happens, war can result from nationalist prestige strategies that hard-pressed leaders use to stay astride their unmanageable political coalitions (Wehler, 1989)” (Mansfield and Snyder, 1995a, p. 7, see also Mansfield and Snyder, 1995a, pp. 19 – 20, and Newman, 2009, pp. 40 – 41). Paris claims that more often than not, liberalization has contributed to the destabilization of postconflict countries. He suggests that liberalization shall be pursued, but its strategy must assume that liberalization is indeed capable of undermining peace (Paris, 2004, p. 152). Importantly, it must not take the existence of a functioning state and government in postconflict countries as a given (Paris, 2004, p. 176). He proposes the strategy that he calls “Institutionalization Before Liberalization”, or the requirement that political and economic institutions be built before the introduction of a market democracy (Paris, 2004, p. 179). Elections should only be held when the conditions are ripe, electoral systems should support moderation, hate speech shall be controlled and conflict-reducing economic policies shall be introduced and functioning state institutions shall be rebuilt (Paris, 2004, p. 188; Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Miall, 2016, p. 155).

**2.2.3 Transitional justice**

Liberal peacebuilding often occurs in parallel with transitional justice, another strategy commonly used by the international community in post-conflict and transition countries. According to the definition of the International Center for Transitional Justice (2009),
transitional justice refers to the set of judicial and non-judicial measures that have been implemented by different countries in order to redress the legacies of massive human rights abuses. These measures include criminal prosecutions, truth commissions, reparations programs, and various kinds of institutional reforms. These measures are executed mainly by the institutions of the new regime (Kritz, 1995; Teitel 2000; Boraine 2004). Both approaches share the same assumptions that democracy, free market and justice will necessarily lead to peace. There is, however, much debate about the potentially destabilizing effects of transitional justice on countries that emerge from war and mass atrocities, and about the inappropriateness of the transplantation of the framework of transitional justice to other political and legal cultures (Sriram, 2007, p. 579).

More importantly for this thesis, transitional justice often aspires at post-conflict reconciliation and it is introduced in post-conflict countries for this purpose by local governments or by the international community (for claims about transitional justice and reconciliation see for example Hayner, 2001; Akhavan, 1998). A large empirical study by Thoms, Ron and Paris (2008, p. 4) does not prove neither positive nor negative effects of transitional justice, nor does the evidence clearly prove whether the process contributes to reconciliation. A review of the mechanisms of transitional justice and the related key debates is now going to follow.

Criminal justice entails submitting the establishment of responsibility of persons responsible for human rights and international humanitarian law violations submitting them to a just punishment (Orentlicher 2004). This usually happens through criminal trials before national, international or hybrid courts. They focus on establishing individual responsibility of each perpetrator (Teitel, 2000). In some situation, the number of perpetrators is so high that it is impossible to punish all of them: in these cases, exemplary trials (Orentlicher, 2007, p. 15) or amnesty (Teitel, 2000, p. 51). The prospect of criminal trials often dissuade power-holding perpetrators from giving up arms and concluding peace agreements. This is called the dilemma “justice versus peace”. In these situations, peace is exchanged for impunity of the perpetrators (Teitel, 2000, pp. 81 – 85) and amnesty may sometimes be justifiable (Orentlicher, 2007, pp. 20 – 21).

Truth-telling is based on the right of individuals to know the truth (United Nations, 2010, p. 8). It is typically conducted by truth commissions established (usually) by the state, such as the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. They are often based on
public or closed hearings of victims of the human rights violations, where the latter can give an account of their suffering and receive acknowledgement of it (Hayner, 2001; Mendeloff, 2004, p. 361). These temporary bodies investigate the history and context of the past human rights violations and establish an official, unified version of truth about them, which is called *transitional truth* (Teitel, 2000, p. 70). They investigate „the pattern of crimes in a given time period rather than concentrating on a specific event“ and they are „officially approved, authorized or supported by the state“ (Hayner, 2001, p. 14). This way, they go beyond the narrow notion of individual guilt and the focus on individual perpetrators that is typical for criminal trials (Brants and Klep, 2013, 42 and 48). On the other hand, truth-telling can help individualize guilt and counteract the blaming of whole groups by manipulative leaders (Akhavan, 1998, p. 766). Their aim is, among others, to prevent the truth from being distorted and used as the basis for a new conflict (Hayner, 2001; Mendeloff, 2004, pp. 356–357). Their accounts represent a form of punishment of perpetrators by identifying their guilt and exposing them to public shaming (Verdeja, 2009, p. 116; Hayner, 2001, 107 – 132; Brahm, 2007, 21; Teitel 2000). By doing all this, truth commissions initiate the process of reconciliation (Hayner, 2001, p. 24). However, they face the dilemma “*truth versus peace*” as their accounts and the truth established by them can potentially destabilize post-conflict countries (Hayner, 2001, p. 185). The testimonies can “rekindle anger and trigger posttraumatic stress among victims”, and at they “may generate resentment and insecurity” in the whole society (Brahm, 2007, p. 23). Truth commissions have existed in many countries such as Morocco, Timor-Leste, Peru or Guatemala. One prominent example was the South African *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* which contributed to the reconciliation between South Africa’s white and native African population after a period of intense violence accompanying the end of the apartheid (Gibson, 2004; see also Hayner, 2001). On the other hand, it was object of many controversies such as granting amnesty to some of the perpetrators (Hayner, 2001, p. 29). A second famous example was the Argentinian *National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons* created in 1983 following the fall of the dictatorship, and which became famous with its slogan *Nunca Más* (Never Again) (Hayner, 2001).

Within the truth-telling approach, there is a less known and niche model of intervention called *Unofficial Truth Projects* (Bickford 2007, p. 997). This approach is based on telling stories are told in an unofficial setting and so spreading them throughout society (for a classification of similar initiatives in the Bosnian transitional justice field see Popović, 2009,
Such projects can replace or precede truth commissions, as they share their goals (Bickford 2007, 1004), especially when the creation of an official truth commission is not possible for political reasons, or the concept of truth commission is compromised (Bickford 2007, pp. 995 and 1026). Thanks to their independence of state power, their legitimacy can be greater than the legitimacy of official truth commissions (Bickford, 2007, p. 1027), especially when the perpetrators are still in positions of power (Bickford, 2007, p. 2006). However, although they examine the patterns of abuse through storytelling by victims (Bickford, 2007, p. 2006), they can only focus on “smaller components of the national story” (Bickford 2007, 1027). Nevertheless, they can shape the society’s collective memory (Bickford 2007, 1033). Unofficial Truth Projects have been found to foster reconciliation in many ways. This field of research will be reviewed in more detail in the next sub-chapter in order to allow for an exhaustive overview. In this dissertation, I am filling a number of gaps in this specific literature on storytelling, as I will show further.

Reparations are based on the moral duty of the state to remedy to the fact that it was not able to protect its citizens (International Commission of Jurists, 2006, p. 23). They entail material or financial compensations, restitution to the state before the human rights violations, rehabilitation, other forms of satisfaction, such as apology or memorials and a guarantee of non-repetition of the human rights violations in the future (United Nations, 2006, pp. 7 – 9).

Institutional reforms such as lustrations, vetting or the change of legislation aim to transform the old regimes’ institutions into new ones that will support the respect of human rights and enforce the rule of law (International Center for Transitional Justice, 2009).

To conclude, the framework of liberal peacebuilding and transitional justice both share some of their assumptions and their focus on institutions in the peacebuilding process. They both have the potential to both build peace and exacerbate conflict, depending on the concrete conflict context and success of the application.

2.2.4 Critical Peacebuilding and the Need for a Liberal-Local Hybrid Form of Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina

In this section, I am going to review the concept of liberal-local hybrid form of peace as a form of critical peacebuilding (Richmond, 2009a and 2009b). This approach aims to address some of the structural shortcomings of liberal peacebuilding. At the same time, I will address
the weaknesses of liberal peacebuilding in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in order to argue for the need for this alternative form of peacebuilding. This debate will serve as foundation to my argument developed in the following and last section of chapter two, which is that unofficial truth projects such as “My Story” can represent exactly this form of liberal-local hybrid peacebuilding.

**Liberal peacebuilding proceeds in an excessively top-down fashion**

The first major point that critical peacebuilding brings up is that liberal peacebuilding proceeds excessively in a *top-down fashion*. There appears to be a failure to recognize and address traditional institutions and forms of authority, and a presumption of uniform or ‘virgin’ territory…” (Newman, 2009, p. 42). Also, top-down peacebuilding is based on achieving security through negotiating with local power brokers. However, these are often the same elites that led their country into war. This way, peacebuilding reaches mainly political elites who are unwilling to make the desired changes (Newman, 2009, p. 37; cfr. Paris, 2004). At the same time, liberal peacebuilding tends to be very ethnocentric in the sense of being firmly anchored Western values and conception of the state and its institutions, thus transplanting them onto non-Western societies or societies that lack a liberal tradition (Richmond, 2009, p. 557; Chandler, 2010, pp. 139 – 140; Newman, 2009, p. 42). Duffield claims that the assumptions and agenda of peacebuilding represent regulatory instrument to counterbalance market failures (Duffield, 2003, as cited in Newman, 2009, p. 43). It tends to promote globalization and subjugate rather than emancipate post-conflict societies (Pugh, 2005, p. 13). Therefore, it is being criticized and its legitimacy is being questioned due to the fact that it is perceived to be “ethically bankrupt, subject to double standards, coercive and conditional, acultural, unconcerned with social welfare, and unfeeling and insensitive towards its subjects” (Richmond, 2009, p. 557). On the other hand, the critical peacebuilding paradigm argues for a more bottom-up approach that would also focus on the local dimension of conflict (Richmond, 2009, p. 557; see also Newman, 2009, p. 42). The bottom-up approach to peacebuilding is based on resolving the conflict within the actual communities (Newman, 2009, p. 37; Lederach, 1997).

Indeed, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, peacebuilding heavily relied on installing the Dayton system, a form of consociation democracy (Lijphart, 1969 and 1967) and managing the country with the help of the Office of The High Commissioner (OHR). The ethnic veto granted to the three Bosnian nations by the Dayton system, along with the victories of
nationalist parties, lead to a stalemate in which political decision making is inhibited. At the same time, entities have a lot of power comparing to the central state (Bieber, 2006, pp. 19 – 21; see also Donais, 2003; Keil and Perry, 2016). For these reasons and due to the structural impossibility to represent the non-constitutive Bosnian nations in some of the highest institutions exemplified by the court case that Sejdic and Finci won at the European Court for Human Rights, the constitutional design based on the Dayton agreement is under fire. One approach says that the current system should be reformed, and another one argues that it should be abolished and replaced by a new one based on a different territorial division (Bieber, 2006, p. 25). Another major point of critique, especially by the locals, are the “Bonn powers” allowing the OHR to overrule, remove or replace local politicians. This, along with the overall international involvement in running the post-conflict country has been criticized as an international protectorate (Bagatskyi, 2016; Donais, 2009, pp. 3 - 5). Indeed, local people including politicians have acquired the impression that powerful foreigners will run their affairs for them, an undesirable reality that Chandler criticizes as a “culture of dependency” (1999a, 1999b, 2001).

However, even the measures of transitional justice, as much as they declare to aim at societal reconciliation, remain on a highly institutional level and share many of the weaknesses of liberal peacebuilding. First of all, they are of a highly top-down nature focusing on the institutions and on the political level. The International Criminal for The Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) mainly focused on punishing high-level perpetrators, so as to remove them from politics (Popović, 2009; Nettlefield, 2010; Orentlicher, 2010). The total estimated number of war criminals in Bosnia and Herzegovina is estimated at only 8 – 12,000 (Bašić, 2006, p. 363). Despite notable international support, local Bosnian courts were unable to punish all direct perpetrators, who therefore keep upsetting victims in local communities (Subotić, 2009, p. 145; Popović, 2009). At the same time, the ICTY is being criticized as a politicized court, being labelled as “anti-“. That means that each one of the three Bosnian nations considers it as biased against their own nation and because of the lack of punishment of NATO bombing of Yugoslavia (Clark, 2008, pp. 338 – 339). This conviction is the strongest in the Serbs, probably also due to the fact that most of the persons condemned by the ICTY were from their nation, notably Slobodan Milošević, Radovan Karadžić or Ratko Mladić or Biljana Plavšić (Orentlicher, 2010, p. 89). On the other hand, some Bosniak defendants suspected of war crimes such as Naser Orić have been acquitted, which led to an embitterment among the Serbian population and to an even greater perception of bias (Simic,
2011, p. 1395). This is crucially important as the non-acceptance of the ICTY decisions is a major obstacle reconciliation (Akhavan, 1998, p. 770). At the same time, the ICTY truth is considered as insufficient in order to clarify the causes and course of the war and so contribute to healing and reconciliation. Its truth is a judicial one and therefore focused on the guilt of individuals for concrete crimes and does not examine the war events as a whole. For this reason, it is too narrow to contribute to reconciliation (Clark 2008; Valiñas 2009). Such a truth commission has not yet been founded (Popović, 2009, pp. 55–56, Clark, 2009b; Subotić, 2009, p. 148). However, the ICTY has been found to strengthen democracy, a democratic political culture (Nettlefield, 2010, p. 143), the communication between entities and the rule of law in the country, and so contributed to reconciliation (Nettlefield, 2010, pp. 168 – 169). Its findings also facilitated a public apology of the government of Republika Srpska (Nettlefield, 2010, p. 143).

On the other hand, compensations and other form of support dedicated to victims and handicapped war veterans are significant, but they tend to omit people with psychological injuries only, including victims of torture (Popović, 2009, pp. 99 – 110). At the same time, compensations for war veterans are much higher than those for war victims, fuelling a sense of injustice (Popović, 2009, pp. 85 – 88). Rehabilitation measures in the country are insufficient (Popović, 2009, pp. 98 – 100), public apologies rare and instrumental (Dragović-Soso, 2012) and memorials dedicated to one nation only and controversial due to clear perpetrator blaming (Irwin and Šarić, 2010). Last but not least, institutional reforms have been largely successful due to the establishment of institutions and adoption of laws protecting human rights (Popović, 2009, pp. 121 – 160). A good degree of success has been achieved in refugee return, aiming at reversing the ethnic cleansing achieved during the war. This was also thanks to the removal of war criminals from power (Nettelfield 2010, pp. 168–169) and from the police and justice system through vetting (Mayer-Rieckh 2007, p. 185; Popović, 2009, p.77). Notably, people involved in war crime or supporting the extremist national elites were removed from the police forces and justice system thanks to vetting. This significantly improved citizens’ trust in the police, thus significantly increasing refugee return (Mayer-Rieckh 2007, p. 192). The trust in the justice system improved as well (Mayer-Rieckh, 2007, p. 202). Last but not least, the reform of Bosnian army into a smaller, modern and multiethnic one has been a large success (Popović, 2009, p. 127).

To conclude, although some of the measures of transitional justice such as compensation or vetting directly or indirectly positively impact local communities, the focus of transitional
justice largely remains structural and top-down. I am now going to continue the debate with a second major point of critique of liberal peacebuilding, which is its lack of involvement with the everyday of the citizens in conflict-affected communities.

**Lack of involvement of local communities**

The second major point of critique of liberal peacebuilding is its lack of involvement of the local societies. It is dominated by the three main strands of thought, that are the “victor’s peace”, the “institutional peace”, the “constitutional peace”, while the “civil peace” area of governance is being neglected. Civil peace entails “individual agency within an international organization, agency or NGO context or within the market, rather than community agency, which it itself is deemed to carry problematic cultural baggage. It also represents and underlines the old contractual dilemmas between the state and the citizen, of self-government, self-determination, and pluralism” (Richmond, 2009a, p. 559 – 560). On the other hand, liberal peacebuilding is disempowering in that it makes local actors implement regulations dictated internationally (Hughes and Pupavac, 2005, p. 883). It is true that the opposition of local elites can undermine any peacebuilding reforms (Donais, 2009, p. 10-11). However, liberal peacebuilding tends to impose solutions on the locals as adopts a discourse of pathologization of post-conflict societies according to which the latter are too dysfunctional to manage their own affairs (Hughes and Pupavac, 2005, p. 887). Baskin points out that this is what happened in Bosnia power had to be “expropriated” from the nationalist elites by the OHR in the first two years of peace. This “trusteeship model” made local politicians believe that if they do not find an agreement, the international community will resolve their disputes for them. He also warns that this kind of authoritative international intervention will alienate the potential allies within the civil society (Baskin, 2004, pp. 129 – 130). On the other hand, the ownership of local authorities over the peace process can make the transition of responsibility back to local authorities more successful (Donais, 2009, p. 10).

Traditional liberal peacebuilding is considered to be a blueprint to be transplanted into non-western societies, however it tends to degrade into violence “because its universal aspirations are not mirrored on the ground” (Richmond, 2009, p. 562; see also Snyder, 2000; Paris, 2004). This leads to a focus on security and institutions rather than “individual agency, social justice, community and everyday life” (Richmond, 2009, p. 562). Richmond thus accuses liberal peacebuilding of maintaining the existing hierarchies on all levels and being “complicit in anti-democratic and anti-self-determination processes” (Richmond, 2009, p.
Liberal peace focuses excessively on security and institutions, “rather than developing an engagement with the everyday life of citizens” (Richmond, 2009, p. 563). It builds on “force rather than consent, and more often conditionality, and it has failed to recognize local cultural norms and traditions. It has created a ‘virtual peace’ in its many theaters” (Richmond, 2009, p. 563). According to Richmond, reconciliation cannot stem from Western liberal institutionalism or from the principle of sovereignty since they “offer obstacles to the recognition of certain others, favour liberals, and continue the process of marginalization”, and he insists that a focus on the everyday is needed (Richmond, 2009, p. 573).

Applying this debate to liberal peacebuilding in Bosnia and Herzegovina, I argue that the approach has focused too much on the institutional and political levels and has not done enough to bring peace to the local communities. Although the Dayton peace agreement has helped to stop the fighting, it did not resolve the underlying issues that led to the war in the first place. This way, the war continues, only with political means (Burg, 2005, p. 200; Pepić, 2010). Therefore, due to the political stalemate (Bieber, 2006, pp. 19 – 21; see also Donais, 2003; Keil and Perry, 2016) the situation in Bosnia can be characterized more as negative peace (Clark, 2009a), i.e. an absence of war rather than harmonious relations (Galtung, 1996).

One weak point of liberal peacebuilding in Bosnia is the lack of addressing local conflict narratives. The problem here is the existence of three truths about the war: a Bosniak one, a Croat one and a Serb one. The solution would be to unite the three truths in one official version of truth established by a national truth commission (Kritz-Finci 2001; Clark, 2009b). There have been two tentatives to establish a national truth commission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, both of them led by the US Institute for Peace (USIP) in 1997 and 2005 respectively. The commission was meant to “clarify the nature, origin and extent of human rights violation between 1990 and 1995” (Popović, 2009, p. 58), which excluded a potentially very problematic investigation of the origins of the war. The first tentative failed due to the fear of Bosnian politicians of losing electoral votes and on the absence of strong central state institutions that would legitimize such a body (Subotić, 2009, p. 148). The critics of a lack of transparency, of a participation of civil society and the fear that the commission would grant amnesty also contributed to its failure (Popović, 2009, pp. 54 – 57). On the other hand, three local truth commissions have been founded in Bosnia. Only the commission investigating the 1995 massacre in Srebrenica was successful: it established an official death toll and uncovered new mass graves (Popović, 2009, pp. 62 – 63) and drafted a list of people involved
in the massacre (Subotić, 2009, p. 152). Even so, the denial of the Srebrenica genocide is persistent (Sadović, 2009; Obradovic-Wochnik, 2013). The commission for Sarajevo failed because its mandate was too wide and led to politicization and ceased to exist in 2007 (Popović 2009: 63 – 66; Subotić 2009: 149 – 150). The truth commission for Bijeljina was founded in 2004 and failed because of a lack of transparency and a lack of trustworthiness due to the fact that while most victims were Bosniak, most commission members were Serbs (Popović 2009: 66 – 68).

As ordinary Bosniaks cannot resolve the controversies about the war, many opt for silence in order not to hurt their interethnic social relations, though they remain well-aware of the wrongs of the past (Eastmond and Selimovic, 2012). Clark (2012, p. 246) has also observed that people try to get along again and solve the problem of competing narratives by silence, avoiding speaking about the war (Clark 2012: 246). I believe that a possible reconciliation has to come from the bottom up, i.e. a reconciliation on the grassroots level would spill over to the political level (Lederach, 1997).

*A liberal-local hybrid form of peace*

Criticizing the concept of liberal peacebuilding for its weaknesses, Oliver Richmond stresses the need for a “*liberal-local hybrid form of peace*”, a post-liberal peace that would add the eirenist perspective to peacebuilding and allow for peacebuilding to refocus on the everyday life of ordinary people (Richmond, 2009b, p. 233). According to Richmond, a *post-liberal peace* should be inclusive, include the local societies and communities involved into the process, give them voice instead of giving it only to the elites, and enable “self-government, self-determination, empathy, care, and an understanding of cultural dynamics, contained within the everyday” (Richmond, 2009a, pp. 569 – 570; Richmond, 2009b). Citing de Certeau (1984, as cited in Richmond, 2009a, p. 571), he stresses that involving local people along with their everyday the peacebuilding process could bring additional knowledge and would allow for people to take ownership of it in a way that reflects their everyday lives and allows for culturally sensitive solutions, thus promoting active citizenship, self-government and self-determination (Richmond, 2009, p. 571). Local ownership means that “the reform of security policies, institutions and activities in a given country must be designed, managed and implemented by local actors rather than external actors” (Nathan, 2007, p. 4). Such an an emancipatory, bottom-up model based would be on local ownership, human needs, social welfare and justice, representing the civil peace. This approach is typically led by NGOs and
other non-state actors and movements. It is concerned by the everyday, by care and by the wishes of the recipients (Richmond, 2009a, 2009b).

Adhering to these outlines, peacebuilding “would be more likely to be participatory, empathetic, locally owned, and self-sustaining, socially, politically, economically and environmentally speaking, … adaptable to changing circumstances and needs” (Richmond, 2009a, p. 572). This approach would ensure justice and avoid all forms of violence, including structural and refocus attention to the needs of ordinary citizens and communities. Liberal states would have to engage with local polities that provide for these needs in their context. This hybrid form of peace would contribute to the local sustainability, resilience and legitimacy of peacebuilding (Richmond, 2009a, p. 572). This view is in accordance with Lederach’s Integrated Framework for Peacebuilding which focuses focuses, among other elements such as the root causes, also on the transformation of relationships, the personal and the cultural dimensions (Lederach, 1997, p. 73 – 83). According to MacGinty (2010, p. 391), “hybrid peace is the result of the interplay of the following: the compliance powers of liberal peace agents, networks and structures; the incentivizing powers of liberal peace agents, networks and structures; the ability of local actors to resist, ignore or adapt liberal peace interventions; and the ability of local actors, networks and structures to present and maintain alternative forms of peacemaking.” In the next sub-chapter, I will show how unofficial truth projects can, in my opinion, represent instances of liberal-local hybrid peacebuilding.

2.2.5. „My Story“ and Unofficial Truth Projects as A Liberal-Local Hybrid Form of Peace

I will first describe the initiative “My Story”, after which I will argue why along with other unofficial truth projects, it represents a form of liberal-local hybrid form of peace and why it is needed in intractable conflict.

My Story is a storytelling initiative in which war victims from the three Bosnian nations, a Bosniak, a Serb and a Croat, sit side-by-side and publicly tell their stories about their wartime experiences and their personal pathway to reconciliation. The aim of this initiative is to change peoples’ attitudes and promote their reconciliation with the other nations. It gives an opportunity to the public to hear authentic war victim stories such as stories about the suffering in a concentration camp, to be looking for a missing person, to become victim of a bombing or to be fighting on the frontline. Roughly 218 of such public testimonies have
taken place across Bosnia and Herzegovina between 2011 and the end of May 2019 in different settings such as schools, youth centers, town halls or simply organized for whomever was interested to come (Bubalo, 2017; Sajevic, 2019). According to the observations and feedback that the organizers of the initiative have got, the public testimonies have led to many cases of attitude change, and even of real conversions from hate to full reconciliation (Bubalo, 2017).

The original idea for using war victims for peacebuilding was outlined in the goals of the project “Choosing Peace Together” (Izaberimo mir zajedno, CPT) that was run by CRS and Caritas between 2010 and 2014 and financed by USAID. The project viewed war victims as opinion leaders thanks to the gravity of their wartime losses and traumas and assumed that if they were helped in dealing with their traumas, they would be very effective promotors of reconciliation in their communities (Bubalo, 2017). During the course of the project, the organizers had the idea to bring the victims to tell their stories to the wider Bosnian public in order to promote attitude change in the audience. The intervention model was inspired by truth commissions around the world, such as the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission or the Nunca más! slogan (Bubalo, 2019).

However, the victims had first to be trained for these public testimonies so they could bear the difficult experience of reliving their traumatic stories and avoid offending the public by divisive words. Two groups of war victims - leaders and representatives of different war victim associations (victims of torture, civilian war victims, family members of missing persons, but also some war veterans, around 230 in total) underwent training led by specialized psychologists-coaches. This training consisted of a curriculum that aimed at making the participants understand the origins and dynamics of conflict and train them in nonviolent communication, dealing with their trauma and ultimately and, ultimately, forgiveness (Bubalo, 2017). It a cycle of several seminars that lasted a whole weekend in a place (hotel) where the participants would not be distracted by the outer world (Bubalo, 2017). Out of this larger group, about ninety participants were trained in telling their stories in public testimonies. Out of these, about sixty do so actively (Bubalo, 2017). The storytelling training was conducted by CRS and Caritas workers and CPT workshop trainers, and it culminated in mock “public” testimonies in front of a safe audience of NGO workers and sympathizers (Bubalo, 2019). The first public testimonies took place in 2011 and they have since then become firmly established and take place across Bosnia in schools, youth camps and as public events.
The project *Choosing Peace Together* ended in 2014 and the public storytelling events continue within the scope of a new successor project that aims at bringing about reconciliation in Bosnian youth, the project *PRO-Future (PRO-Budućnost)*. The storytelling events continue since supported by a network of local partners including 73 municipalities across Bosnia and Herzegovina (Sajević, 2019).

Storytelling as related to peacebuilding initiatives more in general can be classified into constructive and destructive. *Destructive storytelling* is “associated with coercive power, exclusionary practices, a lack of mutual recognition … and sustains mistrust and denial” (Senehi, 2002, p. 45). On the other hand, constructive storytelling is defined as a practice which “is inclusive and fosters collaborative power and mutual recognition; creates opportunities for openness, dialogue, and insight; a means to bring issues to consciousness; and a means of resistance. Such storytelling builds understanding and awareness, and fosters voice” (Senehi, 2002, p. 45). Destructive storytelling can exacerbate conflict and social cleavages and perpetuate structural violence (Senehi, 2002, p. 45), while *constructive storytelling* is associated with positive peace and “peaceful relationships within communities” (Senehi, 2002, p. 45). All stories are not equal, though. According to Bar-On (2006), a “good enough story” is “a story that creates intergroup empathy and does not alienate or hurt the other participants” (as cited in Maoz, 2011, p. 121). Constructive storytelling, as I classify “My Story”, correspond to the bottom-up, culturally sensitive and empowering nature of liberal-local hybrid forms of peacebuilding (Richmond, 2009a and 2009b).

As to the general effects of storytelling, the latter has a number of benefits. Firstly, it can empower the excluded. It has a power of healing through addressing conflict-related emotions. It can comfort the suffering and provide them with hope (Senehi, 2002, pp. 47 – 53). It can promote “moral imagination” (Coles 1989, as cited in Senehi, 2002, p. 53). Storytelling can also help overcome conflicts over geographical issues by reinterpreting space and developing “shared identities and a cooperative vision of place” (Senehi, 2002, p. 56). What is of key importance for the topic of this article, storytelling can promote inclusion by means of consciousness rising and community building (Senehi, 2002, p. 209). Gergen suggests narratives have the power to change relationships by bringing people into a “state of mutuality (Gergen, 2006, p. 117) and change otherwise stable forms of action (Gergen, 2006, p. 119). He claims that the mechanisms by which this happens are: the fact that stories are

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1 PRO-Future ([www.probuducnost.ba](http://www.probuducnost.ba))
familiar to people, that the storytellers enjoy the position of trusted witnesses, that people put themselves into the position of empathic witnesses, and the fact that the storytellers re-create their selves by putting themselves in the place of the protagonists of the stories (Gergen, 2006, p. 118).

Building on Richmond’s argument, I argue that unofficial truth projects (Bickford, 2007) can represent one form of liberal-local hybrid peacebuilding. First of all, they are run by agents that are part of larger networks linked to the same international agents that promote some of the same values as liberal peacebuilding does (Mac Ginty, 2010, p. 396). Indeed, unofficial truth projects are directly owned and run by local organizations and focus on reconciliation in the local communities. They are run by local people for local people and thus culturally sensitive (Bickford, 2007) and therefore have a bottom-up nature (Lederach, 1997). This way, “My Story” is organized by local staff working for international organizations, involving local people as storytellers. Also, an advantage of storytelling is that stories are part of the grand narratives, but due to their focus on individual stories they represent only small parts of it, not attempting at capturing the whole. They can capture elements outside of the grand narrative and are thus “broader” than the latter. Therefore, they are “able to better accommodate ambivalences, uncertainties and discrepancies. Because they are parts they are not subjected to the coherence and rationality of the whole” (Yaron, 2006, p. 393; see also Bickford, 2007). For this reason, they may be able to avoid the weaknesses of truth commissions that are linked to the risk of reigniting tensions and conflict (Gibson, 2006). This is also an intentional element of “My Story”: it is framed as personal stories of the war victims that do not attempt at explaining the broader narratives of the war (Bubalo, 2019) as this could make people react negatively to the stories. At the same time, the recipients of the stories also actively produce narratives in which “self” and “other” are re-created and redefined, turning “perpetrators” into “victims” and altering the power relations between them, for example (Yaron, 2006, p. 394), thus strongly directly attempting at changing peoples’ attitudes such as competitive victimhood (Noor et al., 2012; Adelman et al., 2016; Furman, 2013; Kleinot, 2011). Furthermore, unofficial truth projects are empowering because they are very easy to implement and to understand by their listeners, because they give people voice (Senehi, 2002, p. 45) and because they foster community building through bringing people together to address their problems (Senehi, 2002, p. 48).
Most importantly, I suggest that unofficial truth projects address exactly what Bar-Tal (2013) designates as the socio-psychological infrastructure of the conflicts that is present in members of conflict societies and thus address peace within local communities (Richmon, 2009a and 2009b). My findings suggest that after the storytelling events studied here, negative narratives shift into positive ones, thus doing exactly what Bar-Tal (2000) calls the ethos of peace, a precondition for reconciliation. As explained in the introduction, reconciliation in intractable conflicts is crucial in order to secure stable peace (Kelman, 2004, p. 112; Bar-Tal, 2000; see also Boulding 1978; Bar-Siman-Tov, 2004) as intrastate conflicts tend to repeat (Hartzell, 1999; Licklider, 1995). Therefore, I argue that along with other unofficial truth projects (Bickford, 2007), My Story addresses exactly the underlying negative beliefs, emotions and narratives that prevent reconciliation and therefore a lasting peace (Bar-Tal, 1998 and 2013). I will show in chapter 6 how discursive narratives and frames signaling negative attitudes shifted into positive, reconciliatory ones in some listeners.
3 Bridging The Research Traditions on Discourse, Storytelling, Discursive Narratives, Peace Psychology and Reconciliation

3.1 Connecting Disparate Fields of Research

The purpose of this research is to enrich and create a bridge between several related, yet usually disconnected fields of literature. Thanks to my interdisciplinary education in peace and conflict studies, I am bringing together literature on intractable conflict, sociology, social or peace psychology, ethnic discourse and storytelling and connecting it by creating a framework for inferring attitude change by the means of analyzing discursive narratives and frame shifts. Also, as the only or one of the few authors, I am creating a taxonomy of frame shifts signaling attitude change in ethnic conflict, thus bridging the literature on framing, discourse, narratives and ethnic attitudes. In this literature review, I am going to present the characteristics and knowledge gaps of these fields of literature and show how my thesis is connecting and complementing them.

The disparate fields of literature

The first type of accounts of intractable conflict is one from the point of conflict studies, political science and/or international politics (for the sake of simplicity and due to the overlap between them, I will refer to them as the conflict studies approach). This approach focuses on the governance and political aspects of both domestic and international politics, as well as international conflict intervention and peacebuilding. The founder of this approach, as well as the father of the term of protracted social conflict, the precursor term of intractable conflict, is Edward Azar (1990) Other works based on this approach can be found in the volume edited by Crocker, Hampson and Aall (2005b), such as Zartman’s approach to analyzing intractability (2005).

The second account is a sociological one focusing on the internal social causes and dynamics of these conflicts, and on the conflict systems (Kriesberg, 1993, 1998 and 2005; Crocker, Hampson and Aall, 2005a). While the sociological stream of literature does not focus on individual or collective attitude change but does reflect many of the elements of the political science approach, the socio-psychological is mainly focused on individual and group
psychology, dedicating relatively less space to the causal models that would include the broader causes of the conflict.

The third account comes from the area of \textit{social or peace psychology}. Regarding my dissertation, the core of the discipline consists of a small number of authors who have provided theoretical frameworks of the psychology of intractable conflict. One of the key authors is Daniel Bar-Tal who developed a theoretical framework of the \textit{socio-psychological infrastructure of intractable conflict} consisting of the memory of conflict, the \textit{ethos of conflict} (negative conflict-related societal beliefs) and conflict-related collective emotions. His approach aims at the peaceful resolution of these conflicts through addressing these underlying psychological barriers to reconciliation (Bar-Tal, 1998, 2000, 2007 and 2013). The second author is Peter T. Coleman who focuses on the resolution of intractable conflicts though a combination of psychology and conflict studies approach building on intrastate and international intractable conflicts such as the one in Kashmir (2000 and 2011). Furthermore, Herbert C. Kelman is a social psychologist who focuses on attitude change and reconciliation based on mutual acceptance, inclusive identity and cooperation (1999, 2004, 2008). Yet another field of social psychology focuses on experimental studies on different partial aspects of the psychology of intractable conflict. These studies will be reviewed in detail in chapter 3.5. (e.g. Pettigrew and Tropp, 2011; Batson et al., 1997; Brown and Cehajic, 2008). This literature often mentions terms such as victimization or perpetrators and some of it focuses on political aspects of e.g. asymmetric conflict by focusing on peoples’ perceptions, in general its variables pertaining to individual or collective psychology as tested on individual human subjects, and they are not explicitly linked to variables from the area of the conflict studies / political science or sociological approaches. Also, being strictly experimental, it most often neglects the discursive approach to attitude change including reconciliation. Last but not least, the \textit{human needs} approach to intergroup conflict which looks at variables such as identity, resources, participation/self-determination, freedom, etc. also has a psychological basis (Burton, 1990).

Fourthly, the \textit{discursive field} of literature is built on the understanding of discourse as an object of study on itself, conceptualizing it as the way in which actors speak about and construct social phenomena (Foucault, 1972; Potter, 1987; Phillips, Lawrence and Hardy, 2004). The way people speak about these phenomena are consequential for their actions by influencing institutions (Fairclough, 1995, p. 38; see also Phillips, Lawrence and Hardy, 2004), while sometimes they construct imaginary objects of discourse that do not exist in
reality (Potter and Wetherell, 1987, pp. 50 – 51). From here derives the field of discourse analysis which is a theoretical as well as methodological approach focusing on studying how people construct social phenomena through discourse and language. Different authors focus on this is achieved in the area of national identity (Wodak, 2009; Wodak, Cillia, Reisigl and Liebhart, 2009, p. 30 – 47), ethnic prejudice and racism (van Dijk, 1984 and 1987; Reisigl and Wodak, 2005; Potter and Wetherell, 1988) and attitudes (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). From this field, the most relevant is the research on prejudice, racism and attitudes more in general. Importantly Van Dijk (1984) developed a theoretical framework for inferring prejudice from discourse and analyzing prejudiced talk. This model includes different elements of cognition as they relate to prejudice, and various elements of focus in the study of prejudice. He also created a category of narratives as they appear in prejudiced talk, a repertoire of semantic strategies that justifies it, a set of rhetorical operations and means of expression signaling prejudice and other useful analytical tools. While these works focus on advanced Western European democracies, literature on inferring intergroup attitudes from discourse in the context of armed ethnic conflict is lacking. The approach adopted by Potter and Wetherell (1987) along with other authors is more psychologizing and it is called discursive psychology. Discursive psychology is a “theoretical and analytical approach to discourse” that focuses on discourse as object of analysis and treats it as “doing things in interaction and examines the ways in which psychological concepts are produced and made consequential in interaction” (Wiggins, 2016). For example, Potter and Wetherell focus on inferring attitudes from discourse and is based on studying the context, the discourse variability (inconsistencies in an individual’s attitudes in different claims), and the constitution of the object (its construction by the individuals producing the discourse) (Potter and Wetherell, 1987, pp. 43 – 55).

Fourthly, a narrative or storytelling approach is also part of the foundation of this thesis. While the literature on storytelling and narratives in general is quite rich (e.g. Bruner, 1991; Polkinghorne, 1988), a small portion of it focuses on how narratives can be used to support reconciliation and peacebuilding (Senehi, 2002 and 2009; Zembylas and Bekerman, 2008; Bar-On and Kassem, 2004; Bar-On, 2002, 2004, 2006 and 2010; Bar-On, Kutz and Wegner, 2000; Gergen and Gergen, 2006). Part of the literature falls into the broader field of transitional justice (Hayner, 2001; Teitel, 2000, Bickford, 2007). The specific literature on storytelling will be reviewed in the dedicated chapter 3.5.
Last but not least, on a more abstract level I can say that the academic literature that theorizes and conceptualizes ethnic conflict, reconciliation and narratives or storytelling remains on an abstract level from which it is being applied onto conflicts around the world (Kriesberg, Bar-Tal, 2013, Hayner, 2001; Senehi, 2002 and 2009; Zembylas and Bekerman, 2008). My research combines both the highly theoretical and the strictly empirical dimensions by creating a typology of these larger categories based on data from the field coming from one concrete conflict context.

Bridging disciplines by creating an analytical framework for inferring attitudes from discursive narratives

The major aspiration of my dissertation is to bridge the above disciplines and fields of research on reconciliation by building an analytical framework for inferring changes in conflict-related attitudes, beliefs, emotions and conflict narratives from discursive narratives and frame shifts in the accounts of story listeners. This framework is specifically developed from and for the use in the context of contemporary Bosnia and Herzegovina. By doing this, I am also contributing to the scarce literature on discursive narratives as I am creating not only the typology of these narratives, but also a taxonomy of frame shifts that bridge narratives with broader societal discourses (Svarstad, 2009; Tumusiime and Svarstad, 2011). I am going to review the literature on the topic and show the gaps that my dissertation aims at filling.

It is true that there is a high number of studies investigating reconciliation in concrete ethnic conflicts, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or Bosnia, providing accounts of concrete people or from concrete local datasets. A number of local and international researchers study reconciliation in Bosnia or in the former Yugoslavia more in general. In the field of psychology, Petrović (2010) has created a scale of willingness to reconcile. Sabina Čehajić-Clancy has published a number of mainly experimental studies investigating the causal variables of reconciliation, forgiveness and attitude change (Cehajic, Brown and Castano, 2008), as well as collective guilt (Cehajic and Brown, 2010; Čehajić-Clancy, 2012). Adjuković and Čorkalo Bируški have published a number of studies with focus on explaining and bridging ethnic divisions (Adjukovic and Bируški, 2008; Čorkalo Bируški and Adjuković, 2009). A smaller number of authors focuses on individual accounts and narratives, such as Eastmond and Selimovic (Eastmond and Selimovic, 2012; Selimovic, 2010) and Janine Natalya Clark (2009a, 2009b, 2012), also in connection to denial (Obradovic-Wochnik,
A number of authors takes the conflict studies approach, focusing the conflict dynamics in the perspective of domestic politics and international pressures (e.g. Burg, 2005).

However, with the exception of Petrović’s (2010) scale of willingness to reconcile, the above authors do not offer an analytical framework for inferring peoples’ interethnic attitudes. My dissertation aims at filling this gap. To my best knowledge, nobody before me has attempted creating such a systematic framework for inferring interethnic attitudes from discursive narratives, or even narratives alone. At the same time, this framework shall be created predominantly inductively by coding raw interview data by the means of thematic discourse analysis, sorting them into categories corresponding to the categories or variables of reconciliation, and observing the patterns and the links among these categories. This approach was chosen in order to highlight the role of data coming from a concrete conflict context (i.e. Bosnia) as opposed to a purely deductive approach that would focus on deductively applying abstract concepts to data in order to establish their presence and discuss the findings on an abstract level. This way, the larger concepts will be discussed in terms of their sub-categories, themes, and the relationships between these categories and themes in the particular Bosnian case, and their specificities comparing to the conventional scientific conceptualizations will be discussed along with the findings. For example, how is the genocide in Srebrenica linked to the Bosniaks’ lack of empathy for the Serbs and an increased dehumanization of their nation? What is the link between understanding that ordinary people were forced to fight, and a broader change of the collective memory of the Bosnian war?

3.2 Advancing The Conceptualization of Discursive Narratives and Creating A Taxonomy of Frame Shifts

The nature of frames in discursive narratives

As a second major point of academic contribution, this dissertation aims to enrich the conceptualization and literature on discursive narratives (Svarstad, 2009; Tumusiime and Svarstad, 2011, p. 242), namely in the context of intractable ethnic conflict. I will look into the frames that, according to this theory, make the discourse frame the single issues in the narratives (Svarstad, 2009, as cited in Tumusiime and Svarstad, 2011, p. 242). Frames are interpretive schemes (Goffman, 1974), conceptualized by two different traditions (see Dewulf
et al., 2009, p. 158): an interactional one that focuses on how communication and interaction are understood by its participants (Bateson, 1954; Goffman, 1974 and 1981) and one of cognitive frame theory according to which a frame is a “remembered framework”, a structure present in a person’s memory that helps interpret new information (Minsky, 1975, p. 211, as cited in Dewulf et al., 2009, p. 158). Adopting the cognitive approach here, the most typical elements that get framed in conflict and negotiation processes are representations of the conflict issues, representations of self, others and mutual relationships, and the interaction process between the parties in conflict (Dewulf et al., 2009, p. 166). In this dissertation, I rely on the definition of Snow and Benford (1992, p. 137), according to the term framing "refers to an interpretive schemata that simplifies and condenses the 'world out there' by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of action within one's present or past environment" (Snow and Benford, 1992, p. 137). Frames are used by actors (for example by social movements) to produce, maintain and alter meanings (Snow et al., 1986) as I will explain below. While single frames may be very context specific, broader, more generic and more inclusive frames exist that are called master frames (Snow and Benford, 1992, as cited in Benford, 2013).

To return to the central topic of this dissertation, discursive narrativity asserts the “existence of a social phenomenon of importance in which narratives are produced within discourses” (Svarstad, 2009, p. 39). The narratives “exemplify the discourse’s meaning content” and “strengthen and support views that are otherwise present in the discourse” (Svarstad, 2009, pp. 34). As mentioned in the introduction, a discursive narrative is then defined in the following way: “A discursive narrative is a narrative of a case that is produced according to the way the discourse frames the issue (Svarstad, 2009)” (Tumusiime and Svarstad, 2011, p. 242). Svarstad adds:

“Narratives are linked to discourses and present concrete cases of these discourses. The vast majority of narratives can certainly be interpreted in relation to specific discourses, and often to multiple discourses at the same time, even if only some of the narratives can be considered discursive narratives in the sense that they constitute examples of discourse” (Svarstad, 2009, p. 40).

Within one single discourse, multiple narratives can exist that are constructed in different ways. In some of these discourses, similarities and patterns in the narratives can be found that constitute a metanarrative (Svarstad, 2009, p. 39). Svarstad suggests that proper scientific
research on discursive narratives shall look for not only patterns, but also diversity and
deviations, as well as the production of narratives and metanarratives (Svarstad, 2009, p. 40).

Although the concept of discursive narrative is being used in literature, also in relation
to ethnic conflict and/or identity (Salih, 1998; Li & Simpson, 2013; Toyota, 2011; Lorcin,
2011), its relation to reconciliation is being understudied. Its conceptualization is scarce,
mainly linked to the work of Svarstad (Svarstad, 2009; Tumusiime and Svarstad, 2011) and
the concept is typically mentioned by authors only as part of the research purpose, without
any theoretical discussion of it. At the same time, the potential for the contribution of the
study of discursive narratives to the study of post-conflict reconciliation is enormous as a vast
field of literature outlines how reconciliation can be brought closer by a shift in both
discourse (Bar-Tal, 2013) and narratives (Zembylas and Bekerman, 2008; Senehi, 2009; Bar-
On, 2010). This dissertation aims to fill this gap by inductively studying conflict-related
discursive narratives and the frames that link narratives to discourses within them, in the
context of this interview study conducted in Bosnia and Herzegovina. At the same time, the
shifts in discursive narratives and frames from negative to positive (or vice versa) will be
highlighted. Discourses, narratives and frames will be analyzed with focus on inductive
coding of their underlying themes and their mutual relationships. This analysis will contribute
to the conceptualization of the term of discursive narratives more in general, and in the
context of intractable ethnic conflict in particular. I will show how individual narratives used
by single storytellers regarding the public testimony, the storytellers’ lives and examples, and
the listeners’ reaction to the testimony mirror and illustrate broader societal conflict-related
discourses, and how these discourses frame the above-mentioned individual narratives and
issues (Svarstad, 2009). Individual narratives were regrouped into broader discursive
narratives by their theme and framing, and the discursive narratives were then classified
under single dimensions or influencing variables of reconciliation as defined in the theoretical
framework (empathy, prejudice, rehumanization, etc.).

As to the relevance of frames for peacebuilding, frames are not only interpretive
schemes, but they are also known to influence human behavior, including in conflict (Drake
and Donohue, 1996) and contribute to conflict intractability (Gray, 2004). More concretely,
according to Oberschall, the manipulation of frames by war-mongering elites stood at the
origins of the wars in former Yugoslavia. This is congruent with the work of Volkan (2002)
on the role of chosen intergenerational traumas such as the war in Kosovo, and with the
theories of manipulative elites developed by Gagnon (1994) and identity politics (Kaldor,
2013) precisely on the same conflict context. Focusing strictly on the concept of frames in the wars in former Yugoslavia, Oberschall (2000) has observed the presence of two frames in the minds of people across time: the normal (or peace) frame and the crisis frame. The normal frame entailed that citizens perceived ethnic relations as “cooperative and neighbourly”, allowing for ethnic mingling and intermarriage (Oberschall, 2000, p. 989). However, at the same time, people also held a dormant crisis frame which was anchored in the history of past interethnic violence, from the battle of Kosovo to modern history, including wars, ethnic cleansing and different atrocities, in which civilians were indiscriminately targeted for their supposed collective responsibility given by their nationality and religion. While in the 1980’s, the normal frame prevailed, in the early 1990’s, the crisis frame was reactivated by Serbian and Croatian nationalists by making their respective nations believe that they are endangered again. Notably, Slobodan Milosevic resuscitated the Serbs’ fear of extinction by the hands of their Muslim enemy by reviving the memories of the battle of Kosovo. The reactivation of the crisis frame was one of the factors that led to the war (Oberschall, 2000, pp. 989 – 994). The relevance of Oberschall’s concept of normal and crisis frame (Oberschall, 2000) shows that in the interest of the prevention of a new war, it is crucially important for the people of former Yugoslavia to move away from the crisis frame toward the re-adoption of the normal frame. In this research, I am developing on Oberschall’s notions of normal and crisis frame, giving them precise meanings, categorization and a taxonomy in the context of postwar Bosnia and Herzegovina, since Oberschall’s description of them is very brief and generic. In a way, the negative frames I have registered can be interpreted as part of the crisis frame and the positive ones as part of the normal frame.

Current literature on conflict-related frames and frame shifts

Having outlined the nature and importance of frames, I am now going to review the literature on the typology of conflict-related frames and on frame shifts in order to lay the foundations of my own taxonomy of frame shifts signaling attitude changes in the listeners of the public testimonies in this research that link the broader discourse to the single narratives. The taxonomy is created by identifying the negative frames signaling the listeners’ negative attitudes, and the corresponding positive frames, signaling newly acquired positive attitudes in the attitude changes described in the data. This taxonomy of discursive narratives and frames is firmly grounded in the context of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This has two advantages: they will be suitable for interpreting this conflict, but also, they show how the
themes, frames and discursive narratives used by the listeners do or do not mirror the established meanings of the underlying scientific concepts. According to my literature search, I seem to be the first author who focuses on creating a taxonomy of frames in discursive narratives, especially in the context of intractable ethnic conflict. Existing literature does deal with the concepts of frame alignment and frame transformation. In order to pinpoint the nature of my contribution and present the best of the state of the art, I am going to present the typology of frames as present in the literature on intractable conflict and negotiation, and furthermore the typology of frame shifts presented by Snow, Rochford, Worden and Benford (1986).

Several existing types of frames present in academic literature are known to be relevant to negotiation and intractable conflicts as classified by Dewulf et al. (2009) and Kaufman, Elliott and Shmueli (2003). First of all, identity frames stem from the identities, self-conceptions and group affiliations that individuals ascribe to themselves (Kaufman, Elliott and Shmueli, 2003). They “‘crop’ information and perspectives that do not align with or perhaps contradict features of an individual's core identity” of which the individual is protective, such as beliefs, values or group affiliations (Gardner, 2003; see also Lewicki, Gray and Elliott, 2003). Secondly, characterization frames are used by people in making judgments about others and can be positive, negative or neutral (Donellon and Gray, 1990 and Lewicki, Gray and Elliott, 2003, as cited in Dewulf, 2009, p. 168). They are often related to stereotyping and they can be delegitimizing or even dehumanizing (Burgess, 2003). Furthermore, they also relate to identity frames, “serving to strengthen one’s own identity while justifying your actions toward the other (e.g., for me to be a liberator, my opponent must be an oppressor)” (Kaufman, Elliott and Shmueli, 2003). Thirdly, power frames relate to the expectations regarding one’s status comparing to others (e.g. superiority or inferiority). This status can stem from many factors such as sympathy or, most importantly, morality (Lewicki, Gray and Elliott, 2003, as cited in Dewulf, 2009, p. 169). More broadly, power frames in intractable conflicts are can also be viewed as interpretive schemes that help the disputants identify the the forms of power which are legitimate and those that can help them strengthen their position (Kaufman, Elliott and Shmueli, 2003). Fourthly, trust frames relate to individuals’ conceptions of others as trustworthy or untrustworthy, thus influencing judgment about them (Dewulf et al., 2009, p. 169 cfr. for example McKnight, Cummings and Chervany, 1998). However, some researchers conceptualize trust as a heuristic rather than as a frame (Lewicki, 2004, as cited in Dewulf et al., 2009, p. 180). Fifthly, risk and information
frames help people involved in conflict assess risks and evaluate sources of information for their reliability (Kaufman, Elliott and Shmueli, 2003). Sixthly, loss versus gain frames concern the focus of conflict parties on “conflict to focus on threats of potential loss rather than on opportunities for gains” in which loss prevention typically takes priority (Kaufman, Elliott and Shmueli, 2003). Seventhly, conflict management or process frames concern the preferred remedies and courses of action in resolving differences between parties in conflict, such as “violence, civil disobedience, litigation, and negotiation” (Kaufman, Elliott and Shmueli, 2003). Eightly, as classified by Levin, Schneider and Gaet (1998, p. 150), conflict issues are framed in terms of risky choice frames regarding the risk level (Dewulf et al., 2009, p. 167), attribute frames regarding the attributes of the objects being evaluated (Levin, Schneider and Gaet, 1998, p. 150), and goal frames regarding the implied goals of certain behavior (Levin, Schneider and Gaet, 1998, p. 150 and 173; Brewer and Kramer, 1986). Last but not least, four types of relationship frames exist as created by Donohue (2001), of which “moving toward” and “moving with” promote consensus, while “moving against” and “moving with” less so (Donohue and Roberto, 1993).

As to frame changes, the most specific and elaborate typology is probably the one given by Snow et al. (1986) that is based on the concept of frame alignment. Frame alignment can be defined as the linkage of individuals’ “interpretive orientations, ..., values and beliefs” with the „activities, goals, and ideology“ of social movements as to make them „congruent and complementary (Snow et al., 1986, p. 464). Frame alignment consists of several different processes: frame bridging or „the linkage of two or more ideologically congruent but structurally unconnected frames regarding a particular issue or problem“ (Snow et al., 1986, pp. 467); frame amplification or „the clarification and invigoration of an interpretive frame that bears on a particular issue, problem or set of events“ (Snow et al., 1986, p. 469); frame extension or stressing the originally less important values or interests that were originally beyond the boundaries of the „primary framework“ (of a social movement) (Snow et al., 1986, p. 472); and finally, frame transformation or adopting and nurturing new values, meanings, understandings, beliefs and correct frames in the place of the old ones (Goffman, 1974, p. 308, as cited in Snow et al., 1984, pp. 473 – 474). Frame transformation brings entirely new, and often unconventional, frames, thus not simply „aligning“ other actors’ frames to one’s own frames (Snow et al., 1986, p. 473). In the context of this dissertation, this frame transformation seems to take the shape of frame alignment process of the listener’s frame with the frame of the storyteller or of the general
message of the public testimony, or, to some extent, a complete frame transformation bringing new, positive attitudes that were not explicitly promoted by the storytellers, or that came to be in the listeners’ minds in a spontaneous manner.

**Laying the foundations of my taxonomy of frame shifts**

I am now going to review several concepts that are at the core of the single frame categories that will appear in my taxonomy of frame shifts. These frames converge in two master frames called *Otherization* and *Exclusive victimhood* that get transformed into the positive frames of *Similarization* and *Inclusive victimhood*.

As seen in the previous sub-chapter, some of the conflict-related frames concern the character, the identity, goals and power of the opponents, which, in turn, inform trust and relationship frames (Kaufman, Elliott and Shmueli, 2003; Dewulf et al., 2009). Since these frames relate more to processes of conflict negotiations and not person-to-person relations of individuals living those conflicts, I can contribute to academic literature by creating such a typology. Moreover, I develop my own frames, categories and master frames inductively, with a slightly different angle of focus on the identity and delegitimization categories of frames. The concept of otherization as an overarching frame in ethnic conflict is innovative and it covers the identity, characterization and power frames. This focus is specific in that it repositions outgroup identity based on the victim vs. perpetrator dynamics, seeing the other nations not only for their nationality, but mainly for their role in the conflict. This conceptualization of identity and its shift toward a more positive identity is extremely important, especially in the light of Kelman’s understanding of reconciliation as a change of an exclusive toward a more inclusive identity that legitimizes the narrative of the other (Kelman, 2004). Since reconciliation should proceed both top-down and bottom-up with both directions reinforcing themselves (Bar-Tal and Bennink, 2004, p. 27; Lederach, 1997), I believe that the focus on socioemotional reconciliation is crucial for a change on the political level as it represents the somewhat neglected one of these two dimensions. Therefore, my taxonomy of conflict-related frames and frame shifts focuses mainly on individual-level attitudes, beliefs, emotions as they relate to narratives and broader societal discourses.

The concept of *otherization* is a concept often used in cultural studies and can be defined the following way:
“Otherization means the personalization of one who is not us or the exclusion of the person from his or her own group or culture. As it could be understood from the definition, in societies where such a situation occurs, persons who are included in the group “other” and have a culture different from the dominant culture are considered as victims” (Aydin, 2014, p. 892).

For example, Jamal points out how otherization of Muslims and Arabs is based on the binary “us” versus “them” logic, and how they are seen by white Americans as “inferior to whites, potentially violent and and threatening and therefore deserving policies that target them as a distinct group of people and criminalize them without evidence of criminal activity”, thus restricting their civil liberties (Jamal, 2008, p. 116, see also Afshar, 2013). On the other hand, as the contrary of otherization, I will use the term of of *similarization*. This term is used relatively rarely, and mainly in relation to discourse or narratives. For example, it is used regarding the process of the world becoming more uniform and internationalized in the process of globalization (Moghri, 2012, p. 4), human beings becoming culturally conform to their environment (Benjamin, “Lehre vom Ähnlichen” II, p. 204, as cited in Gess, 2010, p. 693). In my taxonomy, I will use this term as the antonym of otherization, i.e. coming to perceive the Other as more similar to oneself.

Another important concept of my taxonomy is the one of asymmetry. This notion is inspired by the concept of asymmetric conflict that is characterized by asymmetric (unequal) power relations and dependence of the weaker party on the dominant one (Rouhana and Fiske, 1995, p. 52). I believe that this is extremely important in Bosnia precisely conflict is not usually classified as an asymmetric one in the literature, but the notion of asymmetry was recalled by my respondents may times. Under the Otherization master frame, I have regrouped some of the frames into three categories of asymmetry: power asymmetry (regarding unequal power relations between adversary nations), initiative asymmetry (regarding the side that initiated the violence or concrete smaller incidents) and ontological asymmetry (regarding the assumed radical differences in the essential characteristics of the groups). Under the frame of exclusive victimhood (Noor et al., 2012; Cohrs, McNeill and Vollhardt, 2015), I have used the category of asymmetric morality (presenting the ingroup as moral and the outgroup as immoral, e.g. Irwin, 2004, p. 95) and information asymmetry (positive information about the ingroup and negative information about the outgroup, or also a lack of access to alternative information). Several sub-frames need clarification. First of all, under the initiative asymmetry frame, I use the term aggressivization. The term aggressivization is sometimes
used in literature regarding the manifestation of primitive aggressive energy, with the term 
de-aggressivization meaning, among other things, this energy coming under the control of the 
ego and being used constructively (Cameron, 1963, pp. 179 – 180, as cited in Munroe, 1955, 
p. 6; see also Hartmann, 1939). I adapt this term denominate a frame designating the 
prejudiced belief according to which all outgroup members are aggressive and wish to harm 
the ingroup. Furthermore, I use the term criminalization used in literature to designate a 
practice that presents or treats whole outgroups as criminals due to their different ethnic 
(Lubbers, Scheepers and Wester, 1998) or immigrant origin, presenting them as a threat to 
national security (Taylor, 2018). De-criminalization in this thesis then means the reversal of 
this ascribed status.

I also refer to the term vilification. According to most definitions, vilification refers to the act 
of “making or attempting to make another person or group of persons an object of detestation, 
enmity, ill-will, revulsion, serious contempt and/or malevolence” (Oboler, 2013, p. 1). I use 
the term vilification in a more modest manner as presenting outgroup members as evil. This 
is somewhat similar to the concept of political vilification used by Wagner, Mitchell and 
Theiss-Morse (2011, p. 2) that designates a “nasty” political rhetorics that “depicts the 
opposition as the enemy, an enemy that is evil and threat to the United States and its people.”

My second master frame is the one of Exclusive victimhood, as opposed to Inclusive 
victimhood. I conceptualize the former as in accordance with Pamela Ballinger “a situation in 
which all are unable to recognize overtly the atrocities perpetrated by members of their own 
group or the victimhood suffered by the other group (2004: 146–50)” (Jeffery and Candea, 
2006, p. 292; see also Noor et al., 2012; Cohrs, McNeill and Vollhardt, 2015). On the other 
hand, inclusive victimhood represents a sort of opposite of competitive victimhood as it 
consists of acknowledgement “that the outgroup has suffered in similar ways to the ingroup” 
(Noor et al., 2012, p. 351). Inclusive victimhood is also referred to as common victim identity 
(Shnabel, Halabi and Noor, 2013; Cohrs, McNeill and Vollhardt, 2015; Noor et al., 2017 p. 
124) or inclusive victim consciousness (Vollhardt, 2015). Thus, narratives of inclusive 
victimhood “emphasize both ingroup and outgroup suffering” (Adelman et al., 2916, p. 1416; 
and ethnic conflicts often lead to a competition for who the greater victim is, a fact that 
Vamik Volkan (Volkan, 1985, p. 222) labels with the term “egoism of victimization”, i.e. a 
“situations in which ‘there is no real empathy for suffering experienced by a group’s 
traditional enemies, although it may be as severe as that of the group itself – or even worse’”
Mack defines this concept as “the inability of one outgroup to sympathize with the victims of another because of its own traumas” (Mack, 1990, p. 125, as cited in Sabucedo, Blanco and De La Corte, 2003, p. 551). Within my taxonomy of frame shifts, I will explore the themes connected to this type of lack of empathy and its further implications.

This leads to people being “immobilized by their grief, by their anger and by this self-definition as victims” (Furman, 2013, p. 137). In this category, I use the frame of de-empathization. The term of empathization exists in literature to designate a situation when “we feel empathy with the feelings of other group members and intuitively, subconsciously try to align with the group emotions” (Wierzbicki and Nakamori, 2005, p. 79). Based on these conceptualizations, I create a somewhat varietate and innovative division of the master frame of exclusive victimhood into dimensions: emotional exclusion, asymmetric morality in judging ingroup and outgroup victimization and the ingroup exclusive entitlement to the truth. This focus goes beyond the more conventional conceptualization of competitive victimhood (Noor et al. 2012) by its focus on emotions and the moral aspects. By asymmetric morality I mean applying moral standards to one’s own ingroup, while denying them to the outgroup. This term is sometimes used in literature, namely in regard to the strategic advantage that terrorists have due to the fact that they are not bound by any rules or inhibitions posed by law and morality (Irwin, 2004, p. 95).

In sum, I have inductively created a taxonomy of frame shifts from negative frames signaling negative interethnic attitudes of individuals living in the conflict context of Bosnia and Herzegovina toward positive ones. Nobody has attempted this before me with such a specific focus on frame changes in individual society members and nobody has categorized the existing categories of frames into substantively meaningful frame categories master frames characterizing a particular conflict; the categories remain still very abstract on the level of concepts such as “identity” or “stereotypes”. My taxonomy fills these categories with concrete meaning that is applicable to individuals living the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

### 3.3 Describing A Storytelling Model With Some Unique Features

In order to locate My Story in the broader spectrum of storytelling initiatives and highlight its rare or unique features and to present a context for chapter 3.5. on the effects of storytelling, I
will now provide an overview of the existing storytelling initiatives documented and discussed on academic literature. The storytelling initiatives will be roughly grouped by some of their underlying features (type of storyteller, live/media, etc.) as to allow the reader to notice their similarities and differences.

First of all, I am going to start the overview with two side-by-side, face-to-face initiatives involving mainly conflict victims (and descendants of Nazi perpetrators, in one case) that are, in many ways, the most similar to My Story, the initiative To Reflect and Trust, and the The Parents Circle-Families Forum. The literature on these two initiatives is the richest and the most relevant to the state of the art of this dissertation.

The international organization To Reflect and Trust (TRT) is probably the most famous example of the Storytelling/Narrative approach to reconciliation (Maoz, 2011, pp. 120 – 121). It was initially proposed by the psychologist and peace researcher Dan Bar-On (Bar-On, 2006; Bar-On and Kassem, 2004; Bar-On, Kutz and Wegner, 2000). This initiative brought together descendants Nazi perpetrators and Jewish Holocaust survivors in order to work through the painful past through telling each other their stories. Later, representatives from other conflict settings such as Northern Ireland or South Africa were invited, and workshops in other settings such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict were conducted (Albeck, Adwan and Bar-On, 2002, p. 301). The participants are led to empathic listening and to avoid talking about politics. “Learning to contain the stories of the other, to hear their pain and to legitimize their narrative, while not negating your own pain and story, is the main work and "product" of the TRT process” (Chaitin, 2003). An offshoot of the TRT is the Northern Irish organization “Toward Healing and Understanding” (Chaitin, 2003).

Secondly, The Bereaved Families initiative, officially called The Parents Circle-Families Forum (PCFF), is a binational Israeli-Palestinian grassroots NGO which uses storytelling about loss and bereavement to build peace and “connect people across the divide” (Furman, 2013, p. 126; see also Kleinot, 2011 and Braun-Lewensohn and Kitain, 2016). It aims so at influencing the public and politicians to opt for a “just settlement” of the conflict “based on empathy and understanding” (Parents Circle-Families Forum, Our Mission Statement, as cited in Furman, 2013, p. 137) and an end to the occupation (Gawerc, 2016, p. 204). Despite not taking direct political positions (Furman, 2013, p. 127), it aims at educating people and influencing decision makers in favor of a peaceful conflict resolution (Furman, 2013, p. 137). The PCFF consists of 500 families (Kleinot, 2011, p. 97) “who have lost a close relative to
the conflict” (Furman, 2013, p. 126). It organizes meetings between members of bereaved families from both sides of the conflict simultaneously (Furman, 2013, p. 126). Its members are taught empathic listening “so they can hear the other’s narrative, even if they disagree with the perspective of the speaker” (Furman, 2013, p. 133). This way, they are later able to discuss the conflict and the power relations (Furman, 2013, p. 120). Compassionate listening (Furman, 2009 – 2010, as cited in Furman, 2013, p. 133) is also important in order to be able to imagine the perspective or narrative of the Other and legitimize their existence (Furman, 2013, p. 133). But attitude change in the bereaved family members is only one aspect of the organization’s activity. What is more important for this research is that some of them tell their stories in public storytelling events, mostly in school classrooms in Israel (Furman, 2013, p. 138), just like what the public storytellers in “My Story” do.

There are also joint (multi-ethnic) initiatives based on side-by-side storytelling by former combatants. Two such examples are the one run by the Center for Nonviolent Action in Sarajevo, and the Combatants for Peace consisting of former Israeli and Palestinian combatants.

A side-by-side and face-to-face storytelling is used in public testimonies given by war veterans in Bosnia, an initiative run by the non-governmental organization called Center for Nonviolent Action in Sarajevo. This initiative is very similar to My Story, as a contingent of Bosniak, Serb and Croat war veterans was being worked with by the NGO in order to become prepared for these storytelling events. Just like in My Story, war veterans from different sides sit next to each other while sharing their stories and send messages of peace. The purpose of these stories is to “motivate people to reflect critically and honestly on their role and their personal responsibility before, during and after the war” (Fischer, 2006, p. 388). The Center for Nonviolent Action also published books and films documenting the stories of these war veterans.

The initiative Combatants for Peace was founded in 2005 based on a series of initially very tense encounters between Israeli refuseniks who no longer wanted to serve in the Israeli Defense Forces supporting the occupation, and of Palestinian former Fatah fighters. The Israeli members approached the Palestinians first, and after a period of distrust, both sides eventually started sharing their personal stories. In these closed storytelling encounters, the

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2 Center for Nonviolent action ([www.cna.org](http://www.cna.org))
Israelis explained their beliefs that initially led them to serve in the army, their becoming conscious of the Israeli army actions and their decision to withdraw from military service in occupied Palestinian territories. Palestinians shared their stories of loss of their homeland and of the occupation, the impact of the occupation on their family life, stories of torture, jail time and personal losses and suffering. Sharing each other’s stories was the crucial moment which eventually led to removing the barriers and building trust between the two sides (Gawerc, 2016, pp. 199 – 201). Eventually, a common identity between the two parties within the organization was created. To promote peace and attitude change and recruit more members, the organization started storytelling events in which an Israeli and a Palestinian member jointly tell their stories and stress their common identity, (Gawerc, 2016, p. 201). Palestinian storytellers are so hoping to reduce Israeli public support for the occupation, however on the other hand, they can be viewed by their fellow Palestinians as part of the Israeli “normalization” efforts (Gawerc, 2016, p. 202).

Besides the TRT, a number of other initiatives deal with the Holocaust. One of them is a project aiming at changing the attitudes of Poles towards (Israeli) Jews and vice versa in the context of the debate according to which the Polish were seen as passive bystanders who did nothing to prevent the extermination of Polish Jews during World War II. These storytelling and contact-oriented encounters took place within the “March of the Living commemorative study tours” in Poland. They entailed 2-hour meetings of Polish high school students with Jewish high school students from different countries (Canada, Australia and USA) visiting Poland. The encounters aimed at removing mutual stereotypes through contact (Bilewicz, 2007). Yet another initiative brought together Poles and Israeli Jews in small group encounters in which stories of Polish heroic helpers who had saved Jews from the Holocaust were presented to them (Bilewicz and Jaworska, 2013).

Besides live, face-to-face storytelling initiatives, a number of other initiatives uses media for spreading its message and creating more peaceful attitudes. I will discuss a few of them that use either video, radio transmission, interview audio or transcripts, or books. On the one hand, Ross (2003) observes that sharing storytelling events via video can not only weaken the transmission of emotions and cues, but it can also lead to an alienation of the stories from their storytellers and to an uncontrolled spreading of the stories, exposing them to possible abuse and distortion (Ross, 2003). On the other hand, internal evaluations of a few public screenings of a short documentary film on the CPT project including My Story has improved listeners’ attitudes improving attitudes in 80 percent of the spectators and
increasing trust in 88 percent of them, and making 88 percent of them more willing to join peacebuilding activities (CRS, 2013a and 2013b).

Among those that use video messages are the initiatives are the “Messages of Hope” from Rwanda, and the youth participatory video project from Rift Valley, Kenya. The second one was a participatory video project run by Mercy Corps in Kenya as evaluation of their LEAP Sports Programme dealing with the 2007-2008 post-electoral violence between the Kalenjin and the Kikuyu, a conflict over land and other issues. After a number of contact activities, some of the young people told their stories on the camera, while other served as support to this project. These testimonies were then shown to the public in two screenings, however their main goal was the evaluation of the contact programme (Baú, 2014, pp. 123 – 125). Members of the audience evaluated the video project as “a great contribution to peace in the area”, and the two rival tribes organized meetings and started to interact more, thus bringing the two sides together (Baú, 2014, p. 131). The videos seem to have served as catalysts that started intergroup communication and a process of broader social change (Baú, 2014, p. 133; see Figueroa et al., 2002, as cited in Baú, 2014, pp. 133 - 134).

A second initiative using video is the project “Messages of Hope” conducted in Rwanda. Its aim is to spread positive video messages of hope and healing sent by the survivors of the genocide to the general public. The initiators of this activity believe that spreading messages of hope can assist recovery thanks to the fact that it is able to increase the feeling of hope and to show that recovery and growth after the genocide is possible (Lala, 2014, p. 450).

Another medium through which storytelling is meant to be spread to support reconciliation is radio drama. Fictional narratives have been used in Africa for this purpose. The NGO La Benevolencija runs projects of fictional radio drama in several countries (Rwanda, Burundi, Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo) that are based on real-life stories and situations, and purposively incorporate socio-psychological theories of reconciliation and trauma healing, as to make people understand the causes and events of past violence and behaviors that can prevent it in the future (Bilali, Vollhardt and Rarick, 2016, p. 221). They are quite successful, maybe also because fiction delivers its message to its audience in a more “subtle” and “non-threatening” way by avoiding mentioning real adversary groups (Bilali, 2014). In Rwanda, the “Musekeweya” project uses fictional groups and places to address the underlying issues of common identity, reconciling group differences, positive intergroup contact, intergroup friendships, positive interactions and trust-building, confronting the past and creating a
shared collective memory (Bilali, 2014, pp. 392 – 393; cfr. Paluck, 2009). In Burundi, a similar project called „Murikira Ukuri“ (Shedding Light on The Truth) and focuses on group inequalities and power differences (Bilali, Vollhardt and Rarick, 2016, p. 221). In brief, research has shown that fictional narratives have effects similar to those of real stories (Bilali (2014, p. 390; Bilali and Vollhardt, 2013; Bilali and Vollhardt and Rarick, 2016, p. 221; for a more skeptical account cfr. Paluck, 2009; Paluck and Green, 2009).

Yet another group of storytelling projects uses documenting and spreading oral histories via books or internet in order to promote reconciliation. PRIME - the Peace Research Institute in the Middle East, a non-governmental organization conducts two initiatives that deal with narratives The first one is the Oral History Refugee Project which collects stories Israeli Jews’ stories of past persecution during the Holocaust and in their original home countries, and stories of Palestinian refugees in a computerized archive. The second project is Writing the Shared History which is concerned with preparing a joint Israeli-Palestinian history textbook (Chaitin, 2003; see also Bar-On, 2010; Adwan and Bar-On, 2004). Yet other projects focus on documenting and publishing victim stories in the form of books. Two initiatives aim at publishing books recollecting stories of victims of the Northern Ireland conflict in two working class areas of Belfast. Firstly, the Ardoyne Commemoration Project aimed at showing the human side of the conflict (Hackett and Rolston, 2009, pp. 367-368) and its publication led to the resolution of some intra-community violence issues (Lundy and McGovern, 2005, as cited in Hackett and Rolston, 2009, p. 368). Secondly, The Falls Community Council’s oral history archive Dúchas, a bottom-up storytelling project aimed at exposing intra-community issues such as gender, besides the main conflict (Hackett and Rolston, 2009, p. 369).

The Specifics of “My Story”

A crucial element of some storytelling initiatives including “My Story” is their side-by-side format bringing together storytellers from the adversary sides. This aspect is not in the world, but still comparatively not used very often in public testimonies. From the ones in this literature review, only a few uses this format, while others such as the TRT discuss issues face-to-face in small groups while sitting in a circle. Furman observes regarding the PCFF: “The paired nature of the school presentations undoubtedly functions to model for students empathy and the possibility of reconciliation between Palestinians and Israelis” (Furman,
2013, p. 140). She also observes that the presenters display trust and positive affect toward each other (Furman, 2013, p. 140).

Among the unique features of My Story is the explicit and extensive training of the storytellers in forgiveness, dealing with their traumas, and above all, in nonviolent communication. They were extensively and purposefully trained for talking in a way that would not offend or alienate their audience (Bubalo, 2019). This is somewhat more encompassing than the single technique of empathic listening used in the TRT and the PCFF (Chaitin, 2003; Furman, 2013, p. 133). The creation of a safe space for sharing stories is of key importance for joint initiatives such as the PCFF or the TRT (Kleinot, 2011; Furman, 2013).

Related to this is the unique fact that My Story storytellers purposefully avoid mentioning their nationality, but only their name and the name of the town or village they come from. It must be admitted that their names can sometimes lead to successful guessing of this information by the listeners (some names are typically national, some can be either Serb or Croat). However, the idea of the organizers of the testimonies is to highlight the universal character of human suffering regardless of the victim’s nationality (Bubalo, 2019), a goal that seemed to be successfully realized, according to the results of this research. Thirdly, as part of the nonviolent communication, My Story storytellers usually scrupulously avoid blaming. Although this is left up to the discretion of each one of them, storytellers very often avoid mentioning the adversary side that victimized them. This is, however, by no means a rule (Bubalo, 2019). It must be noted that older listeners who know which ethnic group was fighting against which in the concrete towns and areas mentioned in the stories can guess who the perpetrator side is. On the other hand, young listeners who did not live the war (such as the ones in this research) very often do not manage to decipher this information. My data suggest that avoiding mentioning the nationality potentially highlights the universality of human experience as to victimhood and guilt.

### 3.4 Shedding New Light on Storytelling

**Focusing on young people**

Yet another, very specific, point of my contribution concerns the focus of my study on young people. On the other hand, most of the literature on the effects of storytelling focuses on
adults, with a few exceptions (Braun-Lewensohn and Kitain, 2016). I will argue and prove below that the interethnic attitudes of young people, even though born after the war, are still influenced by the conflict, and that these attitudes must change if the young generation is to bring lasting peace to the country. My first argument to support this point is that trauma or victimhood have been shown to decrease forgiveness (Hewstone et al., 2004) and the readiness to reconcile (Staub et al., 2005; Pham, Weinstein and Longman, 2004; Čorkalo Biruški and Ajduković, 2009), while a large percentage of the older generation was traumatized by the war: according to the statistics of the World Health Organization, about 10% of the overall population of Bosnia and Herzegovina suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Karić, 2017). In absolute numbers, the Bosnian authorities claim that about 450,000 people suffer from PTSD and 1.4 million shows at least one of its symptoms (Hazan, 2016). At the same time, half of the population of Bosnian war veterans suffers from the disorder (Polovina ratnih veterana u BiH ima PTSP, ca. 2019). The war in Bosnia and Herzegovina raged between 1992 and 1995, which means that a whole new generation of young people has been born after the end of the conflict. However, traumatized people often transmit their PTSD to their family members, a phenomenon called secondary traumatization (Klarić et al., 2013). Psychological problems have been proven to occur also in the children of Bosnian war veterans (Klarić et al., 2008). At the same time, this happens despite that Bosnian parents have the tendency to avoid talking about the war to their children. They tend to struggle to find the right language to describe their experience and give fragmented accounts of their experience and role in the war. Yet other times, their narrative would conflict with the official version of history (Jordanova, 2012). This results in a “fragmentation of history and consequently in a fragmented sense of selfhood and belonging in their children” (Jordanova, 2012, p. 52, see also Connerton, 1989). At the same time, children are socialized into negative conflict-related attitudes through school books (Banarovič, 2001; Swimelar, 2013). Parents and teachers also often socialize young people into prejudice or even hatred (Kosić and Livi, 2013, p. 4). Kosić and Livi (2013, p. 4) add: “Young people, through the narratives and stories of victimhood, start to feel like vicarious victims themselves (Lickel et al., 2006).” At the same time, children in Bosnia often lack interethnic contact, while ethnic separation has been shown to increase intergroup biases, negative attitudes and discriminative behavior (Adjuković and Biruški, 2008). Since removing conflict-related attitudes, beliefs and emotions, or the socio-psychological infrastructure, is necessary in order to bring about reconciliation and lasting peace (Bar-Tal, 2013; Bar-Tal and Bennink, 2004, p. 12, see also Lederach 1997), these attitudes must
ultimately disappear even in the new generations. To some extent, reconciliation happens over time, even over decades (Hayner, 2001, p. 190; Chapman, 2009, p. 156). Chapman adds that “the passage of time may enable painful memories to recede and a new generation, without direct experience of the hostilities and hence more open to new kinds of relationships, to emerge” (Chapman, 2009, p. 156). During my research in Bosnia, I often heard the comment that in order for reconciliation to occur, the “old generations who lived the war have to die” and the young ones must take over (Jovan, 2014). At the same time, since future is in the hands of the young generations, the focus of my study on young people who did not live the war either at all or as small children is highly relevant to the future development of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and also indicative of the present state of ethnic relations.

Illustrating mechanisms of attitude change

My study also provides an illustration of the operation of mechanisms of reconciliation and attitude change as they are known from theoretical literature. It does so by systematically connecting the findings to the single dimensions of reconciliation, which is rarely done in existing studies.

Defining three components of the stories

An interesting point of contribution is my definition of three components of the stories that are relevant to attitude change: the story content, the emotions of the storytellers, and the message of peace conveyed by the storytellers (see chapter 6.2. of this dissertation). I have arrived at this analysis independently, although the single elements can be inferred from literature such as the research on empathy (e.g. Batson, 1997), the role of new information (Stephan, 2008; Furman, 2013, p. 144) or of the message and persuasion (Heesacker, Petty and Cacioppo, 1983).

Studying storytelling from the perspectives of discursive narratives and framing

To my best knowledge, I am the first author who has studied a storytelling initiative from the perspective of discursive narratives and most likely also framing. Most literature on storytelling proceeds by qualitative content analysis, ethnomethodological methods or participant observation. These approaches omit or only indirectly refer to the concept of discourse, or to the larger societal discourses of the conflict contexts of the storytelling
initiatives under study. Also, very often, the final research reports, books and articles only mention the aggregate resulting positive attitudes, without mentioning the individual stories (or narratives) that were at the origin of the change. I am aiming at filling these gaps by my in-depth and systematic study of individual narratives produced by the listeners regarding their own lives or family history, the storytellers, and their view on the war and group relations.

*Enlarging a field of literature*

It must also be observed that my dissertation contributes to the field of literature on storytelling and reconciliation which is not negligible, but it is neither mainstream nor comparably too extensive either. Most of the existing studies focus on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Furman, 2013; Kleinot, 2011) or the Holocaust (e.g. Bar-On, Kutz and Wegner, 2000). This is one of the few studies of storytelling in the Balkans (Hart and Colo, 2014; Fischer, 2006).

3.5 The Outcomes of Storytelling Regarding Reconciliation: A Literature Review

In order to provide the state of the art on the use of storytelling in reconciliation, I am now going to review two types of literature that underpins the mechanisms and outcomes of attitude change that occurs after storytelling: social-psychological theories and existing studies on the effects of storytelling. I will use the former as a firm, mostly experimental, foundation of the discussion and develop on the modalities of the attitude change by complementing with the latter. At the same time, I will pinpoint the points of contribution or polemics of my dissertation regarding this literature.

*Dangerous memories, empathy and their influence on narratives*

The stories in this research contain shocking portrayals of pain and suffering of the outgroup which can be classified as „dangerous memories“. These are memories that are

“disruptive of the status quo, which is the hegemonic culture of strengthening and perpetuating existing group-based identities. Group-based identities are usually essentialized, static and tribalistic, because they are built on the notion of
separating “us” (the good”) from “them” (the bad) (Hill, 2000). However, dangerous memories are potentially subversive to those identities and may create new narratives and identities that do not retain essentialism. (...) The danger is in the practice of remembering the past in new ways that are disruptive to taken-for-granted assumptions about a group’s identity; such ways establish new understandings of personal and collective identities that enable solidarity” (Dyson, 1994).” (Zembylas and Bekerman, 2008, pp. 126 – 127).

According to Giroux, dangerous memories have two dimensions: one of suffering, and one of hope (Giroux, 1997, p. 105, as cited in Zembylas and Bekerman, 2008, p. 132). They inspire solidarity (Zembylas and Bekerman, 2008, p. 130) and, according to Metz (1972, 1980, as cited in Zembylas and Bekerman, 2008, p. 131), they can interrupt taken-for-granted historical narratives. They can then lead to the legitimization of alternative narratives and changes the way the Other is perceived (Furman, 2013, p. 130).

Dangerous memories also have an important place in the remembrance vs. debate on post-conflict reconciliation. On the one hand, a large part if not the majority of academics, but also the international community, sustain that in order for reconciliation to happen, the past must be remembered and dealt with so that the groups involved put it behind them and beware of repeating it. This argument is the strongest in the field of literature on dealing with the past and transitional justice (Teitel, 2000; Hayner, 2001; Orentlicher, 1991 and 2007; Villa-Vicencio, 2004). On the other hand, a minority of scholars suggest that reconciliation should happen naturally by forgetting the past by avoiding speaking about it as reopening it could only produce new tensions and new conflict (Connerton 2011; Rigby, 2001). However, according to Zembylas and Bekerman, dangerous memories are said to “oppose the dichotomy between forgetting and remembrance” as they enable the forgetting of “hatred, resentment and violence” while keeping the memory. On the other hand, they and create openings for new identities and new solidarities (Zembylas and Bekerman, 2008, p. 125).

Telling dangerous memories can be described as anamnestic solidarity with past victims (Benjamin, 1968, as cited in Zembylas and Bekerman, 2008, p. 132). Anamnestic solidarity is based on telling stories of suffering from both sides, so that these dangerous memories can build new knowledge based on remembering not only ingroup, but also outgroup suffering. When that happens, dangerous memories „force the system to calibrate again, to restabilize, to readapt, and to reconfirm in order to reach homeostasis“ (Zembylas and Bekerman, 2008,
p. 144). For example, the PCFF events then represent a sort of “pedagogy of dangerous memories” to alter conflict narratives into more inclusive ones (Furman, 2013, p. 145).

**Gradual attitude change regarding changing attitudes and conflict narratives**

As mentioned just above, storytelling also leads to a change in *attitudes and conflict narratives*, legitimizing the Other’s narrative and creating an openness toward it (Zembylas and Bekerman, 2008; Furman, 2013; Kleinot, 2011; Bar-On, 2010; Bar-On, Kutz and Wegner; Maoz, 2011, etc.). I want to polemize here with the mixed methods study by Braun-Lewensohn and Kitain (2016) that did not find significant attitude changes in a pre-test post-test survey data collected one week after a PCFF testimony. The authors found that there was no significant difference in attitudes before and after the PCFF storytelling event. Firstly, the study did not find any statistically significant changes in the listeners regarding the listeners’ “legitimacy, empathy and anger about their own and the others’ historical narratives” (Braun-Lewensohn and Kitain, 2016, p. 187). The storytelling event only brought the traditional, more religious Israeli adolescents (traditionally right-wing) to a level comparable to that of their more liberal and secular counterparts (Braun-Lewensohn and Kitain, 2016, p. 188). The authors explain this pointing out that the socio-psychological infrastructure of intractable conflict (Bar-Tal, 2007; Rouhana and Bar-Tal, 1998; Braun-Lewensohn and Kitain, 2016, p. 188) prevented these changes, which lead to the rejection of knowledge that contradicted it (Kelman, 2007, as cited in Braun and Lewensohn, 2016, p. 187). However, the additional round of interviews showed many of the elements described in literature, such as an increase in empathy, questioning the ingroup narrative and an increase in the legitimization of the Palestinian narrative, an increased understanding of the Palestinian perspective and a wish to end the suffering for both sides (Braun-Lewensohn and Kitain, 2016). Looking at the overall impact of the PCFF storytelling event, the authors found “significant changes in empathy toward the Palestinian other’s narrative and in anger toward the Israeli self-narrative among the traditional adolescents” (Braun-Lewensohn and Kitain, 2016, p. 188). The authors explain the lack of major change with the pre-established and “crystalized” attitudes of the young people which were result of their socio-psychological infrastructure as well as their ethnocentric objections (Braun-Lewensohn and Kitain, 2016, p. 189). This is coherent with the claims of some Serb respondents in this research. The programme however influenced emotions (Bar-On 2010; Steinberg 2010, as cited in Braun-Lewensohn and Kitain, 2016, p. 188) solidarity, openness to alternative information and to change (Kelman 2007, as cited in
Braun-Lewensohn and Kitain, 2016, p. 189). It brought authentic stories and reliable information on the Other’s perspective and related the Palestinian narrative to the Israeli one, both criticizing and empathizing with it and enabled to see the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in its complexity. Last but not least, the joint storytelling shall serve as a “model of cooperation” for the adolescents (Braun-Lewensohn and Kitain, 2016, p. 189).

In my research, I want to polemize with Braun-Lewensohn’s and Kitain’s study (2016 claim that the storytelling events do not produce any significant attitude change as I believe that they conducted their post-test too soon from the testimony and that attitude change increases in time. A proof for this is the famous study on the influence of empathy on attitudes by Batson et al. (1997, p. 105). These authors conclude: “Results provided only weak evidence of improved attitudes toward murderers immediately but strong evidence of improved attitudes 1–2 wks later.” I, too, have observed a similar pattern in my data and therefore I will suggest that the attitude change is gradual and increases in time. I will show that one week after the public testimony, the attitudes only started changing, and that this was a process that only beared noticeable results after several (three or more) months and continues to reinforce itself for years.

**Empathy and attitude change**

Storytelling, i.e. the sharing of dangerous memories, leads to empathy, a well-known mechanism of attitude change (Batson et al., 1997; Stephan and Finlay, 1999; Finlay and Stephan, 2000) that often lacks in conflict settings. I am first going to present the Organizational model of empathy as presented by Davis (1996), after which I will discuss the theories of the influence of the single types of empathy. The systematic application of this comprehensive model to storytelling is one of the points of my contribution to this field of literature. Current studies do describe empathy but do not classify it into its types the way I have.

Storytelling has been constantly reported in academic literature to change peoples’ attitudes and foster reconciliation through a number of mechanisms. These mechanisms will be systematically reviewed and described in chapter 4. In this literature review, I am going to pinpoint some of the contributions that I am making to this field despite my strictly non-causal focus. My work is largely based on the work classifying type of storytelling initiatives here under the term of Narrative/Storytelling Model of contact interventions (Maoz, 2011, pp.
120 – 121). It is based on face-to-face group encounters of people from opposing sides of the conflict who tell each other their traumatic stories in order to work through (learn to live with) their pain and negative emotions and later on eventually discuss the conflict (Maoz, 2004). Maoz summarizes: „Encountering the experience and suffering of the other through storytelling is seen as enabling conflicting groups to create intergroup trust and compassion by re-humanizing, and constructing a more complex image of, each other (Bar-On, 2006, 2008; Maoz and Bar-On, 2002)“ (Maoz, 2011, pp. 120 – 121).

Therefore, one of the key mechanisms of the storytelling model is empathy, elicited by being confronted with outgroup suffering (e.g. Furman, 2013; Kleinot, 2011; Bar-On, Kutz and Wegner, 2002; Bar-On and Kassem, 2004). This is caused by the similarity of the traumatization and losses between the storyteller and the listener and his loved ones (Furman, 2013, p. 131). To my best knowledge, I am the first author who not only gives a verbal description of the manifestations of empathy reported by the story listeners, but who also systematizes and classifies them, in this case notably based on the very exhaustive *Organizational model of empathy* presented by Davis (1996, pp. 12 - 22). Basing myself on this model, I cover some of the subtle and unexpected manifestations of empathy it specifies, such as empathic anger at the perpetrators or the very strongest form of empathy, which is *imagining oneself* in the storyteller’s place. These aspects are rarely explicitly pinpointed in literature on storytelling.

*The Organizational Model of Empathy*

In the empirical part, the author will apply Davis’s (1996, pp. 12 - 22) *Organizational model of empathy* to the data on empathy in order to better describe the latter’s characteristics and dimensions. The model consists from the antecedent, processes and outcomes of empathy.

The antecedents of empathy in Davis’s model include, among others, two variables relevant for this research: the strength of the situation and the observer-target similarity. Davis says that the stronger the situation in terms of display of negative emotions, the stronger the observer responses will be. He adds that “especially with regard to affective reactions, situations vary tremendously in terms of their power to evoke a response from observers. Strong displays of negative emotion, especially by weak or helpless targets, are particularly able to engender powerful observer responses. In fact, faced with such extremely strong situations, other variables, both situational and dispositional, may recede in importance. In less powerful situations, other factors, including characteristics of the observer, may play a
larger role” (Davis, 1996, 14 - 15). The second variable, the degree of similarity between the observer and the target, is “thought to increase the likelihood and/or intensity of the observer’s empathic response, whether affective or non-affective” (Davis, 1996, p. 15).

Among the processes of empathy is motor mimicry, the tendency of the observer to imitate the target, which leads to a similar state as the target’s (Davis, 1996, pp. 15 – 16). Another process is classical conditioning, where the perception of affective cues of the target leads to a similar affective state in the observer (Davis, 1996, p. 39). In direct association, emotions accompanying previously lived events are evoked and felt when perceiving similar cues in the target of empathy (Davis, 1996, p. 32). Labelling according Eisenberg et al. (1991, as cited in Davis, 1996, p. 16) means that “the observer uses simple cues to infer something about the target’s experience. For example, an observer may know that certain situations (like college graduations) usually produce happiness” (Davis, 1996, p. 16). Advanced cognitive processes require advanced cognitive activity. Language-mediated association is a mechanism in which the victim’s cues such as “I am frightened” triggers feelings and experiences stored in the individual’s memory symbolically through language (Davis, 1996, p. 40). Elaborated cognitive networks (Eisenberg et al. 1991, as cited in Davis, 1996, p. 17) represents the employment of target cues “in order to access existing knowledge stores, and use this information to form inferences about the target” (Davis, 1996, p. 17). The most advanced empathy process is role taking or perspective taking (Davis, 1996, p. 17). Davis says that “this mode requires a deliberate effort by observers to imagine how they would feel if faced with the circumstances affecting the target. Making this effort then produces them in an affective response paralleling that of the target, perhaps, Hoffman argues, because imagining ourselves in the target’s circumstances triggers associations with the actual past experiences with such circumstances” (Davis, 1996, p. 40). Hoffman (1984, as cited in Davis, 1996, p. 40) believes that the fact that role taking requires the highest cognitive skills, it is less likely to be employed than the direct association or the language-mediated association.

The outcomes of empathy in Davis’s model are divided into intrapersonal, affective and non-affective and interpersonal outcomes.

Intrapersonal outcomes in Davis’s model are influenced by both the antecedents and the processes and they influence the interpersonal outcomes. They consist from affective and non-affective responses of the observer. Affective outcomes are “emotional reactions experienced by an observer in response to the observed experience of the target. (…) This
reaction can be even negative to classify as an empathic response (Stotland 1969)” (Davis, 1996, p. 17 - 18). Davis beholds the contemporary division of affective outcomes on parallel and reactive outcomes (sometimes called parallel or reactive empathy). While a parallel outcome is a mere reproduction of the target’s feelings in the observer, a reactive outcome is different from the target’s observed affect such as compassion, empathy, empathic concern, personal distress or empathic anger when someone is being maltreated (Davis, 1996, p. 18).

Importantly, empathic anger at the ingroup members who have hurt the outgroup which has been found to reduce prejudice (Dovidio et al., 2004; Finlay and Stephan, 2000).

The non-affective outcomes of the exposure to others are accuracy in the perception of others, attributions regarding other people and evaluative judgments of others.

Interpersonal outcomes, which are the final construct in Davis’s model, can be defined as “behaviors directed toward a target which result from prior exposure to that target” (Davis, 1996, p. 19). They can be helping behavior, a reduction of aggressive behavior, an effect of behaviors that occur within social relationships. Davis affirms that, “interpersonal outcomes are viewed by the organizational model as resulting most directly from cognitive and affective interpersonal outcomes, and less directly by various empathy-related processes and antecedent conditions” (Davis, 1996, pp. 19 – 20). This is consistent with the conclusions of this research, where emotional empathy and perspective taking have shown as the key mechanisms by which the public testimonies affect their listeners.

Reducing Prejudice and Improving Attitudes through Empathy

Empathy is hypothesized to be a fundamental component and precondition of reconciliation, mainly in the form of “a fundamentally individualizing view of another” (Halpern and Weinstein, 2004, p. 306). Empathy has been proved to be a key mechanism of attitude change in storytelling initiatives (Furman, 2013; Kleinot, 2011, Maoz, 2011). In this chapter, the author is going to present empathy as a concept, its role in storytelling and she will conclude with a review of the literature on empathy as a mediator of attitude change.

Empathy is commonly categorized into two types. The first type of empathy is cognitive empathy, also called perspective taking, or “taking the perspective of another person” (Stephan and Finlay, 1999, p. 739). The second type of empathy is emotional empathy which is subdivided into two types: the first type entails the emotional responses to another person that either are “similar to those the other person is experiencing (parallel empathy)” (Stephan and Finlay, 1999, p. 730) and the second type entails the “reactions to the emotional
experiences of the other person (reactive empathy)” (Stephan and Finlay, 1999, p. 730). Both emotional empathy (Batson et al. 1997) and cognitive empathy (Stephan and Finlay, 1999) are known to change attitudes.

Evaluating the Story-Telling Model, Maoz writes that as a key factor, this model “relies on creating personal ties and empathy to each other as human beings” (Maoz 2011, p. 120), which extends also to outgroup members (Bar-On 2002, 2006, as cited in Maoz, 2011, p. 120). This evaluation is mainly based on the TRT where all participants are storytellers. However, in the case of the CPT initiative, creating empathy to each other as human being still holds, while certain bonds in the form of improved relationship toward the outgroup are created. Another important aspect is the “capacity to feel the pain and suffering of the out-group as one’s own”, a type of emotional empathy which is the most relevant to reconciliation (Stephan, 2008, p. 382). As Pam Kleinot (2011, p. 106) suggests, each side is able to withdraw its hatred by witnessing each other’s suffering, which mirrors one’s own. She also finds that “[a]cknowledging each other’s pain replaces blame” (Kleinot, 2011, p. 108). This claim is consistent with the findings that emotional empathy can counteract blaming (Finlay and Stephan, 2000). Stephan and Finlay observe that “learning about suffering and discrimination while empathizing with the victims may lead people to reappraise their assumptions concerning victim blame, and they may come to believe that the victims do not deserve the mistreatment to which they are being subjected. If the victims do not deserve this unjust treatment, it may no longer be tenable to hold such negative attitudes toward them” (Stephan and Finlay, 1999, p. 735). Empathy is also a key factor in “conversion experiences” occurring in bereaved Palestinians during PCCF interventions over an hour or two, “insofar as seeing the suffering of the other opens up the possibility of identification with and compassion toward the other’s pain” (Furman, 2013, p.131). Empathy encourages bonding across the divides and it represents the internal affective change that allows “for a significant shift in the perspective about the other, including elements of personal experience and collective realities” (Furman, 2013, p. 131). Senehi highlights the role of a “visceral” response to sharing laugh and tears together, which affect relationships and the fact that storytelling leaves the imagery of the story to the imagination of the listeners (Senehi, 2009, p. 210), which can be seen as a manifestation of cognitive empathy.

Theoretical literature from the area of social psychology further clarifies how empathy can be a factor of attitude change. Cognitive empathy may reduce prejudice by reducing the perception of dissimilarity and threat (Stephan and Finlay, 1999, p. 734 – 735). Parallel empathy may also induce the feeling of injustice, which in turn change attitudes
Reactive empathy can lead either to positive emotional reactions such as empathic concern, which can improve attitudes, or to negative emotional reactions such as personal distress which are not likely to improve attitudes. Furthermore, “learning about the suffering caused by discrimination may lead to the reactive emotional responses of compassion and concern along with the parallel emotional reactions of dread, confusion, and perhaps anger toward one’s own ingroup. … Emotional empathy may lead to both attitudinal and behavior changes, depending on which emotions are elicited and the intensity of these emotional reactions” (Stephan, Finlay, 1999, p. 737). Parallel empathy accompanied by a sense of injustice may lead to social action and attitude change as a result of the experienced discomfort or guilt (Stephan, Finlay, 1999, p. 738, see also Finlay and Stephan, 2000).

However, as Stephan and Finlay (1999, p. 737) observe, cognitive empathy may be more effective in changing stereotypes and such cognitive processes as attributional patterns than either type of emotional empathy by increasing knowledge about the unknown. Furthermore, Finlay (1996, as cited in Finlay and Stephan, 2000) found that the perceived common humanity, leading to empathy, influenced behavioral intentions. Last but not least, Batson and colleagues (Batson et al., 1997, p. 106) proposes a three-step model of how empathy may improve attitudes:

"(a) Adopting the perspective of a needy individual who is a member of a stigmatized group (i.e., imagining how this individual is affected by his or her situation) leads to increased empathic feelings for this individual

(b) These empathic feelings lead to a perception of increased valuing of this individual’s welfare.

(c) Assuming that this individual’s group membership is a salient component of his or her plight, the increased valuing should generalize to the group as a whole, increasing positive beliefs about, feelings toward, and concern for the group."

In general, according to this model the positive feelings toward the stigmatized group do generalize to the outgroup as a whole (Batson, 1997, p. 117), unless the person who is object of empathy is treated as an exception to the rule (Batson et al., 1997, p. 106).

On the other hand, as explained above, empathy is inhibited by the “egoism of victimization” (Volkan, 1985, as cited in Furman, 2013, p. 136; Mack, 1990, as cited in Sabucedo, Blanco and De La Corte, 2003, p. 551).
Prejudice Reduction by Counteracting Ignorance

The negative perception of the outgroup is often caused by ignorance (Stephan and Stephan, 1984, as cited in Stephan 2008, p. 386), a lack of knowledge of the outgroup, which results from biased reporting about it (Stephan, 2008, p. 386). As feelings of anxiety and threat lead to negative attitudes (Stephan and Renfro, 2002; Stephan and Stephan, 2000), providing accurate information about the out-group can reduce the feeling of threat. Information can further counteract bias: “Information about the similarity of the groups, the variability within groups, the out-group members’ motives for doing the things they do, and their personal lives can begin to undo the distorted perceptions created by the conflict” (Stephan, 2008, p. 382).

Regarding these theories, storytelling has the ability to bring information on outgroup suffering that is often unavailable to ingroup members, they are considered authentic, trustworthy, and the storytellers, due to their high degree of suffering, tend to be considered opinion leaders, as shown also in this research. Many of the stories represent the sharing of dangerous memories, such as those of Israeli army’s “behavior typically unavailable for public viewing” (Furman, 2013, p. 144) or, in the case of my study, stories of war victims including testimonies from concentration camps which tended to be very surprising to the listeners (Bubalo, 2019). At the same time, the testimonies have been found to be made effective also by the “authenticity of the bereaved peoples’ loss and grief” (Furman, 2013, p. 143).

My research has shown the crucial importance of the information and willingness to acquire alternative information that represents an outcome of the storytelling events. This way, it illustrates the above mechanisms in a concrete empirical context.

Attitude change through intergroup contact

Contact is a crucial aspect of attitude change due to storytelling. Since intergroup contact is a crucial mechanism of attitude change (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew and Tropp, 2011), the lack of intergroup contact is a common problem in ethnic and intractable conflicts, including the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Damen, 2011, as cited in Furman, 2013, p. 138). Storytelling is, indeed, a form of intergroup contact since listeners and storytellers are „sitting closely together, sitting in unison, laughing or crying as one“ (Jackson, 2002, p. 28).
This research is based also on the social-psychological theory called the "intergroup contact hypothesis". The latter states that intergroup contact reduces prejudice, especially under favourable conditions which are: equal status in the contact situation, pursuit of common goals, institutional support and a perception of common interests and common humanity (Allport, 1954, p. 281). In an extensive review of existing research on contact, Pettigrew and Tropp (2011) have found that these conditions are "facilitating rather than necessary" (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2011, p. 68) and that contact can decrease prejudice even in their absence (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2011, p. 67). From these conditions, institutional support may be especially important for fostering positive attitudes (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2011, p. 69). They also found that contact does not decrease prejudice under all circumstances (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2011, p. 2). Affective dimensions of prejudice are more strongly affected by contact than cognitive dimensions (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2011, p. 11).

Prejudice is among other factors caused by the feeling of threat (Stephan and Stephan, 2000). Contact then reduces prejudice through the reduction of anxiety and perception of threat (Voci and Hewstone, 2003; Paolini et al., 2004) which is due to an increased knowledge about the outgroup, and through empathy thanks to perspective taking and sympathizing with the concerns of the outgroup (Hodson, 2008). Thanks to the reduction of prejudice, such processes are hypothesized to increase trust (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2011, p. 77). Anxiety is significantly and negatively related to empathy (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2011, p. 85). Contact is known to reduce prejudice and to generalize positive feelings such as sympathy even to other out-groups, the mediators being empathy and deprovincialization as a reappraisal of the ingroup (Pettigrew, 1997). The effects of generalization of positive effects of contact is facilitated by a heightened group membership salience, i.e. a situation where it is obvious to what group which person belongs (Brown, Vivian and Hewstone, 1999; Pettigrew and Tropp, 2011, p. 75). The positive effects of contact can generalize even to other, third-party outgroups through the so-called "secondary transfer effect" (Pettigrew, 2009).

Intergroup attitudes cannot improve in the case of a "ceiling effect", i.e. a situation when they are already very positive (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2011, p. 54).

The mutual sharing of stories accompanied by strong emotions has been reported to be the groundbreaking (and ice-breaking) moment in which former "enemies" turned into fellow victims to whom empathy and solidarity was extended (Gawerc, 2016, p. 202). Kleinot observes that contact led to the recognition of outgroup suffering (Kleinot, 2011, p. 107), awareness that both sides share the same story and the same pain, and the expression of a wish
for peace (Furman, 2013, pp. 127 – 128). This was also the case in the very first interethnic workshops in the project Choosing Peace Together (Bubalo, 2019). Also, while PCFF storytelling has been shown to reduce fear so that people could connect to each other (Furman, 2013, p. 141), the Polish/Jewish encounters within the March of the Living study tours showed that talking about the groups’ present issues led to an increase of the perception of intergroup similarity and liking. However, focus on the past instead of on the present had a negative effect on the Poles (Bilewicz, 2007). Bilewicz and Jaworska (2013, p. 172) also show that the contact with Polish heroic helpers who had saved Jews from the Holocaust through storytelling improved intergroup affect and cognitions by making Poles perceived by the Jews as more similar to their ingroup, and it also improved the attitudes of the Jews toward the Poles. It must however be said that storytelling initiatives such as the PCFF bring about healing, but on the other hand, they may lead to retraumatization (Bar-On, 2006, p. 41, as cited in Furman, 2013, p. 129; cfr. Brahm, 2007, p. 23).

My research nicely illustrates the shifts in prejudice in Bosnia and Herzegovina and examining it from the perspective of otherization (Jamal, 2008) and its subordinate frames. Moreover, it shows different themes, dimensions of reconciliation and victimization events that are linked to prejudice in the Bosnian context.

**Prejudice reduction by recategorization into superordinate and cross-cutting identities**

Conflicts tend to divide people into „us“ and „them“. Reconciliation can be facilitated through recategorization of several types. First and foremost, sharp distinction between groups can be reduced by thinking of outgroup members in terms of their individual identities (Brewer and Miller, 1984; Dovidio, Gaertner, Isen, Rust, and Guerra, 1998; Miller, Brewer, and Edwards, 1985, as cited in Stephan, 2008, p. 384). Furthermore, personalization of outgroup members through one-on-one interactions “break down monolithic perceptions of the out-group by providing in-group members with accurate information about individual out-group members as well as information on the heterogeneity of out-group members” (Stephan, 2008, p. 385). The third way is making people aware that they belong to multiple or cross-cutting social categories besides their conflict-related ones, such as gender or work roles (Stephan, 2008, p. 385). This awareness has been proven to reduce prejudice (Brewer, 2000) and inter-group bias (Hall and Crisp, 2005; Crisp, Hewstone and Rubin, 2001). Fourthly, intergroup bias is also reduced by recategorization into a common identity, i.e. thinking of outgroup members as members of the same ingroup (Dovidio et al., 2004;
Gaertner et al., 1993; Gaertner and Dovidio, 2014). The fifth mechanism is to make people think of themselves as members of a superordinate group which leads to more positive attitudes toward the outgroup (Sherif, 1966; Gaertner et al., 1999, as cited in Stephan, 2008, p. 385) and reduces intergroup bias (González and Brown, 2003). In this study, the superordinate category as “human” is especially relevant as it can facilitate forgiveness and discourages the assignment of collective guilt to outgroup members (Wohl and Branscombe, 2005). Stephan (2008, p. 385) adds that transition to superordinate identities takes time and begins with getting to know each other as individuals, after which the positive attitudes can eventually generalize to the whole group. On the other hand, the reduction of the salience of group identities facilitates personalization, which can “break down the monolithic perceptions of the out-group” (Stephan, 2008, p. 385).

As to storytelling, the encounters of the two adversary sides that involve storytelling has the capacity to deconstruct the polarized and “essentialized identities” dividing people into the “good” ingroup and the “bad” outgroup (Hill, 2000, as cited in Zembylas & Bekerman, 2008, p. 127). Furman (2013, p. 129) points out that the “dangerous memories” (Metz, 1972; Ostovich, 2002; Zembylas and Bekerman, 2008) produced in PCFF encounters have the capacity to open people to the suffering of the other side, suffering that is normally “kept hidden from the populace by master narratives”. That way, the stories of bereaved family members challenge and subvert the “secure national narrative that informs personal identity” (Furman, 2013, p. 129), hence creating a shared identity. Kleinot points out that the PCFF is underpinned by a form of communication that she calls the aspiration at “the shared and sacred dream” of living in peace in a common land.

**Rehumanization**

Another key outcome of storytelling that counteracts delegitimization is rehumanization, or recognition of the Other’s humanity, also understood as common identity as humans. In the Bereaved Families initiative, Israelis wish to be recognized as moral human beings instead of soldiers, and the Palestinians simply as humans instead of terrorists, suicide bombers or “monsters” (Furman, 2013, p. 135 and 138). PCFF testimonies humanize the Other, which is only possible if people come to see each other as, “individual qua individual, that is, beyond usual stereotypes and perceptions defined strictly via national categories” (Furman, 2013, p. 138). That is, perceive a person’s both personal and group identity (Furman, 2013, p. 138). It eliminates viewing the Israelis automatically as soldiers and enables seeing them as humans
who can understand the Palestinians’ pain (Gawerc, 2016, p. 203). The witnessing of the other’s suffering, too, facilitates the recognition of the humanity of the Other (Zembylas, Bekerman, 2008, p. 145; Damelin, 2011, as cited in Furman, 2013, p. 138) and facilitates an extension of trust and solidarity to him (Furman, 2013, p. 132). In addition, storytelling promotes moral inclusion, i.e. the expanding the circle of one’s moral responsibility for members of the other side of the conflict (Furman, 2013, p. 132; cf. Staub, 1990; Opotow, 1990b; Opotow, Gerson and Woodside, 2005). Furman observes that the “storytelling nature of these events – as opposed to presentations of facts and statistics”, one building mainly on emotions, that enables the attitude transformation and moral imagination by removing the “social blinders” that prevent people from seeing the humanity of the Other (Furman, 2013, p. 140). The narratives thus “create new solidarities without forgetting past traumas” (Zembylas and Bekerman, 2008, p. 128).

**Overcoming Competitive Victimhood**

Victimhood should be overcome in order to reach reconciliation (Bar-Tal and Cehajic-Clancy, 2014). The decrease in competitive victimhood can lead to an increase in the willingness to forgive and reconcile with the outgroup (Noor et al., 2012, p. 363.

The *reduction of competitive victimhood and the creation of a common victim identity, or inclusive victimhood* are a key outcome of storytelling (see e.g. Adelman et al., 2016; Kleinot, 2011; Furman, 2013; Zembylas and Bekerman, 2008; for a general discussion of inclusive victimhood see Shnabel, Halabi and Noor, 2013; Cohrs, McNeill and Vollhardt, 2015; Noor et al., 2017 p. 124; Vollhardt, 2015). Encountering other victims of the conflict and hearing their stories can lead to a reduction of the belief in the exclusiveness or disproportionately large share of ingroup suffering, and to the change of the related narratives. First of all, PCFF storytelling leads to the acknowledgement of the Other’s suffering (Furman, 2013, p. 131; Kleinot, 2011; Zembylas and Bekerman, 2008). This acknowledgement also entails moral inclusion of the Other, a sort of “moral conversion” due to the fact of not rejoicing when the other side suffers a loss (Furman, 2013, pp. 131 – 132; Kleinot, 2011). Furthermore, “encountering the other results in a shift of self-perception and relief from the experience of being victims” (Furman, 2013, p. 137). The authentic suffering witnessed has also been shown to open the bereaved family members to multiple narratives (Furman, 2013, p. 144) and make them perceive the suffering of both sides as equivalent thanks to the common value of “sacredness of human life” (Furman, 2013, p. 135). It must be
admitted, though, that some PCFF members did admit the Other’s pain, but not as equivalent to one’s own pain, thus still engaging in an argument about whose pain is worse (Furmam, 2013, p. 136). Shnabel, Belhassen and Mor (2017, p. 1) found that testimonies held by the Combatants for Peace held during the 2015 and 2016 Israeli-Palestinian Memorial Day ceremony have induced the perception of a “common victim identity” and “predicted peace activism”. However, the latter outcome was not predicted by a common perpetrator identity, contrary to the researchers’ predictions. In three experimental study by Adelman et al., showed that inclusive victimhood narratives, and thus an acknowledgement of shared victimhood, “can decrease support for aggressive policies” (Adelman et al., 2016, p. 1426) by reducing competitive victimhood. The authors also found that the reason for engaging in competitive victimhood may be securing third-party support, and that inclusive conflict narratives increased competitive victimhood and support for aggressive policies in people high in concern for losing third-party support (Adelman et al., 2016, p. 1426). Last but not least, Maoz and Bar-On (2002, p. 46) claim that storytelling coupled with emotional support can help in “moving beyond victimhood.” They believe that the TRT process is highly relevant to other conflicts.

Another mechanism which is often reported to decrease competitive victimhood is the recategorization into a common victim or perpetrator identity, i.e. to induce the belief that both ingroup and outgroup are both victims and/or perpetrators in the conflict (Shnabel, Halabi and Noor, 2013). As Noor et al. (2012, p. 364) observe, “the recategorization strategy of highlighting common victimhood could serve as a useful superordinate category by encouraging groups to broaden their narrow focus on their own victimhood and become mindful that the impact of the conflict is more pervasive.” In a study on Jews and Palestinians, Shnabel, Halabi and Noor (2013) found that inducing a common victim identity reduced moral defensiveness, while a common perpetrator identity increased the sense of agency, both of which led to a decreased competitive victimhood. The decrease in the latter led to an increased forgiveness. On the other hand, the induction of a common regional identity did not lead to any change in these processes.

Yet in another study, Andrighetto et al. (2012) concluded that competitive victimhood can be reduced by a perception of a common identity, but also through intergroup contact. This relationship was mediated by increased perspective taking (cognitive empathy which entails seeing the world from the point of view of the Other), increased trust and a decreased infrahumanization (the belief that outgroup members are less human).
Noor et al. (2012, p. 362) suggests another way of overcoming competitive victimhood. The first one is the removal of threats to the in-group’s identity, for example by reciprocal exchanges of (empowering) messages. This theory constitutes the Needs-Based Model of Reconciliation (NBM) (Nadler and Shnabel, 2008; Shnabel and Nadler, 2008) which states that perpetrators experience a psychological threat to their identity as moral actors and they have the need for acceptance by their victims and victims. The victims, on the other hand, experience a threat to their identity as powerful actors, i.e. they feel powerless, and they have the psychological need for empowerment by their perpetrators. When victims receive empowerment from their perpetrators and when perpetrators receive acceptance from their victims, reconciliation is facilitated. This works not only with direct victims and direct perpetrators, but also on inter-group level (Shnabel et al., 2008). The author hypothesized that this model could lead to attitude change in some listeners who understood that their nation harmed the storyteller, and she will refer to it on a few places throughout the thesis. According to a study based on this theory, competitive victimhood can decrease if ingroup members receive a recognition of injustice, empathy and understanding from outgroup members (Sonnenschein, 2008, as cited in Noor et al., 2012, p. 362).

In my research, I am showing the key importance of common identities by including them in my frame taxonomy. Most importantly, inclusive victimhood (Adelman et al., 2016) has turned out to be one of my two master frames, and I have shown that it does not only have a dimension including beliefs, but that it also includes emotions, morality and search for information.

**Counteracting blaming, denial and inducing an admission of ingroup guilt**

In this sub-chapter I will deal with the reduction of blaming and the induction of collective guilt as a mechanism of reconciliation. My dissertation is one of the few studies of the effects of storytelling that explicitly deals with the acknowledgement of collective guilt.

Starting the discussion with general experimental research, a basic precondition for the feeling of collective guilt to be possible is the self-identification as a member of the perpetrator group. However, Doosje et al. (1998) have found that strong identifiers had the tendency to defend the ingroup, which reduced their feeling of collective guilt. High identifiers avoid the threat to their identity by avoiding apologizing for their ingroup’s misdeeds (Branscombe, Doosje and McGarty, 2002, p. 58).
Among the factors facilitating the acceptance of collective guilt are self-categorization with the perpetrator group, the acceptance of in-group’s responsibility, the appraisal that the harm committed was illegitimate, and the perceived costs for correcting the harm (Wohl, Branscombe, Klar, 2006, p. 9). As Roccas, Klar and Liviatan (2004) found, attachment to the ingroup leads to collective guilt and ingroup glorification reduces it, both mediated by exonerating cognitions. Furthermore, “collective guilt was related positively to universalism values that express the importance attributed to concern for others and with openness to change values that express a desire for independence” (Roccas, Klar and Liviatan, 2004, p. 144). A mechanism which increases the likelihood of acknowledging collective guilt is the categorization of the self and the outgroup into a common ingroup as the harm is seen as more illegitimate (Wohl, Branscombe, Klar, 2006, p. 11, 13). Recategorization into a superordinate identity as human beings has been found to facilitate collective guilt and forgiveness guilt as well as forgiveness (Wohl and Branscombe, 2005). Last but not least, based on other studies, Čehajić mentions the assumption that intergroup contact can foster acknowledgement of ingroup perpetration: the exposure to victim stories increases empathy and “decreases both intergroup anxiety and the perception of ingroup victimhood” (Čehajić-Clancy, 2012, p. 241).

Collective guilt is closely related to shame. In two studies conducted in the context of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brown and Cehajic (2008) have found that both lead to positive attitudes toward reparations for the harm done to the outgroup. In the case of collective guilt, this relationship is mediated by empathy, while in the case of shame it is mediated by empathy and self-pity. On the other hand, another study found that empathy was not a mediator of collective guilt (Wohl, Branscombe and Klar, 2006, p. 20). Yet another study conducted on adolescents in Bosnia and Herzegovina showed that quality contact leads to acknowledgement of past wrongs. The mediators of this relationship were increased perspective-taking and decreased perceived victimhood (Čehajić and Brown, 2010). As Čehajić-Clancy highlights, being exposed to victim stories enables a person to see the world from the point of view of the Other (Čehajić-Clancy, 2012, p. 242).

When assessing the storytelling events, it is however necessary to be aware that assigning “too much responsibility” that should lead to collective guilt can be become ineffective as it can lead to denying all responsibility (Wohl, Branscombe and Klar, 2006, p. 26).
Storytelling also touches on the themes of collective guilt, ingroup misdeeds, blaming and anger. As Pam Kleinot (2011, p. 106) suggests, each side is able to withdraw its hatred by witnessing each other’s suffering, which mirrors one’s own. She also finds that “[a]cknowledging each other’s pain replaces blame” (Kleinot, 2011, p. 108). Some PCFF members rejected their wish for revenge thanks to the interethnic encounters (Furman, 2013, p. 142). Kleinot observes that PCFF storytelling detoxifies the “poison” of intergroup relations that is “murderous rage” “by talking, witnessing, and processing the pain” (Kleinot, 2011, p. 107). She also refers to the concept of malignant mirroring (Zinkin, 1983, as cited in Kleinot, 2011, p. 107), according which they blame each other trying to “get rid of unbearable feelings of what they see in the other that they do not like in themselves. They are fascinated and repelled by each other in a highly charged context which can change with dialogue” (Kleinot, 2011, p. 107). Kleinot concludes that the “healing narratives” of the PCFF storytellers can resolve mourning, help the groups to work through their traumatic experiences and “produce a type of transformation in the group” (Kleinot, 2011, p. 109).

Also, according to the Needs-Based Model of Reconciliation mentioned just above (Nadler and Shnabel, 2008; Shnabel and Nadler, 2008), when perpetrators receive acceptance from their victims and victims receive empowerment from their perpetrators, their willingness to reconcile increases. Accordingly, the Polish-Jewish encounters with heroic Polish helpers who had saved Jews from the Holocaust met the Poles’ need for acceptance as moral actors by the Jews. In contrast, the intervention did not meet Israelis’ needs of empowerment or acceptance (Bilewicz and Jaworska, 2013, p. 172).

As to my own contribution to the storytelling literature, my study is one of the rare ones that explicitly capture how the stories induce a feeling of collective guilt in the listeners that is associated attitude change. The only initiative that can be classified under the storytelling model that explicitly deal with guilt are the initiative of the Center for Nonviolent Action in Sarajevo that uses storytelling by former combatants (Fischer, 2006, p. 388) and the TRT. Notably, the TRT between Israelis and Palestinians has shown “how a victim’s identity construction makes it possible to ignore that fellow group members have become victimizers of other people. For recognizing the ignored feelings of the other, storytelling played an essential role in Hamburg” (Maoz and Bar-On, 2002, p. 46). However, research on the PCFF does not mention explicitly that the storytelling would lead to feelings of collective guilt for the suffering of the storytellers in the listeners. This can only be inferred from Kleinot’s claim that the PCFF “offers a symbolic demonstration of the commitment to mutual recognition of
acknowledging and apologizing for acts of injustice and infliction of suffering” (Kleinot, 2011, p. 109). In my dissertation, I show very explicitly the themes, narratives and frames associated to the shift from the narratives of collective innocence (Selimovic, 2010) to the acceptance of collective guilt (Wohl, Branscombe, Klar, 2006, p. 4; Brown and Cehajic, 2008)

Facilitating forgiveness

Forgiveness can be facilitated by apology (Tavuchis, 1991; Worthington, 1996), common ingroup identification (Cehajic, Brown and Castano, 2008) or recategorization into a superordinate category as “human” (Wohl and Branscombe, 2005), collective guilt (Hewstone et al., 2008), outgroup trust, perspective-taking and contact (Hewstone et al., 2006). The positive effects of contact on forgiveness were found to be mediated by empathy and trust (Cehajic, Brown and Castano, 2008). On the other hand, among the factors which predict decreased forgiveness are in-group identification (Hewstone et al., 2008), infrahumanization and anger (Hewstone et al., 2008, p. 209), social distance (Cehajic, Brown and Castano, 2008), and victimization (Hewstone et al., 2008, p. 208) or the degree of hurt inflicted (McLernon et al., 2004).

As to storytelling and forgiveness, on the one hand, PCFF members are characterized by Nir Oren, a former PCFF co-director, as “messengers of reconciliation” (Furman, 2013, p. 130). On the other hand, many PCFF members believe that reconciliation is possible without forgiveness, and that they did not want to or did not have the right to forgive, as their loved ones and not themselves had been victims of the conflict (Furman, 2013, p. 148). PCFF encounters also lead to the development of trust and bonding (Furman, 2013, p. 149). The TRT does not really use the terms forgiveness or reconciliation either. Instead, it uses the concept of “working through” (Albeck, Adwan and Bar-On, 2002, p. 303) which means “to learn to live with the painful traumatic event better than she/he had done before (Lehman, Wortman, & Williams, 1987)” (Bar-On and Kassem, 2004, p. 290). In the TRT, this is achieved by sharing personal stories.

Increasing trust

Calculus-based distrust can be managed through agreeing on expectations, deadlines, penalties and monitoring (Lewicki, 2006, p. 104). Identification-based distrust can be built if
the parties share “common ingroup membership (Brewer and Kramer, 1986), common interests, common goals and objectives, similar reactions to common situations, situations in which they stand for the same values and principles, thereby demonstrating integrity (Lewicki and Stevenson, 1998)” (Lewicki, 2006, p. 105). Furthermore, trust can be built through intergroup contact and it mediates the positive effects of contact on behavioral tendencies (Tam et al., 2009, see also Hewstone et al., 2008, p. 214 - 215). Quality contact was also found to increase outgroup trust through the reduction of threat (Hewstone et al., 2008, p. 215). Trust is also correlated with positive emotions and empathy (Hewstone et al., 2008, p. 214). In yet another model, contact positively impacted trust due to the decrease of negative emotions and increase in positive emotions, self-disclosure, equality and fairness appraisals (Hewstone et al., 2008, p. 216). Trust is furthermore supported by, and in its turn supports, cooperation (Kramer and Carnevale, 2001, p. 441).

**Opinion leadership**

In a number of studies, especially on the PCFF, the storytellers are found to be influential due to their status as opinion leaders. According to research on the PCFF, listeners come to understand that “if people who have lost so much can talk to the other side, so can everyone else” (Furman, 2013, p. 136). This claim resembles to a change theory on which the initiative “My Story” is founded: “People most directly affected by the war enjoy a high degree of influence over public and political options about reconciliation” (Catholic Relief Services, ca. 2014). These two claims illustrate the belief that the storytellers, in this case victims of the conflict, are opinion leaders and that they can influence other peoples from this position. According to a simple definition, „opinion leaders are people who influence the opinions, attitudes, beliefs, motivations, and behaviors of others” (Valente and Pumpuang, 2007; see also the research on opinion leaders an influential by Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet, 1948 and Katz, 1957, p. 66). Their influence is given by several factors. Besides trust, “the influence is related (1) to the personification of certain values (who one is); (2) to competence (what one knows); and (3) to strategic social location (whom one knows). Social location, in turn, divides into whom one knows within a group; and ‘outside’” (Katz, 1957, p. 73). The most relevant to this study are the first two, i.e. the values of the storytellers and the information they have. It is necessary to add, however, that “opinion leader is not an authoritative, charismatic or leading figure but rather a position of an expert among his or her peers, a source of advice on a particular issue or subject” (Weimann, 1994, p. 71).
Inviting people in mutual contact and peacebuilding

As Mahmoud from the PCFF pointed out, it is the loss and the that brings the members together (Gawerc, 2016, p. 204). Eventually, a sense of togetherness, trust and solidarity between PCFF members was built (Gawerc, 2016, p. 204). Through sharing each other’s stories, people come to understand that they are living the same kind of pain (Furman, 2013, p. 127) and many of the families get further involved in workshops, public public testimonies and other peacebuilding work (Furman, 2013; Kleinot, 2011).

3.6 Research Purpose

Based on the literature review above, in my dissertation, I aim at answering the following research questions:

1. What difference do the testimonies held within the initiative “My Story” make in the construction of the listeners’ attitudes toward reconciliation with the other Bosnian ethnic groups and the conflict-related emotions and narratives, judging from the discursive narratives that the listeners use?

2. What discursive narratives corresponding to factors positively or negatively affecting reconciliation that are known in theoretical literature do the public testimonies held within the initiative “My Story” elicit?

3. What types of frame shifts from negative to reconciliatory frames (or vice versa) appear in the discursive narratives pronounced by the listeners of public testimonies within “My Story”?

This means that the aim of this dissertation is multifold. On the first and most basic empirical level, the study documents the presence of shifts in the listeners’ attitudes, beliefs, emotions and conflict narratives (research question 1), as well as the known factors (variables influencing) of reconciliation (research question 2). On the second and higher level, this thesis aims at building an analytical framework grounded in the Bosnian context through which changes in interethnic attitudes, beliefs, emotions and conflict narratives can be inferred from discourse, namely from discursive narratives and the frames that connect them to broader societal discourses (Svarstad, 2009). On the third and highest level, by creating a categorization of discursive narratives and a taxonomy of frame shifts capturing the transition from negative to positive, I am aiming at making a contribution to the scarce conceptualization of these concepts in theoretical literature, in particular in the context of ethnic conflict. Last but not least, I must stress the word “construction” contained in the
research questions. By this I mean that my research is more of a constructivist and not a causalist account of the phenomena under study.
4 Theoretical Framework

4.1 Discourse and Discursive Narratives

4.1.1 Discourses and Truth Regimes

The concept of discourse is central to this doctoral dissertation. Therefore, I am now going to provide an overview of the key definitions of discourse and conceptualize the term for the use in this thesis and then put discourse in the wider perspective of its relation to power and to the concept of truth regimes. I adopt a constructivist stance and compile my theoretical framework for the discourse analysis from different sources, rather than relying on the works of one single author.

In the 1960’s, with the work of Wittgenstein and Foucault, the social sciences have taken a “turn to language” and a subsequent “turn to discourse”. They started to consider social reality as constructed, and therefore saw language and discourse an object of study on themselves (Fairclough, 1989, p. 3; Wood and Kroger, 2000; Parker, 2002). The method of discourse analysis emerged that started focus its attention „on the many competing structures of language and the way these enabled speakers to engage in the ‘social construction’ of reality“, an approach being called „post-structuralist“ and „post-modern“ by some (Parker, 2014, p. 1; see also Parker, 2002).

A crucial and encompassing definition of discourse is provided by Michel Foucault. As summarized by Lessa (2006, p. 285), in his work Archeology of Knowledge (1972) he defines discourse as “systems of thoughts composed of ideas, attitudes, courses of action, beliefs and practices that systematically construct the subjects and the worlds of which they speak.” Some definitions focus on discourse as social practice. For example, Fairclough defines discourse as “different ways of structuring areas of knowledge and social practice” (1992, p. 3). Yet other scholars, such as Wodak (2001, p. 66) focus on discourse as a simple speech or linguistic act. Dryzek defines discourse as “a way to perceive the world as shared by several people (Dryzek, 1997)” (Svarstad, 2009, p. 38) similarly to the definition of discourse by Adger et al. (2001, p. 683) as “a shared meaning of a phenomenon.”

According to Fairclough, discourse consists of three elements: a text (spoken or written), discursive practices (“processes of text production and text consumption”) and sociocultural
practices ("social and cultural goings-on which the communicative event is part of") (Fairclough, 1995, p. 57). In this thesis, attention will be dedicated to all three, with special focus on the context to which the respondents refer.

Parker (2002) defines seven criteria of discourse that shall form the basis of discourse analysis. According to him, discourse is a coherent system of meanings that give an account of reality, forming a coherent discourse about the same topic (Parker, 2002, pp. 145 – 146). It is realized in texts, but only pieces of discourses, and not whole discourses as such, can be found in texts, and discourses can sometimes differ based on the audience (Parker, 2002, pp. 147 - 148). It reflects on its own way of speaking in that it asks questions and analyzes its own implications (Parker, 2002, p. 148). In order to do that, it also refers to other discourses (Parker, 2002, p. 150). Moreover, a discourse is about objects and bring objects into being by referring to them (Parker, 2002, p. 151). A discourse also contains subjects in the sense that it creates its own reality independent from the reality that exists outside of the discourse. It also sets certain relationships between the addressee (or text) and the addressee (Parker, 2002, pp. 152 – 153).

More importantly, Parker adds three auxiliary criteria that resonate with other literature on discourse. Firstly, discourses support institutions as they are implicated in their structure. More specifically, discursive practices reproduce institutions (Parker, 2002, p. 155). Secondly, discourses reproduce power relations (Parker, 2002, pp. 155 – 156). Thirdly, discourses have ideological effects. Ideological discourses must be distinguished from those that tell the truth. Parker considers that “ideology is a description of relationships and effects and should be employed to describe relationships at a particular place and historical period” (Parker, 2002, p. 156). However, Parker claims that ideology must not be equated to a belief system (Parker, 2002, p. 156). The latter claim is in direct opposition to Teun van Dijk who theorizes that there is a close relationship between discourse and ideology. He defines ideologies broadly as “some kind of ‘ideas’, that is, ‘belief systems’” (Van Dijk, 2006, p. 116). These belief systems are not private or personal, but rather socially shared by the members of a collectivity of social actors… Ideologies consist of social representations that define the social identity of a group, that is, its shared beliefs about its fundamental conditions and ways of existence and reproduction.” (van Dijk, 2006, p. 116). Furthermore, “ideologies are gradually acquired and
(sometimes) changed through life or a life period, and hence need to be relatively stable” (van Dijk, 2006, p. 116). Ideologies represent “the basis of discourse and other social practices” (van Dijk, 2006, p. 120 – 121). Group members’ discourse is typically based on ideological discourse (van Dijk, 2006, p. 121). Ideological discourse “may depend on ideologically biased contexts, on the ideological way participants interpret events as subjective mental models, or more directly on general group beliefs that are ideologically controlled” (van Dijk, 2006, p. 124).

Importantly, discourse shapes reality. It also shapes social structures, but it is also shaped by them. Institutions and powerful actors use the control of discourse, among other means, to maintain their power (Fairclough, 1989, p. 37). This is also due to the subversive power that discourse has. Foucault talks about the concept of the order of discourse and he assumes thereby "that in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off its powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade its onerous, formidable materiality" (Foucault, 1981, p. 52. Powerful participants thus constrain the contribution that non-powerful participants make to discourse by putting constraints on the contents of the discourse, the social relations of the people who enter into the discourse, and the subjects or “the subject positions people can occupy“ (Fairclough, 1989, p. 46). Foucault (1981) establishes a number of strategies by which powerful actors exclude non-powerful actors from the discourse. Among them are prohibition, division of discourses or their rejection, the opposition between truth and falsity, commentary, the name of the author which gives discourses coherence, disciplinarity (belonging to a certain discipline). The conditions of access to discourse are the qualification of the speaking subject, societies of discourse who act as guardians and distributors of discourses, doctrines, and the social appropriation of discourse.

Importantly, according to Foucault, discourses are also intimately implicated in the constitution of truth regimes. By truth, he means

“a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution and circulation of statements. … 'Truth' is linked by a circular relation to systems of power which produce it and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which redirect it. A 'regime' of truth.” (Foucault, 1976, p. 14).
This means that for Foucault, truth is closely related to power, and it even induces its “regular effects” (Foucault, 1976, p. 13).

“Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse it harbours and causes to function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true from false statements, the way in which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures which are valorised for obtaining truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true.” (Foucault, 1976, p. 13).

In making these statements, Foucault refers to truth as a product of science, and he points out that it is widely diffused and “transmitted under the control, dominant if not exclusive, of a few great political and economic apparatuses (university, army, writing, media)” and object of a “battle for truth”, or societal ‘ideological’ struggles (Foucault, 1976, p. 13).

### 4.1.2 Discursive Narratives

The concept of narrative can be simply defined as “someone telling someone else that something happened” (Smith, 1981, as cited in Senehi, 2002, p. 43). In this dissertation, I adhere to the definition of narrative as provided by Polkinghorne (1988, p. 3, as cited in Emden, 1998, p. 35): narrative is “a kind of organizational scheme expressed in story form” or "a meaning structure that organises events and human actions into a whole" (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 8, as cited in Emden, 1998, p. 35). He adds: "narrative is a scheme by means of which human beings give meaning to their experiences of temporality and personal actions" (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 11, as cited in Emden, 1998, p. 35). A story, on the other hand, is “a single narration or account that provides meaning to the past events and actions of a person's life whether, as Polkinghorne states, these are 'true' or imagined (1988, p. 14)” (Emden, 1998, p. 35). Lars-Christer Hydén defines a story in the following way: “Central to a story are events that occur in a certain context, are caused or caused by something (perhaps the main character in the story) and experienced by someone (for example, the narrator - but not necessarily) and produced by someone” (Hydén, 1997, p. 20, as cited in Svarstad, 2009, p. 38).

Bruner (1991) outlines ten features of narrative: (1) A narrative is *diachronic*, i.e. it contains a temporal sequence of events (Bruner, 1991, p. 6). (2) A narrative is characterized by *particularity*, i.e. it refers to particular events that can, however, belong to broader and more
general types, a “more inclusive narrative type” (Bruner, 1991, p. 7). For example, a concrete story from a concentration camp presented in this study represents a more generic type of human suffering. (3) Narratives contain a protagonists who have intentional states. Animals or objects are given this purpose as well. Narratives provide reasons for the protagonists’ actions and a basis for their interpretation, rather than ready-made causal explanations as such (Bruner, 1991, p. 7). (4) Narratives are characterized by hermeneutic composability, i.e. the meaning of the whole story can only be constructed by reference to its component parts (Bruner, 1991, p. 8). According to Propp (1928), these component parts “serve as ‘functions of the narrative structure as a whole” (as cited in Bruner, 1991, p. 8). Importantly, “the moment a hearer is made suspicious of the ‘facts’ of a story or the ulterior motives of a narrator, he or she immediately becomes hermeneutically alert” (Bruner, 1991, p. 10). Interpretation also depends on intention, i.e. why the story is being told, on the background knowledge of the storyteller and the listener and on their mutual interpretations of the other’s background knowledge (Bruner, 1991, p. 10). (5) Narratives must contain the breach of a canonical script, i.e. a convention (Bruner, 1991, pp. 11 – 12). This usually involves a “plot”, or a “precipitating event”, as called by Labov (Bruner, 1991, pp. 11 – 12). (6) Narratives can be real or fictional: they are characterized by referentiality, i.e. a narrative “truth” that is “judged by its verisimilitude rather than its verifiability” (Bruner, 1991, p. 13). (7) The interpretation of a narrative depends on its genre (i.e. whether it is a tragedy, a comedy, a travel saga, etc.). (8) Narratives are normative, since breach of a canonic script involves a norm (Bruner, 1991, pp. 15 – 16). (9) Narratives are sensitive to context (storyteller’s intentions, background knowledge, etc.) and they are negotiable, i.e. different narrative versions can be confronted before arriving at a “narrative truth”, as to allow cultural negotiation (Bruner, 1991, pp. 17 – 18). (10) Narratives are characterized by narrative accrual, i.e. single stories become connected parts of larger wholes or even “cultures” or “traditions” (Bruner, 1991, p. 18).

Importantly, narratives “serve as a rationale for action” since they encode shared group knowledge and they can “comment critically and persuasively on social life” (Senehi, 2002, p. 43). Since they get results in the real world, they have narrative potency (Raheja and Gold, 1994, as cited in Senehi, 2002, p. 43).

Most importantly, my dissertation is based on the concept of discursive narratives. The literature on this topic is scarce, and the concept is best developed by Hanne Svarstad (2009). I have defined and presented the basics of the concept of discursive narratives in
chapter 3.2. I have cited their definition stating that “a discursive narrative is a narrative of a case that is produced according to the way the discourse frames the issue (Svarstad, 2009)” (Tumusiime and Svarstad, 2011, p. 242). I am now going to present additional theory regarding the concept.


The dichotomy between agents and structures is also relevant for the production of discursive narratives. The first type of agent is the one creating or modifying the narrative; the second are the audience; and the so-called co-manufacturers of the narrative (professional actors who produce narratives) (Svarstad, 2009, p. 42). Discourses and related narratives are sometimes produced by powerful actors who act out of their own interest (Svarstad, 2009, p. 43).

Narratives can be typologized according to the level of content stakeholder (narratives about individuals vs. collectives) and the narrator’s position (the narrator himself is or is not in the narrative). Researchers and professional storytellers are typically actors who do not figure in the narrative (Svarstad, 2009, p. 43).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The narrator’s positions:</th>
<th>Content actor level:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The storytellers are themselves in the narrative actions</td>
<td>Narratives about individuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researchers or others &quot;professional storytellers” design the narrative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Type 1 narratives are told by individuals about themselves. Type 2 narratives also concern individuals, but they are told by uninvolved actors, such as researchers. They may investigate identity issues by studying narratives. Type 3 narratives concern collectives, but they are produced by actors of the stories themselves. Type 4 narratives are researchers’ accounts of collective issues. These types are not fully mutually exclusive, and some narratives can fall in between the types, or several types can be relevant to one narrative. Discursive narratives can contain elements of all four types of narratives (Svarstad, 2009, pp. 44 – 45). Importantly, “collective interpretations contribute to creating frames for individuals’ interpretations of their own lives. This is largely about interaction between the production of individual and collective identity” (Svarstad, 2009, p. 45). Svarstad (2009, p. 45) adds: “When individuals’ own stories are to a greater or lesser extent consistent with an established discourse, they must be considered discursive.”

Lieblich et al. (1998, as cited in Svarstad, 2009, p. 46) distinguish between holistic and categorical approaches to narrative. “A holistic approach implies that parts of a narrative are interpreted in the light of the narrative as a whole, while the categorical approach is categorizing specific aspects within the same or several narratives” (Svarstad, 2009, p. 46). While according to Lieblich et al., a holistic approach is more commonly used to analyze life stories (type 1 and type 2), while the categorical approach is suitable for analyzing a phenomenon that is collectively shared (type 3 and type 4). Svarstad considers that a combination of both approaches is appropriate for the analysis of narratives, in particular discursive ones (Svarstad, 2009, p. 46).

Discursive narratives studied in this thesis fall mainly into the first three categories of narrative, although the respondents also heavily commented on intergroup relations and on the conflict in Bosnia, which could be considered a type 4 narrative.

In this thesis, I divide discursive narratives of the story listeners into positive ones, i.e. testifying of attitude shifts in the direction of reconciliation, and negative ones, i.e. narratives illustrating negative intergroup attitudes and lack of reconciliation. These discursive narratives are heavily derived from theories of reconciliation. An overview of these narratives as classified into dimensions of reconciliation can be found in chapter 4.5.
4.2 Intergroup Conflict, Behavior and Attitudes

In this sub-chapter, I am going to lay the foundations for the broader analytical framework of this dissertation. The concept of conflict will be defined and discussed in relation to its basic components, which are attitudes/assumptions, contradiction/content and behavior (Galtung, 1996, p. 71). I am then going to amplify this framework by adding beliefs, emotions and narratives based on the conceptualization of Bar-Tal (Bar-Tal, 1998 and 2013). Theories linking the above elements to behavior will be discussed, as to both conscious (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975) and unconscious attitudes (Ajzen and Dasgupta, 2015).

Galtung’s triangle of conflict

According to Johan Galtung, conflict is a triadic construction that basically represents a triangle of relationships between attitudes/assumptions (A), behavior (B) and contradiction/content, defined as “incompatible goal-states in a goal-seeking system” that “has to involve something wanted” (Galtung, 1996, p. 71). Simply put, according to this definition, “conflict = A + B + C” (Galtung, 1996, p. 71). In other words, a conflict consists of “actors in pursuit of incompatible goals, remembering that as limiting case actors may be parties, goals may be interests, incompatibilities may never be brought into the open, and the pursuit may be steered by the structure.” (Galtung, 2009, p. 44). All three sides of the triangle must be taken in consideration in order to correctly observe the conflict as a whole. While behavior represents the manifest level of the conflict, attitudes and contradiction remain on the latent level (Galtung, 1996, p. 71). A conflict can start in any of the three corners of the triangle, i.e. in either A, B or C, and transform into an escalatory, mutually self-reinforcing spiral (Galtung, 1996, pp. 72 – 73). Galtung defines four basic dimensions of a conflict, which are: actors, goals, incompatibility and pursuit (including attitudes, behavior and resource distribution) (Galtung, 2009, pp. 44 – 45), see the following figure Galtung (1996, p. 72).
Galtung does not see conflicts as a unilaterally negative phenomena: he highlights their creative, problem-solving potential, and also the potential for their nonviolent transformation into positive outcomes (Galtung, 1996). However, some conflicts are easier to resolve than others, and some that are protracted (Azar, 1990) and extremely resistant to any attempts at their resolution have been classified as intractable conflicts (Kriesberg, 1993 and 1998; Bar-Tal, 1998; Coleman, 2000).

*Theory of Planned Behavior*

With the underlying concepts defined, I am going to discuss how, along with other related variables, they influence behavior. I will discuss models regarding the conscious level based on the *Theory of Planned Behavior* (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975) and regarding the unconscious level based on the theory by Ajzen and Dasgupta (2015).

The core of the *Theory of Planned Behavior* consists in the claim that beliefs regarding a behavior (i.e. evaluations of the behavior) influence attitudes towards this behavior, which in turn influence behavioral intentions, which then influence behavior. Two other independent chains of factors are added to this basic line of reasoning. Behavioral intention is also co-determined by subjective norms meaning “the perceived social pressure to perform or not to perform the behavior” (Ajzen, 1989, p. 251). These subjective norms are influenced by normative beliefs, i.e. beliefs “concerned with the likelihood that important referent individuals or groups would approve or disapprove of performing the behavior” (Ajzen, 1989, p. 252). Thirdly, behavioral intention is co-determined by perceived behavioral control meaning “the perceived ease or difficulty of performing the behavior” (Ajzen, 1989, p. 251). This factor is, in its turn, influenced by control beliefs “which provide the basis for perceptions of behavioral control” (Ajzen, 1989, p. 252). Ajzen summarizes: “As a general rule, the more favorable the attitude and subjective norm with respect to a behavior, and the
greater the perceived behavioral control, the stronger should be an individual’s intention to perform the behavior under consideration” (Ajzen, 1989, p. 251). A scheme of the theory follows below:

![Figure 6.2 Beliefs as the informational foundation of intentions and behavior](image)

(Ajzen, 2005, p. 126)

Behavioral beliefs, normative beliefs and control beliefs are furthermore influenced by background factors. These factors can be divided into three groups: personal, social and information (e.g. the information available in a person’s life environment) (Ajzen, 2005, pp. 134 – 135).

![Figure 6.3 The role of background factors in the theory of planned behavior](image)

(Ajzen, 2005, p. 135)
In order to lay the conceptual foundations of this dissertation, I will now define some of the fundamental elements of the above-mentioned frameworks.

**Conceptualization of attitudes**

I am now going to discuss the conceptualization of attitudes. Some of the conflict-related negative attitudes that will be dealt with in this thesis are prejudice, blaming, distrust and unforgiveness. Attitudes are about positioning oneself toward an object. The concept of attitudes is notoriously vaguely defined in the social sciences (Allport, 1935, as cited in Potter and Wetherell, 1987, p. 43). Both Bar-Tal (2013, p. 19) and Ajzen give practically identical definitions of attitudes. According to Ajzen (2005, p. 3), „an attitude is a disposition to respond favorably or unfavorably to an object, person, institution, or event. Although formal definitions of attitude vary, most contemporary social psychologists agree that the characteristic attribute of attitude is its evaluative (pro–con, pleasant–unpleasant) nature (see, e.g., Edwards 1957; Osgood et al. 1957; Bem 1970; Fishbein and Ajzen 1975; Hill 1981; Oskamp 1991; Eagly and Chaiken 1993).“ Ajzen departs from Rosenberg and Hovland’s conceptualization of attitude as a construct composed of cognition, affect and conation as „first-order factors“, and attitude as „a single second-order factor“ (Rosenberg and Hovland, 1960, as cited in Ajzen, 2005, p. 4). All four elements (attitudes, cognition, affect and conation) have several „verbal and non-verbal classes“ that can be subdivided into different response tendencies, from which attitudes can be inferred (Ajzen, 2005, p. 4).

*Cognitive responses* „are responses that reflect perceptions of, and thoughts about, the attitude object“ (Ajzen, 2005, p. 4). Attitudes can be inferred from cognitive responses based on an explicit verbal expression of beliefs about the attitude object or its characteristics or attributes, or nonverbal expressions whose nature is more indirect (Ajzen, 2005, p. 4). *Affective responses* have „to do with evaluations of, and feelings toward, the attitude object“ They, too, are verbal (e.g. admiration, disgust) or non-verbal (facial expressions, bodily reactions (Ajzen, 2005, pp. 4 - 5). Thirdly, *Conative responses* „are behavioral inclinations, intentions, commitments, and actions with respect to the attitude object“ (Ajzen, 2005, p. 5). „Starting again with the verbal mode of expression, we can consider what people say they do, plan to do, or would do under appropriate circumstances“ (Ajzen, 2005, p. 5). Nonverbal conative responses can include different kinds of actions, for example learning more about or financially supporting the object of attitude, or on the other hand taking formal actions to complain about it (Ajzen, 2005, p. 5). On the other hand, attitudes must be distinguished from
A personality trait is defined as a characteristic of an individual that exerts pervasive influence on a broad range of trait-relevant responses (Ajzen, 2005, p. 2). They are more stable than attitudes, so as to characterize individuals, they “describe response tendencies in a given domain” and they “are not necessarily evaluative” (Ajzen, 2005, p. 6).

The three types of responses as to inference of attitudes are summarized in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response mode</th>
<th>Cognition</th>
<th>Affect</th>
<th>Conation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbal</td>
<td>Expressions of beliefs about attitude object</td>
<td>Expressions of feelings toward attitude object</td>
<td>Expressions of behavioral intentions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonverbal</td>
<td>Perceptual reactions to attitude object</td>
<td>Physiological reactions to attitude object</td>
<td>Overt behaviors with respect to attitude object</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Ajzen, 2005, p. 4)

It must be noted that attitudes, beliefs and intentions are not always conscious, i.e. explicit. Responses to direct questions do not capture the whole of peoples’ attitudes. Implicit measures based on e.g. response time have been developed since. According to the Associative-Propositional Evaluation model (APE), attitudes stem from associative and propositional processes (Gawronski and Bodenhausen, 2006, as cited in Ajzen and Dasgupta, 2015, p. 129). Associative processes are spontaneous reactions in which a stimulus activates an attribute or evaluation automatically, a reaction that is often learned through co-occurrence of the stimulus and the attribute (Ajzen and Dasgupta, 2015, pp. 129 – 130). On the other hand, asking people about their attitude directly leads to a “deliberative inferential processes similar o those described in the TPB by considering information they regard as relevant to their racial attitudes and beliefs” (Ajzen and Dasgupta, 2015, p. 130). At this point, answers may be distorted or influenced by peoples’ memorized exemplars, values, self-presentational concerns, considerations of thoughts and feelings for the judgement, etc. (Ajzen and Dasgupta, 2015, p. 130). Although in most cases explicit attitudes predict behavior better than implicit ones, the latter can predict behavior, both controlled and spontaneous, and in a situation of cognitive depletion, social desirability bias, uncertainty or in a context that activates a steretotype (Ajzen and Dasgupta, 2015, pp. 131 – 134).
I also must specify what I mean by the term “attitude change”. The concept of “attitude” is so multifaceted that it has no one single definition on academic literature. Each definition is specific to the concrete attitude under study. Therefore, since I examine several types of attitudes in my research, I will mean by “attitude change” the shift of prejudice into a lack of prejudice, blaming into lack of thereof which I call exculpation, distrust into trust and unforgiveness into forgiveness. Since full attitude change happens rarely, while I want to allow my research for capturing any changes, I will include under the term “attitude chang” any partial shifts toward the positive counterparts of the negative attitudes under study here, such as partial prejudice reduction or an increase in trust.

**Conceptualization of beliefs**

Beliefs are defined by Bar-Tal in the following way:

“Beliefs are defined as propositions that a person holds with at least a minimal level of confidence in their validity (Bar-Tal, 1990c; Bem, 1970; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Kruglanski, 1989). Proposition refers to an object, relations between objects, or their characteristics. A minimal level of confidence refers to the likelihood that the proposition will be valid and truthful from a personal perspective. Beliefs differ with regard to the level of confidence that is attributed to them. Some beliefs are held as total truth as individuals attribute very high confidence to them, whereas other beliefs may be considered as uncertain or as hypotheses to which individuals attribute a low level of confidence.” (Bar-Tal, 2013, p. 18).

The negative conflict-related beliefs that my thesis will address are some of the beliefs of collective memory (Bar-Tal, 2013) and of the ethos of conflict (Bar-Tal, 1998; Bar-Tal, 2013) that are victimization (competitive victimhood), positive self-image, delegitimization (including prejudice and dehumanization) and, in addition, denial.

### 4.3 The Social-Psychological Infrastructure of Intractable Conflicts

Daniel Bar-Tal (2013) presents a very useful model of the socio-psychological foundations of intractable conflicts. Foundations for this infrastructure in the form of shared socio-
psychological repertoire consisting of societal beliefs, attitudes and emotions develop in society members living in intractable conflict. Its purpose is to help these people cope with the extremely difficult conflict challenges such as “stress, hardship, uncertainty, losses, suffering, solidarity and so on” (Bar-Tal, 2013, p. 131). The shared socio-psychological repertoire is then institutionalized by penetrating the channels of communication of the society and this way, it turns into a conflict-supporting socio-psychological infrastructure. This infrastructure consists of three interrelated elements: collective memory, societal beliefs called ethos of conflict and collective emotional orientation. Through acculturation and socialization of society members into this infrastructure (by the means of extensive sharing, wide application, expression in cultural products and educational materials), a culture of conflict emerges that prevents conflict resolution and reconciliation. This is because people tend to collect and interpret information through the prism of the socio-psychological infrastructure, which perpetuates the conflict (Bar-Tal, 2013, pp. 130 – 132). On one hand, this sociopsychological infrastructure helps a society to meet the challenges of living in an intractable conflict, provides a certain predictability of the events, an explanation about the conflict and it helps to cope with stress by assigning it a meaning. On the other hand, it justifies the violence toward the enemy, which resolves feelings of guilt and shame. It delegitimizes the opponent and presents the ingroup as the exclusive victim and it strengthens ingroup social identity (Bar-Tal, 2007, pp. 1442 - 1443). Its removal is therefore in order for reconciliation and peacebuilding to happen (Bar-Tal, 2000 and 2013).

What is crucial for the focus of my dissertation is that the socio-psychological infrastructure is institutionalized and becomes dominant in public discourse: via the channels of mass communication, it “serves as frame for the interpretation and assessment of situations and events” (Bar-Tal, 2013, p. 260). It encloses the society members in a sort of “bubble” in which it prevents them from receiving and processing alternative information (Bar-Tal, 2013, p. 281). More concretely, the beliefs of collective memory are expressed in public discourse and used to justify action (Bar-Tal, 2013, p. 141). The major victimizing events that Volkan (2002) refers to as chosen traumas are also “eternalized” in public discourse, including the education system (Bar-Tal, 2013, p. 146). The beliefs of ethos have been shown to be embedded in public discourse through being spread by political leaders and transmitted by the media (Bar-Tal, 2013, p. 264). The collective emotional orientation also arises from public discourse, among other factors (Bar-Tal, 2013, p. 219). A conflict-related emotion is expressed, reported on and appears in public discourse such as public debates. Bar-Tal
observes: “There is direct reference to this emotion as well as to the cues and signals that evoke it” (Bar-Tal, 2013, p. 223).

**Conflict narratives**

At this place, one last word must be said on narratives. Both the collective memory and the ethos of conflict fall into this category (Bar-Tal, 2007, p. 1438) and as societal beliefs, they represent the units of narratives (Bar-Tal, 2013, p. 22). Collective narratives are “social constructions that coherently interrelate a sequence of historical and current events; they are accounts of a community’s collective experiences, embodied in its belief system and represent the collective’s symbolically constructed shared identity” (Bar-Tal, 2013, p. 22). They are divided into dominant narratives and counternarratives, the latter competing with the former. The latter “consist of stories that provide alternative social constructions of interrelated sequences of historical events with new implications (Andrews, 2007; Bamberg & Andrews, 2004; Lindemann, 2001)” (Bar-Tal, 2013, p. 22). Ultimately, societies construct general *collective master narratives* that deal with the whole picture including the causes of the conflict and that instead of its partial aspects or single events. They are closely connected to identity and serve as a mobilizing force (Bar-Tal, 2013, p. 439).

In this thesis, special attention will be dedicated to the so-called *ethos of conflict* as it applies very well to the interethnic attitudes of expressed by the respondents in this research and it seems to be mitigated by the public testimonies. *The ethos of conflict* is defined as “the configuration of shared central societal beliefs that provide a dominant orientation to a society; these beliefs illuminate the present state of affairs and conditions and set goals for the future (Bar-Tal, 2000a)” (Bar-Tal, 2013, p. 174). It consists of eight themes:

- **Societal beliefs about the justness of one’s own goals**: these beliefs imply that the goals of one’s own society are just and the goals of the opponent are unjust. Their attainment is fundamental to the survival of the society. They also provide the “rationale for the eruption of the conflict” (Bar-Tal, 1998, p. 26).

- **Societal beliefs about security**: they concern the conditions under which ingroup can prevent injury and damage, secure national survival and attain its goals. They can include honoring the military forces and glorifying heroism (Bar-Tal, 1998, p. 27).

- **Societal beliefs that delegitimize the opponent**: Delegitimization is a crucial element of all conflicts as it leads to the exclusion from the moral norms which are usually
applied to the in-group. Delegitimization is defined as “categorization of a group or groups into extremely negative social categories that exclude it, or them, from the sphere of human groups that act within the limits of acceptable norms and/or values, since these groups are viewed as violating basic human norms or values” (Oren and Bar-Tal, 2007, p. 112 – 113). There are five basic types of delegitimization: dehumanization (claiming that the opponent is non human), out-casting (claiming that the opponent is violating fundamental social norms), negative trait characterization (ascribing extremely negative traits), political labeling (categorization into political groups rejected by the society), and group comparison (categorizing as groups which are portrayed as negative in the society) (Oren and Bar-Tal, 2007, p. 113). The delegitimizing beliefs about the opponent help explain to the society the reasons for the opponent’s hostility and goals. These explanations typically blame the opponent for the eruption of the conflict and ascribe him negative traits and “malevolent” goals and present the ingroup in positive light (Bar-Tal, 1998, p. 28). The most severe is probably dehumanization as it makes the ingroup view “them”, i.e. the outgroup not “not just as different from “us” but as outside the human universe of moral obligation” (Moshman, 2007, p. 115). This process basically represents the moral exclusion mentioned above (Opotow, 1990b; Staub, 1990).

- **Societal beliefs that create a positive self-image**: Societies engulfed in intractable conflict maintain a positive self-image, ascribe themselves positive traits, values and skills, positive contributions to mankind and positive actions in the past. These beliefs support an intense “self-justification, self-glorification and self-praise” that maintain a positive self-image in situation when the ingroup perpetrates immoral acts and atrocities (Bar-Tal, 1998, p. 28).

- **Societal beliefs about victimization**: A society engulfed in intractable conflict „believes that it is being victimized by the opponent, a belief formed through a long period of violence, as a result of one’s own sufferings and losses“ (Bar-Tal, 1998, p. 28). It concentrates on the evil done by the adversary blaming him for the conflict and at the same time depicting itself in positive traits and assuming it is the victim, blaming the opponent for the eruption of the conflict and and the consequent violence (Bar-Tal, 1998, p. 29).

- **Societal beliefs about patriotism**: The patriotic beliefs of “love, loyalty, commitment, pride or care” enable ingroup members to cope with the intractable conflict (Bar-Tal, 1998, p. 29).
- **Societal beliefs about unity**: These beliefs “engender a feeling that all society members support the goals of the conflict and follow the leaders” (Bar-Tal, 1998, p. 29).

- **Societal beliefs about peace**: These are beliefs that peace is the ultimate desire of the society. The ingroup depicting itself as peace-loving and peace-seeking. The aim of these beliefs is to provide hope and optimism (Bar-Tal 1998, p. 29).

- Collective memory is a narrative that presents events of the past in a selective and biased way, such accounts are however treated as the truth and widely shared in the whole society. It consists of societal beliefs which focus on four key themes: a justification of the conflict onset, a positive image of the in-group, delegitimization of the opponent and presenting one’s own society as the victim (Bar-Tal, 2007, p. 1436–1438).

**Collective memory**

The other type of narrative which forms the sociopsychological infrastructure of intractable conflict is **collective memory**. The latter can be defined as “representations of the past that are remembered by society members as the history of the group” (Kansteiner, 2002, as cited in Bar-Tal, 2013, p. 138). Every intractable conflict has a collective master narrative which explains the conflict in its entirety (its causes, nature, major events, guilt for the conflict etc.) and more specific narratives about concrete major events, as well as mini narratives referring to single incidents (Auerbach, 2010, as cited in Bar-Tal, 2013, p. 145).

Collective memory can be official, i.e. held by official representatives of the society and transmitted by institutions, or popular, i.e. held by society members (Bar-Tal, 2013, p. 138).

Collective memory contains societal beliefs which can be regrouped into four important themes. The first type of beliefs “justify the outbreak of the conflict and its development” (Bar-Tal, 2013, p. 149) and outline the related goals. The second type of beliefs delegitimizes the opponent, depicting him as inhuman, immoral and preventing a peaceful solution of the conflict (Bar-Tal, 2013, p. 149). The third type of beliefs “present a positive glorifying image of the ingroup” (Bar-Tal, 2013, p. 149), presenting the ingroup as moral and human. The fourth type of beliefs “present one’s own group as the sole victim of the conflict and of the opponent. (…) Focusing on the injustice, harm, evil and atrocities associated with the adversary, while emphasizing one’s own society as being just, moral and humane, leads
society members to present themselves as victims. Beliefs about victimhood imply that the conflict was imposed by a adversary, who not only fights for unjust goals, but also uses immoral means to achieve them” (Bar-Tal, 2013, p. 149). Another two themes of collective memory are specific to collective memory. The first one involves the violent confrontations with the enemy (celebrating the victories and heroes and remembering the defeats). The second theme focuses on the society members who fell in conflict as active participants or civilian victims (Bar-Tal, 2013, p. 150). Collective memory may furthermore relate to the distant past, such as chosen traumas and glories, ancient events that are remembered and intergenerationally transmitted (Bar-Tal, 2013, p. 153, see also Volkan, 2002). It is furthermore important to note that collective memory is generally very selective in what is remembered and biased against the rival, presenting a “black-and white picture” of the conflict (Bar-Tal, 2013, p. 163).

Collective memory is very hard but not impossible to change. Nets-Zehngut and Bar-Tal (2012, as cited in Bar-Tal, 2013, p. 169) describe a model of six stages of this process: new information supporting an alternative narrative is researched and later disclosed and disseminated through channels of communication which leads to a contest between supporters of old and alternative narratives, which finally leads to a change of the narratives and a full acceptance of the alternative ones (Bar-Tal, 2013, p. 169).

Collective emotional orientation

The third element of the sociopsychological infrastructure of intractable conflicts is the collective emotional orientation. These emotions “strengthen the close the psychological repertoire of society members and strengthen the rigidity of societal beliefs” (Bar-Tal, 2013, p. 291). The most important is the collective fear orientation but there may be also an orientation dominated by fear, hatred, anger, guilt or pride (Bar-Tal, 2007, p. 1439). In this thesis, I focus on hate in particular as it turned up to be very important in my data. I consider, along with other authors that prejudice is the main cause of hate (Allport, 1954, as cited in Sternberg and Sternberg, 2008, p. 43).

Institutionalization of The Sociopsychological Infrastructure

The sociopsychological infrastructure, and especially the ethos of conflict, shape the nature of social identity (Bar-Tal, 2007, p. 1444). The persevering nature of intractable conflicts
causes the negative repertoire of the sociopsychological infrastructure to become institutionalized in a process that Bar-Tal calls freezing, and it is then shared not only among society members, but also through media, educational institutions, cultural products etc. This reproduction further validates the societal beliefs, attitudes and emotions that accompany intractable conflict. Young people are socialized to accept them, too (Bar-Tal, 2007, p. 1444). Furthermore, in intractable conflicts, it is difficult to get alternative information due to severe censorship, control of mass media and persecution of alternative information providers (Bar-Tal, 2013, p. 284 - 287). Therefore, it is believed to be the only truthful and valid information (Bar-Tal, 2013, p. 291). Freezing makes cues related to the conflict automatically activate the conflict-supporting beliefs in society members. Therefore, even when the latter do get alternative information, it is processed in a one-sided way and tends to be disregarded (Bar-Tal, 2013, p. 289) and only information confirming the beliefs is accepted (Bar-Tal, 2013, p. 291). Ambiguous information in interpreted so that it be coherent with the held psychological repertoire. As Bar-Tal (2007, p. 1446) adds, “it is thus not surprising that the above-described information processing leads to such phenomena as double standards, fundamental attribution error, reactive evaluation, perception of self-uniqueness, self-focus, false consensus, and disregard of empathy for the rival.” Society members also tend to be self-focused, i.e. they empathize with the ingroup’s needs and goals and disregard the empathetic information about the rival. They tend to believe that the ingroup can do anything to ensure its safety (Bar-Tal, 2013, p. 306 – 312).

From Conflict Narratives to Reconciliation

In order to attain social change, the above-mentioned institutionalized beliefs must change in a process which Bar-Tal (2013, p. 327) calls unfreezing. “On the psychological individual level, the process of unfreezing usually begins as a result of the appearance of a new idea (or ideas) that is inconsistent with the held beliefs and attitudes and causes some tension, dilemmas or even intrapersonal conflict which may stimulate people to move from their basic position and look for alternative ones (…). This new idea is called instigating belief, because it motivates society members who construct it to evaluate the held societal beliefs of the culture of conflict, and in fact it may lead to their unfreezing and eventually to the seizing (i.e. adoption) of alternative beliefs that sow the seeds for the emergence of the ethos of peace” (Bar-Tal, 2013, pp. 327 – 328). Such an instigating belief has to come from a credible source and must be able to make the society members think about their colliding
beliefs. Once the new belief is absorbed, mediating beliefs are adopted which ask for the change of strategy or ultimately for a peaceful solution of the conflict. The idea of a peaceful solution of the conflict must be spread among society members and the majority has to be persuaded to adopt it (Bar-Tal, 2013, pp. 328 – 329).

The process of unfreezing leads to the development of a peace-supporting psychological repertoire and to the adoption of an ethos of peace. The ethos of peace entails a positive change of the fundamental beliefs of the ethos of conflict. The first belief constituting this concept is the belief about societal goals, i.e. conflict-related goals that were considered just must be indefinitely postponed or abolished (Bar-Tal, 2000, p. 357). Furthermore, new beliefs about the adversary group must be adopted, i.e. the rival side must be legitimized, i.e. viewed as “belonging to the category of acceptable groups, behaving within the boundaries of international norms. Basically, it grants humanity to adversary group members after years of denying it to them” (Bar-Tal, 2000, p. 358). New beliefs about the ingroup must portray the latter in a more objective and critical way, recognize that both sides were victims of the conflict and not just the ingroup. The ingroup must also admit portion of guilt on the conflict and the committed atrocities. New beliefs about intergroup relations need to be established that concern the past, present and the future. They reconstruct the past and promote friendly and cooperative relations (Bar-Tal, 2000, p. 358 - 359). The new beliefs about peace entails an understanding of what living in peace means and how can disputes be resolved in a nonviolent way (Bar-Tal, 2000, p. 159). The replacement of the ethos of the conflict by the ethos of peace is a condition that must be met in order to attain reconciliation (Bar-Tal, 2000, p. 159).

4.4 Conceptualization of Conflict-Related Beliefs, Attitudes and Emotions

Denial

Cohen defines denial as „disavowal, a refusal to believe what is happening. The archetypal denier is an imbecile who seems unable to see, let alone accept realities obvious to everyone else“ Cohen, 2001, p. 262). He classifies denial into literal, interpretive and implicatory denial. Literal denial can range from ignorance, aversion of gaze from the truth, self, deception, a cultural non-noticing, or lying, deception and disinformation. Interpretive denial
is represented by the inability to understand the meaning of the facts or renaming the facts. Implicatory denial means „avoiding moral and psychological demands“ (Cohen 2001, p. 9). „Denial, then, includes cognition (not acknowledging the facts); emotion (not feeling, not being disturbed); morality (not recognizing wrongness or responsibility) and action (not taking active steps in response to knowledge)“ (Cohen, 2001, p. 9). The opposite of denial is acknowledgement in four different senses. The first one is self-knowledge, as „to be healed, you must face the truth about yourself“ (Cohen, 2001, p. 255). The second is moral witness who „looks for the quiet but certain knowledge of what the powerful deny and would rather not have witnessed“ (Cohen, 2001, p. 256). The third sense is blowing the whistle, the transformation from bystander to rescuer (Cohen, 2001, p. 264), and the fourth one is living outside the lie (Cohen, 2001, p. 255).

Acknowledging that atrocities against the outgroup have been committed is, on itself, a great achievement in Bosnia as people are generally „not ready or willing to come to terms with collective atrocities“ (Čehajić-Clancy, 2012, p. 240). There is however another dimension of acknowledgement, which is the acknowledgement of collective responsibility. The latter serves as a precondition of the acceptance of collective responsibility (Čehajić-Clancy, 2012, p. 239) which leads to the feeling of guilt (Čehajić-Clancy, 2012, p. 238). Čehajić-Clancy considers that acknowledgement of ingroup responsibility should be „a practical category oriented towards the future“ and implies the „psychological willingness to share in the collective blame for the misdeeds of one’s group – even if one did not personally took [sic!] part in those misdeeds (May, 1992)“ (Čehajić-Clancy, 2012, p. 240).

Guilt

Wohl, Branscombe and Klar (2006, p. 2) define guilt the following way: „(...) guilt is an unpleasant feeling that accompanies the belief that the harmful act one committed was not justified. Thus, guilt fundamentally involves a sense that one’s actions that harmed another were illegitimate. "While personal guilt results from the self’s actions, on group level “collective guilt can occur when the ingroup is perceived as having treated an outgroup unjustly or as having violated moral standards”, even in absence of personal responsibility of the self (Branscombe, Doosje and McGarty, 2002, p. 50). They add that however, “collective guilt might be a rather rare phenomenon precisely because people have a variety of strategies that allow them to legitimise their group’s harmful actions” (Wohl, Branscombe, Klar, 2006,
Highly victimized people experience are much less likely to feel collective guilt and to forgive the outgroup (Hewstone et al., 2004, p. 204 – 205).

Collective guilt can be alleviated by three strategies. A first strategy for the perpetrator group is to focus on the harm the outgroup has experienced rather than on the ingroup’s wrongdoing. The second strategy is to blame the outgroup for the harm they have experienced. The third strategy is placing the blame on “a few deviant ingroup members” (Wohl, Branscombe, Klar, 2006, p. 13). On the other hand, the perpetrator group can legitimize its actions as a simple reaction to the outgroup’s harmful actions (Wohl, Branscombe, Klar, 2006, p. 18, see also Wohl and Branscombe, 2004). Another possible strategy to dispel collective guilt is to claim that the ingroup was more victimized than the outgroup (Buruma, 1999, as cited in Branscombe, Doosje and McGarty, 2002, p. 56). The perpetrator group can also try to lessen collective guilt by increasing the legitimacy of its harmful actions or by claiming they had been “provoked by the victimized group” (Branscombe, Doosje and McGarty, 2002, p. 56). Dehumanization of the outgroup can also be a strategy for avoiding collective guilt “by decreasing the extent to which a moral violation is perceived as having been committed. Another important means of avoiding collective guilt would involve denying the ingroup’s involvement in the moral violation” (Branscombe, Doosje and McFarthy, 2002, p. 56).

**Competitive victimhood**

Competitive victimhood is a key term in this research. It refers to “a group’s motivation and consequent efforts to establish that it has suffered more than its adversaries” (Noor et al., 2012, p. 351). It further contributes to the conflict escalation, impedes its peaceful conflict resolution (Noor et al., 2012, p. 351) and prevents intergroup forgiveness (Noor et al., 2008). Especially victimization in violent conflicts lead the parties tend to monopolize their position as exclusive victims of the conflict (Bar-Tal, 2000, p. 358; see also Noor et al., 2012; Cohrs, McNeill and Vollhardt, 2015). Competitive victimhood is, among others, fueled by the societal beliefs about victimization (Bar-Tal, 2007, as cited in Noor et al., 2012, p. 352). This victimization can stem either from a direct victimization by outgroup members or by indirectly by witnessing ingroup members suffer (Noor et al., 2012, p. 352). Competitive victimhood operates both on a collective and individual level: on the collective level, it can operate for example by creating a historical narrative (Noor et al., 2012, p. 352- 353). Noor adds: “Competitive victimhood can lead to perceptions of the out-group as the guilty, violent,
perpetrator and the in-group as the innocent, moral victim (Bar-Tal, 2000). This again, lays the foundation for CV” (Noor et al., 2012, p. 356).

Competitive victimhood has several dimensions that Noor et al. (2012) call the dimensions of suffering.

The first one is the physical dimension of suffering which represents the effort of the ingroup to establish that it “was subjected to more physical victimization than the outgroup” (Noor et al., 2012, p. 356). This leads to a devaluation of the outgroup’s suffering. Noor adds: “Moreover, even in contexts where one group has been commonly acknowledged as responsible for more violence than the other group, both groups may still engage in competition over physical suffering” (Noor et al., 2012, p. 356).

The second dimension is the material dimension of suffering which refers to different kinds of discrimination in housing, education, employment and similar, that may be stem from a situation of structural violence. These disadvantages can further fuel the conflict (Noor et al., 2012, p. 356).

The third dimension is the cultural dimension of suffering, a sense of cultural deprivation or a threat of cultural extinction. This can include the loss of language, customs or way of life (Noor et al., 2012, p. 357).

The fourth is the psychological dimension of suffering and it represents the psychological distress and emotional pain that can result even from a mere threat of harm (Eidelson and Eidelson, 2003, as cited in Noor, 2012, p. 357).

The fifth is the legitimacy dimension of suffering entails that even when groups acknowledge the others suffering, they still compete to say that their own suffering was decidedly more illegitimate and unjust than the outgroup’s and that the outgroup brought it on itself (Bar-Tal, 2000, Noor, Brown and Prentice 2008b). This may lead to legitimization of violence (Noor et al., 2012, p. 357).

**Prejudice**

Prejudice is a negative attitude generally accompanying ethnic conflict (Green and Seher, 2003). Allport (1958, p. 8) defines prejudice as „an avertive or hostile attitude toward a person who belongs to a group, simply because he belongs to that group, and is therefore presumed to have the objectionable qualities ascribed to the group.” He defines ethnic
prejudice the following way (Allport, 1958, p. 9) the following way: „Ethnic prejudice is an antipathy based upon a faulty and inflexible generalization. It may be felt or expressed. It may be directed toward a group as a whole, or toward an individual because he is a member of that group.“ Prejudice has two essential ingredients: hostility and rejection, and the fact that the individuals belonging to the outgroup are condemned for their simple group membership (Allport, 1958, p. 5 – 6).

There are three components of prejudice: negative stereotypes, negative feelings and negative behavioral inclinations (Duckitt, 2003, p. 561 - 566). Stereotypes, or the cognitive component of prejudice, are, „beliefs about the personal characteristics of a group or category of people“ (Duckitt, 2003, p. 561) are very common and not necessarily negative processes that serve to simplify the complex world that surrounds us (Duckitt, 2003, pp. 562 - 563). Only negative stereotypes can be viewed as expression of prejudiced attitudes (Duckitt, 2003, p. 562). Negative feelings toward the outgroup represent the affective component of prejudice. It was found to better predict the favorability and preferred social distance than the stereotype component of prejudice (Stangor, Sullivan and Ford, 1991). It was conceptualized by Djiker (1987) as either a negative affect such as “anger or irritation, worry or concern and anxiety” (Duckitt, 2003, p. 564), or a low positive emotion (Stangor, Sullivan and Ford, 1991). A lack of positive affect predicts a disrespect for the outgroup (Brewer and Campbell, 1976, as cited in Duckitt, p. 564). Last but not least, the third or behavioral component of prejudice entails expressions such as aggression, violence, discrimination or avoidance (Duckitt, 2003, pp. 565 – 566).

Van Dijk in his theoretical model of prejudiced discourse defines stereotypes as “group schemata” and points out, along Linville and Jones (1980, as cited in van Dijk, 1984, pp. 20 – 21) that information about outgroups is interpreted more negatively, also due to outgroup schemata being assumed by the authors to be less complex (van Dijk, 1984, pp. 20 – 21). People tend to process information regarding outgroup members in accordance with their own pre-existent stereotypes and overestimate the frequency of actions confirming those stereotypes (Hamilton, 1976, 1979 and 1981, as cited in van Dijk, 1984, p. 19).

In order to shed some more light on the attitudes of the young people without pretending to explain them, the author of this thesis has interviewed the respondents on the way they had been socialized. This analysis will be useful in explaining the course of the attitude change and what the new beliefs are actually contradicting. Socialization is said to be a key factor of
interethnic attitudes. It consists from four factors: the family, the friends, school/teachers and media (Whitbeck, 1999; Nurco, 1999; Kelly, 1999; Aldana and Byrd, 2015; Aboud and Amato, 2001; Arnett, 1995).

Hate

Hate is a powerful negative emotion which makes part of the collective emotional orientation in intractable conflict. It was defined by Halperin (2008, p. 718) the following way:

“Hatred is a powerful, extreme, and persistent emotion that rejects the group toward which it is directed in a generalized and totalistic fashion. Group-based hatred is provoked in consequence to recurrent offenses committed against the individual or his or her group. These offenses are perceived as intentional, unjust, threatening the person or his or her group, and of a nature with which in practice the individual has difficulty coping. This hatred includes cognitive elements that make a clear ideological, moral, and cultural differentiation between the in-group and the out-group while delegitimizing the out-group. The affective element of hatred is secondary, and it is manifested in unpleasant physical symptoms as well as in anger, fear, and a strong negative feeling toward the out-group to the point of a desire to harm and even destroy it. In the majority of cases, this desire is not realized and therefore is channeled to other behavioral directions, such as isolation from the object of the hatred, delight at the expense of the hated other, or taking part in political action against him or her.”

There are a number of theories that explain hatred. The most significant one in this research is Allport’s (1954, as cited in Sternberg and Sternberg, 2008, p. 43) assertion that hate is caused by prejudice. Hate may also stem from the frustration of basic needs such as the needs for security as the latter lead to fear and hostility (Sternberg and Sternberg, 2008, p. 28 - 29). Hate can also develop on the basis of anger (Sternberg and Sternberg, 2008, p. 48) or devaluation (Sternberg and Sternberg, 2008, p. 27), destructive ideologies, interpretation of history such as past traumas (Sternberg and Sternberg, 2008, p. 28), difficult life conditions which lead to scapegoating (Sternberg and Sternberg, 2008, p. 29). Hate may also arise from the “belief that one’s own side is good and that the enemy is evil” (Baumeister, 1998, as cited in Sternberg and Sternberg, 1998, p. 35), from the revenge for injustices suffered, from “greed, lust, ambition and other forms of self-interest (Baumeister, 1996, as cited in
Sternberg and Sternberg, 2008, p. 35 – 36) and from sadism (Sternberg and Sternberg, 2008, p. 36). Hate is not experienced only by individuals for individuals, but also as collective hatred of whole groups for other groups (Yanay, 2002).

Forgiveness

The author furthermore hypothesized that the public testimonies under study here could support forgiveness. Forgiveness is a mechanism which enables people to liberate themselves from the vicious circle in which the victim becomes a perpetrator by revenging on his perpetrator, and the perpetrator becomes a victim (Botcharova, 1988). Furthermore, forgiveness is an important concept discussed in relation to reconciliation, but it does not equal to the latter. As Worthington highlights, “It is possible to reconcile with an opponent without actually forgiving the individual” (Worthington, 2006, p. 18). Forgiveness is often considered to be a precondition for reconciliation (Tutu, 1999). Some scientists however believe that forgiveness is possible without reconciliation (Enright and Zell, 1989, cit. in Hewstone et al., 2004, p. 197; Enright, Gassin, Longinovic and Loudon, 1994, as cited in Worthington 2006, p. 471). According to Power (1994, as cited in Worthington, 2006, p. 471), forgiveness must point towards reconciliation. Auerbach (2004, p. 154) adds that „forgiveness is only possible when the sides involved in the conflict acknowledge that injustice has been done and agree upon the identity of the victim and the perpetrator.” This is a great problem in countries where all sides victimized and were being victimized and where no official truth about the crimes has been established, like in Bosnia.

Forgiveness is a major topic in the literature on reconciliation (Worthington, 2006, Lederach, 1997 aj.). According to Worthington, unforgiveness has two different levels of generality: emotional unforgiveness for a particular transgression and chronic emotional unforgiveness that generalized across situations and over time (Worthington, 2006, p. 65). Forgiving or unforgiveness can be directed toward a person, a race, an ethnic group or a class. In the case of racial, ethnic or class unforgiveness, transgressions at the hand of those groups have become generalized to other members of those groups (Worthington, 2006, p. 65).

Unforgiveness is very stressful, both psychically and physically (Worthington, 2006, p. 62), and so is hate (Baures, 1996). For this reason, it is better for the victim to forgive: forgiveness enables a person to release the hate (Baures, 1996) and anger, which has therapeutic properties (Fitzgibbons, 1986). According to Worthington’s theory, unforgiveness can be replaced by emotions such as empathy, sympathy (arousal from seeing a person in distress),
compassion, and altruistic love (Worthington, 2006, p. 74). Empathy is important in forgiving as it helps to understand the offender: “Through a series of studies, Levenson and Ruef (1991) demonstrated that people tend to empathize more with negative emotions observed in the other person than with positive emotions. If the transgressor experiences and shows remorse, distress, contrition, and regret, the victim’s empathy (and thus forgiveness) will be enhanced“ (Worthington, 2006, p. 74).

Trust

A key aspect of reconciliation is intergroup trust (Lewicki, 2006; Bar-On and Kassem, 2004; Kelman, 2004, p. 120). In the wake of fratricidal conflicts such as the one in Bosnia, however, trust is devastated and must be restored (Mooren and Kleber, 2001).

Trust is “an individual’s belief in, and willingness to act on the basis of, the words, actions and decisions of another’ (McAllister, 1995, p. 25; Lewicki, Mc Allister and Bies, 1998, p. 440)” (Lewicki 2006, p. 94). Lewicki adds that “trust can be defined as ‘confident positive expectations regarding another’s conduct,’ distrust can indeed be ‘confident negative expectations’ regarding another’s conduct (Lewicki, McAllister, and Bies, 1998)” (Lewicki, 2006, p. 97)

High trust leads to ascribing positive intentions, while distrust leads to the contrary (Kramer and Carnevale, 2001, p. 435). Trust is difficult to gain and easy to lose (Hewstone et al., 2008, p. 211). The level of trust is influenced by the individual’s chronic disposition toward trust, situational parameters and a history of the relationship (Lewicki, 2006, p. 94). Trust can be divided into several types: calculus-based trust stemming from the fear of the consequences of non-compliance, identification-based trust based on “identification with the other’s desires and intentions” (Lewicki, 2006, pp. 94 – 96).

4.5 Dimensions of Reconciliation

Reconciliation is a very vast concept, however I am systematizing its dimensions in this work based on two scales of reconciliation: Petrović’s scale of readiness for reconciliation (Petrović, 2010), and the scale of willingness to reconcile as established by Shnabel et al. (2009). The former represents the foundation of this thesis, while the second brings some minor additions to it. Petrović developed his scale based on a round of 60 interviews and a very large survey of students from Croatia, Bosnia and Serbia. Factor analysis has established
four dimension of readiness for reconciliation: distrust, cooperation, forgiveness and rehumanization. The survey items regarding cooperation were not suitable for this research due to the fact that the public testimonies were not likely to have direct impact on them, and therefore this dimension was omitted from this research. The other three dimensions, however, were part of the interview guide and of this analytical framework. The items of the scales for each dimension have been summarized in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive indicators of reconciliation</th>
<th>Negative indicators of reconciliation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Distrust</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of blaming</td>
<td>Blaming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ascribing good intentions to the ingroup</td>
<td>Ascribing bad intentions to the outgroup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not considering the ingroup as victim of evil intentions of the outgroup</td>
<td>Considering the ingroup as victim of evil intentions of the outgroup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belief that the outgroup fought because it had to</td>
<td>Belief that fighting is part of the outgroup’s nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belief that the outgroup can be trusted</td>
<td>Belief that the outgroup can never be trusted again</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not being more suspicious and careful when meeting an outgroup member</td>
<td>Being more suspicious and careful when meeting an outgroup member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Forgiveness</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belief that forgiveness is necessary</td>
<td>Belief that forgiveness is not necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal willingness to forgive if outgroup members admit their guilt</td>
<td>Refusal to give personal forgiveness if outgroup members admit their guilt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belief that all nations should apologize to the others</td>
<td>Belief that ingroup shall not apologize to other nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belief that ingroup should ask for other nations’ forgiveness</td>
<td>Belief that ingroup should not ask for other nations’ forgiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belief that one’s nations’ officials should apologize for evil deeds of ingroup members</td>
<td>Refusal of the idea that one’s nations’ officials should apologize for evil deeds of ingroup members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belief that forgiveness can facilitate healing</td>
<td>Belief that forgiveness can not facilitate healing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Belief that forgiveness can bring a better future  Refusal of the idea that forgiveness can bring a better future
Belief that forgiveness can end violence  Refusal of the idea that forgiveness can end violence
Personal readiness to forgive everyone  Lack of personal readiness to forgive everyone

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rehumanization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belief that outgroup members are human beings  Belief that outgroup members are not (fully) human beings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belief that many outgroup members suffered during the war  Belief that outgroup members did (mostly) not suffer during the war</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling sorry for peoples’ losses regardless of the nation  Not feeling (very) sorry for peoples’ losses regardless of the nation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All human lives are the same worth  The lives of ingroup members are more worth than the lives of outgroup members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence has led to great losses for everyone  Violence has led to losses for the ingroup only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admission of ingroup guilt  Denial of ingroup guilt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belief that not all outgroup members have participated in (war) crimes  Belief that all outgroup members have participated in (war) crimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belief that crimes of individuals do not make all outgroup members bad people  Belief that crimes of individuals do make all outgroup members bad people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belief that there are good and honest people in the outgroup  Belief that there are no good and honest people in the outgroup</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table: Dimensions and subcategories of reconciliation (Petrović, 2010)*

Petrović’s (2010) dimensions of reconciliation are further complemented by a few items from the scale by Shnabel et al. (2009, p. 1024): participants in the study had to report how much a message of reconciliation pronounced by an outgroup member created a better image of the outgroup in their eyes; made them perceive the outgroup as human beings just like the ingroup; increased their willingness to learn more about the outgroup’s culture; and increased their willingness to act for promoting reconciliation. While the first two items correspond to Petrović’s rehumanization (2010), the third item is an addition to the analytical framework of
this thesis, with a focus on information about the outgroup in general and its suffering during the war in particular. The last above-mentioned item was relevant since it is the aim of CRS and Caritas to use the storytelling events in order to attract new peace activists from among the youth.

Importantly, in my conceptualization of reconciliation I also link Petrović’s scale (2010) to conflict narratives and to Bar-Tal’s ethos of peace (2000). Rehumanization in the form of beliefs such as that outgroup members are normal human beings or that they can be good people represents a form of legitimizing beliefs (Bar-Tal, 2000, p. 358), or a contrary of societal beliefs that delegitimize the opponent (Bar-Tal, 1998, p. 28). The ethos of peace also contains two subcategories of rehumanization that belong to new beliefs about the ingroup (Bar-Tal, 2000, p. 358 - 359), as opposed to its positive self-image (Bar-Tal, 1998, p. 28): These are the admission of ingroup guilt and the acknowledgement of outgroup suffering. The latter also represent the direct contrary of the usual conflict beliefs about ingroup victimization (Bar-Tal, 1998, p. 29). These are the three beliefs of the ethos of conflict that this research focused on; the remaining ones were omitted since exploratory research showed that the public testimonies would probably not have much impact on them.

For my analytical purpose of distinguishing which discursive narratives indicate a shift toward reconciliation and which ones its contrary, I have classified my theoretical framework into the table below. The table is divided into two sections: concepts that represent actual reconciliation are located in the first section, while factors that on themselves do not represent reconciliation, but rather factors which facilitate it, are located in the second section. I have also added hate, classified by Bar-Tal (2013) as a conflict-related negative emotion. Last but not least, willingness to engage in intergroup contact was also added to based on the definition of reconciliation of reconciliation as a renewal of relationships (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Miall, 2011, p. 246).

I consider this distinction into negative and positive discursive narratives analytically useful because it systematically examines one dimension or variable of reconciliation after another, clearly labeling the negative aspects and matching them to their positive counterparts. This way, when identified in the data, the discursive narratives can be clearly classified as negative or positive and shifts on the same dimension before and after the testimony can be identified.
### Table: Analytical framework for classifying discursive narratives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive discursive narratives</th>
<th>Negative discursive narratives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attitudes corresponding to reconciliation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rehumanization</td>
<td>Delegitimization (includes prejudice)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Prejudice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- All criminals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of outgroup blaming; blaming of ingroup members</td>
<td>Outgroup blaming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingroup guilt / common perpetrator identity</td>
<td>Ingroup guilt denial / outgroup guilt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outgroup victimhood / common victimhood</td>
<td>Competitive victimhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness for intergroup contact</td>
<td>Refusal of intergroup contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outgroup trust</td>
<td>Outgroup distrust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outgroup liking</td>
<td>Outgroup hate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forgiveness</td>
<td>Unforgivingness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to acquire alternative information about the outgroup</td>
<td>Lack of willingness to acquire alternative information about the outgroup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attitudes corresponding to factors facilitating reconciliation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>Lack of empathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common, superordinate or cross-cutting identity</td>
<td>Lack of common, superordinate or cross-cutting identity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5 Methods and techniques

This dissertation represents a study of the discursive narrative and their embedded frames elicited in the listeners by the public testimonies within the initiative “My Story” that aims to explore the possible shifts in their attitudes regarding the readiness for reconciliation and conflict-related narratives, as seen through the lens of the relevant social-psychological theories. The study is based on in-depth interviews with 17 young people (16 – 25 years old) and one teacher: 8 Bosniaks (1 male, 7 female), 7 Serbs (2 male, 5 female), and 3 Croats (2 male, 1 female). Their names have been altered to pseudonyms in order to keep their identity confidential, and the identifying elements of their accounts have been omitted from this report. Their respective towns are only referred to generically by mentioning their approximate ethnic composition. Thanks to the support of CRS and Caritas staff, the interviews were collected after three different storytelling events, two of which I videotaped and analyzed its contents. The whole of my field research was conducted in different phases between October 2012 and April 2015, and the main phase of interviewing took place in late 2014 with several follow-up phone interviews in the spring of 2015 (February – April).

The first storytelling event analyzed here took place in late spring of 2014 in a Croat-Bosniak town in Herzegovina, where these two ethnic groups fought for control over the town. The participants were members of a local youth center that promotes interethnic contact and they were recruited by the leader of this center. The interview took place inside of the building of the center. The second storytelling event took place in late 2014 in a Serb town in central-eastern Bosnia. This town was held by Serbs during the war (in a conflict against the Bosniaks), and only a small Bosniak minority lives here nowadays. The storytelling event took place for a class of 18-year old high-school students who were, for the most part, social and peace activists, already participating in an interethnic contact programme with young Bosniaks. Respondents for my research were recruited through a questionnaire I distributed to the listeners after the testimony, asking about their interethnic attitudes and about their experience of the storytelling event (the questionnaire was not included in this research due to low reliability of the acquired data\textsuperscript{3}). Three respondents

\textsuperscript{3} The students in the ethnically mixed town thought the questionnaire was a test, and they were copying from each other. Many questionnaires were also not well filled, or they were filled in a careless and unreliable way, which may be due to the number of questions and due to the limited amount of time for filling the questionnaire.
participated in the interview right after the storytelling event based on the author’s personal request. The third storytelling event took place at the local high school of an ethnically mixed town in Northeastern Bosnia. This town has, nowadays, a Bosniak majority, a Croat minority, and a small number of Serbs. During the war, local Bosniaks and Croats fought together against the Serbs. The audience was composed of two classes of 16-year old students who were, for the most part, not involved in peacebuilding activities at that time. Participants were recruited partly through the questionnaire and partly by a teacher, and they took place in her office with no other adults present. Additionally, the I managed to conduct phone interviews with two listeners who assisted to public testimonies 1 and 2 years earlier that took place in a larger Bosniak-Croat town in Herzegovina where these two nations were fighting each other during the war. Both listeners come from the same ethnically mixed area where all three ethnic groups are strongly represented. The organization of the events fully depended on the local partner NGOs Caritas and CRS and the possibilities and constraints of their PRO-Future peacebuilding project aiming at young people, and on the organizations participating in this project. The focus on young people is, however, a major point of contribution of this research. A summary overview of the public testimonies can be found in the table below:

Locations and Context Information on the Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wartime fighting:</strong> Serbs vs. Croats and Bosniaks</td>
<td><strong>Wartime fighting:</strong> Bosniaks vs. Croats</td>
<td><strong>Wartime fighting:</strong> Serbs vs. Bosniaks</td>
<td><strong>Wartime fighting:</strong> All against all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stories:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Stories:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Stories:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Stories:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smilja, Andelko, Edisa</td>
<td>Amir, Janko, Stanislav</td>
<td>Latifa, Andelko, Vesna</td>
<td>Amir, Janko, Stanislav</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Setting:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Setting:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Setting:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Setting:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school</td>
<td>Youth center promoting peacebuilding</td>
<td>High school with support of municipality</td>
<td>Testimony for the general public in a large hall in a bigger town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ca. 60 listeners, mainly Bosniak</td>
<td>Ca. 30 listeners, Bosniak and Croat</td>
<td>Ca. 30 listeners, all Serb</td>
<td>High number, mainly Croat and Bosniak, some Serbs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Male:
Kasim (B)
Female:
Jasmina** (B)
Zehra** (B)
Hanifa (B)
Dina (B)
Halima (B)

Female:
Azra (B)
Meliha (B)
Danica (C)

Male:
Marko (S)
Jovan (S)
Female:
Ana (S)
Marija (S)
Jelena (S)
Mirjana (S)
Serb teacher (S)
Male:
Franjo** (C)
Josip** (C)

Note. * First author videotaped the testimony; **Significant attitude change involving prejudice reduction or a reduction of competitive victimhood; the names of Latifa Begić and Vesna Tomic as well as those of all listeners are pseudonyms.

B = Bosniak; S = Serb; C = Croat.

Table 1 (Oberpfalzerova, 2019, p. 8)

The storytelling events in the ethnically mixed and Serb towns were videotaped, and the remaining stories were videotaped during a storytelling event for Ukrainian NGO activists (this was due to the author’s travel circumstances).

The interviews were in-depth, lasting between 60 and 90 minutes, partly individual and partly conducted as focus groups, and semi-structured. The interview guide focused on eliciting answers regarding factors of reconciliation and attitude change known in social-psychological literature (empathy, individualization, rehumanization), the respondents’ previous and current attitudes (prejudice, hate, delegitimization, blaming, etc.) and their overall experience of the storytelling event. For example, to elicit an account of empathy, the question “What feelings did you have during the public testimony?” was asked. They were also questioned about their socialization and their biography, including the wartime experience and traumatization of their family during the war. The former part was more deductive and semi-structured, while the questions on their impressions of the storytelling event and their biography were more narrative in order to allow for unexpected answers.

This research was open to all the possible outcomes of the public testimonies. The author was aware of most of the negative attitudes that the respondents may have had, which consisted mainly of prejudice, competitive victimhood, negative emotions and collective narratives. Under attitude change I mean the change of these negative beliefs and attitudes toward more
positive ones and the increase of readiness to reconcile\textsuperscript{4}. Wherever possible, I decomposed the term of reconciliation into dimensions (see chapter 4.5.). In the case of readiness for reconciliation (or willingness to reconcile), the questions were based on dimensions from two scales (Shnabel et al., 2009 and Petrović, 2010). Of key importance here are the dimensions of rehumanization and forgiveness, less attention was dedicated to trust and collaboration (Petrović, 2010). Based on the scale of Shnabel et al. (2009), the following items were studied: whether the public testimony created a better image of the outgroup in the eyes of the respondent, whether it attests to good intentions of the outgroup, whether it made the respondent perceive the outgroup as human beings and whether it made him or her want to learn more about the outgroup’s culture. I have also broadened the last item to general willingness to acquire new information about the outgroup and added willingness to engage in intergroup contact on the list (Esses and Dovidio, 2002). Also, I departed from the “strong” conceptualization of reconciliation, i.e. one that includes the acknowledgment of one’s own guilt and of the harm done (Jeong, 2005, p. 156) as this is a key variable the victims’ public testimonies in the CPT project seem to influence. The different concepts related to attitude change were decomposed into dimensions and operationalized into interview questions. In order to capture possible attitude change, the respondents were asked about their attitudes before and after the testimony.

The first round of interviews took place from the same day of the public testimony to one week later in order to capture the immediate effects and impressions of the testimonies. I then contacted most of the initial respondents about four months later by telephone in order to verify whether an attitude change had taken place and conducted deeper interviews with the respondents in which this was the case. I chose this time frame based on the claims of the two male Croat respondents who stated that it had taken them around 2 – 3 months after the testimony in order to feel some stronger attitude change. Their accounts helped illustrate the long-term effects of the initiative as the change appears to be a gradual process occurring over several months or even years.

A deep attitude change (at least partial prejudice reduction or reduction in competitive victimhood) occurred in four of the respondents (two female Bosniaks reacting to the story of

\textsuperscript{4}Readiness for reconciliation instead of actual reconciliation is the concept that psychologists usually measure, as readiness is “of central importance for arriving to reconciliation. Where there is readiness, there is a way,” Petrović (2010, p. 15) observes.
a Serbian lady and two male Croats reacting to the stories of three former concentration camp prisoners), while some of the symptoms of the attitude change process manifested in several other Bosniak girls whose attitudes were already positive. There was no respondent with clearly negative attitudes who would keep them even after the testimony, with the exception of one Bosniak boy (Kasim) who was somewhat biased and high in blaming the Serbs for the war, although demonstrating some signs of good attitudes. This author must stress out that the object of this study, i.e. an individual conversion from negative attitudes to reconciliation, is a sort of miracle, and that it was extremely difficult and a matter of chance to come across a case of attitude change that could have been captured by the researcher. In two public testimonies, no attitude change could have happened due to circumstances which the author of this thesis was not able to influence. As to the public testimony in the Bosniak-Croat town, the event was organized for members of a youth center which focuses on promoting interethnic contact and reconciliation. For this reason, and as observed by the respondents, the attitudes of most if not all audience members were already positive. Also, most of the students in the Serbian town were part of an NGO contact program, too. Thus, this situation seems to illustrate the „ceiling effect“ (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2011, p. 54) in which my respondents’ attitudes could not have changed because they were already positive. The only occasion where a public testimony under study in this research could have changed attitudes, was the public testimony in the mixed town, where two reported cases of attitude change happened. In the Serb town, the positive effects of the testimony were somewhat spoiled by the fact that Andelko was (in good faith) reading his testimony from a paper, which made all stories untrustworthy in the eyes of some listeners. On the other hand, the positive effects of the testimonies may have been strengthened by the institutional support of authorities and authority figures (teachers, school director, religious leaders or NGO staff being present), as literature on the contact hypothesis (Allport 1954, p. 281; Pettigrew and Tropp 2011, p. 69) or the positive effects of storytelling (Jackson, 2002, p. 40) suggests.

After I conducted and recorded the interviews, I transcribed them and coded them. I used two methods of analysis: thematic discourse analysis and frame analysis. I will describe each one of them at a time along with the precise analytical techniques.

I opted for discourse analysis as a constructionist approach that would allow me to study how people construct the people and objects toward which they are taking evaluative positions instead of focusing on causal claims (see Potter, 1996; Potter and Wetherell, 1987). Wood and Kroger (2000, p. x) see discourse analysis as a set of methods that focus on language,
data and their analysis and also includes “metatheoretical and theoretical assumptions (Potter, 1997)”

It is concerned with meaning and interpretation rather than behaviour and measurement (Reason and Rowan, 1981, as cited in Parker, 2014, p. 3) and it „focuses on talk and texts as social practices, and on the resources that are drawn on to enable those practices” (Potter, 1996, p. 9). In this dissertation, I have excluded the option of critical discourse analysis due to the lack of a strong enough critical and normative position toward the object of study. Instead, I have opted for a variant of discourse analysis called thematic discourse analysis, a term “used to refer to a wide range of pattern-type analysis of data, ranging from thematic analysis within a social constructionist epistemology (i.e., where patterns are identified as socially produced, but no discursive analysis is conducted), to forms of analysis very much akin to the interpretative repertoire form of DA (Clarke, 2005)” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 81). It is closely related to the method of thematic analysis by Boyatzis (1998) that can be used in combination with other methods. Concretely, I was inspired by the thematic discourse analysis by Taylor and Ussher (2001) that allows for the analysis of discourse by focusing on the themes that are object of the latter. I considered that thematic analysis allows me to focus on all key aspects: the data, the discursive narratives and also the themes whose framing would be object of later frame analysis, a method that focuses on the analysis of frames, in this case notably when used in discourse. Frame analysis is “about how cognitive processing of events, objects, and situations gets done in order to arrive at an interpretation” (Johnston, 1995, p. 218; see also Goffman, 1974).

In a first phase, I coded the material in MAXQDA based on the definitions of the single concepts of this research, however for the purpose of the analysis of the discursive narratives I recoded the whole material in MS Excel in several different ways. I recoded the whole interview material inductively by splitting it into units of meaning that represented coherent wholes that were not necessarily single words, sentences or speech turns. Secondly, I assigned each unit of meaning a label that characterized its precise content regarding a possible theme that could concern a discursive narrative, thus assigning a descriptive type of code (Saldaña, 2015). In a third step, I analyzed all the Excel sheet entries with the low-level labels or themes and regrouped them into superordinate themes as they appeared in the patterns that emerged out of the different listeners’ accounts. Some of these themes happened to correspond to categories of reconciliation, while others did not. Yet others represented partial themes of these dimensions of reconciliation. I then regrouped material by superordinate theme and pieced together the discursive narratives regarding the single larger
or partial themes, hence creating a coherent classification. Most of the themes overlapped with the dimensions of reconciliation, while others were only more loosely related (e.g. the discursive narratives regarding personal reflection and gradual attitude change). In the interpretation of this material, I paid attention not only to the themes and thus content of the narratives, but also to the discursive aspect, i.e. to what discourses these narratives were connected. After that, I proceeded to frame analysis. I reanalyzed the initial Excel sheet sheet once again, creating a table per each respondent that had four cells: negative or positive narratives and negative or positive discourses. This time, I focused on the frames through which larger societal discourses framed the single issues in the narratives (Svarstad, 2009). I created a table that listed the relevant frames and the discursive narratives underpinning these frames. I inductively sorted the frames into superordinate categories and master frames (Benford, 2013), removing those that were redundant. The frames eventually converged into the two master frames, otherization and exclusive victimhood. The categories were created predominantly inductively, with some of the labels used (e.g. aggressivization) adopted from literature when already established. The discursive narratives and frames were then discussed and interpreted in the light of existing scientific literature.

To evaluate the validity of the findings, I have paid attention to several aspects of the research design. First of all, a semi-structured nature of the study was required as my pilot research had proven that unstructured interviews would only lead to general complaints about ethnic relations and politics and would bring up only few of the elements actually linked to reconciliation. Given this hindrance, the questions were asked regarding dimensions or factors of reconciliation that were expected to be present, hence a possible bias. For this reason, the interviews also included a more unstructured part, allowing for unexpected answers. Regarding the semi-structured part, I asked the questions in such a way that any kind of answer, including a negative one, could be brought up. Indeed, many if not most most of the respondents did report the attitudes that were expected to appear, however, many of them also freely and clearly denied the presence of such attitudes. Therefore, my interviewing, despite its semi-structured nature, appears to have been free enough as to allow for predominantly honest answers. At the same time, I was aware that some of the respondents may have tried to portray themselves in a more positive light (e.g. Ajzen and Dasgupta, 2015, p. 130) especially when the listeners were not interviewed individually but rather in a small groups, i.e. they were vulnerable to peer pressure. Also, they may have wanted to give a positive personal impression to a foreign researcher or because they were
recruited by an authority figure such as a teacher, some of them giving their interviews in a school. For these reasons, I examined their attitudes very carefully, comparing the different parts of the interview. Indeed, in some cases I did identify some bias and interpreted the declared positive attitudes with more skepticism and caution. During coding and analysis, I omitted a number of passages that were too ambiguous as to their interpretation or too incoherent with the rest of the account. For example, Marija (2014) declared generally good attitudes toward Bosniaks but she was high in blaming and in stressing the victimization of Serbs by that same nation. In that case, I did not consider her attitudes as overly positive like those of some other respondents.

Regarding the overall value of these findings, I cannot attempt at making any causal conclusions. This research was conducted on eighteen respondents recruited through convenience sampling and is therefore to be considered as an account of their self-reports. Instead, use the temporal aspect of my data and I aim to explore the discursive narratives and frames that were present in the listeners before and after the public testimonies. This temporal aspect is inferred either from the listeners’ own accounts of their earlier and new attitudes, or from the difference in the accounts given during the first and second interview. Further longitudinal quantitative research would be necessary in order to prove any real causal conclusions. However, such a research is extremely difficult to conduct since the storytelling is usually conducted for a limited audience (in this research 30 – 60 people), thus a representative sample of 100 responses would be difficult to reach. Yet another problem is the difficulty to find a control group (except in school classes).
6 Public Testimonies within The Initiative „My Story“

In this key chapter, the author is going to outline the main findings of the dissertation which represent the answer to the research questions. In the first sub-chapter, I analyze the intervention model of “My Story” as such and I present its key characteristics, including a summary of the stories. In the second sub-chapter, I outline the three components of the stories that I have identified: the emotions, the content and the message. In the third sub-chapter, I give a summary backgrounder on the testimonies and the biographies of the respondents included in this study. Chapter 6.4. represents my main analysis of discursive narratives and chapter 6.5. the description and summary table of my taxonomy of frame shifts.

6.1 An Analysis of The Intervention Model

6.1.1 The Origins and Key Ideas of The Initiative

“My Story” was born as one of the goals of the project Choosing Peace Together. This project aimed at helping war victims deal with their traumas so that they could become promoters of reconciliation in their local communities. It was also assumed that they were in a position of opinion leaders and could support an attitude change toward reconciliation in the audience (Bubalo, 2019). As mentioned previously, the intervention model consists of public events where war victims, always at least one Bosniak, one Serb and one Croat, sit side-by-side and tell their stories to the audience. At first, these events were organized as part of the project Choosing Peace Together, and after its ending within the project PRO-Future in which the same organizer NGOs continue the CPT work but which focuses on young people (Bubalo, 2019).

The public testimonies were inspired by truth commissions around the world (Bubalo, 2019). The storytellers are a group of ca. 70 war victims such as former concentration camp prisoners, civilian war victims, family members of missing persons, war invalids or former combatants. They are from among approximately 230 war victims who underwent a training within the project Choosing Peace Together which helped them to learn nonviolent communication, understand the conflict, deal with their trauma and eventually forgive their perpetrators and so improve their interethnic attitudes and reach reconciliation (Bubalo, 2015;
Hart and Colo, 2014). The project is based on the change theory stating that if war victims are helped to deal with their traumas, they will become effective promoters of peace in their communities (Bubalo, 2017). Such public testimonies are based on the theory that war victims are opinion leaders due to the fact that they have suffered more than many ordinary people have (Bubalo, 2017). As Bubalo (2019) said: „if they live the transformation, everybody else can (...) We try to give them [to the young people] the information that [attitude] change is possible even in the toughest conditions.“

The public testimonies themselves are based on several key principles. First, the name of the initiative, “My Story”, serves to frame the storytelling events as personal stories of the individual war victims, i.e. what the individual victim has lived and witnessed himself or herself. As Goran Bubalo (2019) put it, “It is my story, my own personal story. Nobody can say it is not true.” This mechanism helps to mitigate the risk that the stories will create controversies on what really happened (see Eastmond and Selimović, 2012). Another mechanism which shall prevent negative reactions to the storytelling is a non-written rule which most storytellers hold on to, which is not telling their own nationality and not naming the perpetrator side. The storyteller’s national identity can however often be deduced from their name and the town they come from, as this is how they present themselves. The perpetrator side can sometimes be deduced from names of places where the events occurred, neighbouring states or the warring armies. Another significant element of the design of „My Story“ is thinking: the public testimonies shall induce young people to „think with their own head“ and think about what they can do themselves (Bubalo, 2019). Last but not least, the public testimonies are meant to give people information on what was happening to the other side of the conflict, as people generally do not know this (Bubalo, 2019).

6.1.2 The stories in this research

In order for the reader to know what the respondents in this research were reacting to, I am now going to review the most important stories which induced the attitude change.

Amir Omershpahić

Amir is a Bosniak. He comes from Han Pijesak in Eastern Bosnia. After a Serb attack in 1992, he fled his town and was hiding in caves and forests, before getting to the UN protected enclave of Žepa. In 1995, Žepa was attacked by the Serbs as well, which made Amir flee
again. He and other refugees were arrested by the Yugoslav army when crossing the Serbian border on the river of Drina and taken to a concentration camp in Serbia. One of the guardians broke Amir’s finger with his gunstock, which caused him a gangrene. He was taken to the hospital, where a doctor treated him extremely kindly, “like a small child”, and saved his life. Upon Amir’s return to the concentration camp, a guardian gave him a blanket so that he wouldn’t have to sleep on the plain concrete floor. Amir described the crude reality of a concentration camp, however he also likes to stress that people should be divided only into good and bad and a whole nation should not be held guilty for the deeds of individuals (Omerspahić, 2014a).

**Stanislav Krezić**

Stanislav is a Croat. He comes from Potoci, a small ethnically mixed town near Mostar. In the beginning of the war, the Croats and the Bosniaks were allies in Potoci and surroundings, fighting together against the Serbs. One day, the Bosniak-Croat conflict unexpectedly broke out and Stanislav was arrested by his fellow combatants and taken to a concentration camp. He had to do forced labour and witnessed several killings, where one of the victims died in his arms (Krezić, 2014). He described the terrible life conditions in the concentration camp, such as food. After being released, he hated the other two nations and he blamed them for his suffering. He held a nationalist café and let only Croats enter it. Later he joined the CPT seminars and fully changed his attitudes to reconciliation (Krezić, 2014).

**Janko Samouković**

Janko is a Serb. He comes from Pazarić, a Serb-Bosniak setting east of Sarajevo. During the war, he was arrested in his home and taken to the concentration camp of Silos held by the Bosniak forces. He described unspeakable violence during “interrogations”, beatings and prisoners’ abuse, terrible life conditions and a lack of food and hygiene. He also mentioned that the prisoners slept on a plain concrete floor without blankets, and the building had no ceiling. He described how he was fainting of hunger. He also described how only several years after the war he started to live a normal life again, going hiking and skiing and doing all the activities that he used to like. He also stresses that a whole nation should not be held guilty for the war (Samouković, 2014).
**Anđelko Kvesić**

Anđelko comes from Busovača in central Bosnia, an ethnically mixed setting. Before the war, he was a teacher. During the war, he was defending a frontline position. One day his patrol was attacked by the Bosniak army. He was shot and severely wounded in the cross-fire and saw one of his comrades die. He was taken by the Bosniaks to an emergency room where he heard the nurse saying there were only two more bandages left, and the doctor replying: “Even if there was only one, give it to me” (Kvesić, 2014a). A driver took him to the hospital, keeping Anđelko awake, fearing that he would die. The doctor at the hospital asked him why he was driving a member of the enemy army, but the driver replied: “Doctor, do your work, and I am doing mine” (Kvesić, 2014a). Anđelko underwent a surgery and after spending 45 days in KP Dom Zenica (a concentration camp), he was released. He insisted on the positive war heroes in his story and did not mention any details about the concentration camp. He expressed his forgiveness to the former enemy and the hope for a better future.

**Smilja Mitrović**

Smilja Mitrović comes from Bijeljina, a mixed Bosniak-Serb setting in Northeastern Bosnia. She used to have a husband and a son who was a university student. In 1994, when her son was still a student, he received an order to join the Serbian army. In 1995, her son went missing in combat. She was devastated, but soon she started to search for her son’s body herself. After five years her husband died of sorrow and she stayed alone as she had no other children. She has founded an association whose aim is the search for missing persons regardless of nationality or religion. At the end of her testimony, she wished the listeners would not live the tragedy of their own child as it is “the most difficult thing that can happen to a family” (Mitrović, 2014).

**Latifa Begić**

Latifa lived the war as a small child. She had to abandon a worriless life and became a refugee along with her mother. She moved from one house to another, not always feeling welcome. On a sunny morning in late 1995, she was playing with her friends. She went home to take her mountain bike. When she arrived home, the house was hit by a bomb. Her mother thought she was dead, but they found her alive hidden in the refrigerator. Her mother then took her to the hospital to treat her injuries and burns. There, another horror came: she saw
several dead children, including her friends and neighbours. Latifa concluded her story by stating that it is necessary to spread forgiveness, peace and love (Begić, 2014).

**Ingroup storytellers**

We are going to briefly mention the stories of the audience’s ingroup storytellers. The first one is Edisa who told a story about fighting in the war defending her town and educating her children in love and tolerance (Šehić, 2014). The second one is Vesna who also fought on the frontline along with her sister. One day, both women were hit by the same shell which killed Vesna’s sister and left Vesna herself an 80% invalid (Tomić, 2014).

**Composition of storytellers in this research**

In this research, Janko, Stanislav and Amir spoke together in the Bosniak-Croat town based on which three girls were interviewed, and in another testimony in Herzegovina that led to attitude change in two male Croats. The latter two attended another public testimony involving partly the same storytellers, with the Serb storyteller being most probably Dragiša Andrić who tells a story about being put in a concentration camp in Sarajevo. The public testimony in the Serb town was performed by Andelko, Latifa and Vesna, and the one in the ethnically mixed town was performed by Andelko, Smilja and Edisa.

**6.2 Three fundamental components of the stories**

I have identified three fundamental components of the stories regarding the strength of their effect on the audience. This analysis is based on a detailed scrutiny of the videorecordings, transcripts and participant observation of the storytelling events, and on interviews with some of the listeners.

**The Content**

The first and most obvious component of the stories is the content, i.e. the story itself. I have been made aware by “My Story” staff that trauma should not be measured and compared to who has suffered more. This is considered to be harmful and unethical by the initiative organizers (Bubalo, 2019).
The stories contain several key elements which will be listed as follows. The first one is the new and unexpected information that they convey. This information contains two fundamental dimensions: the suffering of the outgroup and the guilt of the ingroup. In this sense, the most unusual and probably most shocking are the stories of the three former concentration camp prisoners. People who have lived such traumas are not likely to talk about them, therefore these stories are a rare occasion to hear true insider accounts from such places. Most of the ordinary Bosnian population suffered terrible traumas such as bombings, shellings, losing loved persons, but only a minority (however non-transcurable) have found themselves in concentration camps. People may have also been shocked by the fact that their nation had held concentration camps as well, otherwise they would have tended to believe the narratives of collective innocence (Selimovic, 2010). Moreover, the detailed description of the suffering in the concentration camp has proved to be a strength of the model as it triggered powerful reactions of empathy, as the author will illustrate below. Janko’s story also included an account of the persecution of Serbs in places around Srebrenica, which appeared to be very surprising and shocking to some of the respondents in this research.

A second element of the stories is the focus on suffering versus the focus on hope. While the stories of Janko, Amir, Stanislav, Smilja and Latifa dedicated most of the time to the description of suffering, Anđelko and Edisa dedicated less time to the description of the suffering and more time to promoting hope and tolerance by giving their own example (Edisa) or the example of people who have saved their life (Anđelko).

The third element of the stories are positive war heroes who have saved the speakers’ lives or otherwise helped them in a difficult situation. This is the case of the doctors who saved Anđelko’s and Amir’s lives, the driver who drove Anđelko to the hospital, or the guardian who gave Amir a blanket.

The fourth element of the content of the public testimonies that proved to be powerful was learning that ordinary people were forced to go to the war, as Smilja’s story illustrated, as Serbs are generally deemed to be aggressive (Skoko, 2011, p. 16) and guilty for the war (Kasapović, 2015).

Finally yet importantly, the fifth element of the stories is the type of suffering endured by the storyteller. While Amir, Janko and Stanislav lived in a concentration camp in the first person, Anđelko suffered as a combatant (not making his imprisonment in a concentration camp explicit), Smilja suffered as a mother who had lost her child, and Vesna as a child who
became victim of a bombing. The analysis will show that all types of stories can generate powerful reactions and empathy.

**The Emotions**

This research has illustrated the strength of negative emotions in promoting attitude change. All outgroup member stories except for Anđelko’s were told with a strong accent on suffering and despair, which proved to evoke a very strong emotional and cognitive empathy. The strength of the empathy seemed to be related to the degree to which the negative emotions appeared in the story. The strongest emotional reactions registered in this research were the reactions of three girls reacting to the stories of Amir, Janko and Stanislav. The girls were visibly shattered by the stories and one of them was even crying during the interview. They demonstrated a very high degree of emotional and cognitive empathy, copying the negative emotions of the storytellers and putting themselves in their situations. They were resorting to Janko’s story most often when highlighting the everyday suffering in the concentration camp. The strength of the girls’ reaction can be illustrated by the fact that they experienced even the highest degrees of empathy such as anger at the ingroup perpetrators who hurt the outgroup storyteller (in this case the focus was on Janko).

The second strongest emotional reaction registered in this research was the one to Smilja’s story, which was self-reported to have changed the interethnic attitudes of two young Bosniak girls, Jasmina and Zehra. The girls felt a very strong empathy for the storyteller and one of them, Jasmina, even imagined how it would be like if Smilja’s son one day turned up at her door. The empathy, however, involved mainly sorrow and perspective taking and did not seem to equal the empathy experienced by the listeners reacting to the stories of the three concentration camp prisoners. However, a feeling of anger at the perpetrators was intensified by the fact that Smilja did not mention which warring side killed her son.

Latifa’s story was very strong as to its emotional charge. She appeared to be very strong and in control of the situation when she was speaking. It was however visible how difficult it was for her to talk about her trauma and so relive it: the tone in which she was telling her story was not very sad, but from the pace of her words, from the pauses and the sighs it was evident that what she is talking about must have been a real traumatic experience for her.

The least emotional story of all was Andelko’s. In the Serbian town, the storytelling was so important to him that he wrote his speech on a piece of paper from which he was reading for
most of the time. His story thus contained many literary and formal expressions which are usual in written language, but less so in spoken language. This is especially true about the parts in which he was presenting his message to the audience. As to the emotional charge itself, Anđelko spoke in a somewhat detached way, being in firm control of the situation, not showing much of the emotions that he was living at the time when the events he spoke about were happening. Due to his emotional detachment, the preparedness of his speech and his reading from the paper, some of the students doubted about the trustworthiness of his story, and consequently about that of all the other stories, especially the episode when Latifa hid in the refridgerator. This aspect of the reaction will be analyzed in more detail in the sub-chapter on the trustworthiness of the stories.

Based on this analysis, I have formulated a few hypotheses which can be tested in further research:

- The more detailed the description of the suffering if given in an emotionally involved way, the deeper the empathy and emotional impact.
- The sadder the tone of the storyteller, the stronger the emotional reaction of the audience.
- The more empathy the story produces, the stronger will be the trust of the audience in the story.

The Message

The last of the three fundamental elements of the public testimonies is the message they conveyed. Sometimes throughout the story, or only at the end, storytellers convey a message they want the audience to take away. The message can be of different types. In Anđelko’s case, the message is that forgiveness is necessary for reconciliation. Some of the other concentration camp prisoners, such as Janko, have not forgiven their perpetrators, but in this case they prefer to send a message of interethnic tolerance and not blaming ordinary people for the war. In some cases, such as in Anđelko’s or Smilja’s case, the message for the audience contains a wish; which is not to live a new war like the storyteller’s generation had to. The messages sent by storytellers in this research as perceived by the listeners are analyzed in a special sub-chapter of part III.

In this research, the messages of the storytellers did not appear to trigger any strong reactions, at least by far these reactions were not as strong as the reactions to the emotional and tragical
side of the stories. This author however believes that the emotions could be a mechanism to open the listeners’ minds to thinking, and they will think about the message along with the other facts and impressions of the stories.

6.3 A Backgrounder on The Respondents and The Public Testimonies

For analytical purposes, the respondents in this research have been divided into two groups: those with positive attitudes at the time and others with slightly or strongly negative attitudes at the time of the public testimony. This research does not aim at explaining these initial attitudes; however, it has monitored several factors which may be relevant to the analysis.

The first of these factors is socialization (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2011, p. 59). Socialization in the family may have played a role in determining the respondents’ interethnic attitudes. Most respondents with positive attitudes reported a positive or no influence of their parents and family on their attitudes. The only exception was Ana, a Serb girl who made friendship with Bosniaks despite the fact that her family did not like it. On the other hand, most respondents with negative or biased initial attitudes reported that their family was inculcating them with biased attitudes, such as that “the Serbs are not a good nation” (Kasim, 2015). However, the only respondent who was socialized to true hate in the family was Franjo. Thanks to the public testimony, his parents have also undergone the same attitude change that he has. On the other hand, Zehra, who had negative initial attitudes against the Serbs, was not educated to such attitudes. Another source of negative attitudes seemed to be the media. The best example of their influence was Franjo who was only following the Radio-TV Herceg-Bosna, a Croat channel, during the war. There were no other media until long after the war, and Franjo called this environment “one-sided”, i.e. biased, socializing him into negative attitudes. The other young people did not report a significant influence of the media, except for hate speech on social media, which strongly bothered them. School did not seem to have a strong influence on the respondents’ interethnic attitudes, although school curricula in Bosnia are famous for presenting national narratives (Banarovicé, 2001) and “enemy images” (Torsti, 2007). The influence of peers was also not reported, although the interviewing did not go in-depth into this topic.

The second of these factors influencing interethnic attitudes is traumatization as it prevents reconciliation (Pham, Weinstein and Longman, 2004) and it is transmitted between
generations (HKO „Kruh svetog Ante“a Trauma Centar, 2008). Stories about the war are also transmitted from parents to children (Jordanova, 2012). Only two of the respondents in this research lived the war personally. Both Franjo and Josip, respondents with bad initial attitudes, were small children when it started. Josip was even imprisoned in a concentration camp together with his family. Other respondents with negative initial attitudes such as Zehra and Kasim reported the loss or severe injury of a loved person. Jasmina, a respondent with negative attitudes, reported that her father was fighting on the frontline and her mother lived bombing by Serb forces. Respondents with positive attitudes generally did not mention losing a loved person, and some of them reported that their families fled Bosnia at the time of the war. The exception were the Serb respondents Marko, Marija and their teacher who lost some relatives in the conflict.

Bosniak respondents furthermore reported much stronger negative attitudes toward the Serbs than toward the Croats. This is coherent with the results of a survey on interethnic attitudes (Skoko, 2011, p. 16). The main cause of negative attitudes toward the Serbs was that they started the war, and that they wanted to rule Bosnia and “cleanse it from Bosniaks” (Zehra, 2014). As echoed by Jasmina, their aim was “that all people be Serbs” and “to kill as many of us as possible so that the minority that remains would see they cannot do anything against them so they would join their side” (Jasmina, 2014). Kasim (2014) says: „The number of victims was not important, whether it would be one thousand, two thousand or ten thousand. What was important to them was only to reach their aim, that is to create a greater Serbia, but thank God they did not succeed.“. According to some of the respondents, Serbs should stop defending and denying their acts and admit guilt for the sufferings they have caused to Croats and Bosniaks (Dina, 2015). One reason for the different attitudes toward the Serbs is that the genocide in Srebrenica was committed by Serbs: “Whenever the war was spoken about, the Croats were never mentioned. They simply were here and they were fighting their own way just like we were and they did not commit such genocides like the Serbs.” The opinion that the Croats had not done anything bad in the war was echoed by Kasim (2014) who said that he “has no opinion on the Serbs”, neither a positive nor a negative one. He was however high in blaming them for the war.

Another characteristical trait of all respondents with whom this topic was opened was that they had good attitudes toward young people from the outgroup and they did not blame them for the war. This can be best illustrated by Halima’s account (2015):
At our school class we have a Serbian girl. We respect her, we trust her, she is not guilty for anything, I cannot blame her as she was not even born at that time. Some of them may be good but some who are bad did what they did.

They were however well aware of the hate and hate speech present in their outgroups. Dina, for example, says that while the older generation of Serbs has still been creating hate toward Bosniaks, in the young generation of Serbs there are nice and good people. She however adds: “But what was before [i.e. the war] will always stay inside of us.” (Dina, 2015). The public testimony seems to have reinforced her belief that “we should not condemn the new Serb generations as they are not guilty for what happened during the war. But even so the hatred is still here, even in the new generations.”

On the other side of the divide, there were Serb respondents who strongly longed for acceptance by Bosniaks. On the one side there was Marija whose family had to leave Sarajevo during and after the war due to severe discrimination and harassment. She would like to return to live in Sarajevo but her sister who did so a few years ago was forced to leave due to the same discrimination and harassment. Marija strongly longs for Sarajevo and for living together with Bosniaks, and she seems to be somewhat angry at them for not accepting the Serbs and presenting themselves as the exclusive victims. Another complaint about the lack of acceptance by outgroup members came from the young Serbs in the Serbian town. Many people from the class are involved in contact seminars led by an NGO. They said that the Bosniak boys do mix with the Serbian group; however, they kept complaining that the Bosniak girls from the group avoid any contact with Serbs outside of the actual seminar activities. They tended to explain this with a strict quranic education and nationalist sentiment.

In general, the respondents expressed a positive opinion on interethnic reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and a strong desire for it. All Serb respondents, the girls in the Bosniak-Croat town, and Kasim in the ethnically mixed town are part of interethnic contact programs. All respondents were bothered by the fact that interethnic attitudes are still not good. As Mirjana said: “Nothing has changed here in our place. [It’s just like in the year] 1992, still the same story, still the same attitudes.” A few respondents expressed the conviction that people who lived the war cannot change their attitudes and that reconciliation will not come about before these generations disappear. Jelena believes that until those who lived the war die and only the new generation stays, the changes for the better can be only
“minimal” (she stressed the word minimal). Some of the Serb respondents reported that when going to Sarajevo, they pretend to be Bosniaks, in order to avoid harassment. On the other hand Kasim (2015) thinks that reconciliation is possible but “not with the whole Serbia” due to the persistent hate, but it is slow because Serbs create tension against Croats and Bosniaks. Finally and above all, several respondents expressed the conviction that the war “must be forgotten”. Most of the Serbs respondents agreed that the war should not be reopened and talked about, while the Bosniak respondents meant to take a “forgive but not forget” approach.

Last but not least, we will briefly review how the respondents and other listeners received the public testimonies. In general, the reactions were very positive. The Bosniak students in the ethnically mixed town spoke about the testimonies for two more days, feeling pity for the storytellers’ suffering. According to Zehra (2015), nobody has made any negative comments. The students also agreed that the public testimony made them research more information about the war events and the perspective of the other nations (Zehra, 2015). Kasim (2015) observed, however, that young people are generally not interested in the war; they are rather interested in Facebook of Twitter. Dina (2015), however, thinks the students did not have bad attitudes so they could not change, or get improved. Despite this, two cases of attitude change were registered in the class.

On the side of the Serbian students, the reactions were not as positive, but this was not due to the fact that they would have bad attitudes. The Serb class was chosen to participate in the public testimony by the school director as they are the most active class in the school. The students were speaking about the public testimony “a little bit” for a day or two, but as Jelena said a few days later that “nobody mentions it nor thinks about it.” She believes that this is due to the fact that her classmates have interethnic contact and are roughly informed. There were some negative reactions in the class which were due to the fact that Anđelko was reading his message from a paper. As Jovan (2014) said, “if you live something, you remember every event that is important to you, there is no need to read it as it is engraved in your memory.” For this reason, some of the students doubted in the trustworthiness of the three stories. They also wondered how Latifa could have ended up in a refridgerator and believed Vesna made her story up as no invalidity was visible on her while she claimed to be an 80% invalid.

Some of the students talked to their parents about the public testimony. All those who did and reported this to me said that their parents found it was allright they participated in the
public testimony and that it was a good thing. Franjo is however a case when the testimony influenced other, uninvolved, peoples’ attitudes through him: he told his parents about the testimony and they were impacted by it just like him, and they, too, changed their attitudes from hate to reconciliation (Franjo, 2014).

6.4 Discursive Narratives of Reconciliation in the Accounts of the Listeners of the Public Testimonies

6.4.1 Understanding Whom The Storytellers Suffered From

The public testimonies built around stories of ingroup and outgroup war victims, and this confrontation is meant to induce attitude change. Such stories imply victimization, a process which needs two parties: the victim and the perpetrator. The understanding of who is who is a fundamental precondition for some of the potentially beneficial psychological mechanisms such as feeling guilt that we have reviewed above. Therefore, we are going to present the evidence how the respondents did perceive the identity of the warring side from which the storytellers suffered (for simplicity, we will call it the perpetrator side, although some of the storytellers’ injuries were result of the conventional way of leading war).

The students, in both the ethnically mixed and in the Serb, did not notice the storytellers mentioning the perpetrator side, except for Andelko who mentioned the Bosniak army during the public testimony in the Serb town but not during the public testimony for the Bosniaks. The latter were mentioned as the perpetrator side by some students in the Serb town and deduced by some of the Bosniak students. The Bosniak students agreed that Bosniaks did victimize members of the other two nations; however, they did not feel any collective guilt as they were “born after the war“ (Kasim, 2014) and morally defended their nation by saying that the Bosniak were only “defending themselves“ (this was mentioned by Zehra, Dina and Kasim during our first interview). Kasim (2014) added that the number of people killed by Bosniaks was “very low“ compared to the number of people killed by the Serbs: “The number of killed in Srebrenica reached 8020 and it is growing every day“, he said (Kasim, 2014). This number was mentioned by a few other Bosniak students, which would illustrate the theory that the Srebrenica genocide is a chosen trauma to the Bosniaks.

When the students did not know which storyteller suffered from which nation, they tended to assume that he or she suffered from the Serbs. This was true not only for the Bosniak
students, but also for the Serb students. Jovan (2014) echoes this, avoiding to name the Serbs as perpetrators directly: “it is well known who was committing terror against the Muslims, Muslims against the Serbs, that’s mostly how it is.” As we mentioned, Anđelko named the Bosniaks as the perpetrator party; however, some of the students overheard this information and supposed that he, too, has suffered from the Serbs (Mirjana, 2014). Vesna, on her side, was supposed, by the students, to have suffered from the Bosniaks. As to Latifa, the students did not know where she lived, so they were not able to guess whom she suffered from.

I believe that the strength of the victimization episode in the story could hypothetically override the awareness about who the perpetrator side was. In the Bosniak-Croat town, some of the girls did not perceive such information. Azra (2014) highlighted: „I only had the image in front of my eyes of how they were tortured. I did not listen to who was torturing them. (...) I did not pay attention to it and I did not care about it.“ This passage shows the rehumanizing potential of the stories: the strength of human suffering has shown here to be able to erase the boundaries between group identities, i.e. nations, which is a great achievement. On the other hand, not being aware that one’s ingroup was the perpetrator (which was the case in Janko’s and Stanislav’s story, and Stanislav mentioned it explicitly), prevented the activation of some other mechanisms such as collective guilt, which also improve attitudes. In the discursive narratives elicited in this research, both the understanding and non-understanding of who the perpetrator side was in the story was put by the listeners in the context of rehumanization and attitude shifts, although by two different pathways.

6.4.2 The Storyteller as A Trusted Witness

As mentioned in the theoretical chapter, the storytellers had important status as a witness and his account has the status of truth (Gergen and Gergen, 2006, p. 118). I have collected some discursive narratives that would illustrate or disconfirm this thesis. Although this research does not attempt at making causal claims, it is worth highlighting that material presented by a trustworthy source can lead to an immediate opinion change (Hovland and Weiss, 1951, p. 650).

Listeners labelled the stories as highly authentic, and supported this claim by pointing out to the face-to-face setting in which they could directly see the storytellers’ face and feel their emotions, and to the fact that the storytellers lived real suffering and can give a valid account of it. The emotions mentioned were mainly the negative ones, such as sadness and grief, and
they were stronger in the public testimonies given by the three former concentration camp prisoners, Amir, Janko and Stanislav. These storytellers generally found it very difficult to speak about their experiences and do not hide their negative emotions stemming from reliving the traumas. The listeners in the Bosniak-Croat town clearly remarked and reproduced these emotions. Azra, who likes to read about psychology, noticed the storytellers’ body language and interpreted it as a proof. Franjo said that the information about war crimes of the three sides is often reported by the media, but people tend to pay only superficial attention to this information or they disbelieve it completely. “But when you speak directly with people to whom it has happened, it is more authentic and it stays much deeper in your brain,” he observed (Franjo, 2014).

6.4.3 Empathy is The Key

In this chapter, I am going to apply the theory of empathy to the interview data and to the observations of the public testimonies. First, Davis’s (1996) Organizational model of empathy will be applied to analyze what the antecedents of empathy are, what processes are involved and to what the outcomes of empathy are. This chapter is divided into several sections: accounts of how emotions represented the deepest impact of the testimonies, commonalities between storyteller and victim and its importance for empathy, understanding how the storytellers felt, perspective taking, emotional empathy, empathic concern and personal distress, empathic anger at the perpetrators, and more importantly, the emphasis put by the listeners on the fact that human suffering is always the same, regardless of the nationality.

The Most Powerful Stories Are The Most Shattering Ones

The first of Davis’s two antecedents of empathy is the strength of the situation. In this chapter, the author is going to try to estimate and compare the strength of the situation in the different public testimonies, since “strong displays of negative emotion, especially by weak or helpless targets, are particularly able to engender powerful observer responses” (Davis, 1996, p. 14-15).

The strongest reactions in terms of emotions in this research were to the stories of the three concentration camp prisoners – they will be described more in detail below. For Franjo (2014), the most influential moments of the public testimonies consisted mainly in the
description of suffering, i.e. the cruelties in the concentration camps. To him, the stories were all equally strong – none of them has left a greater impression. For example, Danica (2014) was most affected by Janko’s story about food: “They were drinking some kind of liquid, there was only one liter of water for more than twenty people. I think about how little that is. And how they were beating them, when they took one to the office and they started to abuse him, that affected me the most.” She was also affected by learning about the lack of food and water in the concentration camp. Meliha (2014) was most affected by the moment when Janko was being tortured in the office and would have preferred to be killed than to bear all that psychological pain.

If we interpret these facts, we can say that the concentration camp stories were the most shocking and surprising as such stories are rarely told in Bosnia and the listeners did not have many possibilities to get in touch with them. For this reason, the effect of desensitization to wartime stories present in at least one case in this research has less probability to be at work here. Moreover, the stories were also told in a very emotional way and with great details of the suffering, for which reason this author assumes that the strength of the situation was maximized. Indeed, many respondents have claimed that the most influential story was the most shattering one, the one where the storyteller focused on her personal losses (Latifa), that was said in the most emotional way with focus on the storytellers’ pain. The three girls reacting to the stories of the three concentration camp prisoners had tears in their eyes and they were feeling powerful emotions when talking about their perception of the public testimony. It was clearly visible that they were shattered by the stories. If we then compare the three stories told in the mixed town to young Bosniak listeners, Smilja’s story was told in the saddest and most emotional way and also designated by the students invariably as the most shattering. Her story was considered the most shattering due to the fact that she lost her child, which is “the worst thing that can happen to a person” (Zehra, 2014). For this reason, the story of the loss of a child won the listeners’ hearts over the other two stories that were told with an optimistic tone. The reactions to Smilja’s story did involve being shattered, however none of the respondents was close to crying.

Out of the three stories in the ethnically mixed and in the Serb town, Anđelko’s story was (with due respect) the least influential. The students in the ethnically mixed town agreed that Anđelko had impact on them, however less than Smilja. The listeners explained this based on his optimistic tone and attitude and focus on the positive things in his story and on the fact that he survived his injury (Zehra, 2014). As Zehra (2014) observed: “Of course,
Smilja told her story in a very sad way, somehow silently, and it was visible how shattered she was. Edisa and Andelko were smiling when they were telling their story, so that Smilja showed her emotions the most.” Thus, two narratives indicating what stories have the deepest impact explain that emotions in the stories were more influential than optimism, and that the story told with an optimistic tone was the least influential. Kasim (2014) observed: „Every story about the war has some kind of impact. It then depends on whose story was more shattering and who ended up in a worse situation.“ Then he added regarding to Smilja: “She has suffered the most, she stayed alone, while Edisa has at least a daughter whom she can talk to.”

As to negative discursive narratives in this category, the empathy for Andelko was most probably diminished by the fact that he was speaking with a positive tone, trying to incite hope and optimism in the listeners. However, the lower level of emotions was ascribed also to the fact that he is a man. Compared to him, Latifa and Vesna were seen as being “carried away” by their stories (Marija, 2014). Also, this difference in the impact was due to the fact that Andelko had not died, neither did he mention his son’s death in the ethnically mixed town as he did in the Serb town. Some of the Serb students expressed more empathy for him. Marko, for example, said that while Latifa has “only” lost her friends, however difficult it must have been, Andelko has lost his son, which is “a million, million times worse and more difficult” (Marko, 2014).

Another factor which decreased the emotional impact of the stories and for which a few Serb respondents were not feeling shattered was desensitization, i.e. being too accustomed to victim stories to be moved by the stories at the public testimony (Marko, 2014).

His account can be compared with the account of Mirjana who was feeling “exceptionally shattered” due to the fact that she had grown in another country and she had only moved to Bosnia recently.

To conclude, I believe that negative emotions are what makes the public testimony particularly powerful. The evidence for this thesis can be found in the comparison of Andelko’s public testimony in the Serb town. At that occasion, he described the details of being wounded, seeing a fellow fighter die next to him, and especially losing his only son. In this case, it was compared to the story of Latifa, who survived a bombing as a child, and Vesna who fought on the frontline and saw her sister die from the same grenade which made her 80% invalid. In this case, Andelko was the one who displayed the least negative emotion.
I believe that if he had shown more negative emotion, his story may have made a deeper impression on the listeners as its content component does have a great potential to induce strong reactions. I however respect Anđelko’s choice to carry a message of hope instead of one focused on suffering. The Serb students sympathized with the other two stories more. Mirjana was “exceptionally sorry” for Latifa, whose story shattered her as during her childhood in Montenegro she did not come in contact with wartime stories. Jovan was most impressed by Vesna’s story as she went to fight in the war while being a woman, which is very unusual in Bosnia. He was very sorry for her becoming an 80% invalid and he felt the strongest empathy for her. Jelena could not choose one particular story: “They are all tragical in their own way, they all have great consequences. Anđelko lost his son, Latifa became an invalid and her house was destroyed by bombing, Vesna lost her sister in the war. I really couldn’t draw a parallel between these stories, they are all equally stressful and difficult to me.”

This research can thus confirm Davis’s thesis about the effect of negative emotions. The three concentration camp prisoners were basically helpless, and Amir and Janko were moreover quite young at that time. They and Stanislav put accent on their suffering and negative emotions while speaking – thanks to the practice, they have already found a “style” of storytelling that, according to their experience, touches the audience the most. Their aim is to show how much they have suffered and how they have achieved reconciliation and live without hate, while Andelko does not put accent on his suffering (he barely mentions the name of his concentration camp) and he wishes to use his story to incite the listeners to think as positively as he does. Ana was shattered by the three stories, but Latifa’s story influenced her the most: “The three have lost a loved person in the war, that is a great loss above all. Latifa’s story shattered me the most as she was the youngest of them and what happens to you in your childhood has the greatest influence on your adolescence and I can see that she grew up to be a really smart woman and that she is experienced and everything, but the past left great traces on her.” Marija was sorry for the three storytellers. She was sorry for Andelko as her grandmother had lost her son, too. She believed that Latifa’s traumatic experience was somewhat alleviated by the fact that she was a small child when the episode happened.
“They Were Our Age When They Were Taken To The Concentration Camp”

Davis’s observation on the similarity between observer and target as an antecedent of empathy (1996, p. 14) has also been illustrated in this research. The respondents felt similar to the storytellers in three different ways: by the age in which the storytellers lived their traumatic period, by their or their family’s war experience, and by gender.

As to the first factor, the listeners realized that the storytellers were about their age when they lived their wartime traumas. Latifa, Janko and Amir were about the age of the young adult listeners when the war broke out. This has made the listeners think how it must have been for themselves if they lived the same things. This association was even stronger in Azra who reacted to the public testimony of the three concentration camp prisoners: “I was deeply struck that (...) they were approximately our age when they were taken to the concentration camp. And how they were tortured [a sad smile]... And I wonder how it would be like for us as I think of the conditions they lived in when they were our age – torture and who knows what else” (Azra, 2014). Jovan (2014) finds it “shattering to think about that.”

Yet other respondents mentioned as a similarity with the victim the loss of a loved person or being wounded. Marija (2014), while describing her empathy with Vesna, mentioned that her mother had lost her brother in the war, just like Vesna lost her sister. Zehra (2014) felt a strong empathy for Andelko as her father was severely injured when fighting on the frontline, as a result of which he forgot to speak and conduct common daily activities and had to learn everything again. As a result of Janko’s story, Danica (2014) remembered an episode when her family’s house was burning and her relatives had to pull her baby sister through the fire in order to save her life. Her mother was very young, about 21 or 22 years, about the age of Janko when he was in the concentration camp. “I can not imagine living something similar with my children,” she concluded referring to the traumatic experience of her family. Gender also played a role: some girls in the Bosniak-Croat town perceived a common identity with Smilja as future mothers.

Understanding How The Storytellers Felt

In this sub-chapter, we are going to review the processes of empathy by which observers receive cues about the target and react to these cues (Davis, 1996, pp. 15 – 16). Role- or perspective taking will be treated in the following chapter as it merits a separate analysis.
The listeners of the stories in this research really did seem to imitate the victims’ emotions, but especially the negative ones. There was no evidence that they would imitate Andelko’s or Edisa’s positive attitude, although this aspect was not investigated more in-depth. As to the imitation, Azra was cracking her knuckles just like Amir was doing. She and Danica described the storytellers’ body language such as movements of hands and feet as a proof of how difficult their experience and the public testimony must have been for them. As to the process of direct association, an illustration can be Azra’s (2014) reaction to the fact that Amir’s eyes during his public testimony were “full of tears”. Azra said: “I was feeling some kind of sadness, pain.” Jasmina (2014) also reported that during Smilja’s public testimony, she was feeling “sad, very emotional, in pain, lost, simply distraught, sad and impatient until the very end.”

Language-mediated association may have played its role in negative stories, as the respondents were strongly reactive to and could vividly imagine the most horrifying details of the story such as the lack of food, the bad hygiene or the torture, or to Smilja’s verbal expression of sadness and suffering.

As I Myself Were in The Concentration Camp

Cognitive empathy, or perspective taking, however difficult to reach in other contexts, was very common in this research, present in most respondents. This is the focus of this subchapter.

The Bosniak respondents in the ethnically mixed town expressed a generally low empathy for the Serbs and a much higher empathy for the Croats. Zehra (2014) explained this by the fact that the Serbs have harmed the Bosniaks more. Kasim (2014) added that the Serbs had “all weaponry of Yugoslavia”, which made them say “Let’s start a war!”. He however added that he feels a lot of empathy for the Croats as they are “extra” (means very sympathetic) to him. These claims seem to be consequences of a wider trend to blame the Serbs for the war. The public testimonies thus present a very rare occasion to empathize with the members of the outgroup, especially for the Serbs.

This new empathy was most strongly expressed in taking perspective of the storytellers. The different stories were generally reported to be “shattering” for different reasons. There were three types of stories. The first type is represented by stories about getting wounded on the frontline. This was Andelko’s and Vesna’s story. Marija (2014) , for example, reported
that she was “the most shattered” by Anđelko’s story because her grandmother had lost a son in the war. She also felt a lot of empathy for Vesna as Vesna had seen her sister die. Just like many other respondents, she said: “I cannot even imagine how difficult it would be for me to find myself in such a situation.”

The second type of story is the loss of a loved person, which was mainly represented by Smilja, but partially also by Vesna and Anđelko. The two Bosniak girls who changed their attitudes after the public testimony were truly shattered by her story and demonstrated a very high measure of perspective taking. Zehra (2014), for example, imagined how difficult it was for Smilja to lose her son and not knowing where he was.

There is some evidence that the listeners not only put themselves in the shoes of the storytellers, but they also actively and creatively worked with the stories, imagining what an alternative resolution could be. The only example observed was Jasmina (2014) who described her thoughts as follows: “I was thinking how it would be if her [Smilja’s] son turned up now. How it would happen, whether he would tell her how it was for him and how she would bear it. (...) I simply think that she is still waiting for the moment when he will ring her doorbell and say: ‘Mum, I am alive, I have come, here I am.” Another type of creative activity was to imagine the story in front of one’s eyes like a film. The images may have come from one’s own imagination (Marko, 2014) or from the images on the media (Franjo, 2014).

The third type of story, the story of the three concentration camp prisoners, was reported to be difficult mainly because of the details of the suffering that were given by the storytellers. Danica (2014) observed: “They didn’t have anything: food and everything was very limited, they were dying of thirst and besides that they were being tortured and so on. If I didn’t have food nor water and the things to make me live… it was very difficult for them.” The three girls were putting themselves in the situation of the storytellers imagining how it must have been for them (Azra, 2014). Danica (2014) imagined herself to be in Amir’s place, to be sleeping on a hard floor of concrete without a blanket. “I could not lie on a floor of concrete, and they spent four years in the concentration camp (...) And to listen to the people crying for their children ... (...) I don’t have my own children but (...) I don’t know how it would be if I lost my sister, my parents, I think that I would break down psychically only if I heard someone telling such things.” However, one theme that was repeated across the interviews was the conviction that only the storyteller himself can understand how the pain really was to
him. Some respondents like for example Franjo (2014) reported that those experiences are so difficult that nobody except for the storytellers themselves can really know what it was really like, for example how it must have been to be afraid of being killed in any moment. In the ethnically mixed town, the students were aware of how terrible the suffering was, but they acknowledge, as Zehra (2014) says, that “they cannot tell us (how it really was), we cannot fully understand how it must have been for them. We can feel empathy for them but we cannot exactly know how they are feeling and how much they have suffered.”

As the second manifestation of perspective taking, the listeners often imagined how it must have been for them to live the same things as the storytellers did. For example, Kasim (2015) reported that he was putting himself in Smilja’s shoes because he was “trying to feel how it would be to lose someone in the war.” He also said that he felt a lot of empathy for Smilja as “the pain caused by losing a loved person cannot be dealt with.” Ana (2014) imagined how it would be for her to find herself in the same situation and lose a brother or another close relative. Jelena (2014) called this imagery “a vision inside of my head” and she observed that it was “terrible.”

The third manifestation of perspective taking was the suppression of all other stimuli at the moment of the storytelling and a total immersion into the story. This was reported by Franjo (2014): “You are only focused on their stories. (...) Only later when you come to your senses, you think about what was happening to all the concentration camp prisoners on the three sides, that there were all kinds of things happening. But in that moment, you cannot think, you are only focused on their stories.” In cases of such an immersion into the story, the respondents were most often thinking about what was happening to their family during the war. Zehra (2014) was thinking about her father and his fight for life after he had been wounded. Ana (2014) was reminded of her brother who got a cancer as a result of the bombing and was taken to Belgrade to be cured. Marija (2014), on her side, was reminded of her father and two sisters had to flee Sarajevo while her mother spent the whole war there. Thus, they were reminded of stories of people from their surroundings with whom they empathized already.

As the fourth type of perspective taking, was that the respondents imagined (or were wondering) “how it would be if the war broke out now, how would we behave and how it would all happen” (Jovan, 2014). This is closely connected to imagining war-related moral dilemmas, such as the one reported by Azra (2014). She imagined how she would deal with
her former friends who would betray her just like Janko was betrayed and brought to a concentration camp by his former schoolmates. The negative war-related thoughts are often connected to the reactions in which respondents expressed their gratitude that they had not been affected by the war as severely, for example in the sense that they did not lose a loved person (Ana, 2014).

On the other hand, a negative discursive narrative appeared in this category, too. Marija (2014) believed that Latifa’s experience must have been easier for her due to the fact that she was a child when the event happened. She commented:

“Latifa was very small. It (her trauma) had a big influence on her, but she got out of it, she has grown up. Of course, she cannot forget it, but it was somehow easier for her because she was younger when she lived all that. That could also have happened when they were mature personalities (izgradjene licnosti) who would have to pull through life all by themselves, while she was able to build herself (her personality) as she was practically a child when it all happened.”

I Was Deeply Sorry for Those People

In this chapter, I am going to review the types of parallel empathy as it was reported by the listeners. A parallel empathy outcome is “an actual reproduction in an observer of the target’s feelings” (Davis, 1996, p. 18).

With the exception of Andelko and partly Edisa, the tone of the public testimonies was generally sad, displaying the underlying suffering and negative emotions, including the longing for loved persons who had been lost in (or during) the conflict. The emotions which prevailed in the listeners copied this input and were named most often as “sadness” (tuga) and “pity” (sažaljenje). Besides of that, they mostly reported to be “shattered” by the stories. The strongest emotions named by the listeners were generally sadness and grief, named also as “suffering”. For example, “sadness” and “suffering of the concentration camp prisoners” were named as the strongest emotions by Franjo. He added: “I was sorry for them from all my heart (žao mi ih je bilo, baš iznad duše).” Marija (2014) named the most influential emotion as “pain”, along with “hope that something will change for the better”. The sadness was mostly stemming from the strong empathy for the storyteller, such as the loss of Smilja’s child, which is “the worst thing that can happen” (Zehra, 2014).
The negative emotions such as sadness seemed to be the strongest in the public testimony of the three concentration camp prisoners, followed by Smilja’s story. This order of strength of negative emotions was the same in the respondents. Also, in the ethnically mixed town, Smilja’s story was considered to be the most emotional while in the Serb town, it was Latifa’s testimony. Respondents related this to the fact that she was a child at the time (Marko, 2014), and that she is a woman (the Serb teacher, 2014).

The respondents also invariably reported to be deeply sorry for the storytellers and their losses. Franjo also reported that his feelings were “mixed”, a combination of “guilt and sadness (krivnja i žalost) for what was happening.”

The strongest reaction which appeared only in the three girls who reacted to the stories of the three concentration camp prisoners was crying just like Amir was. As Danica (2014) said:

“When they were telling their stories, I was feeling some kind of empathy and pain, and I was in tears. Everyone had his story... How a Croat saved a Bosniak, or how he was being hurt, we are were forced to tears and and I am really sorry for what those people have lived and how they later didn’t want to talk about it, but thanks to the help of the people in the NGOs they found the courage to tell their story...”

Danica also observed: “I imagined myself in that situation, how it would have been to me or to anyone, if they did that to my parents or my friends for example... I was feeling really sad.” Emotions were a source of trustworthiness of the stories in the young Bosniaks in the ethnically mixed town. As Zehra (2014) summarized: „Smilja told her story in the saddest way, somehow silently and it was visible that she was being shattered. And Edisa and Andelko were smiling when they were telling their stories so that Smilja showed her emotion the strongest. “

Despite that empathy prevailed in the interviews, some rare negative discursive narratives appeared, too.

First of all, empathy was present in the form of emotional empathy and perspective taking in all respondents, with the exception of Marko (2014) who did experience some perspective taking, but not emotional empathy. He explained this by saying that he was an “optimist” who “is generally not sad” and was “not shattered” by the stories and that he was “partly indifferent” towards them. Marko explained this state of mind by two factors.
The first one was that he did not take the stories very seriously, since Andelko was reading his story from the paper. The second one was desensitization accompanied by indifference. He commented:

“I was partially indifferent during the public testimony. I mean, the stories were shattering and truthful and I am sorry for those people, but every day on the TV, on the street, at home, at our neighbour’s we hear those stories. (...) Before, such stories were really making me feel shattered, but now I am only sorry for those people but those things don’t have the same impact on me as in the beginning” (Marko, 2014).

Marija added concerning Andelko that the students “did not feel his emotions and his loss as much because he was telling his story indifferently, with one tone, while the other two [storytellers] were carried away by the story and we could feel the emotions they were transmitting us.” This observation was echoed by many of the Bosniak respondents in the ethnically mixed town, in some cases also regarding Edisa.

Secondly, Kasim who is high in blaming and somewhat prejudiced toward the Serbs (2014) was mostly feeling “sorry” not only for Smilja, but also for the consequences of the war. This feeling sorry was closely linked to blaming: he mentioned that Smilja’s son was taken by his own nation and went missing as a result of the fact that he was sent to fight. He connected the story to the war more generally: “They shouldn’t have done that as they have caused consequences that can’t be erased.”

Thirdly, and by the same token, Kasim admitted that he did not feel much empathy for the Serbs because they had harmed the Bosniaks and the Croats so much.

**Empathic concern and personal distress**

Accounts of of reactive empathy that went beyond mere imitation of the storytellers’ emotions were also very common in the interviews. One of them was the visible concern for the well-being of the storytellers. Empathic concern was observable in all respondents but varied in its strength. It was the lowest in Andelko, whose message seemed to send the signal that although he has suffered, he has been doing well and he is an optimist. The listeners did care for his well-being, but this concern was most probably not as strong as he did not express emotions of sadness and suffering as much as they it should be done.
The second strongest empathic concern was registered in respondents who reacted to Smilja’s story. These students were truly and sincerely concerned for her well-being and they were aware of how difficult the losses must have been for her. The best example of this concern is Jasmina (2014) who wished that her son turn up at her door alive. Jasmina was however thinking about the emotions of the three victims: how they were feeling and if they were strongly wounded.

The third strongest empathic concern was felt by the three girls reacting to the concentration camp prisoners’ stories who repeated many times how the lack of food and water must have been difficult, along with the daily beatings. This empathic concern can be judged to be the strongest from the fact that some of the girls were crying during the public testimony or even during our interview.

The empathic concern varied along with the strength of the situation: the more brutal the suffering is and the more that type of suffering is surprising, the stronger was the empathic concern. Empathic concern could also partly stem from one’s own experience of having lived a similar situation. For example, Zehra (2014) empathized with Andelko as her father had been seriously injured on the frontline just like him.

There were no differences in the reactions of the respondents with good attitudes and of those with somewhat worse attitudes. Kasim (2014) was feeling “sorry for Smilja regardless of the fact that she is a Serb.” During the public testimony he was putting himself in her place and he observed: “I also know that she will remember for her whole life that the pain felt because of the loss of a loved person cannot be overcome” (Kasim, 2015). Franjo (2014) was exceptionally sorry for the storytellers and he expressed a concern for the fact that the storytellers, during their time in the concentration camp, were afraid they could be killed in any moment.

Some of the listeners have also mentioned personal distress as a result of the stories. Jasmina (2014), for example, mentioned that she was “in pain” and “lost”, and Azra (2014) mentioned that she “was feeling pain… and could not breathe normally.”

As to negative discursive narratives, empathic concern seemed to be somewhat diminished in the case of two respondents with good attitudes, Marko and Mirjana. Marko (2014) concluded that the storytellers do not have greater financial or social problems, at least this was the case of Vesna as she receives financial aid from the Republic of Srpska for being a mother and a war invalid, so Marko thought.
Anger at the perpetrators

One important reaction that was registered in some of the young Bosniak students in reaction to Smilja’s story, and in Franjo in reacting to the tortures of a concentration camp, was the anger of the listeners at the perpetrators. There were some differences in the connotations, though.

During the public testimony, Franjo was thinking about

„the individuals who were committing those cruelties (zvjerstva), in that moment I felt wrath against those people (bila mi je srdžba na te ljude). In the moment when the stories were being told, I was feeling hate towards those who had committed those evil deeds. But then there are those who were condemned by the court, so you are not sorry for them. But as I say, you cannot feel hate toward another nation only because of a few individuals who have committed the crimes.”

On the other hand, the Bosniak students were angry at the Serbs who recruited Smilja’s son for the army. For example Zehra (2014) explained her anger this way: “They harmed a person of their nationality because only their own aim was important to them. “ Kasim (2014) was, on the other hand, excusing their behavior by saying that “maybe the people who took her son were good, maybe they had the order to do so, they were forced to (...) and maybe they will lose their life if they don’t do it…”

Sameness of suffering

A theme that was prominent throughout the interviews was the theme of the sameness of human suffering, i.e. the claim that all human beings suffer in the same way. As Kasim (2014) observed regarding the storytellers, “no matter the nationality, whether Muslim, Croat or Serb, everyone had a difficult story, everyone of them has suffered”. Jelena (2014) added: “It does not matter which side is telling the story, the consequences of the war (...) are always big catastrophes and nobody who is listening can stay indifferent.” Jelena observed that anytime that someone hears a wartime stories, the reactions are to be “sad and shattered, no matter which side is telling them and no matter what the consequences are. When consequences of the war are talked about, they are really great catastrophes and no listener can stay indifferent.” The understanding that the three stories are essentially similar and
equally tragic is reflected in accounts of the suffering of whole nations. Jasmina (2014) pointed out: “The testimony made me understand that all three nations suffered, that they had the same pain. ... All nations suffered the same, regardless of whether they were Bosniaks or Serbs. All of them had the same pain.” The theme of the sameness of suffering will be dealt with more in detail in the chapter on competitive victimhood.

**Empathy: Positive discursive narratives**

*The most powerful stories are the most shattering ones*

1. The storytellers’ pain was what affected me the most.
2. The most influential story was the most shattering one.
3. The most emotional was the story of the storyteller who focused on her personal losses.
4. The story that left the deepest impression in my mind was the most emotional story.
5. The story of the storyteller who lost his child was the most shattering, as the loss of one’s own child is the worst thing that can happen to a person.
6. The story of the storyteller who lost her child was more influential than the story of the one who survived.
7. The most influential moments of the public testimonies consisted mainly of the description of suffering.
8. Emotions in the stories were more influential than optimism.
9. I was most shattered by Latifa’s story because she was a child.

**Commonalities between storyteller and listener:**

10. The storytellers were my age when they lived their wartime traumas.
11. I was thinking how it would have been to live such torture at our young age.
12. I was particularly sorry for the female storyteller who lost her child, since I, too, would not like to lose my child when I have one.
13. The story of the storyteller affected me more strongly since one of my loved ones was hurt in a similar way as the storyteller was hurt / wounded.

**Understanding How The Storytellers Felt**

14. I was mirroring the storyteller’s emotions.
15. I was cracking my knuckles during the testimony just like the storyteller was doing.
16. The storytellers’ body language made me understand how difficult it was for them to speak in the public testimony.
17. I cried inside of myself.
18. I was feeling the same kind of sadness and pain as the storyteller.

**Perspective taking**

19. I put myself in the storyteller’s shoes and shared his/her thoughts and emotions.
20. I was totally immersed into the story and could not perceive anything else around me.
21. I imagined the story in front of my eyes like a film.
22. We cannot feel the storytellers' suffering the way they feel it.
23. I felt the storytellers’ fear for their lives.
24. I imagined myself in the storyteller’s place in the concentration camp and what it would be like.
25. I was thinking about the hunger, thirst and torture in the concentration camp.
26. I imagined how it must have been to get wounded on the frontline.
27. I put myself in the storyteller’s situation and tried to feel what it is like to lose a loved person.
28. I imagined how it would be like for the storyteller if her missing son came home some day, how it would all happen.
29. I was sorry for the storyteller as the pain caused by losing a loved person cannot be dealt with.
30. I imagined how it must have been for me to live the same things as the storytellers did.
31. I imagined how it would be if the war broke out now, how would we behave and how it would all happen.
32. I am thankful that I did not live the war / that my family was not affected that severely.
33. I was thinking about what was happening to my loved ones during the war.

**Emotional empathy**

34. I was feeling sad because of the storyteller’s suffering / because of the suffering of other nations.
35. I felt (deep) sorrow for the storyteller’s suffering / for the suffering of other nations.
36. I felt the storytellers’ pain caused by their suffering.
37. I was shattered because of the storytellers’ suffering.
38. I was in tears while listening to the stories.
39. I was crying inside of myself when listening to the stories.

40. I was totally focused on the story and the storytellers’ pain.

41. I was thinking about the storytellers’ emotions.

42. I felt chilling when listening to the stories.

43. I was touched by the storytellers’ suffering.

44. I focused on the storytellers’ emotions.

45. I felt empathy for Smilja as it is impossible to deal with the pain of losing a loved person.

46. Latifa was the most emotional storyteller, maybe because she is a woman

*Empathic concern and personal distress*

47. I was concerned for the storyteller’s well-being.

48. It was difficult to listen to the stories.

49. I was feeling pain as a result of the difficult stories.

50. I could not breathe normally as a result of the difficult stories.

51. I am not so deeply concerned for the well-being of the storyteller, as he/she receives financial aid from the state.

*Empathic anger*

52. I felt anger / wrath at the perpetrators who hurt the storyteller.

53. I felt anger / wrath at the perpetrators who were hurting the other nations.

*Sameness of human suffering*

54. The three stories are equally shattering and difficult.

55. I am sorry for the suffering of the three storytellers, regardless of their nationality.

56. I am sorry for the suffering of the three nations, regardless of their nationality.

*Negative*

*Empathy: Negative discursive narratives*

The most powerful stories are not the most shattering ones

57. The story told with an optimistic tone was the least influential.

58. The storyteller transmitted us less of his emotions, probably because he is a man.
59. I felt the strongest emotions towards those who told the story in the saddest way and showed their emotions the most.

*Imagine self: As I Myself Were in The Concentration Camp*

60. Marija believed that Latifa’s experience must have been easier for her due to the fact that she was a child when the event happened.

61. Latifa’s trauma must have been easier for her to overcome, due to the fact that she was a child when the event happened

*Emotional empathy*

62. I was not shattered by the stories.

63. I was partially indifferent during the public testimony.

64. The stories told at the testimony do not shock me, as I have heard many stories worse than theirs.

65. I am an optimist who is generally not sad.

66. I did not feel empathy for the storytellers because I did not take the stories very seriously.

67. The storyteller was telling his story with one tone and did not transmit us his emotions well.

68. I do not feel much empathy for the Serbs because they have harmed our nation the most.

69. I was feeling sorry for the consequences of the war that Their nation has caused.

### 6.4.4 Receiving The Storytellers’ Message

In this chapter, I am going to review the main themes of the messages that the storytellers send to the listeners and the reactions to these messages, i.e. how they were reflected by the listeners.

*Do Not Allow It To Happen Again*

The most basic message that the storytellers convey to the listeners is that the war was terrible and that they must never allow it to happen again. They also say that the “*war cannot bring anything good to anyone*” and that “*in the war there is not a single family that did not suffer a loss*” (Samouković, 2014). Amir adds that the war “*only leaves consequences until the end of life*” (Omerspahić, 2014a). Smilja sends the same message by highlighting the
tragedy of her child and wishing the listeners never to live the same experience as parents (Mitrović, 2014). Stanislav says that his public testimony is a way of fighting against future wars and he adds that “whoever may offer me a gun, I would not take it” (Krezić, 2014a).

**All Victims Are Equally Important**

The public testimonies seem to counteract competitive victimhood, as will be mentioned below. One of the key elements of the message that the listeners have taken away was echoed by the Serb teacher (2014): “it is not important which side you come from, every victim is equally important and every living being lives pain and suffers in the same way.” This happened several times across this research although such a formulation was not explicitly mentioned by the storytellers.

**People Should Only Be Divided Into Good And Bad And Not By Their Nationality**

One of the favourite themes that the storytellers repeated in most public testimonies is a way of saying that people should be only divided into good and bad, and not by their nationality. As Amir (Omerspahić, 2014a) says: „I never divided people by their nationality so that I hate the whole Serb nation. I cannot as they are not all guilty for what hapened to me. As I only remember that doctor who helped me that time in those conditions and who was a Serb.“ Another, related element of the message is that „the war may have been a test of humanity – and who managed to stay human in that war and not to harm anyone, they should congratulate themselves and be proud of it“ (Samouković, 2014). Edisa echoed the same message and added an episode when her daughter asked her: “Mother, and what would happen if I fall in love with someone who belongs to another faith (i.e. nationality)?” Edisa replied: “The important is that he be human, no matter what his name is. The important is to have a pure heart and a pure soul.“

**Spread Love, Not Hate**

There was yet another reaction to Edisa’s story. Zehra (2014) has echoed Edisa’s message by extending it to forgiveness: even though Serbs killed Edisa’s husband, she would not forbid her daughter to marry a person of another faith: “And this means that we should spread love and not hate,” she concluded. This is also the same message that Latifa repeated in her public testimony in the Serb town: “We need to live happy, respect, understand and love each other
and go in a positive way” (Begić, 2014). Jovan (2014) understood her message in a broader way: “That we need to strive to defeat that nationalism, that we shall all together participate in the unification of Bosnia and Herzegovina and that we must not put obstacles between us and people of other religions who live with us.” (Jovan, 2014). Throughout this research, respondents and storytellers repeated a famous saying that held Bosnia together for centuries which can be translated as follows: “Love your own people but respect the other nations” (voli svoje, poštuj tudje). It was mentioned both by Edisa and Vesna, the latter said during her message that she educates her children in the spirit of this saying (Tomić, 2014).

The last and crucial part of this message is that the listeners should not hate the other two nations. This was echoed by several of the young people. Kasim (2014) for example said that “the young generations must strive to reduce hate and they must mix (...) with all the three nations”, which ensured him that his participation in the contact program is the right thing to do. The three concentration camp prisoners also spoke strongly against hate, with Stanislav’s story about his nationalist café and his consequent conversion being the strongest. This message was strongly perceived by the listeners, Danica (2014) saying that young people need to collaborate in order to „build it all again“ (Danica, 2014).

**Do Not Condemn Other People Because of The War**

Yet another theme is the message that the listeners should not blame innocent ordinary people for the war. Danica echoes Stanislav’s story about his nationalist café and his conversion from hate to reconciliation. She says that Stanislav understood that while he was blaming the other two nations for the war, he later understood that “the reality is different, that everyone is equally guilty” (Danica, 2014). Jasmina expressed a surprising impact of the message, i.e. that the older generation should not be blamed and condemned for allowing the war to happen. She also expressed that young people need to have understanding toward them. She was most probably led to this analysis by the story of Smilja, in which the motive of her son being forced to go to war was made very clear. Jasmina concluded that these older people “were forced to it [the war] by powerful and influential people who started all that” (Jasmina, 2014). This was also echoed by Zehra. As the main message of the public testimony, Jasmina indicated the following: „We should not condemn other people as everything will return back sooner or later.“
Forgiveness is Both Possible and Necessary

Forgiveness is a very strong message across the public testimonies. The two storytellers who carried a very strong message of forgiveness in this research are Stanislav and Anđelko as they have personally forgiven their victimizers. Anđelko called forgiveness the “most human of all acts” (Kvesić, 2014a) and invited the audience to forgive their enemy in order to live in peace and happiness. The message of forgiveness triggers different understandings. One possible understanding is the “forgive but not forget” approach. As Zehra (2015) said: „We need to forget... not to forget what was but try to reconcile, to start living in peace regardless of the religion or nationality.“ The other possible understanding was represented by Josip who may wish to forget his childhood in a concentration camp. Josip defines the message of the public testimony in the following way: “That all the people went through that, that it all needs to be forgotten as soon as possible, as everyone has suffered enough. We need to forget it and move on. It happened a long time ago.” Such a wish to forget the war may come from personal traumatization and the author believes that it is thus more likely to appear in older people and also in Serbs who generally advocate forgetting (Bubalo, 2017).

In The War, There Were Good Individuals Helping People From The Other Side

At least two of the stories under study in this research contained the theme of positive war heroes who have saved an enemy’s life in the middle of an ongoing warfare. These heroes are the ambulance doctor who saved Amir’s life and the guardian who gave him the blanket, and the doctor and the ambulance driver who saved Anđelko’s life. These are a kind of messages of hope which have been used in Rwanda to promote peace (Lala et al., 2014).

In this research, the reception of this positive message was somewhat mixed. The Bosniak students in the ethnically mixed town reported that they were already aware that there had been good people in all of the three nations. Dina (2015) comments the message: “I believe they were helping, that nobody can see a person lying and bleeding and not help. I believe they were helping each other somehow. (…) I had heard such stories.“ Kasim (2014) highlighted: “There were many Bosnian Serbs who were defending Bosnia and Herzegovina from Serbia. There were many of them, which is a proof that there were many good Serbs who wished to help so that Serbs would not destroy the Bosniak nation.“ He probably meant the general Jovan Divjak who led the defense of Sarajevo during the wartime siege although he was himself a Serb. For all these reasons, the students were not surprised that there had
been good people in the war belonging to the other two nations and they thought that the stories about suffering have a greater impact than positive stories about war heroes. On the other hand, as compared to Amir, Janko and Stanislav, Anđelko told his story with a positive, optimistic tone, thus evoking less empathy, as listeners mentioned throughout the interviews. On the other hand, the example of positive war heroes was surprising to Franjo, who had believed that all Serbs and Bosniaks were bad.

One last observation that we need to mention at this point is that Anđelko’s story elicited discursive narratives about helping. Zehra mentioned the story about the doctor who saved Anđelko’s life by saying: “The important thing is how our soul is, whether we will help someone when he is in a difficult situation and when we need help as Anđelko did, because he was wounded, so the doctor saved him, and so did God (laugh).“

**Be Optimist and Build A Better Future**

The storytellers very often concluded their message by a wish to the audience. This wish most often was for the listeners to have a better future than the previous generation had. Edisa wished the young people to „achieve their dreams and to build coexistence, peace and tolerance“ (Šehić, 2014). Latifa pinpointed that it is the young people who should move the community in the right direction (Begić, 2014). Vesna wished the youth that their children live in peace (Tomić, 2014). Anđelko wished the audience „concordance which leads to progress, and progress provides happiness“ (Kvesić, 2014a). Zehra (2015) interpreted his message in the sense that young people „need to be happy and enjoy every moment.“ She referred this claim to the moment in which Anđelko almost died as it reminded her of the same experience of her father. This is a proof that Anđelko’s message did resonate among the young people, however Zehra (2015) indicated that she had been influenced by Smilja’s story more.

**The Reception of The Message**

Based on the above analysis, the message was correctly received and interpreted, and also well accepted by the listeners. None of the respondents contradicted any part of the message. At certain times, they even complemented the message in creative ways and mentioned as part of the message even things which were not explicitly said. Therefore, the author of this thesis believes that the message has two components: what is said, and what is not said but
implied, or what results from the non-verbal aspect of the public testimony. What is said has been analyzed above. Among the second aspect, Franjo has mentioned the brotherly interaction among the storytellers as „a motive of coexistence“, and Jasmina inferred that older people should not be blamed by the war, although this was not explicitly mentioned.

The degree to which the listeners were impressed by the message itself is somewhat mixed and differs between public testimonies. The strongest impression message was reported by Franjo and Josip, who reported that the message clearly influenced their attitudes. Franjo’s take-away was that the war shall be pushed to the background and people shall forgive and reconcile. The power of this message seems to have been put in relation with a perception of the storytellers’ opinion leadership. As Franjo (2014) said:

„The message had a lot of influence on me. When you see the former concentration camp prisoners and when they tell you personally in their own words what happened to them, they are telling that to an ordinary listener, they give you a message of what it would be like if you were in the same situation. That you should forgive your neighbour and turn the page and move on.“

On the other hand, opinion leadership seemed to be somewhat weaker in the other public testimony. The students did not express a particular admiration for Andelko, but they did admire Smilja for being brave and founding an organization for the search for missing persons. The other storytellers were not mentioned as being particularly admired, however the interviews did not focus on admiration at that time.

It also seems that some parts of the message have made a deeper impression than others. The most impressive seems to be the story about the doctor who saved Amir’s finger and his life: it was spontaneously recalled by Franjo even though at least one year had passed from the public testimony.

6.4.5 We Are All Humans

The testimonies elicited spontaneous claims regarding the fact that “we are all humans”, which can be interpreted as a common identity and a factor of reconciliation.

At first, this common humanity is perceived to be between the storyteller and the listeners. This can be illustrated by several quotes. For example, Jasmina (2014) retold the story of the loss of Smilja’s son and she said regarding her testimony: „She wanted to say that we are all
humans regardless of who or what nationality we are, we all have a heart and a soul, we all have someone for whom we would do anything. (...) The pain of all people is the same. We are all humans regardless of what has happened. “This awareness could erase the sharp distinction between ingroup and outgroup: as Halima said, “We all have feelings, like when you lose your child.” The suffering of Amir, Janko and Stanislav were also very often quoted, notably their dehumanizing treatment in the concentration camp, and their hopes and dreams such as Janko’s passion for skiing. Very important is also the rehumanizing example of the Serb doctor who saved Amir’s life. This common humanity particular to the stories was then elaborated on and generalized by the respondents, and often quoted regarding the suffering of the other nations.

The perception of common humanity was present in respondents with both positive and negative attitudes on the different dimensions, although, as illustrated on the case of Kasim, the positive effects of this mechanism may be mitigated by blaming. For example, as Kasim said, “some people are worse and some are better, someone is guilty and somebody is not (...) The Serbs have chosen the worse way, they provoked a war.” However, when a real lack of rehumanization was present, the respondents represented mainly by Jasmina (2014) stated that members of the other nation (i.e. the Serbs) were humans, but not as much as members of one’s own nation (i.e. the Bosniaks).

The perception of common humanity seemed to be aided by the fact that the storytellers do not name the nation to which they belong, and sometimes they do not name their perpetrators. This pushed the national identities of the storytellers to the background and the common identity so the listeners could focus on the pain and on the human side of the story. According to this author, this is the mechanism that made the superordinate identity as humans more evident.

On the other hand, the credibility of the message that “we are all humans” was inhibited by a perception that the storytellers were individuals and that they; therefore, “could not speak for the whole nation” (Zehra, 2014).

Rehumanization: Positive discursive narratives

1. They are human beings just like us
2. We are all human but it is a person’s character / qualities, and not nationality that counts

Rehumanization: Negative discursive narratives

3. We are all humans but some are guilty an some are not
4. Members of the other nation(s) are humans, but not as much as members of my nation.
5. Perpetrators are not humans.

6.4.6 We Are All Victims of This War

In this chapter, I aim at showing what discursive narratives testify about the absence or presence of competitive victimhood. I will show that there were no shifts in beliefs about the overall death toll, but respondents have reported some shifts in the beliefs about the amount and proportion of suffering. Both Bosniaks and Croats claim to have solid evidence proving that their nation is the biggest victim.

In this research, nearly all respondents initially held convictions of competitive victimhood. This showed to be scaled in several degrees. The deepest competitive victimhood consisted in the unshakeable belief that one’s own nation had the highest number of victims, i.e. the highest death toll. This belief was held by respondents of all three nations, but it was prevalent in the discourse of the Bosniak in the ethnically mixed town, and present in the discourse of almost half of the respondents in the Serb town. While in the case of Serb respondents, nothing about this conviction changed, some Bosniak and Croat respondents acknowledged that other nations have suffered, too. On the other hand, no respondent acknowledged that the three nations had about the same number of victims, except for Franjo, who talked about the same “amount” of suffering (which is not the same as victim numbers). We must admit, though, that stories of individual victims do not polemize with official death tolls statistics, and thus can hardly change the related beliefs.

The second highest shift in competitive victimhood consisted in the acknowledgement that the three nations endured about the same share of wartime suffering. Franjo (2014), Josip (2015) and Azra (2014) all reported an attitude change on this dimension. Some of them were vaguely aware of the suffering of the other nations, and some were not, however thanks to the testimonies, they came to full understanding that the share of suffering was the same in all nations. The deepest change was reported by Franjo (2014), who was initially cut off any information about the suffering of other nations:

„In that period it was as if things were happening only to us, as if we were the biggest victim of the war. But now when you start to re-examine those things, you see that it was happening to all sides, as through those public speakings that I
saw, the testimonials of those people, you see that things where happening to them, too."

To the question whether some nations have suffered more than others, he answered: „It was all mostly the same, the same things were happening – killings, destruction, persecution and refugees were on all of the three sides.“ This claim was echoed by many other respondents, to a smaller or greater extent. These beliefs were associated to yet two other discursive narratives: to the narrative that the other nation(s) had great losses in the war, just like one’s own nation, and to the belief that the modalities of the suffering of the three nations were the same. Some respondents associated the understanding about the sameness of suffering to the side-by-side format of the testimonies and the pain exposed by the storytellers. Josip illustrated the importance of seeing war victims and their emotions live, in person: „When you see the people [the storytellers] and the pain in their eyes and what they have all been through, you understand that it was all the same“ (Josip, 2015).

A somewhat weaker, but still very significant shift was when respondents came to realize that all the three nations were victims of the war and that most members of the other nation(s) suffered during the war. While the former was very common and present in most interviews, the latter was not clearly expressed by most respondents, although they may have believed it. The two Croat male respondents, Franjo and Josip, Zehra and two female Bosniaks Azra and Meliha came to fully understand, for the first time, that all three nations were victims, and not just their own nation. For example, Zehra (2015) said that the public testimony had a lot of influence on her perception of common victimhood:

„It had a lot of influence as I used to think that Bosniaks have been hurt the most during the war, but when I heard the other stories, too, I understood that even the other sides had been hurt. (...) I think it [the public testimony] helped us the young to see all sides of the story about what happened, not only of our country but of the other countries and nations as well, how everyone suffered in some way so that we wouldn’t think that we were the only ones in the worst situation. This way, we can feel empathy for the other people.“

Some respondents like Jasmina, or from among those with good attitudes Azra, are already aware that the other nations have suffered, too. In these cases, the public testimony represented a confirmation that their opinion on the matter was correct (Jasmina, 2014). Josip (2014) stated that „looking into the storytellers’ eyes“ enabled him to put himself in
their place, and think about the suffering of their nations more intensively. Yet, for other respondents, learning about the suffering of others represented simply new information and a rare occasion to learn something new about the war (Azra, 2014).

Yet other positive discursive narratives associated with an absence of competitive victimhood are the belief that all human beings suffer in the same way, and that all victims and their suffering are equally important, regardless of their nationality. They are significant indicators, although rarely mentioned. The former was mentioned by Jasmina (2014) who used it to explain why she already believed that the three nations were victims of the war.

An interesting discursive narrative is the comparison of the suffering of the three storytellers. Respondents were typically deeply impressed by the stories when they call them “sad”, “tragical” and especially “shattering”. While in some cases they see one or two of the stories as stronger and thus “more shattering” (such as e.g. Smilja’s), it can happen that they were called “equally shattering” (Marko, 2014), which was also a positive indicator of reconciliation and of the effects of the side-by-side storytelling format.

The last positive discursive narrative consists of the belief that the suffering of the other nation(s) is not mentioned enough among members of one’s own nation. Among all storytellers, only Azra (2014) expressed this concern. This belief testifies of the underlying conviction that the other nations have suffered, too.

The negative discursive narratives consisted mainly of the beliefs that one’s own nation had the highest number of victims and the largest amount of physical and emotional suffering during the war. What was very interesting about this is the way the respondents worked with evidence for this belief. Bosniaks tended to support their claim by pointing to the Srebrenica genocide (e.g. Kasim, 2014). Serb respondents tended to bring up their own nation’s statistics documenting that most war victims were indeed Serbs (Ana, 2014). Yet another discursive narrative testifying of strong competitive victimhood is the belief that one’s own nation was submitted to the worst cruelties, such as raping or cutting dead bodies in pieces (Marija, 2014). Common was the pointing to famous victimization episodes and massacres such as the ones in Srebrenica for the Bosniaks, or Mostar and Konjic for Croats (Josip, 2015). Remembering such episodes can testify of the salience of ingroup victimization in the listeners’ minds.

Another discursive narrative which is somewhat natural but was interpreted here as negative due to the context in which it was told, is the pointing out that it is natural that every nation
focuses on its own suffering. It was mentioned by a few Serb respondents who demonstrated competitive victimhood and questioned the official death toll. Indeed, two discursive narratives that were present among a few Serb respondents stated that the official death toll was fraudulently inflated, for example by bringing bones from Sarajevo to Srebrenica, and that the true death toll remained yet to be proven (Jovan, 2014).

The last two discursive narratives are less significant for this research, but they may be more significant in other studies. The first one is the narrative that Serbs are in danger of extinction because of the hostility of other nations toward them and repeated wars leading to losses of large portions of the population. This was expressed by (Marija, 2014) who also expressed her awareness of her role of a mother and procreator of the nation. Also, researchers could encounter beliefs about the discrimination and victimization of Croats or Serbs in today’s Bosnia and Herzegovina, as expressed by Josip (2015).

The complete overview of discursive narratives on competitive victimhood can be found in the table below:

**Competitive victimhood: Positive discursive narratives**

1. All nations had about the same number of victims
2. All nations endured about the same share of wartime suffering
3. All three nations are victims of the war.
4. Most members of the other nation(s) suffered during the war.
5. The other nation(s) had great losses in the war, just like my nation.
6. The modalities of the suffering of the three nations were the same.
7. All human beings suffer in the same way.
8. All victims and their suffering are equally important, regardless of their nationality.
9. All three stories told during the testimony were equally sad / tragical / shattering.
10. The suffering of the other nation(s) is not mentioned enough among members of my nation.

**Competitive victimhood: Negative discursive narratives**

11. My nation had the highest number of war victims.
12. My nation endured the largest share of wartime suffering/
13. Members of my nation were being mistreated / killed in more gruesome ways comparing to other nations.
14. Bosniaks are the greatest war victims of the war, as the genocide in Srebrenica proves.

15. The other nation(s) suffered during the war, too, but less than our nation.

16. Many Ingroup members were killed by Outgroup members in … [mentioning the place of the massacre/s]

17. It is normal that every nation focuses on its own suffering.

18. Outgroup death toll is exaggerated / fraudolently inflated.

19. The true death toll is yet to be proven.

20. Our nation has precise numbers / hard evidence to prove that our suffering was the greatest.

21. Our nation is/was in danger of extinction because of evil intentions of the other nations.

22. Our nation is disadvantaged / oppressed in the current Bosnia and Herzegovina. Our nation is/was in danger of extinction because of evil intentions of the other nations.

23. Our nation is disadvantaged / oppressed in the current Bosnia and Herzegovina

The interviews in this research have discovered some possible underlying patterns. First of all, the reported shifts in discursive narratives on competitive victimhood have been predominantly reported by listeners who heard the stories of the three concentration camp prisoners: Amir, Janko and Stanislav. These respondents reported positive change on the narratives regarding the sameness and amount of suffering of the three nations but did not have any remaining negative beliefs on the same dimensions. Only Josip (2015) claimed that Croats endured the largest share of wartime suffering and named the massacres in Mostar and Konjic, though comparing them to the suffering of Bosniaks in Sarajevo. To sum up, notably Azra (2014), Meliha (2014), Franjo (2014) and Josip (2015) came to the understanding that all three nations were victims of the war, that they had great losses and suffered roughly the same way, i.e. by the same modalities. Most of them also admitted that the three nations were subjected to the same amount of suffering. Importantly, Zehra (2015), reacting to Smilja’s story, also reported that she came to understand that Serbs and Croats had great losses in the war, although she did not explicitly mention the other dimensions. I would like to point out that in Bosnia where competitive victimhood is the norm, these are very significant findings.
The second group of respondents, which consisted of the remaining Bosniak students, had strongly mixed attitudes regarding competitive victimhood that were not altered by the public testimony. In this group, some positive discursive narratives typically coexisted with negative ones. The belief that Bosniaks are the biggest victim of the war was present in all of them, and most of them cited the Srebrenica genocide as evidence for that claim. While they tended to admit that all nations were victims of the war, and occasionally also that they had great losses and that the modalities of their suffering were the same, many of them insisted that Bosniaks endured the largest share of suffering. Importantly, Jasmina (2014) is part of this group of respondents.

The third group consisted of the Serb respondents that were the teacher (2014), Marko (2014), Jelena (2014), and Jovan (2014) who expressed predominantly positive discursive narratives with none of their negative counterparts regarding the sameness or amount of suffering. Even some of these respondents were convinced that the official death toll is fraudulently inflated, though.

The last group consisted of Marija (2014), Ana (2014) and Mirjana (2014) who did not express any positive discursive narratives regarding competitive victimhood but stressed the same argument regarding the death toll. Moreover, Marija (2014) talked extensively about the gruesome ways in which Serbs were being killed and mistreated by Muslim soldiers. However, the interethnic attitudes of these respondents are mostly good, and even they may have held some positive beliefs regarding competitive victimhood, but the course of the interviews did not bring them to surface.

To conclude, beliefs of competitive victimhood concern several central themes such as the official death toll, the proportionality, quantity and modalities of suffering, the use of different victimizing episodes to prove the claim that one’s own nation is the greatest victim, and the questioning of the official death count. Some marginal positive beliefs regard the humanizing beliefs regarding the universal nature of human suffering regardless of nationality, and on the negative end narratives regarding the fear of extinction and the victimization in today’s Bosnia and Herzegovina. The attitude change was strongest in reaction to the most tragic stories, i.e. the stories of the concentration camp prisoners with almost no negative remnants. Reactions to Smilja’s story left some negative beliefs, coexisting with positive ones. The Serb sample was divided between respondents with mixed
beliefs and those with negative ones, beyond the universal conviction that Serbs are the biggest victim of the war.

6.4.7 Our People Have Committed Crimes, Too

Another large theme of discursive narratives, and one that also registered some attitude shifts in a few cases, is the theme of ingroup guilt. The respondents’ discursive narratives have varied from outright denial of concrete incidents to feeling personally guilty for the misdeeds of one’s own nation. Interestingly, the negative discursive narratives registered in this research are far more numerous than the positive ones.

The first group of positive discursive narratives consists of some degree of acknowledgement of ingroup guilt. The strongest of them consists of the belief that *all three nations are equally guilty for misdeeds against the other nations*. This was mentioned by Danica (2014) in her summary of Stanislav’s message, however none of the respondents in this research quantified their acknowledgement as equality of perpetration. On the other hand, a few respondents had initially not been fully aware of, or used to outright deny, the war crimes and other misdeeds perpetrated by members of their nation. Following the testimony, they all came to believe that *all three nations committed war crimes*, including their nation (Franjo, 2014; Josip, 2015; Meliha, 2014).

Most of the respondents in this research were already aware of ingroup perpetration, however to a few of them this was new information as they tended to believe the narratives of collective innocence (Selimović, 2010). By acknowledging ingroup perpetration, the respondents concerned adopted the beliefs that *some members of their own nation have committed misdeeds or war crimes against the other nation(s), and that none of the three nations is innocent as far as misdeeds during the war are concerned*.

The best example of this acknowledgement is Franjo (2014). Before the public testimonies, Franjo was somewhat aware that his nation may have committed war crimes but he was refusing to think about it:

„I did not want to get deeper into that issue because everyone protects his nation somehow... You don’t look into that and it all looks superficially because that time there were no public public testimonies and this way, so you get the
information that there has been a crime and then it is covered up, so you get a wholly different picture, a false picture” (Franjo, 2014).

After a period of reflection and his own analysis of the testimony, he came to the conclusion that “the war crimes were happening on the three sides, and nobody was innocent. ... There were crimes on the three sides, from the HVO, from the Bosniak army and from the Serbs, so that the destinies of all those people were the same, or similar” (Franjo, 2014). Franjo felt guilty for the harm that the Croats brought upon the other nations: “You have to feel guilty, it is natural that you do” (Franjo, 2014).

In theory, shifts in ingroup guilt would only occur when the storyteller was harmed by the listener’s own nation. However, interestingly enough, the shift in attitudes regarding ingroup guilt occurred even when that was not the case. It seems to be enough to see that the other nations have committed crimes. An example is Josip, a Croat reacting to the stories of Amir, Stanislav and Janko. Josip reported that before the public testimony he was more focused on what the other nations did to the Croats, but the stories of the three concentration camp prisoners made him aware that “if Bosniaks and Serbs committed war crimes, Croats had to commit them as well (...) But you surely need time to accept that, as you always see your own side in a positive light” (Josip, 2014). However, Josip did not feel personally guilty for such crimes, even though he did not justify them.

Beyond acknowledgement, the emotional and cognitive reactions to ingroup guilt were also quite strong. The three reactions that occurred were condemnation, anger or wrath, and shame. Firstly, all respondents who realized their nation’s guilt also came to condemn the members of their own nation who had committed crimes. An example of clear condemnation of ingroup crimes is Franjo: “When you get all the information and you look at those people and what crimes they were committing, you condemn them no matter which nation they belong to. You have to condemn them, I mean, it is human that you condemn them. But I say again, you must not look at one whole nation as if they were all war criminals” (Franjo, 2014). Secondly, some of the respondents were angry at the perpetrators belonging to their nation. Franjo (2014) said: “I was sorry because of the people from among my nation who were committing the crimes against the other people ... That was provoking some sort of wrath inside of me.” This claim can also be interpreted as empathic anger (Davis, 1996, p. 18). Yet the strongest reaction registered here was the feeling of shame for belonging to the perpetrator nation. This occurred in Meliha (2014) in reaction to the stories of Janko and
Stanislav, but mainly in reaction to Janko’s story about the persecution of Serbs around Srebrenica. Meliha said: “In that moment, I felt ashamed that I am a Bosniak, because Bosniaks attacked Serbs and Croats” (Meliha, 2014). It was the first time for her to realize that Bosniaks had committed war crimes.

The negative discursive narratives can be classified into several categories: outright denial of the guilt of one’s own nation for war crimes in general, specific victimization episodes or hurting the storyteller; relativization of ingroup guilt by comparing it to the guilt of other nations; the narrative of collective innocence and merely defensive violence; the non-intentionality of the harm caused; and the questioning of established death toll statistics and other facts.

The first category, or outright denial of collective guilt of one’s own nation, is represented by five narratives. The first one manifested itself in the claim that the testimony did not make the listener question his or her own nation’s guilt regarding the war at all. While most respondents were already aware that their nation is guilty, too, a few of them refused to question that aspect any further. Also, many listeners denied any guilt of their own nation for a particular incident. Indeed, most respondents did not feel guilty for the other nations’ or the storytellers’ suffering – neither in a personal nor in a collective manner. For example, Josip (2015) stressed that he did not justify any crimes perpetrated by members of his nation, but did not feel guilty for them. A variation to this occurred when the listeners understood that the storyteller may have suffered by the hands of their own nation but refused to believe it. This was the case of some Serb respondents, and their strategies for diffusing guilt will be mentioned below. Last but not least, Kasim illustrated another defensive narrative against collective guilt, which is the fact that during the war, he was not yet born, for which reason he cannot feel guilty for such crimes (Kasim, 2015).

The second category, or the relativization of guilt, manifested in one narrative that has a Bosniak variation to it. The main narrative claims that all the three nations are perpetrators, but some more and some less. Kasim (2015), while admitting that Bosniaks also committed war crimes, including against Serbs, stresses that “everyone is guilty, but somebody more and somebody less.” More concretely, Kasim touched a particularistic Bosniak narrative: the belief that Bosniaks did kill Serbs, but few compared to the genocide in Srebrenica. He explained (Kasim, 2014):
“Regrettably, there were many people killed by our army, but that was very little comparing to [the number of people killed by] the Serbian nation. This is because only the number [of victims] perpetrated in Srebrenica has increased over 8,280 and it keeps increasing every day, since many mass graves have not yet been discovered.”

He did understand that Anđelko suffered from Bosniaks and he admitted that “there were some Bosniak individuals who were torturing the Serb and Croat nations, but mostly the persons who were tortured, raped and killed were Bosniak Muslims or Croats who suffered from the hands of Serbia” (Kasim, 2014).

Thirdly, related to these narrative are the narratives of collective innocence. Two of them were prevalent in the Bosniak listeners: Bosniaks are the least guilty of the three nations, and during the war, if they committed any violence, they did so because they were only defending themselves (Dina, 2015; Zehra, 2015). While narratives of collective innocence are present and significant in all the three Bosnian nations (Selimovic, 2010), the Bosniak narrative is particularly strongly rooted.

The fourth category of negative discursive narratives concerned the intentions of the perpetrators. Several narratives are used to diffuse, completely or partly, the guilt of one’s own nation. First of all, some respondents claimed that members of their nation were not intentionally targeting civilians of other nations during the war. For example, Marko said it was “logical” that Serbs did not bomb any civilian areas, but rather “only military areas, but in those areas civilians and civilian settlements can be found, and errors might have happened” (Marko, 2014). He did not feel guilt for Latifa’s suffering because he deemed it to be an error and even if it was intentional, he said that “it is the problem of that commander and he should feel guilty, not me” (Marko, 2015). Related to this is the narrative that harm brought by members of one’s own nation upon the other nation during a concrete incident was not intentional. It is with this narrative that Marko diffused any possible guilt of the Serb nation for Latifa’s suffering in the aerial bombing (Marko, 2014). Yet a third narrative used to explain Latifa’s suffering and deny collective ingroup guilt for it is the narrative that suffering brought upon the other nation(s) by the hands of some members of one’s own nation was perpetrated by psychically ill people. Mirjana (2014) said it was clear that Latifa was not hit on purpose, since “nobody who can see children would shell them ... Nobody is such a monster to do that. And if so, it is a psychically ill person.”
The fifth type of negative discursive narratives concerned the denial of the official statistics regarding the wartime death toll, or other similar firmly established facts. The first narrative, pronounced mainly by many of the Serb respondents, claims that the numbers of victims of the other nations are artificially blown up, and that the true death toll is yet to be established. Related to this is the belief that the Srebrenica death toll is a lie, and that the victim numbers were inflated by fraud, such as by bringing human bones of victims from Sarajevo to Srebrenica. For example, Jovan (2014) used that argument in order to illustrate that the artificially inflated numbers were used to prove the Serbs’ guilt for the genocide in Srebrenica claiming that “25,000 people had been killed, while until that moment, only 10,000 were living there”. By the same token, according to the last narrative, the true statistics of who perpetrated how many crimes have yet to be established (Marko, 2014).

**Ingroup guilt: Positive discursive narratives**

24. All three nations are equally guilty for misdeeds against the other nations.
25. All three nations committed war crimes.
26. If members of the other nation(s) committed war crimes, it is clear that members of my nation committed them, too.
27. Some members of my nation have committed misdeeds or war crimes against the other nation(s).
28. None of the three nations is innocent as far as misdeeds during the war are concerned.
29. When I heard about the misdeeds of some members of my nation, I was ashamed to belong to that nation.
30. I am angry at the perpetrators from among my nation.
31. I do condemn the perpetrators from among my nation.

**Ingroup guilt: Negative discursive narratives**

32. The testimony did not make me question my nation’s guilt regarding the war.
33. The storyteller may have suffered from the hands of my nation, but I do not believe it.
34. I do not feel guilty for the other nations’ / storyteller’s suffering as I did not participate in the war.
35. I do not feel guilty for the misdeeds or war crimes committed by some members of my nation.

36. My nation is not guilty for the suffering of the other nation(s) during the ... incident.

37. During the war, I was not yet born.

38. All nations are perpetrators, but some more and some less.

39. Bosniaks did kill Serbs, but few comparing to the genocide in Srebrenica.

40. During the war, members of my nation were only defending themselves.

41. Members of my nation were not intentionally targeting civilians of the other nations.

42. The harm brought by members of my nation upon the other nation during incident at ... was not intentional.

43. The military commanders have to feel guilty, not me.

44. The suffering brought upon the other nation(s) by the hands of some members of my nation was perpetrated by psychically ill people.

45. True statistics of who perpetrated how many crimes has to be established.

46. True wartime death toll is yet to be established, current numbers are artificially inflated.

47. The Srebrenica death toll is a lie / the victim numbers were inflated by fraud.

48. Bosniaks are the least guilty of the three nations.

6.4.8 They Are Not All Guilty

Blaming is a major obstacle to reconciliation. Interestingly, the listeners have reported some attitude changes on this dimension. Several respondents came to better understand the causes of the war and experienced reduced blaming of the other nations. Also, some respondents reported a shift from the assignment of collective guilt to the individualization of guilt. Both blaming and individualization will be dealt with in this chapter.

Blaming

Positive discursive narratives revolved around several themes. Three major narratives contain the claim that politicians, not ordinary people should be blamed for the war. They
claim respectively that *the war was caused by high-ranking politicians, not ordinary people.* Jelena (2014) suggested that

“The truth about the war is not presented to us, it is further kept secret. People were suffering while politicians were thinking, talking and planning the war, and the nation followed them. I do not think that the three nations wanted to make war again, as in this region we make war all the time. So I think that the war was the work of some high-ranking politicians and important people.”

From this follows the claim that *all three nations were misled by politicians in order to accept the war.* Franjo said regarding the very beginning of the war: “*I think it was all the same, the three nations, we were being misled*” (Franjo, 2014). Franjo also realized that his Bosniak and Serb neighbors were not guilty for the war, and that he should thus not hate them. He added: “Eventually, you think a bit and you find out that his neighbor is not guilty for what happened, and then you also see the Bosniak’s side [of the story]” (Franjo, 2014). Franjo’s account is a reaction to the stories of Amir, Janko and Stanislav, who made it very clear in their stories and in their message that they did not want the war to happen. A shift in Franjo’s attitude regarding blaming is evident: he described his old attitudes as pure hate and blaming Serbs and Bosniaks for his nation’s suffering. Zehra (2015) also reported that she used to blame ordinary Serbs for the war, but thanks to the public testimony she concluded that it was the politicians and powerful people who started the war. According to her, the politicians were sending their respective nations to fight, while “*they were sitting somewhere and controlling all that, and their life was not in danger, while other people were making war and dying for them and for their profit*” (Zehra, 2015).

The third key narrative is that *ordinary people did not want to fight the war, but rather, they were forced to.* This was a common reaction especially to Smilja’s story, since Smilja made it very clear that her son was drafted for the army by force and against his own and his family’s will. For example, Zehra (2015) was deeply touched by this story and she was shattered by the thought that the loss of a child; besides, not knowing where he is and whether he is dead or alive, is “the greatest sorrow”. In her own words, thanks to this story, she came to understand that the Serbs were forced to fight, just like the Bosniaks:

„*I have always thought that the Bosniaks suffered the most, but now I have started to think that even the Serbs suffered in some way, as not all of them*”
wanted to participate in the war. Some of them were forced to participate, so they suffered, and they had great losses just like we did” (Zehra, 2015).

The link between the narrative and the discourse here is that Zehra (2015) found out thanks to the public testimony that “the storytellers were good people and that they did not want the war to happen, but that they were forced to fight by important people who started it all.”

Another discursive narrative, unrelated to the previous ones, was the narrative stating that the young generation that was born after the war is not guilty for the conflict and shall not be blamed. (Dina, 2014; Halima, 2014). As example, Halima (2014) cited a Serbian girl in her class, whom her Bosniak classmates accept as if she was one of them. The listeners themselves used the argument that they were not born when the war happened for rejecting that they carry any collective guilt, or that they have nothing to forgive, among other themes.

The last positive discursive narrative consists in a rejection of blaming and condemning the old generation for the war. Smilja’s story was interpreted yet in another way by Jasmina (2014). The public testimony raised her awareness that „it is necessary to have understanding toward people who have lived it [the war] and not condemn them because of anything.“ She understood the main message of the testimony as follows: „Don’t condemn other people as everything will return back to you sooner or later“, she added.

In this research, negative discursive narratives were more frequent and more salient than positive ones. Sometimes they were pronounced to express the respondent’s old attitudes (Franjo, Zehra), but often they expressed even the current, unaltered attitudes (notably Kasim).

Serbs were often being blamed for the war by both Bosniak and Croat respondents. Several respondents mentioned that the Serbs were “overpowerful” (Franjo, 2014) that they had all the arms and ammunition and controlled the Yugoslav army, for which reason they took advantage of their situation and said “Let’s start a war!” (Kasim, 2014). Serbs were thus seen as aggressors that wanted to take the whole Bosnia and Herzegovina and create Greater Serbia (Kasim, Jasmina):

The Serbs intended to take the whole of Bosnia and Herzegovina and make the whole population Serbian, that they could govern all that. But Bosniaks did not let that happen, they did not give themselves in. It was in their [the Serbs’] aim to kill as many of us as possible, so that the remaining minority would see that we
cannot do anything against them, and then eventually join their side.” (Jasmina, 2014)

Related to this important quote are the discursive narratives stating that the Serbs wanted to clean Bosnia from Bosniaks (Zehra, 2014) and that they used any means to reach their goal of creating Greater Serbia, regardless of the number of victims they make in the process (Kasim, 2014).

A very common theme, around which many discursive narratives revolve, is the theme of the genocide in Srebrenica. It was used by Bosniaks and Croats alike. First of all, the predominant narrative is that Srebrenica was a massive crime that proves that Serbs were evil (Jasmina, 2014). Jasmina used very expressive language when talking about this topic. Like most Bosniaks, she called the massacre a “genocide” and she stressed that many people were killed in the same place at the same time “without the least bit of hate or shame”. She often thought about “how a person has a soul and a conscience when he kills person after person” (Jasmina, 2014). She thought about Srebrenica very often and she reflected about “how the Serb nation could do that” (Jasmina, 2014). Jasmina also stressed that she felt “shattered” everytime there was a funeral in Srebrenica. These observations converge toward the discursive narrative stating that how Serbs could commit the genocide in Srebrenica is beyond human understanding. Even Franjo (2014) mentioned the genocide in Srebrenica without being prompted: he called it a “war crime” (not genocide) and a “black stain” upon the Serb nation and he stressed that the “massiveness of that crime was terrible.” Importantly, the genocide in Srebrenica was being used by some respondents to diffuse arguments about the seriousness of Serb suffering. While Jasmina (2014) admitted that the Serbs suffered in the same ways that the Bosniaks did, losing their loved ones, there was a “great difference in the fact that the Bosniak nation did not commit any genocide in Serbia, while the Serbian nation committed an immense genocide in Srebrenica: 8372 souls were killed in the same place, and that’s not little at all” (Jasmina, 2014).

A group of narratives deals with blaming for the relative share of suffering. The simplest discursive narrative in this sense claims that members of the other nation(s) members were killing members of one’s own nation during the war. More interestingly, some respondents claimed that members of the other nation(s) killed more ingroup members than vice versa. Halima (2014) expressed this in the form of the belief that “Serbs were being killed, too, but not as much as they were killing us”. A related discursive narrative states that the Bosniaks
or the Croats did not do anything as bad as the Serbs did (Kasim, 2014). Also, given the narratives about Serb aggression and the genocide in Srebrenica, it should not be a surprise that a number of respondents expressed the belief that most people in Bosnia suffered by the hands of Serbs (Halima, 2014). What is surprising is that even some Serb listeners used this narrative when guessing which nation Latifa suffered from (Jovan, 2014).

Some more marginal discursive narratives dealt with blaming the other nations for negative attitudes toward one’s own nation. First of all, respondents blamed members of the other nations for hating their nation. Young Bosniaks tended to blame the Serbs for hating Bosniaks (Dina, 2014), and they named especially hate speech spread by young Serbs on the social media (Zehra, 2014). Second, respondents blamed members of the other nations for discriminating against members of their nation. This was prevalent in many of the Serb listeners’ accounts of Bosniak-Serbian relations. They complained especially of the Serbs being evicted from Sarajevo after the war and having to face discrimination and harassment from Bosniaks if they did not hide their crosses and their Serbian identity while visiting the city nowadays (Marija, 2014). Jovan (2014) complained about a case of a Serbian girl who was so badly harassed and discriminated against by her classmates and professors at the university in Sarajevo that she transferred to Banja Luka.

The overview of all narratives regarding blaming can be found in the table below.

**Blaming: Positive discursive narratives**

1. The war was caused by high-ranking politicians, not ordinary people
2. All nations were misled by politicians in order to accept the war
3. Ordinary people did not want to fight the war, they were forced to
4. Young generation is not guilty for the war and shall not be blamed
5. It is necessary to have understanding toward people who have the war and not condemn them because of anything.
6. I never heard about Bosniaks or Croats committing war crimes in the way Serbs did.

**Blaming: Negative discursive narratives**

7. Serbs were overpowerful at the war onset
8. Serbs were aggressors that wanted to take the whole Bosnia and Herzegovina and create Greater Serbia
9. Serbs wanted to clean Bosnia from Bosniaks
10. Serbs used any means to reach their goals, regardless of their victims
11. Most people in Bosnia suffered by the hands of Serbs
12. Srebrenica was a massive crime that proves that Serbs are evil
13. How Serbs could commit the genocide in Srebrenica is beyond human understanding
14. Members of the other nation(s) members were killing ingroup members during the war.
15. Members of the other nation(s) killed more ingroup members than vice versa.
16. I never heard about Bosniaks or Croats committing war crimes in the way Serbs did (Serbs did what they did, but I did not hear such things about Croats)
17. All members of the other nation(s) are guilty for what their nation committed to the my nation.
18. Members of the other nation(s) hate my nation.
19. Members of the other nation(s) discriminate against members of my nation.

Individualization of guilt

Another outcome which counteracted blaming was individualization of guilt, i.e. the conviction that only individuals are guilty, and not the whole group. Commonly, this outcome is associated with criminal trials. The latter are assumed to counteract the assignment of guilt to whole groups or nations and instead assign it to single individuals who are convicted by the courts (Akhavan, 2013, p. 532). Individualization of guilt and shift in this dimension were present in several interviews.

For example, Franjo (2015) reported that he used to believe that the whole Bosniak and Serb nations were guilty for the war and that they were all war criminals, but that after the public testimonies and some thinking, he realized that he should not blame a whole nation but only some bad individuals:

,,When the war began and when it was going on, it was as if they [Bosniaks and Serbs] were all the same. They seemed all the same to me, Serbs and Bosniaks, I thought they were all criminals, so to say. But through the [public] testimonies you see the real truth and so you cannot generalize. They [the storytellers] tell how there were good things, how there were bad things, and about everything that was happening, that there were many good things. So you cannot condemn such people, and so you get a more real picture of everything and so you try to push it [the war] to the background. (...) They were only some individuals who were the bad guys. (...) Let those who were doing the bad things be condemned by
the court. You cannot look at a whole nation through the lens of those few people. “

Importantly, Franjo asserted to the fact that people should not generalize from the deeds of some bad individuals, that individuals but not whole nations can be bad. This was a superb example of individualization. Zehra (2014) who arrived at an attitude shift on this dimension as well, echoed this as she said: “They are not all he same, as they were not participating in that [war crimes]”. Furthermore, Franjo’s claim that „there were many good things“ happening during the war referred mainly to the positive war heroes who helped the storytellers, such as the Serb doctor who saved Amir’s life. Franjo realized that there were only “some individuals who were really bad guys” and that he could not look at a whole nation in a bad way (Franjo, 2015). He also realized that “not all Serbs nor Bosniaks nor Croats” are of “that [evil] way of thinking” and that “there were extremists and war criminals on all sides, but let the tribunal take care of those” (Franjo, 2015). The last important discursive narrative, which can come up in different grades and different strength, is the discursive narrative that all members of the other nation(s) are guilty for what their nation committed to the one’s own nation. This was most visible in Franjo’s old attitudes – he considered all Bosniaks and Serbs, including his neighbors, as guilty for the war (Franjo, 2014). He could not bear looking at his neighbors in hate and he came to realize that ordinary people were not guilty for what happened.

Two discursive narratives concern the theme of a person’s character. The first one states that people should only be divided into good and bad, and that we must know a person and his/her character in order to judge, instead of judging from his/her nationality (Danica, 2014). This was a common theme of the storytellers’ message, and it was often echoed by the listeners. Moreover, a few Serb respondents also expressed the belief that only psychically troubled people can commit evil deeds such as war crimes (the Serb teacher, 2014).

Individualization: Positive discursive narratives

1. Individuals can be bad, but not whole nations
2. You cannot generalize to a whole nation from the deeds of a few criminals
3. We must not hate a whole nation because of a few individuals
4. Not all members of the other nation(s) are perpetrators.
5. We must know a person and his/her character in order to judge, instead of judging from his/her nationality
6. Only psychically troubled people can commit evil deeds such as war crimes.
7. There were good people in the war, we cannot judge a whole nation based on evil individuals.

**Individualization: Negative discursive narratives**

8. Their whole nation are war criminals / perpetrators of misdeeds.
9. Their whole nation is guilty for the war.
10. Storytellers cannot speak for the whole nation.

**I Was Wondering About What They Had Committed**

Despite all the positive shifts in blaming and other dimensions of reconciliation, the outcomes of the testimonies were not always positive. In this research, the dangers storytelling manifested in that one respondent reported that the testimony strengthened negative discursive narratives in his mind. This respondent was Kasim, who kept insisting on the Serbs’ perpetration and the harm they had brought upon the Bosniaks. Kasim demonstrated individualizing beliefs, but also some prejudiced attitudes, and the public testimony prompted negative discursive narratives regarding blaming.

Kasim (2015) said he was “wondering” (čudjenje) as he did “not know that the Serb army could do anything” in order to reach its goals:

> I was wondering a lot. I knew that Serbia committed outrageous crimes, but I did not know that they were capable of destroying the Croat and Serb nations – they were only interested in the territory, they did not count Croat and Bosniak victims, they were simply killing them like ants or flies. As I say, I knew that Serbs were a very bad nation, but I did not know they were so bad in those days. I watched many films about the war, mostly after the public testimony, as I was shocked that Serbs could do this and I am very happy as many war criminals have been caught and condemned.”

This means that Smilja’s story made Kasim aware that the Serbs were capable of harming their own nation, too. At the same time, the testimony made him aware about the damage that the Serbs had done to Bosniaks and Croats, too. He knew about this harm before but hearing the story of Edisa, the Bosniak storyteller, had raised his awareness of these issues. In
Kasim’s own words (2015), the public testimony has brought him new information that he “did not know before”, which he defines the following way:

„I didn’t know that Serbs were such a bad nation. Mostly my friends and family told me that Serbs are a bad nation, but I did not know to what extent they can be so bad and what they were capable of doing. But when you came, and when those people who were suffering from the Serb nation told us their stories, only then did I understand what the Serbs had done. And for that reason I told you that I felt wondering, as I was not so much aware of those facts before, how Serbs were killing and abusing the Croat and Bosniak nation so much. “

Kasim had a somewhat prejudiced attitude because since he was small, he has been hearing stories about the Serbs’ perpetration. On the other hand, he was involved in a contact program with Serbs and he was well aware that there were many good people among the Serbs. But despite this, the public testimony reinforced his earlier frame of the Serbs as a bad nation that indiscriminately harmed Bosniaks and Croats without conscience. The fact that the Serbs were harming even their own nation (Smilja) only reinforced this belief. However, when asked whether the testimony did not worsen his attitudes toward the Serbs, Kasim (2015) said:

„It did in a way... well, I will say that it did not worsen anything as I have already said that I do not wish to know so much about the Serb nation. I know what was and time cannot be returned back. However, I would like everyone, not only the young generation, but also the older one, to leave the war behind. What was done is done, we cannot bring back the past and we need to look forward to the future, a better future. “

Despite this, Kasim believed that the public testimony was a good thing. He said he was glad to hear the stories and learn something new about the war.

6.4.9 Putting Together The Pieces of The Puzzle

In this chapter, the I am going to demonstrate how the listeners described the process of reflection following the public testimonies, and how the testimonies motivate them to get more informed about the other nations’ point of view and wartime suffering. While thinking
or reflection are not established mechanisms of reconciliation, they came out as an important finding of this research that deserves to have its own chapter.

**Initial states**

Firstly, the starting point varied greatly among the respondents. The listeners in the Bosniak town were young people who did not know much about the war, so the testimonies were more surprising for them and brought new information. The listeners in the Serb town were two years older and familiar with the outgroup’s story thanks to their participation in the contact program.

Many, if not most of the respondents, stated that they had enough information about the war from their parents (Kasim, 2015) or from conversations with members of the other nations, although they tended to avoid bringing up the topic of the war. Many were also already acquiring alternative information regarding the war and other nations. Some of them even declared that they tried to see the other nations’ side first (Josip, 2015). Many of them also followed all nations’ media. However, Jelena (2014) also mentioned that she used to think about the war in the way the testimony promoted even before, but it was under the influence of the media. Yet Franjo (2014) declared that during and even long after the war, he had only biased and one-sided information from one single source, which was the Croat medium called Radiotelevision Herzeg-Bosnia. More importantly, a number of respondents said that although they heard about victim stories on the media all the time, they had never heard the story of the suffering of other nation told live like at the public testimony.

**Thinking process during the testimony**

Secondly, during the public testimony, the respondents were thinking about how the wartime events (in the stories or more in general) were happening (Halima, 2014). Some of them were so engaged by the stories that they were exclusively focused on the story and did not perceive anything that was happening around them. For example, Franjo (2014) said:

“In that particular moment you cannot [think about anything else], you can only think afterwards. In that moment, I was focused on their [suffering]. I was lost in that moment thinking about the suffering of those people.”
Furthermore, when listening to the stories, some listeners were identifying with the wartime stories they already knew, for example thinking about how the suffering of the storyteller was similar to the suffering of their family members. Different individual narratives emerged here, such as Zehra’s father being wounded in a similar way as Anđelko (Zehra, 2014). The birth of Janko’s son reminded Danica (2014) about how her sister nearly died when her family’s house burnt down during the war, and about how she lost a brother to the conflict. Kasim (2014) remembered how two of his relatives died in during the war. As a morale, the storytellers often pronounced the narrative that the war was terrible and that it should never be repeated, and the public testimony helped them in understanding this.

**Process of deep reflection**

Secondly, the public testimony provided the listeners with a live picture of the other nations’ suffering. The girls reacting to the stories of Amir, Janko and Stanislav were terrified by hearing about the terrible living conditions and the torture and mistreatment in the concentration camps. Smilja’s story was also quite impressive and illustrating in this regard. Furthermore, the testimony made some listeners think about the topic of the war. For example, Ana (2014) thought about the testimony and she reflected more on the topic of the war even when she arrived home, even though usually she does not think about this topic. She stressed though that the testimony had not otherwise changed her attitudes. Zehra reported that the public testimony “helped her in reflecting” about the fact that the Serbs suffered in the war as well, that they were forced to fight, and that there “are some good Serbs” (Zehra, 2015). Jovan said that he usually does not think about reconciliation but the speaking made him think about it. He reported: “I was interested what really happened here, everyone presented his story from his side and his point of view. I thought about it a bit more than usually, I do not think about this topic very often” (Jovan, 2014).

More significantly, the respondents who reported attitude change also told how the stories engaged them in a process of deep reflection and analysis of war-related events. This was the case of Franjo (2014) who also used the allegory of reflection as putting the truth together like pieces of the puzzle (a mosaic, to use his precise words). He said that during the public testimony, he was exclusively focused on the stories, but coming home, a process of deep reflection and analysis started:
“And only when it’s over and you lay down [in your bed] and you start sorting all that, you start putting some pieces of the puzzle together, as people say [mozaik / slagati kockice].”

The information from the testimonies sharply contrasted with the one-sided picture of the war he had acquired from his surroundings and from the media. He reported that as time went by,

“the media started to have an effect and people started to communicate a bit more, they started opening the ones toward the others, getting information from ones to the others and a little bit from the media. So a kind of puzzle started to be put together” (Franjo, 2014).

The role of the public testimonies in the process was the following:

“The public testimonies have given me a more accurate picture [of the war]. Before, I had started to put together the pieces of the puzzle, but when the public testimonies came and I was able to meet people to whom those things happened, it became much closer and more trustworthy, so it came to be expressed even more strongly” (Franjo, 2014).

The testimony thus enabled Franjo to put together the alternative information he occasionally collected from the media and from his surroundings together with the information from the public testimony, and so get the whole picture of what was happening on the three sides of the war.

A few respondents stated that they had always been more interested in their own nation and its suffering, but the testimony made them think about the other nations, too (for example Dina, 2014).

**New information brought by the testimony**

Furthermore, the public testimonies brought the listeners information about the war that they may not have had earlier. While some families tell their children about the war, some families explicitly avoid this, or the young people are simply not interested in the topic of the war, as revealed also in this research. In the latter case, the testimonies bring new, sometimes unexpected information. This can be illustrated by an Danica’s (2014) observation:

“It [the public testimony] was really useful for me as I got to know many things that I had not known earlier. I had the occasion to hear stories from the three
sides of the war. I mainly learned that everyone was in the same situation, that Bosniaks were torturing Croats, Croats were torturing Bosniaks, or the Serbs did, everyone was in the same situation. And especially that ordinary people were victims.”

Danica did not know much about the war as she did not have the occasion to learn about it. “Now I know a little bit more,” she concluded (Danica, 2014). For some respondents, such as Azra (2014), the public testimony represented the very first occasion to hear the story of the other nations.

Franjo (2014) stressed that thanks to listening to the stories, he got “a real picture from the field”, a picture of the suffering of the other nations.

Jasmina found the speaking very informative: “It was great overall. You could get a lot of information and some morals from those stories. We could understand the aim of our life and understand the people who had surely suffered a lot while we were not yet born, and to have at least a little bit of understanding for them” (Jasmina, 2014). She also said that Andelko’s story made her think generally about the value and sense of the human life (Jasmina, 2014).

Willingness to research and acquire new information

Fifthly, and this is very important, the public testimonies made many respondents research more on the topic of the war and on the perspective of the other nations in it. This was the case not only in the respondents with negative attitudes, but also in those with positive attitudes, in the Bosniaks in the ethnically mixed town and in the respondents in the Serb town alike. This can be illustrated by a quote from an interview with Zehra (2015):

“We talked about it [the public testimony] on that day and even later. The opinions differed but the majority [of students] said that the public testimony has instigated them to think that they should research even more on what happened and that they should understand other people better.”

She personally started reading more about the war. She added (Zehra, 2014):

“You can learn a lot from those stories. And then you can get to know someone of Serb or Croat nationality who lived the war and ask him to tell you something about what he or she lived. It would be good to get to know something more
“beyond what Smilja, Anđelko and Edisa told us, as all stories are not the same, so it would be good to know more.”

This way, many listeners, even those with generally good attitudes, have become more interested in the other nations’ point of view and wartime suffering, and after the testimony, they researched and acquired new information about them, such as reading about their perspective in the war or watching documentaries. A Marija (2014) stated that the testimony motivated her to learn more about the other nations’ customs and traditions. Her friend Ana (2014) also stressed that she had firm attitudes and did not admit that any change occurred, acknowledged that the testimony made her research more information on the other nations, and maybe through that process of research and thinking she would change her attitudes. Overall, many respondents stated that the public testimony has made them more open toward information about the other nations. A couple Bosniak respondents even said that they would like to meet a Serb who would tell them his/her nations’ story (Jasmina, 2014; Zehra, 2015).

**Thoughts about peaceful coexistence**

Last but not least, the testimony may make the respondents think how good it was when the three nations lived in peace under former Yugoslavia. This was reported by Ana (2014) even though she otherwise did not experience any attitude change.

**Negative discursive narratives**

In this research, negative discursive narratives were not present very often, and they prevailed in Serb respondents. First of all, some respondents of different ethnicities reported that they knew a lot about the war already, so the public testimonies did not make them think about anything new, and that it did not make them more open towards or research any new information regarding the war. This may have been because they are simply more interested in their own nation (Jovan, 2014) or they are not interested in learning about the victimization of the other nations because they “don’t have the force” to do so due to their own family’s victimization (Jelena, 2014). Also, the relativization argument that Serbs killed more Bosniaks than vice versa (Halima, 2014) was used. Yet other respondents (Serbs, in this case), said that they do not wish to learn more about the other nations as they want to preserve their own nation’s positive image.
The Serb respondents stated they were adults (18 years) with firm attitudes that were very hard to change. This was best illustrated by Marija (2014):

“Emotions, feelings and mood influence a person to create his own attitude, and that attitude cannot be changed by a public testimony that lasts an hour and a half. We all are 18 years and we have our own attitudes toward life and toward everything. If we changed our attitude based only based on someone’s story, we would really have unstable personalities (laugh).”

Marija however recognized that if she started to research deeper into the matter, this could change her attitudes (Marija, 2014).

Overall, many respondents, predominantly Serbs, said that the public testimony did not engage them in a very long process of thinking, some stating explicitly that “every public testimony has maybe a day or two of thinking after it and then it is forgotten” (Jovan, 2014). This is congruent with Jelena’s claim that the public testimony was being mentioned by the students for a day or two, but “today nobody mentions it nor thinks about it” (Jelena, 2015).

A chapter further below will be dedicated to retraumatization, however we need to mention here that the public testimony made the Serb teacher think about the victimization of her and her loved ones. She stressed that the public testimony returned her to the 1990s and made her think about her personal losses (Serb teacher, 2014).

**Increased Information and Personal Reflection Process**

**Information and reflection: Positive discursive narratives**

**Initial states**

1. I know quite a lot about the war from my parents.
2. Even before the public testimony, I was already acquiring alternative information regarding the other nations.
3. I have enough information and occasion to talk to my friends from the other nation(s), but I avoid talking about the war.
4. I was identifying with the storytellers and thinking about the stories I already knew.
5. I only had one-sided information about the war.
6. I follow all nations‘ media.
7. I used to think about these things a lot before, but it was under the influence of the media.

8. I have never heard the story of the other nation told live like this.

9. I try to see the perspective of the other nations first.

Thinking process during the testimony

10. When listening to the stories, I was thinking about how those wartime events were happening.

11. When listening to the stories, I was exclusively focused on the story, and did not perceive anything that was happening around me.

12. When listening to the stories, I thought about how the suffering of the storyteller was similar to the suffering of my family members.

13. When listening to the stories, I was thinking about how terrible the war was, and that it shall never repeat.

Process of deep reflection

1. The testimonies provided me with a live picture of the other nations’ suffering.

2. The testimony made me think about wartime events more than usual I don’t think about that topic very often The stories engaged me in a deep reflection and analysis of war-related events.

3. I have always been more interested into my nation and its suffering, but the testimony made me think about the other nations’ perspective, too.

4. I was putting the truth together like pieces of the puzzle.

New information brought by the testimony

5. The public testimony brought me information about the war I did not know.

6. The public testimony was the first time when I heard the wartime story of other nations

7. The testimony did not change my attitudes, but it did make me think about the war.

8. The testimony made me research more on the war and learn about the other nations’ perspective.

9. I got a real picture from the field.

10. The public testimony helped me to have more understanding towards the older generations who lived the war.

Willingness to research and acquire alternative information
1. The public testimony has made me research more information on the topic of the war and on the perspective of other nations in it.

2. I became more interested in the Serbs’ point of view and wartime suffering.

3. After the testimony, I read some new information about the other nations.

4. I would like to meet a Serb to tell me their story.

5. The public testimony made me more interested in the other nations’ customs and traditions.

6. The testimony makes me want to research more, and maybe through the research I will change my attitude.

7. The public testimony has made me more open toward information about the other nations.

Thoughts about peaceful coexistence

8. The testimony did not change my attitudes, but it did make me think about how good it was when our nations were united in former Yugoslavia.

Information and reflection: Negative discursive narratives

Lack of interest in the stories

9. I knew a lot about the war already, so the public testimony did not lead me to think about anything new.

10. I am simply more interested in my own nation.

11. I am not interested in learning more about other nations because I want to preserve a positive image of my own nation.

12. I have victims in my own family and I am not so much interested / I do not have the force to be interested in the victims of the other nations.

13. I did not start to get more informed about Serbs, they were killing us more than we were killing them.

14. Every public testimony has maybe a day or two of thinking after it and then it is forgotten.

Firm attitudes hard to change

15. The public testimony did not make me more open toward information about the other nations.

16. I am an adult and I have firm attitudes that are hard to change.

Retraumatization
17. The public testimony returned me back to the wartime and made me think about my personal losses.

18. When listening to the stories, I thought about the victimization of my own family members.

6.4.10 They Are Not All Criminals

In this chapter, I will describe and illustrate the attitude shifts in prejudice. Most respondents in this research, both Bosniaks and Serbs, reported good attitudes toward the outgroup. They perceived the outgroup as heterogeneous, i.e. they were aware that in the other nation there bad people, but also many good people (for example Marko, Mirjana, Jelena and Dina). On the other hand, there are the four listeners (Franjo, Josip, Jasmina and Zehra) who reported attitude change. This change included the prejudice dimension. The point of departure in the attitude change most often included the conviction that the Serbs were „all criminals“. These respondents did not initially believe that there were good people among the other nation. This chapter will illustrate both the positive and the negative discursive narratives elicited in this research, with focus on the four cases of attitude change.

Among positive discursive narratives, the first theme was that members of the other nations are not all the same, all bad, that they are not criminals.

„In that moment it was like they are all the same. During the war, everyone seemed to me to be all the same (...), both Serbs and Bosniaks. I thought they were all criminals. But as I said, through the public testimonies you see the real truth and you cannot generalize. They present how there were good things, as well as bad things, when you think about what happened. There were even many good things, so you cannot condemn such people and you get a more realistic picture of it all. Then you begin to try to push it to the background. You see how people get closer to each other as time goes by and how they try to forgive each other and so on.” (Franjo, 2014).

The above quote most likely refers, among others, to the positive war heroes such as the doctor who saved Amir’s life. It means that Franjo became aware that he could not condemn such good Serbs. As he said, he got a „more realistic picture“ of the other nations, i.e. he understood that there were good Serbs and Bosniaks. Referring to the same public
testimonies, Josip, too, confirmed that the storytelling event changed his belief that the other nations, especially the Bosniaks, are mostly bad and evil.

A similar effect was reported by both Jasmina and Zehra. They explicitly mentioned that thanks to Smilja’s example, they realized that there are many good and nice people among the other nation, i.e. the Serbs. They clearly linked this finding to their impression of Smilja as a normal, peaceful, nice and likeable woman. Zehra reported that Smilja made a great impression on her as a person: “I liked her as she is a nice and peaceful woman, and very emotional, which is understandable due to the loss of her son” (Zehra, 2015). Regarding her attitude change, she reported:

,, I thought that they were all the same, I had never thought that there could be good ones, but now i started to think that there are some who are good and nice. (…) I started to think so mainly because of the public testimony and their stories. I started to think about what had happened [during the war] as every story has its other side. So I had thought that Serbs were all the same, that they are all criminals, that we suffered the most, but then I started to think that some of them had been forced to make the war, and that they suffered as well. (…) Before I looked at them as criminals, but now I understand that there are those who were sending their nation to make the war, while they were sitting somewhere and organizing all that and their life was not in danger while other people were dying for them and their benefit. There was a lot of that” (Zehra, 2015).

In this case, the image given by Smilja contradicted the image of Serbs as criminals who like to fight. Zehra was convinced by Smilja’s story that some Serbs were forced to fight in the war, therefore they did not wish for the war to happen. As we have seen earlier, Zehra had experienced strong perspective taking and put herself in Smilja’s shoes. Zehra stated that what motivated her attitude change were „their feelings, their emotionality, simply their experiences, what they had been through as well” (Zehra, 2015).

Jasmina, too, thought that Serbs were all bad. Besides cognitive prejudice, she also mentioned the lack of emotion, which is also a symptom of prejudice (Stangor, Sullivan and Ford, 1991). She explained that her parents advised her not to have any feelings toward the Serbs as they „do not merit them“ because they committed the genocide in Srebrenica and they were „killing people as if they were throwing stones in water“ (Jasmina, 2014). Basically, Jasmina was educated not to hate, but to the belief that all Serbs are the same, that
they are all bad. At the time of the interview, she was still prejudiced, reporting the following attitude:

> When asked what feelings she had toward the Serbs, she said: “I do not hate them, but I do not feel anything toward them in any way, simply as if those people do not exist for me. I do not hate anyone, but when I think of the word Serbs, I don’t know... I become very sad because there are still such people who could destroy someone’s happiness, someone’s family, take someone’s life, without any need to do so. It means this is beyond my understanding what Serbs have done on the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina: it is not allright at all and when I think of the word Serbs, I have no feeling, simply I remember Srebrenica and immediately everything is clear to me. I don’t feel any hate but I don’t know how to describe it. (…) They are very unjust in my opinion and I really simply have no words for them. Concluding by the genocide they committed in Srebrenica it is not clear enough to me what for a nation they are. (…) This is concerning politicians and ordinary people, especially more politicians.”

Jasmina uses a very expressive language from which strong bias can be observed, such as in the expression “I have no words for them” or “everything is immediately clear to me”. However, the Smilja’s story elicited significant positive discursive narratives in Jasmina (2014):

> „Smilja seemed a very nice woman to me. As I said, people should not be judged by their faith [nationality], people should be judged by how they really are. She [Smilja] seemed a very nice to me and really if I had spoken to her without knowing what religion or nationality she is, I would never have guessed that she is a Serb. For this reason, I really believe that there still are good people who are of Serb religion5. But most of them, as I said, are wicked. But Smilja was a very nice and gentle woman.”

The new thing for her was to understand that there can be even good Serbs:

> „The new thing for me was that I understood that there can be Serb people with whom you can speak about everything, who can be nice and who have good

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5 In Bosnia, the identities of the three nations are defined by their respective religions, for which reason people tend to use the term religion when they actually mean nationality.
intentions with you, who like their own faith but respect other people’s faith\(^6\), and also that there are honest people who love their nation but respect other nations. For that example I took Mrs. Smilja. I mean that she is a really nice woman, I saw this when there was the public testimony in our school."

She had not thought that Serbs can be so nice but Smilja’s example convinced her of the contrary. Zehra even said that she would “never say that Smilja is a Serb” (Jasmina, 2014). She defined her as a “very nice”, “respectful” woman. In Jasmina’s case, contact seemed to have played the central role. Jasmina saw a Serb who broke her monolithic perception of Serbs as evil people. This seems to be a surprise as in the past, her contact with Serbs had been negative and with a threatening connotation. When she went on a school excursion to Srebrenica, she mentioned how a group of Serbs were shouting “Knife, wire, Srebrenica! [Nož, žica, Srebrenica!]” meaning that they “would like the Srebrenica [genocide] to repeat” (Jasmina, 2014). For this reason, Jasmina was strongly afraid of the Serbs, even in her everyday life. Jasmina did have one positive contact with a Serb, her classmate. The class respected this Serbian girl and they liked her as she is (Jasmina, 2014). It was however only after the public testimony that Jasmina recognized that her classmate and Smilja were “a real proof that Serbs are not all the same” (Jasmina, 2014). She admitted, however, that her attitude changed only partly: this change consists in the realization that “all Serbs are not the same, that good, human, nice and gentle Serbs do exist” (Jasmina, 2014). However, at the time of the interview she was still convinced that most Serbs are “wicked” (iskvareno) (Jasmina, 2014), which confirms the finding that positive and negative attitudes can coexist in the same person at the same time (Potter and Wetherell, 1987, pp. 45 - 46).

An indicator of lack of prejudice is also the belief, or discursive narrative, that one’s own nation and the other nation are very similar. While prejudiced Bosniaks tended to stress that Bosniaks and Serbs are very different, Serb respondents with positive attitudes pointed out that the three nations are very similar in terms of physical characteristics, language, or way of life (Jelena, 2014; Jovan, 2014).

Another theme of positive discursive narratives are positive war heroes. First of all, some listeners find the examples of people who saved the storyteller’s life surprising and they realize that some people in the other nations helped members of the other nations (e.g.

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\(^6\) «Volj svoje, poštuj tudje», a Bosnian saying about tolerance between the Bosnian nations
Franjo, 2014). Yet other respondents considered the storytellers themselves to be heroes, such as Smilja’s courage to overcome the loss of her son and founding a multiethnic organization searching for missing persons. Kasim (2014) commented regarding her example:

„I admire her for founding that organization for the search for missing persons. This is because even today, after over 20 years, she has the hope that she will find her son whether live or dead, and she has the hope that if he is dead, that she will at least be able to find his grave. At least that will meet her expectations to some extent. For that reason, I admire her. “

The third major theme of positive discursive narratives is the theme of young generations not being burdened by the war. On the one hand, some listeners tended to explain their lack of negative attitudes by the fact that they were not yet born when the war happened (Dina, 2014). On the other hand, they tend to have a positive feeling for the young people of the other nations, including young Serbs. For example, Dina (2015) said that „the young generation is quite nice.“ Kasim (2015) stressed that the young generation is not guilty for anything, so he could have a nice chat with them. The third discursive narrative regarding young generations regards family socialization – the claim that „my family did not educate me to hate or dislike the other nations“. This was mentioned by a few respondents with predominantly positive attitudes (Mirjana, 2014, Danica, 2014; Halima, 2015).

On the other hand negative discursive narratives revolve around the belief that most or all members of the adversary nation(s) are bad, that they are „all criminals“, and that they are all the same, as mentioned above. Moreover, related to prejudice is the belief that one’s own nation and members of the other nations are very different. For example, Kasim (2015) frames the common characteristics negatively in that the languages are „similar, but different“, and he stresses that Serbs hate Bosniaks and like conflicts. „There are some similarities, but for the most part we are different,“ he concluded.

Kasim’s statement brings us to the next theme, the outgroup as aggressors, or liking conflicts. Some prejudiced respondents in this research, such as Kasim or Jasmina, expressed a firm belief that Serbs like conflicts, and that they have bad intentions toward their nation. Some expressed the fear that members of the other nation(s) would hurt them or members of their nation, either face-to-face or by starting a new war. This was clear in Jasmina’s account. She also stressed that the Serbs would like the genocide in Srebrenica to happen again (e.g. Jasmina, 2014). Kasim stressed that the public testimony made him realize that the Serbs
were so bad as to hurt their own people, as illustrated by the drafting of Smilja’s son for the army (Kasim, 2015).

Yet another major theme of prejudice is the belief that members of the other nation(s) hate one’s own nation. Specifically, Bosniaks liked to stress that the Serbs hate them more than vice versa, and that they hate them because they still want Greater Serbia (Kasim, 2015). Some of the respondents, both Bosniak and Serb, expressed the belief that the other nation inculcates hate to their younger generations (Kasim, 2014), which manifests itself massively in hate speech on social media (Zehra, 2014; Kasim, 2015; Ana, 2014). These respondents also implied or mentioned explicitly that the hate of the other nation for their nation has to disappear.

The last category of discursive narratives is hard to characterize with a single expression, but it can best be labelled as Refusing to engage with the other nation(s). It was mostly present in Jasmina’s discourse. She stressed that she was refusing to think about the Serbs, since it was burdening her emotionally too much as she was scared of them. She also said she had no feelings for them and that she felt as if Serbs did not exist for her, due to what they had committed (she insisted especially on the genocide in Srebrenica as the hardest evidence). For that reason, she also valued them less than Bosniaks.

Prejudice: Positive discursive narratives

They are not all the same

1. Members of the other nation(s) are not all the same, all bad.
2. Members of the other nation(s) are not all criminals.
3. There are many good / nice people among the other nation(s).
4. The storytellers are normal / nice / likeable people.
5. From the example of the storyteller(s), I can see that there are good people among the other nation(s).
6. Members of my nation and of their nation are very similar.
7. Many members of the other nation feel guilty that their nation attacked the other nations.

Positive war heroes

8. I believe that there were good people in the other nation(s) who were helping members of my nation / of the other nations during the war.
9. Storytellers are admirable people / heroes.

*Young generation not burdened by the war*

10. I do not have bad attitudes toward the Outgroup since I was not born at the wartime.
11. Young outgroup members can be nice people
12. My parents did not educate me do dislike / hate the Outgroup

**Prejudice: Negative discursive narratives**

*They are all the same*

13. All / most members of the other nation(s) are bad
14. All/most members of the other nation(s) are criminals
15. All / most members of the other nation(s) are the same.
16. Members of my nation and members of the other nation(s) are very different.

*They are aggressors*

17. Members of the other nation(s) are aggressive people / like conflicts.
18. The other nation has bad intentions toward my nation.
19. Serbs were so bad as to hurt their own people
20. Many members of the other nation(s) have the intention to harm members of my nation when they have the occasion.
21. Serbs would like to repeat the Srebrenica genocide.

*They hate us*

22. The old generation of members of the other nation(s) educates the young generation to hate our nation.
23. Serbs hate(d) Bosniaks more than vice versa.
24. Members of the other nation(s) inculcate hate to their young generations.
25. The hate that members of the other nation(s) have for the my nation must disappear.
26. Members of the other nation(s) engage in a lot of hate speech on the social media that is directed against my nation.
27. Serbs still hate my nation because they want Greater Serbia.

*Refusing to engage with the other nation(s)*
28. I refuse to think / talk about the other nation(s).
29. I have no feelings for members of the other nation.
30. It is as if members of the other nation did not exist for me.
31. I value members of the other nation(s) less than members of my own nation.

6.4.11 I Can Not Hate Them Anymore

A theme that came up in some of the interviews was hate. In this chapter, I am going to review the discursive narratives testifying about whether a person does or does not hate the other nations. I omit the discursive narratives that mention hate more in general, and from which attitudes cannot be inferred. In this research, all respondents except for Franjo claimed that they never hated. The only exception was Franjo who underwent an attitude change from pure hate to reconciliation, similar to one that Stanislav testified about.

Franjo was the only respondent in this research who described his initial attitudes as true hate. He indicated that he hated the Serbs because they were the “initiators” of the war, because they were extremely powerful militarily and because they were committing war crimes. He also hated the Bosniaks later during the war as they declared the war against the Croats (Franjo, 2014). The hate also stemmed from the media. As mentioned earlier, Franjo described his surrounding during the war as “one-sided” and biased. At that time, the only media available to the Croats were the Radio-TV Herzeg-Bosnia which was broadcasting only the Croat perspective.

“The surroundings, were all one-sided, everyone was looking only at that one side. We could not get much information about what was happening in the other places, not only me but everyone, as this was a media blockade. (...) And then as time went by media have started to have an influence and people started communicating a little bit more and to open the ones towards the others and people were getting information from each other, then the pieces of the puzzle started to come together and people knew approximately what was happening, they create an image for themselves. (...) And you start to do an analysis in your head of what was happening and you see that there were crimes on the first, on the second and on the third side, and then you say to yourself that neither Serbs nor all Croats have such a way of thinking. There were extremists on all sides
and let those who committed crimes be held responsible, let the tribunal take care of them, they are not interesting to us, right?” (Franjo, 2014)

As Franjo says, the role of the public testimonies was to reinforce and give more weight to his earlier thoughts, or “pieces of the puzzle” that he had started to put together. He came to the conclusion that we shall not hate the other nation(s) because of some individuals’ crimes, as illustrated in the quote. He realized that “hate devastates a man”, and that living in an ethnically mixed setting, “you cannot live in hate for all your life” (Franjo, 2014). Having Bosniak and Serb neighbours led Franjo to question the three nations’ guilt:

“A man thinks a bit and he concludes that his neighbour is not guilty for what happened and so you also see the other side, the Bosniaks’ side. Then your head cools down, the emotions cool down so you can think clearly.” Franjo (2015)

From among all the stories, the theme of hate was the most prominent in Stanislav’s story: he held a nationalist café where he did not let Bosniaks and Serbs enter. Janko and Amir also stressed that they did not hate the other nations. The theme of hate was thus often mentioned in the interviews despite the fact that the respondents themselves did not hate. As to discursive narratives, the theme of hate came up in several forms. The respondents admired the storytellers for the fact that despite their traumas, they did not hate their perpetrators or the other nations (Meliha, 2014). They also said that “if we revenged, we would be like them” (Danica, 2014). In both of these regards, Janko’s story was prominent: he stressed that he did not hate his perpetrators, and that when meeting them in town, he just does not say hello. Azra (2014) even reported that in Janko’s place, she would not have hated either. Furthermore, some respondents explicitly reported that they were not educated by their family to hate, or that they were told by their family not to hate (Halima, 2015). Last but not least, some of the respondents expressed the opinion that the public testimonies can reduce hate (Zehra, 2014; Dina, 2014).

On the other hand, hate was often cited as a theme regarding other peoples’ attitudes. Very often, respondents complained about members of the other nations, especially young people, spreading hate speech on social media (Kasim, 2014; Zehra, 2014; Ana, 2014) and that this hate is inculcated to the children by their parents (Kasim, 2014). Especially Bosniaks liked to mention that Serbs hate Bosniaks more than vice versa (Kasim, 2015; Dina, 2014). As a reason for this hate, Kasim (2014) cited the fact that Serbs still want to build Greater Serbia.
These themes are, however, not included here as discursive narratives, since they do not account for the respondents’ own attitudes other than their opinion on intergroup hate.

**Hate: Positive discursive narratives**

1. Hate tears a person apart.
2. I cannot hate my neighbors.
3. We should not hate the other nation(s) because of some individuals’ crimes.
4. I admire the storytellers for the fact that despite their traumas, they do not hate their perpetrators or the other nations.
5. If we revenged, we would be like Them.
6. I was socialized by parents not to hate.
7. Public testimonies reduce hate.
8. In the storyteller’s place, I would not have hated either

**Hate: Negative discursive narratives**

9. I hated the other nation(s).
10. I hated them because they were killing us.
11. I hated them because they started the war.
12. I hated them because of what the media were saying.

**6.4.12 I Want to Have A Serb Friend**

Intergroup contact, a known factor of prejudice reduction (Allport, 1954) was a salient theme in this research. It was mentioned in several different respects.

Firstly, many respondents said that they regularly or occasionally engaged in intergroup contact. Franjo and Josip live in interethnic settings and do mix with Bosniaks and Serbs, the girls in the Bosniak-Croat town participate in contact activities in the local youth center, all Serb respondents are part of an interethnic contact programme with young Bosniaks and have outgroup friends. Interestingly, Kasim, too, participates in a contact programme, but still, he keeps a large part of his negative beliefs about Serbs as a nation (although admitting
that Serbs can be good). Some respondents, such as the Serb teacher, stressed that they had “normal” relations with the other nations (in the positive sense).

Secondly, respondents who had regular intergroup contact reported that they did not have any negative experiences in the contact situations. Some of them, like all the Serb respondents, even complained that members of the other nation take more distance than they would like them to. The young Serbs repeated that the Bosniak girls in their contact programme do not mix with the young Serbs beyond the worksho, and spend all their free time on their own (Marija, 2014).

Thirdly, the listeners who had intergroup contact stated that they liked to learn from members of the other nations they knew about their customs and point of view. “The Muslims at the seminars tell us about their customs in the mosque and how they celebrate their holidays, and we tell them about ours, and we never had any arguments (or conflicts),” Mirjana (2014) pointed out. These respondents who have intergroup contact stressed, however, that they avoided talking about the war. Franjo (2014) pointed out:

“We rarely mention the wartime events. Nobody likes talking about the war anymore as the three sides have their three truths, and if you went in depth of all those things, only arguments can happen about who started it first, and so on. That way, people avoid those topics, and we mainly talk about our daily problems.”

Fourthly, some respondents who do not have intergroup contact expressed the wish to get to know members of the other nations. For example, Jasmina (2014) said: “I surely wish to get to know the good Serbs who still exist, and have them tell me their side of the story, and I would tell them mine. I think we would understand each other for the most part.” She also confirmed that before the public testimony, she did not have much willingness to get to know Serbs. But more than that, Jasmina felt the wish to have a Serb friend: “I would like to find a Serb friend, so that I can hear their side of the story. ... After the testimony I told myself: ‘Why not? Why not have such a good Serb friend?’” The same wish was also expressed by Zehra (2015) during her second interview. She said that her attitudes have improved somewhat, so she would like to find some Serbs to talk about their point of view. The Serbs, on the other hand, long for a normalized contact with Bosniaks. This was expressed the strongest by AB (2014) who said that she would love to live in Sarajevo, but she is afraid since her mother and sister were forced to leave the city due to discrimination by Bosniaks.
Like several other respondents, she also complained that she had to hide her Serb identity during her visits of Sarajevo. On the other hand, a few respondents like Dina (2015) said that they do not have contact with Serbs, but they would have nothing against it. Last but not least, most respondents who do have regular intergroup contact, such as through participation in a contact programme, have said that they get along well with their peers from the other nations, and that there have been no important arguments or disagreements. Kasim (2014) also stressed that the Bosniaks and Serbs in his organization do not blame each other.

A fifth category of discursive narratives concerns the role and importance of intergroup contact. Several respondents stressed that before the war, the three nations were in good relations (Franjo, 2014; the Serb teacher, 2014). Also, Jovan (2014) said that “we who remain in this country must understand that there is no war and that we have to live together, as only that way, we can survive. Dividing ourselves on the ethnic and territorial basis does not lead anywhere.”

The sixth and last category of discursive narratives concerns the interaction among the storytellers. The image of three former concentration camp prisoners behaving nicely to each other and being evidently close friends have impressed the listeners. Josip (2015) said regarding this: “It was really sweet how the three storytellers were behaving like brothers. I could see that the relationship between them was very positive. I cannot say that as if there was no war, but it was as positive as it could be.”

Although positive discursive narratives in this research prevailed, negative ones were also present. Some respondents saw contact with the other nations as a potential threat and recalled threatening behavior. Jasmina recalled a situation when she was on a school excursion in Srebrenica, and some Serbs over the street were shouting at the group “Knife, wire, Srebrenica!” (Nož, žica, Srebrenica). Therefore, she was afraid that Serbs were seeking to hurt Bosniaks if they had the occasion. In this regard, Jasmina and partly also Zehra expressed their old attitudes as not wanting to have contact with Serbs. However, as mentioned before, they both opened to the possibility of meeting some of the “good Serbs” (Jasmina, 2014).

The second group of negative discursive narratives consisted of somewhat biased explanations of why members of the other nation(s) avoid contact with one’s own nation. In this research, this concerned particularly the complaints of young Serbs that the Bosniak girls who participate in their contact programme do not mingle with them outside of the
workshops, during their free time. They explained this with their religious or nationalist education (Marija, 2014).

**Intergroup contact: Positive discursive narratives**

*Having intergroup contacts*

1. I have friends among members of the other nation(s).
2. I go to interethnic contact seminars.
3. I do have contact with members of the other nation(s).
4. I like mingling with the good members of the other nation(s).
5. I have normal relations with members of the other nation(s).

*Getting along well in contact situations*

6. I did not have any negative experiences when being in contact with members of the other nation(s).
7. In contact situations, members of the other nation(s) take more distance than I would wish them to.

*Learning more about the other nations through contact*

8. I like it when members of the other nation(s) tell us about their customs / point of view.
9. In contact situations, me and members of the other nation(s) avoid talking about the war.

*Wish for intergroup contact*

10. I want to have friends among members of the other nation(s).
11. I want to meet the good members of the other nation(s) that exist.
12. I would like to live in a place where the other nation(s) represent(s) a large part of the population / where I could be in daily contact with members of the other nation(s).
13. I do not have occasion to meet members of the other nation(s), but I would have nothing against it.

*Importance of intergroup contact*

14. Only living together can we survive.
15. Before the war, Ingroup and Outgroup were in good relations

*Contact with and between the storytellers*

16. I was impressed by the positive interaction that the storytellers from the three nations had between each other.
Intergroup contact: Negative discursive narratives

Not wishing to have intergroup contact

17. I do not want to have close contact with members of the other nation(s).

Intergroup contact as a threat

18. In a contact situation, members of the other nation(s) displayed threatening behavior, testifying about the evil intentions of their nation.

Members of other nations avoid contact with members of my nation

19. Members of the other nation(s) avoid contact with me / members of my nation.
20. Bosniak girls do not want to mingle with Serbs due to their religious / nationalist education

6.4.13 I Was Fascinated To See That The Storytellers Have Forgiven

Forgiveness is a dimension of reconciliation and it was investigated in this research. However, the discursive narratives elicited by the testimonies have not shown any shifts on this dimension, with the exception of Josip’s case. What is certain is that the testimonies contain a very strong message of forgiveness, as was shown earlier, and the respondents seemed to be perceptive to this message. Most of them said, however, that they have nothing to forgive since they have not lived the war, or they were unable to forgive. These differences will be described in this chapter.

The first three positive discursive narratives will be illustrated on Josip’s case. One is that the listener has personally forgiven the other nations regarding the war. The only one who reported this was Josip. As a small child, he was imprisoned in a Bosniak concentration camp along with his family. He also illustrated the second discursive narrative by explaining that he had forgiven his perpetrators as his Catholic religion teaches him so. He reported that the public testimony may have had a small influence, too. He said:

“We have to forgive, we simply have to go forward. Why look back all my life. What was done is done, it causes a great pain and now it needs to be forgotten. I was small and I cannot judge well, but I think that every person should be thinking this way” (Josip, 2015).

He understood the main message of the public testimony as an advocacy of forgetting, thus illustrating a third discursive narrative:
“That all nations have been through it, that it has to be forgotten, everyone has suffered. It is necessary to forget and move forward. It happened a long time ago” (Josip, 2015).

This quote shows that Josip sustains the “forgive and forget” approach, probably because he himself has a real trauma to forget.

A second group of discursive narratives consists of accounts of listeners who reported that they “have nothing to forgive“ as they were only born after the war. This can be best illustrated by a quote from the interview with Marija (2014):

“I personally have nothing to forgive as It did not happen to me to live that period [the war]. Probably my sisters, my parents, my family members who lived that ugly period (...) probably have a lot [to forgive] but I was born after the Dayton agreement, thank God. So I don’t know what I should forgive.”

Thirdly, most respondents, especially the ones who stressed they had nothing to forgive, generally stressed the necessity to forgive. Zehra (2014) stressed:

„It is necessary to forgive. The one who has forgiven is a better person than the one who has done the harm. A lot of power is necessary to forgive someone or something bad. This means that there are very good strong people who can bear that, but I say, it cannot be forgotten“ (Zehra, 2014).

Yet Danica (2014) stated that “if our parents have forgiven, we must not hate.” On the other hand, Mirjana (2014) stated that after a certain period of time, people have to forgive.

Last but not least, a group of positive discursive narrative concerned the theme that if the storytellers have forgiven, everybody should forgive. However, these narratives are dealt with in the chapter on opinion leadership.

On the other hand, negative discursive narratives also appeared and they were largely present, especially in the Bosniak respondents. The most negative ones are narratives of outright unforgiveness. Some respondents stressed that given what the Serbs have done during the war, they cannot forgive them. Kasim (2015) pointed this out very clearly: “I cannot forgive the Serbs even though I was not in the war, I cannot forgive what happened, as they have caused an immense damage, a big hole (rupa) on the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and that hole will never get repaired.” A variation to this is represented by
Jasmina’s approach to “forget but not forgive” take on the same issue. Jasmina (2014) said: “I think that it is not OK what the Serbs have done, but I say that whatever happened, happened. We can forget but we will never forgive.” Aiming at the single stories, Kasim (2014) said regarding Smilja’s story: “It depends whether it is necessary to forgive. How can somebody forgive a person who has killed her own son? How can that be forgiven?”

The second discursive narrative states that the other nation should ask forgiveness from one’s own nation, thus excluding the necessity of one’s own nation to apologize. This narrative appeared in Kasim’s account (2015): “I think that I cannot forgive anything to anybody, but rather, the others should ask forgiveness from us. That’s what I think, because the Bosniaks have suffered the most, so the Serbs have to ask for our forgiveness. I know they would not receive it, but it would be nice if they ask for it.”

The third group of negative discursive narratives deals with conditions to forgiveness. Firstly, forgiveness can be conditioned by the repentment of the perpetrator party. Marko said:

“It is necessary to forgive. The teaching that I adhere to considers that it is necessary to forgive if the other party repents. Forgiveness is, indeed, the acceptance of other peoples’ repentance. We cannot forgive if that person has not repented.”

At the same time, he stressed that it was easy for the storytellers to forgive because they do not have a concrete perpetrator. This is because he interpreted Latifa’s and Vesna’s story in the sense that they did not directly see the person who shot the shell:

„I think they have forgiven very quickly. In my opinion it was so because they did not have a concrete perpetrator. Vesna’s sister was hit by a shell which killed her and it was a shell that hit Latifa. If they had a concrete person to blame for the death, the guilty was the nation which they did not mention and which was bombing them. And I think that if they had a concrete perpetrator, they wouldn’t have forgiven“ (Marko, 2014).

Forgiveness: Positive discursive narratives

Having forgiven
1. I have forgiven the other nations regarding the war.

Having nothing to forgive

2. I personally have nothing to forgive regarding the war.
3. I have forgiven thanks to faith / Faith teaches us forgiveness.
4. We have nothing to forgive as the war happened before we were born

The desirability of forgiveness

5. We should forgive the other nation(s) for the suffering they have brought upon our nation.
6. We should forget the war as soon as possible.
7. Forgiving makes us better people
8. After some time, people should forgive
9. Our parents have forgiven, so we must not hate.
10. The war has to be forgotten, we need to move forward.
11. Forgive but not forget.

Negative discursive narratives

Unforgiveness

12. I cannot forgive the other nation(s) for their misdeeds and war crimes.
13. Forget but not forgive.
14. It is impossible to forgive the loss of one’s own child.

The other nation(s) shall ask our nation for forgiveness.

15. The other nation(s) should ask forgiveness from my nation.

Exceptions from forgiveness

16. Forgiveness is necessary, but only if the perpetrator regrets his deeds
17. The storytellers forgave very quickly because they did not have a concrete perpetrator
6.4.14 Trusting My Neighbor

This research focused on trust only to a minor extent, thus evidence is limited. This is because the author trust is built over a long time, and more focus was given to the variables that the testimonies were more likely to influence. However, I have managed to collect some interesting observations and discursive narratives.

On one hand, there were respondents with little to no interethnic contact. Zehra (2015) said that she was “not really” afraid of ordinary Serbs, since “there are the bad ones, but also the good ones.” Halima (2014) said that she did not have any members of the other two nations in her surroundings, so she did not know whether she trusted the other nations, but she pointed out that she would first “see how a person is, how he/she behaves, what his/her character is, and whether he/she is a normal person” in order to evaluate whether to trust that person. Therefore, she would not distrust a person a priori because he/she was a Serb.

On the other hand, there are two respondents who live in interethnic settings. Josip said that he trusted the members of the other nations in his place of residence, and that he felt safe there. “We are safe here, they come to our café, nobody touches you, everything is normal” (Josip, 2015). He said he did go out with Bosniaks and Serbs he knew. “I have never thought about trust. I think I have enough trust if I go out with them,” he added. However, the testimonies did not seem to affect trust in the respondents in this research, with the exception of Franjo who lives in a multiethnic setting and has neighbors from the other nations. He commented: “When you see the storytellers and their message, it has an influence on you, and then you turn to your neighbor and you start seeing it differently.” Thus, he admitted that the public testimony helped him to gain more interethnic trust, along with interethnic contact that seems to be of crucial importance here. Indeed, even Jasmina (2014) acknowledged that the public testimony testified about the good intentions of the Serb nation, “mostly because it proved that Serbs are not all the same; that there are still those who will understand you, drink a coffee with you, and who will talk to you in the nicest possible way, in that sense.”

There were also several negative discursive narratives mentioned. The theme that comes up in most of them is threat: whether the threat of a new war, or a threat to the safety of the listener or members of his nation. The first narrative is about the conviction that members of the other nation(s) would do again what they did during the war, or provoke a new war. Most Bosniak respondents in this research demonstrated smaller or higher amounts of outgroup anxiety and a generally low trust for the Serbs, including ordinary people.
Generally, respondents were afraid that the Serbs could “do something bad again” (Halima, 2015). Jasmina (2014) was even afraid that if she met some Serbs and they knew she was a Bosniak, they would kill her or do something bad to her. Thus, the narrative of a new war was mainly mentioned by Bosniaks regarding the Serbs. They were strongly afraid of a new war, and new war crimes.

A discursive narrative that focuses on harm to concrete individuals entails that the listener is afraid of members of the other nation(s) because he/she recalled instances when they had hurt or threatened members of his/her nation, or the general belief that members of the other nation(s) did not hesitate to hurt members of the listener’s nation, when they had the occasion to do so. This is best illustrated by Jasmina, who faced several threatening situations with Serbs which made her think that they all wanted to harm Bosniaks. She was strongly afraid of Serbs in her daily life. She explained: “If I entered their space and introduced myself and said who I was, I think they would kill me or do something to me. I really don’t know what they would do, given that I have seen many films about the war in which I saw what they were doing” (Jasmina, 2014). Kasim (2014) also mentioned an incident in which one of his mother’s relatives returned from a village near Banja Luka (Serb area) in which he was the only Muslim, because a Serb threatened him with a gun saying that he would kill him in his sleep. Several such incidents were mentioned throughout the interviews of the evidence for distrusting members of the other nations (mainly the Serbs).

The last discursive narrative concerns the hope that the testimony will make the listeners feel safer in their country. Most respondents reported that the testimony did not feel safer or testify about the good intentions of the other nations. Halima (2014) admitted that it does testify about the good intentions of some people only. Dina (2014) explained that the storytellers “are individuals, they cannot speak for the whole nation.”

Trust: Positive discursive narratives

18. Members of the other nation(s) have good intentions.

19. I am not afraid of ordinary members of the other nation(s).

20. I would first see a person's character, and not his nationality, to know if I can trust him.

21. I trust members of the other nation(s) in my place of residence.
22. I feel safe and secure in my own village / town.

23. The public testimony makes me feel safer from harm by the hands of members of the other nation(s).

24. I do not know whether I have trust in members of the other nation(s) since I do not have the occasion to meet any.

25. After you listen to the stories, you start trusting your neighbor more.

26. The public testimony testifies about the good intentions of the other nation(s).

**Trust: Negative discursive narratives**

27. Members of the other nation(s) would do again what they did during the war, or provoke a new war.

28. I do not trust members of the other nation(s).

29. I am afraid of members of the other nation(s) because I recall instances when they hurt or threatened members of my nation.

30. Members of the other nation(s) do not hesitate to hurt members of my nation, when they have the occasion to do so.

31. The public testimony does not make me feel safer

32. The public testimony testifies about the goodwill of some outgroup members only, it cannot speak for the whole nation.

33. Members of the other nation(s) support extremism / hate.

**6.4.15 The Influence of Those Who Suffered The Most**

In this chapter, the author is going to explore the discursive narratives regarding the potential opinion leadership of the storytellers.

The public testimonies organized within Choosing Peace Together project are based on the following change theory, which the author has transformed into a hypothesis in this research:

“*People most directly affected by the war enjoy a high degree of influence over public and political options about reconciliation*” (Catholic Relief Services, ca. 2014).
This change theory clearly means that the storytellers, as direct war victims, should be opinion leaders, which is congruent with previous research of Furman who claims that “if people who have lost so much can talk to the other side, so can everyone else” (Furman, 2013, p. 136). The author of this doctoral dissertation has explored the discursive narratives in this regard in order to try to establish the relevance of the supposed opinion leadership of the storytellers.

The first discursive narrative is being fascinated by how the storytellers have overcome their suffering. The suffering of the storytellers was, with rare exceptions, undoubted. The listeners generally recognized that the storytellers knew what they were talking about. For example, Franjo (2015) confirmed that the most influential element of the public testimonies was “the suffering of those concentration camp prisoners”. Mirjana (2014) was in turn fascinated by the storytellers’ forgiveness.

Two other, related, discursive narratives stated respectively that if the storytellers have forgiven, everybody can, and that despite their losses, the storytellers advised us to overcome the war and move on.

Furthermore, Furman’s change theory (Furman, 2013, p. 136) was illustrated by Ana and Franjo:

“When they have decided to share it with us and they decided to move forward, I think that so can everybody else. (...) They are a Muslim, a Croat and a Serb here together and they said that we need to move forward, that will never be forgotten” (Ana, 2014).

“You see the people to whom those things have really happened and how they have overcome it, they tried to start a new life, repress that [negative] side and live a normal human life” (Franjo, 2014).

The first quote is a clear reaction to the strength of the side-by-side format of the public testimonies: it appears in the same narrative as the idea that storytellers have moved forward and do not look at each other’s nationality, so the listeners should not look at other peoples’ nationality and move forward like the storytellers did.

Besides that, the storytellers were also being admired for overcoming their suffering and getting to true reconciliation:
“What most stayed in my mind is that despite all the physical and psychical pain they had suffered they stayed strong and they have overcome everything and with other peoples’ help they have managed to recover. And they don’t feel any hate, they are ready to socialize with other nations” (Meliha, 2014).

Even other listeners including the ones with good attitudes, such as Danica (2014), have admired the storytellers for overcoming their suffering and returning to normal life. This admiration is a possible factor of influence, a factor of opinion leadership, a sign of competence (Katz, 1957, p. 73). Besides this factor of admiration, Kasim (2014) admired Smilja for founding an organization that searches for missing persons. Ana’s statement also illustrates the strength of the side-by-side format of the public testimonies. She asserts to the fact that if three people who have suffered so much sit side-by-side and they get along with each other, so can everybody else. This is a very powerful message that was also cited as a factor of influence in the interviews with Franjo (2015) and Josip (2015). More importantly, some storytellers have highlighted the forgiveness aspect of this narrative. Ana (2014) commented: “If the storytellers decided that they will share their losses with us in order to tell us that we shall move on, I think that everybody can (move on).”

An interesting sociological aspect of the public testimonies which also helps to change attitudes is the brotherly interaction among the storytellers. In this research, this was only echoed by Franjo and Josip who reacted to the story of the three concentration camp prisoners. Franjo understood this brotherly interaction as part of the message of the public testimony:

“The message was that we should push those things [the war] to the background, that we should reconcile and forgive so that we can build some kind of peace, that the nations and their destinies get close to each other because all three nations have suffered. The messages had a very positive effect on me. You can see three victims from the three sides sitting nicely together and telling what happened to them and despite what happened to them they keep communicating – that’s a very nice image. And that gives you some kind of motive of a common living (suživota), peace and forgiveness, right?”

Josip (2015) was deeply touched by seeing this brotherly interaction:

I was deeply touched how the three of them are best friends just as if they were brothers. I saw that their relationship was very positive – I cannot say as if there
was no war, but it was as much positive as it only can be. (...) My attitudes have been influenced by how they went through all that but they managed to forget it, whey wish to go forward and leave it behind.

This kind of brotherly interaction can also happen in other ways: In another public testimony that took place in another Serb town and which is not part of this research, the Bosniak storyteller Latifa pronounced her message of love and reconciliation and then stood up and hugged the Serb storyteller Vesna.

The fourth and last, but most important discursive narrative is the one that the organizers of “My Story” testimonies hope for: the conviction that war victims have more influence than ordinary people. The evidence of this claim is positive, although not fully clear, and it varies greatly from one respondent to the other.

The claim that the storytellers have a higher degree of influence than other people in the listeners’ surroundings was to some degree illustrated by Josip:

“Of course, some people use hate speech, some tell what they don’t know and they con. When you see a person who went through those things and you see how he feels, you can see that it [the war] was not good for anyone” (Josip, 2015).

This quote confirms the thesis that the storytellers are opinion leaders thanks to their competence, i.e. what they know (Katz, 1957, p. 73) as they have been through real suffering and they know what they are talking about.

Mirjana was, by her own words, even “fascinated” by the fact that Latifa and Vesna overcame their traumas and losses. On the other hand, Kasim (2014) goes further in the argumentation:

“Of course the victims can influence our attitudes more than people in our surroundings, because they lived what the other people did not live, they were in a more difficult situation.”

She added that she was „fascinated that the storytellers have forgiven“ as it is not easy to overcome the loss of a sister, invalidity, the loss of a friend or something similar.“

At this point, we need to develop on the critiques of Kasim’s point and discuss the negative discursive narratives. Kasim’s argument was not shared by most respondents with good attitudes. They sustained that although the storytellers did have influence, their families
had even more influence on them as they did not educate them to hate (Halima, 2015; Zehra, 2015). Zehra (2015) and Jasmina (2014) observed that the public testimonies mostly corresponded to what people in their surroundings say. It is therefore likely that the influence of the storytellers will be perceived as greater when the listeners’s surrounding promotes negative interethnic attitudes. This was mentioned by Ana (2014) who highlighted that older people such as parents or grandparents “fill the childrens’ heads” with negative attitudes. Some respondents however believed that the storytellers do not influence the listeners more than other people in their surroundings. One reason for this was given by Marija (2014) who explained that “there were many worse and more terrible stories than theirs [the storytellers’] that could be told.” Last but not least, Marko (2014) thought that the storytellers did not have much influence and that “other people like politicians, priests or family” did.

A negative narrative on opinion leadership appeared, too. Mirjana (2014) interpreted the storytellers’ forgiveness as forgetting and she said that „if they managed to forget it, I think it is time that younger generations stop talking about it and put an end to it“ and that young people should move forward.“ Although the testimonies so understood would promote reconciliation, it advocates silence and forgetting. Although this is also a way to reconciliation, the author of this dissertation has stressed in the second chapter that there are good reasons to believe that the Balkan nations tend to bring back the past, and the past should thus be dealt with once for good, as to prevent the circle of violence.

Opinion leadership: Positive discursive narratives

1. War victims have more influence than ordinary people.
2. If the storytellers have forgiven, everybody can, and we need to close the books of the past.
3. Despite their losses, the storytellers advised us to overcome the war and move on.
4. I was fascinated by how the storytellers have overcome their suffering.
5. I was impressed by how the storytellers overcame their suffering and forgave their perpetrators
6. The storytellers made me believe that we shall forgive and overcome the war.
Opinion leadership: Negative discursive narratives

7. There are many stories worse than the storytellers’.
8. The storytellers just confirmed the opinion of my surroundings.
9. The storytellers’ influence is the same as the influence of ordinary people.
10. My parents have greater influence than the public testimonies.
11. War victims do not have greater influence than national representatives.
12. If the storytellers managed to forget the war, I think it is time that younger generations stop talking about it and put an end to it.

6.4.16 Confirming That My Positive Attitudes Are Correct

There was a large number of respondents who already held positive attitudes at the time of the public testimony and who reported no attitude change. In such cases, a few respondents have stated that the public testimony served to confirm their positive attitudes:

„The public testimony has led me to a critical thinking, and the result of this critical thinking is that the attitudes that I now have are exact and correct”
(Marko, 2014).

Jasmina (2014) also mentioned that the public testimony confirmed her earlier thinking that the pain of all three Bosnian nations was the same.

Azra stated that the public testimony had broadened her horizons and increased her willingness to engage in peacebuilding activities:

“My opinion is that the public testimony has had a lot of influence on us. It has changed the direction we are going, [it made us aware] that we have more possibilities, more points of view and that we understand all that. That we are trying to really understand it [the wartime] as we don’t know how it was. And I would like to participate in more such events, that something be organized in our town, that we learn something more so that we could develop our consciousness in the matter as we were not able to understand everything in one hour. We have understood a lot, but they were not able to tell us everything they wanted as the time was limited” (Azra, 2014).
A few other respondents such as Dina (2014) indicated that the public testimony increased their willingness to promote reconciliation.

These statements mostly come from listeners who did not report any major attitude change in terms of prejudice reduction or collective guilt, and who already held predominantly positive attitudes. This way, CRS and Caritas have been forming a new generation of activists. After each public testimony, they collect the listeners’ email addresses and they send them invitation to other public testimonies, youth camps and peacebuilding activities.

6.4.17 The Public Testimony Took Me Back to the 1990’s

A common worry that is also shared by the storytellers is that the public testimonies have the potential to retraumatize the listeners and to heat up ethnic tensions. These two categories of narratives will be handled together in this chapter, since they are illustrated on the same listener. In this research, none of the young storytellers has shown any symptoms of retraumatization. The only person who was traumatized by the stories, and especially by Latifa’s story, was the Serb teacher. After the stories were told, she wanted to comment on them but she broke down in tears saying that

“It is deplorable that you have shattered me and took me back to the 1990’s“
(Serb teacher, 2014).

After she calmed down, she explained her argument:

„It is an error that older people generally heat up tensions by reminding the young people of the past. I think that it is necessary to stop telling that story. As I said, what happened must not be forgotten but it is necessary to forgive and go forward“ (Serb teacher, 2014).

She said that she was particularly touched by the story of Latifa as Latifa was a child when the war broke out, while she was a teenager and lost her boyfriend and several loved ones in the conflict. Her father nearly died when he escaped an aerial bombing of his military unit only by being away from the caserns for 15 minutes at the precise time when it happened. The war, along with the NATO bombing of Serbs, has caused the teacher terrible traumas, and hearing the three stories, especially Latifa’s has retraumatized and shattered her. She was also shattered by the fact that her students, “young people who were born at the end of the war or after, were being taken 20 years back, hearing the same story“ (Serb teacher, 2014).
She thought that the public testimonies could have a negative influence on the listeners by “staying in the young peoples’ heads for two or three hours, maybe” but in some situations in which they would be in contact with people of other nationalities, these memories would come up. She believed that young people in Bosnia had no problems communicating across national divides. For this reason she believed that “telling the wartime stories is heating up tensions and memory“ (Serb teacher, 2014). She thought that it would be better if instead of telling war victims’ stories, young people of different nationalities could meet and tell each other their experiences; thus, they will get closer to each other (Serb teacher, 2014).

Several of the Serb students agreed with their teacher by saying that people shall not be taken back to the past and that they should rather focus on the future and on mutual collaboration. Jelena (2014), from the audience, also said that “the change in the current state of affairs will happen when the generations who lived the war disappear and when they will be replaced by young people.” “A few of the Serb respondents in this research have shared their teacher’s point of view by saying that the past should be “forgotten” and that reconciliation should happen by positive and natural means such as collaboration. This was stressed by Marko (2014), who explained that the public testimony was not a good initiative as reconciliation should not be enforced, like it was artificially enforced upon former Yugoslavia from 1945 till 1992. He thought that people in Bosnia were already reconciled and that to promote reconciliation, to remove the obstacles that are in its way was sufficient. On the other hand, Andelko argued with the old latin saying that “history is the life’s teacher” (historia magistra vitae) and that people must be aware of the past so that they won’t repeat it. However, according to the CRS coordinator Goran Bubalo (2017), Serbs generally support reconciliation by forgetting, so the attitudes of the respondents in this research are actually quite common. Importantly, Mirjana (2014) interpreted the storytellers’ accounts as advocating forgetting – if they have managed to forget the war, then young generations should stop talking about the war, she said.

There were also Serb respondents who supported the public testimony. Ana (2014) said:

“...I think that it is good that it was organized. It was very interesting for me to listen to it as I am interested in that topic. I know a lot about the war and the losses, but it was nice to listen to the other side. It is because we know that there were losses, but what is ours is ours. It was nice to see that the other sides had losses, too and that they were getting by just like us. I think it was a good
testimony. (...) I have never had the occasion to listen somebody else speak about the war live like this."

All Bosniak respondents also agreed that it was good that the public testimony in their town was organized. Zehra (2014) found it to be good that the testimony reminded young people that „they should not start wars and that they shall strive to improve the mutual relations.“ Dina (2014) thought that the public testimony could reduce hate. Zehra (2015) also thought that the public testimony promoted empathy:

„I think that it helped us the young people a lot in seeing all the sides of those events, not only of our country but also of other countries and nations and see how everyone has suffered in his own way. This way we won’t think that we were in the worst situation and we will be able to feel empathy for other people. “

Franjo (2015) thought that „it is better to talk about it as this way it can have an influence on someone, while if it is not talked about, it will not influence anyone. If there are 100 people in the audience, maybe 50 of them will change their attitudes, which is positive. If there was no public testimony, nobody would change his attitudes. “

Retraumatization: Negative discursive narratives

1. The stories took me back to the 1990s
2. I was shattered by the stories and I was reminded of my own traumas.

Positive opinion on whether the public testimonies are a good thing

1. People must be aware of the past so that they won’t repeat it.
2. It was very interesting for me to listen to it as I am interested in that topic.
3. It was nice to see that the other sides had losses, too and that they were getting by just like us.
4. The testimony reminded young people that they should not start wars and that they should strive to improve the mutual relations.
5. The public testimony could reduce hate.
6. The public testimony promoted empathy.
7. It is better to talk about the past as this way it can have an influence on someone, while if it is not talked about, it will not influence anyone.
Negative opinion on whether the public testimonies are a good thing

8. It is necessary to stop telling the wartime story.
9. The public testimonies heat up ethnic tensions by reminding young people of the past.
10. People should not be reminded of the past and they should rather focus on the future and on mutual collaboration.
11. The change in the current state of affairs will happen when the generations who lived the war disappear and when they will be replaced by young people.
12. The past should be forgotten and reconciliation should happen by positive and natural means such as collaboration.
13. Young people who were born at the end of the war or after, were being taken 20 years back, hearing the same story.
14. People in Bosnia are already reconciled, they don’t need to be reminded of the war.
15. If the storytellers have forgotten their suffering, the young generations should stop talking about it and move forward.

6.5 Taxonomy of Frame Shifts in Discursive Narratives

In this chapter, I create a taxonomy of frame shifts involved in the change from negative to positive discursive narratives. I proceed by inductively analyzing the discursive narratives in each of the categories of reconciliation outlined in the previous chapter, in order to create a hierarchy of two major negative master frames: Otherization (Jamal, 2008) and Exclusive victimhood (Noor et al., 2012; Cohrs, McNeill and Vollhardt, 2015). These master frames are then assigned dimensions (sub-categories) and these subcategories are assigned the single frames. Due to the need to simplify this scheme, discursive narratives of several related variables were merged into the appropriate categories of this scheme (e.g. discursive narratives of prejudice and blaming into aggressivization and criminalization frames etc.).

The resulting scheme is outlined below. It consists of two columns: negative and positive frames and is subdivided into a hierarchical structure of the two master frames and their subcategories. Each frame is outlined in its negative variant in the left column of its row and the positive variant into which it shifted in the right column. It is then illustrated with its underlying discursive narratives, negative and positive, respectively. The table focuses on
frames that underwent a change; important frames that deserve to be shown but did not undergo a change are marked with an asterisk (*). The taxonomy of frame changes is then discussed by category, focusing on the underlying themes and their framing, as well as the connection between larger collective discourses and the collective or individual-level narratives of the storytellers or listeners. It will so be shown how in these discursive narratives “discourse frames the issue (Svarstad, 2009)” (Tumusiime and Svarstad, 2011, p. 242). Both the taxonomy and this finding are the main contribution of this chapter, and one of the main contributions of this dissertation in general.

The two superframes, or master frames (Benford, 2013), denominate two key aspects of intractable ethnic conflict: Otherization captures the distinction between “us” who are the good, and “them” wo are the bad (Jamal, 2008; Afshar, 2013), while exclusive victimhood captures the blind focus on one’s own victimization (Mack, 1990, p. 125, as cited in Sabucedo, Blanco and De La Corte, 2003, p. 551; Bar-Tal, 2013, Noor et al., 2012). Some of the dimensions of both Otherization and exclusive victimhood are denominated with the term of asymmetry. This is due to the focus of the frames on the disproportionality between the evil nature or deeds of the outgroup and the good and innocent nature of the ingroup. The asymmetry was then classified as power asymmetry, initiative asymmetry and ontological asymmetry. Power asymmetry captures the respondents’ perceptions about the unequal distribution of political and military power at the onset of the war. Initiative asymmetry focuses on who is responsible for starting the violence, be it the war overall, single wartime events and massacres, or the victimization of concrete people (storytellers, listeners or listeners’ family members). Initiative asymmetry covers several key categories such as aggressivization, generalization of guilt and ingroup as the innocent victim. On the other hand, ontological asymmetry focuses on the underlying attributes that distinguish the bad or evil character of the outgroup from the good character of the ingroup. It contains sub-frames portraying the outgroup as evil people, war criminals, non-humans / sub-humans, enemies and untrustworthy people to beware of. The second master frame is called exclusive victimhood (Mack, 1990, p. 125, as cited in Sabucedo, Blanco and De La Corte, 2003, p. 551). It is partly connected to the concept of egoism of victimization (Mack, 1990, as cited in Sabucedo, Blanco and De La Corte, 2003, p. 551). In this research, I have identified one emotional dimension that is emotional exclusion mainly consisting of lack of empathy, or de-empathization, one cognitive dimension called asymmetric morality in regard of the asymmetric perception of ingroup and outgroup suffering, and the moral entitlement that
stems hereof, one dimension regarding the entitlement of the ingroup to claim its story as the only true one called the exclusive ingroup entitlement to truth, and one last dimension called information asymmetry pertaining to the respondents’ refusal to engage with the outgroup narrative, their lack of knowledge or unbiased information about the outgroup.

I will now describe the single master frames, their sub-frames and the underlying discursive narratives one by one, followed by a summary table.

6.5.1 The Master Frame of Otherization

Power Asymmetry

Power asymmetry concerns here mainly the frame that Serbs were overpowerful at the war onset. With a blaming tone, both Bosniaks and Croat respondents reproached to them that they had all the weaponry of the Yugoslav army, which gave them the courage to start a war. They were seen as a hostile foreign army that had the power and equipment to destroy the newly independent Bosnia and Herzegovina. This frame was most often associated to the frame of aggressivization, as the disproportionate power was said by respondents such as Kasim (2014 and 2015) to have given the Serbs the courage to start a war. This frame, however, does not really have a direct positive counterpart. Such claims carry the signs of a perception of the conflict in Bosnia as an asymmetric one (Rouhana and Fiske, 1995, p. 52), despite that Bosniaks form the majority of inhabitants. It can, however, be inferred that by adopting the frame of inclusive victimhood, respondents understood that the Serbs were not that all-powerful, and that they were vulnerable to victimization, too. In a way, this framing of Serbs as a powerful war-mongering nation often translated into fears of many of the respondents that Serbs would be willing to start a new war again.

The second frame regarding power asymmetry was the view of the ingroup as victim of oppression of more powerful Bosnian nations. This comes from his narrative saying that Croats are disadvantaged or even oppressed by Bosniaks and Serbs in post-Dayton Bosnia and Herzegovina because they are a small minority. From this stemmed the view of Croats as being still the greatest war victims. This can be seen as illustration of the power asymmetry in current Bosnian entities and a case of competitive victimhood (Noor et al., 2012).


**Initiative Asymmetry**

The initiative asymmetry dimension contains three sub-frames: *Aggressivization*, *Generalization of guilt* and *Ingroup as the innocent victim*. *Aggressivization* (Cameron, 1963, pp. 179 – 180, as cited in Munroe, 1955, p. 6; see also Hartmann, 1939) in this taxonomy means the portrayal of the outgroup by the ingroup as aggressive, war-mongering and conflict-prone by nature or general inclination, eager to harm the ingroup. On the other hand, this frame changed into *de-aggressivization* of the outgroup, a mirror image of the first concept which means the removal of the perception of the outgroup as inherently aggressive, war-mongering and conflict-prone.

**Aggressivization**

*Aggressivization* relates here mainly to the broader collective narrative about the origins of the war (cfr. Cameron, 1963, pp. 179 – 180, as cited in Munroe, 1955, p. 6; see also Hartmann, 1939). In this context, both Bosniaks and Croats portrayed the Serbs as overpowerful aggressors who were willing to do anything to create Greater Serbia, even if that cost mass ethnic cleansing. The fact that Serbs possessed the weaponry and control of the Yugoslav army was cited as justification for this asymmetry. At the same time, Bosniaks were convinced that the Serbs wanted to cleanse Bosnia from Bosniaks. The most prominent theme that was used by Bosniaks as evidence almost universally was the genocide in Srebrenica: according to them, it is in Serbs’ nature to recklessly kill not even other nations for their own benefit. They were portrayed as nationalist fanatics who would do anything in order to reach their goals, including starting a new war in order to make their aborted project of creating Greater Serbia happen in the future. At the same time, the framing of the themes of Srebrenica, power asymmetry, nationalism and aggressive nature connected the reconciliation categories of prejudice and blaming and, in Franjo, also hate. Firstly, they testified about the bad nature of Serbs and second, they were using blaming terms in reproaching them that they were not being respectful of the other nations’ lives and needs. Franjo explained his original hate by the fact that Bosniak and Serb aggressions against the Croats created immense suffering to him and his people. Also, one very prominent narrative that respondents used to excuse ingroup violence was the claim that “they were killing us more than we were killing them”. Otherization (see Jamal, 2008) in this context means the portrayal of the outgroup as radically different due to its aggressive nature, while portraying the ingroup as the *peace-loving*, passive and innocent victim of that aggression.
The stories of Smilja, Amir, Janko and Stanislav were cited in cases of frame shifts in direction of de-aggressivization. More in general, the participation of ordinary people from the outgroup in the war was involuntary as ordinary people did not want to fight in the war that was not theirs and were misled into fighting by their manipulative political elites. In this way, they were re-classified as fellow victims of the war and of their political elites in a sense, thus allowing for the creation of a common identity and bringing them out of the realm of blaming and of the supposed aggressive national nature. Specifically, the story of Smilja’s son who did not want to fight in the war was cited as evidence by the young Bosniak respondents, constituting a prominent theme.

Generalization of guilt

The subcategory of Generalization of guilt (Teitel, 2000; Akhavan, 1998; Orentlicher 1991 and 2007) represents the second frame. It means an indistinct assignment of blame to the whole outgroup, not admitting that there were individuals who were not guilty for misdeeds against the ingroup or for the war more in general. Its focus on blame distinguishes it from aggressivization which focuses mainly on evaluating the supposed outgroup national character.

In the most extreme form of guilt generalization, whole nations including all ordinary people were considered guilty in the sense of being guilty for causing the war and of being the exclusive perpetrators of war crimes and other misdeeds against the ingroup. All outgroup members were indistinctly being considered as the agents starting the violence against the peaceful vulnerable ingroup and perpetrators of war crimes, hence the classification of this frame into the initiative asymmetry of otherization category.

Guilt generalization in this research transformed into two positive frames: guilt individualization and exculpation. First of all, a guilt individualization frame shift entailed the understanding that whole nations were not and could not be considered guilty, and that blame should only be assigned to certain individuals who wished for the war to happen and who were the concrete perpetrators of misdeeds and war crimes against the ingroup. Guilt thus came to be regarded as a concept attached to individuals instead of whole groups. Related to this is the second frame, or exculpation. By the shift to individual guilt, only a certain contingent of outgroup members kept being blamed for the war, while the guilt for the same misdeeds was lifted from the rest of the population. The participation of these outgroup members was then framed as a fight for survival against manipulative ingroup political elites.
who would have punished them or killed them if they declined to fight. This frame is distinct from the de-aggressivization frame by its focus on the guilt alleviation aspect. Last but not least, a form of generational exculpation was identified in the interview material: since today’s young people were not born during the war, they cannot be held guilty for it.

_Ingrou as an innocent victim_

The third frame of initiative asymmetry is viewing the *ingroup as the innocent victim*, a reflection of the notion of narratives of collective innocence (Selimovic, 2010). For the Bosniaks, this belief was expressed in the famous narrative that “Bosniaks were only defending themselves” (e.g. Zehra), a notion expressed less directly by Franjo and Josip by denying ingroup perpetration. This frame was supposed to free ingroup from the characteristics ascribed to the other nations within the aggressivization and generalization of guilt frames. In sum, an innocent victim is the one being victimized by others and can therefore not be a victimizer. This frame was specified by listeners into portraying ingroup as a nation that certainly has not committed any war crimes and that has not tortured anyone. Last but not least, listeners denied that they would or should feel guilty for ingroup crimes, whether they be admitted by them or not. They positioned themselves therefore as moral victims (see e.g. Noor et al., 2012 entitled to apology and reparations from the other nations. Ingroup guilt was admitted only by Franjo, Josip and Meliha who initially held these negative frames, too. Looking at the whole picture, the frame of ingroup as the innocent victim is meant to help the ingroup maintain its positive self-image (Bar-Tal, 1998 and 2013).

The frame of ingroup as an innocent victim transformed in some cases into the frame of *ingroup as a perpetrator*. Franjo, Josip and Meliha all admitted based on the stories of Janko, Amir and Stanislav that their ingroup was guilty of war crimes. Franjo brought up a “bandwagon” type of frame according to which if each of the two other nations was committing war crimes, then ingroup must have committed them, too. Hence, he expressed that the wartime situation was such that war crimes were common practice, however repugnant and atrocious. The second frame related to the perception of *oneself as a bearer of collective guilt*. A few respondents, Bosniak and Croat, admitted that by becoming aware of ingroup perpetration, they felt somewhat guilty for the misdeeds and crimes their nations had committed. By the same token, they framed their *ingroup perpetration as worthy of condemnation*. Taking this one step further, Meliha felt the *shamefulness of belonging to a perpetrator nation* when she realized that her fellow Bosniaks had tortured outgroup
members, namely Janko and Stanislav. On a similar note, Franjo brought up the frame of *ingroup perpetrators worthy of anger*, as he said that there is no other way than being angry at such people, regardless that they come from his own nation.

**Ontological Asymmetry**

*Vilification*

The point of departure of one part of the prejudice category consisted in the frame of *vilification*, i.e. ascribing an evil nature to the outgroup (cfr. Wagner, Mitchell and Theiss-Morse, 2011). Vilification consisted specifically in a generalized portrayal of the outgroup as all the same, all bad or even evil people with bad intentions and a lack of morality. A milder variation to this frame was the belief of certain listeners that not all all group members are bad, but in general most of them are not good people. After the storytelling events, these negative frames shifted in some of the listeners into the frame of *devilification*, i.e. the view of of outgroup members as potentially good, at last some part of the nation (this proportion varied by listener). Since there are good and bad people in all nations, it would be too much to require from the listeners to acknowledge that all outgroup members are good. However, what did change is the acknowledged proportion of good and bad outgroup people. On one hand, this started in some cases by seeing the outgroup storyteller as a nice person, a fact framed as evidence that outgroup members can be nice, friendly, honest, respectful and overall good people (Jasmina, Zehra). This way, the individual frame of the storyteller generalized to the whole outgroup by raising the frame of the outgroup proportion from “all bad” to “there are many good people”, even though listeners still stressed that “most of them are bad” (Jasmina, 2014). Some respondents such as Josip or Kasim were already aware that there were good people among the outgroup, and after the public testimony the assumed proportion of good people increased. Last but not least, the individualization argument was raised by Franjo: he suggested that individuals can be bad, but not whole nations. He suggested therefore that general vilification of whole nations is wrong.

The frame of vilification did not only improve in this research: Kasim (2014) provided a discursive narrative testifying of a shift from existing vilification to *reinforced vilification*. He explained this with a discursive narrative stating that he had not known that the Serbs
were so evil as to hurt their own people. However, as explained above, altogether his vilification of Serbs subsided somewhat.

**Criminalization**

A frame that lies at the foundations of the more general vilification frame is the frame of criminalization. This frame consists in a generalized view of the whole outgroup as perpetrators and war criminals. Listeners stressed very often that according to them, outgroup members were “all the same, all war criminals” (e.g. Franjo, Zehra). They also stressed how the perpetration of unspeakable atrocities such as the genocide in Srebrenica was beyond human understanding, and how the Serbs were shameless evil perpetrators who would commit the same crimes again (Jasmina, 2014).

The frame of criminalization shifted in some listeners into a frame of decriminalization, i.e. lifting the accusation of the whole outgroup of being perpetrators and war criminals. The criminalizing frame was then maintained only in regard of those outgroup individuals who really did commit such serious misdeeds and crimes. These individuals were then judged in a similar fashion as ingroup perpetrators, once ingroup perpetration was acknowledged.

**Dehumanization**

Dehumanization is a frame that denies the human nature of a person or group (Oren and Bar-Tal, 2007, p. 113). In the context of this research, the perceived ingroup victimization and the supposed evil outgroup nature were so severe as to be associated to the belief that outgroup members were not human. While none of the listeners in this research dehumanized the whole outgroup to the full extent of the meaning of the concept of dehumanization, variations of it were present. First of all, full denial of the human nature was extended to war crime perpetrators by some listeners. Their crimes were simply seen as beyond the borders of what a real human being with his moral boundaries would be able to commit. A second variation of the dehumanization frame portrayed outgroup members as human, but less than ingroup members. This frame most often coexisted with the aggressivization, culpabilization and criminalization frames.

Due to the lack of absolute dehumanization, there was no case of frame shift from inhuman to human. However, a few respondents admitted that after the testimony, they viewed the outgroup members as more human than before (Oelofsen, 2013; Bar-Tal, 2000).
Hatrification

In Franjo’s case, the aversion toward the outgroup was so severe as to qualify as hate. Franjo stressed that the hate in him and his fellow Croats was “immense” due the war crimes and the double aggression by both Serbs and Bosniaks. In his mind, the outgroup was portrayed as deserving hate for what it did to the ingroup. This belief that the outgroup deserves hate is what I designate under the term hatrification.

This negative frame shifted in Franjo into one of de-hatrification, i.e. a frame of ceasing to view the outgroup as deserving hate. The pure dehatrification frame could be summarized in Franjo’s words that “we must not hate a whole nation”. More precisely, this frame is linked to individualization as Franjo adds with a one breath that this is because the crimes were committed by a few evil individuals, hence only those few individuals were guilty. For this reason, whole nations do not deserve to be hated. At the same time, Franjo also mentioned the theme of his neighbors not deserving hate as they were not guilty for anything. The hatrification frame is thus closely related to the generalization of guilt frame, while the dehatrification frame is linked to the individualization frame.

Enemies of ingroup

Many respondents viewed the outgroup as hostile, positioning itself as enemies of the ingroup by demonstrating different threatening behaviors and hate speech. This evidence was used to prove the evil intentions of the outgroup, thus qualifying it as real, standing enemies who still hope to realize their old wartime goals. This chain of reasoning was most prominent in the Bosniaks, who claimed that the Serbs hate Bosniaks because they still want to create Greater Serbia. Due to the supposed outgroup enmity, intergroup contact was seen as undesirable and dangerous, risking resulting in an interpersonal conflict or in the ingroup member getting hurt.

After the public testimony, outgroup members came to be seen by some listeners as potential friends. Jasmina (2014) and Zehra (2015) both recognized that “the good Serbs” were worthy of befriending so that the Bosniak girls could listen to their story. Intergroup contact was thus reframed as not only potentially non-threatening and possible, but also beneficial. This reframing was mainly connected to the positive example of Smilja as a nice, friendly Serbian woman. At the same time, the theme of being born after the war was also prominent, with some respondents such as Zehra highlighting that young people should get to know other
young people across ethnic lines, as they are not guilty for the war and contact between them is therefore possible. This connection of emotions and willingness to engage in intergroup contact corresponds to current scientific research (Esses and Dovidio, 2002; Pettigrew and Tropp, 2011).

On the other hand, I have registered the worsening of the frame of ingroup enemies in Marija (2014). This girl with a very strong patriotic or even nationalist sentiment framed the public testimony as a reminder that Serbs historically were and still are in danger of extinction due to their victimization and outnumbering by adversary nations. Due to this frame, she considered that it was her duty to have children in order to help secure the existence of her nation. Therefore, I interpret the public testimony as a reminder that ingroup still has enemies.

Untrustworthy nation

One of the key topics of ethnic conflict, i.e. trust, also translated into a frame. In this case, some listeners tended to present other nations as untrustworthy out of the fear that they would lead a new war against their ingroup if they had the occasion to and commit the same crimes again. This suspicion was mainly pronounced by Bosniaks regarding the Serbs, although there was some evidence of a similar kind of distrust toward the other nations, too. This frame shifted into the frame of trustworthy people in the sense that some respondents such as Franjo (2014) and Josip (2015) declared that they had gained trust in the other nations after the public testimony overtime. Also, some listeners admitted that the public testimony served as evidence of the good will of some outgroup members, which could be interpreted as a small increase in trust. It must be said, however, that no respondent stated that he or she would consider the whole nation trustworthy, as everyone of them had some serious reservations as to the trustworthiness of politicians, perpetrators or simply ill-intentioned people (e.g. Josip, 2014).

Prominent Discourses, Themes and Their Framing in the Otherization Master Frame Subcategories

Several themes and discourses stood out in the processes of justifying the power, initiative and ontological asymmetry themes. I am now going to give an overview of these themes, the links among them and relate them to the broader societal discourses from which the frames and narratives presented stem.
Three prominent discourses in the were two: the one about collective innocence, about ingroup as the exclusive victim and victim of genocide, and the one about exclusive outgroup perpetratorshod under the pretext of a nationalist project. Many frames and aspects regarding morality then stemmed from here.

The first major discourse stated that the \textit{ingroup was innocent and had not committed any crimes}, especially not war crimes or torture. It was being portrayed, in some cases, as the \textit{exclusive victim}. The \textit{instances of ingroup victimization} and their description full of emotions and passion were a prominent theme being framed by this discourse. Chronologically, the most prominent theme was the one of \textit{aggression}: both Bosniaks and Croats referred to the initial Serbian aggression of Bosnia and Herzegovina, while Franjo and Josip also referred to Bosniak aggression against Croats at the onset of the Bosniak-Croat war. These societal narratives are part of the broader truth regime that presents Serbs as the ones who caused the war (and Bosniaks as the ones who started the Bosniak-Croat war). Franjo named both these acts of aggression as the main reason for his hate towards Bosniaks and Serbs. Due to the theme of aggression on Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbs, and also Bosniaks, respectively, were portrayed as aggressors, out of which the adjectives of “overpowerful” and “war initiators” were added to the Serbs’ label as aggressors and the theme of their overwhelming power was often being brought up, presumed to give them the courage to start the war. The theme of aggressors relates closely to the theme of \textit{Srebrenica}, a theme used in many different narratives as justification many different types of claims. Firstly, the genocide in Srebrenica was framed as a massive crime and was brought up as part of the broader societal discourse according to which Serbs were an aggressive nation not hesitating to commit genocide, victimize other nations and create Greater Serbia. Some \textit{massacres of Croats} (e.g. Konjic) were mentioned by Franjo (2015) as well. Some Serbs also mentioned events of victimization of their own nation, with Marija providing a vivid description of the most gruesome ways in which some Serbs were being killed by Bosniak or mujahedin soldiers (2014). Bosniaks tended to point out that since they were the victim of genocide, any possible ingroup misdeeds (if admitted at all) were \textit{negligible} comparing to how the ingroup was victimized by the others. A prominent theme brought up by several respondents such as Jasmina (2014) was the precise \textit{number of victims} of the Srebrenica genocide at the time, which was claimed to be 8372. An important theme was also the theme of \textit{genocide}. Some Bosniak respondents (but not Croat and Serbian ones) called the \textit{ethnic cleasing} in Bosnia as genocide against their nation, aiming at wiping the country clean from Bosniaks so that \textit{Greater Serbia} could be
created (Zehra, 2014). In this view, the genocide of Srebrenica was a means of achieving that nationalist goal of the Serbs. Reversing the negative discourse of ingroup innocence and exclusive victimhood, the theme of acknowledged outgroup massacres underpinned the positive discourse according to which the outgroup was a victim, too. In the cases of attitude change, two themes stood out: the theme of the concentration camp torture of Amir, Janko and Stanislav (Franjo, 2014; Josip, 2015) and the killings of Serbs near Srebrenica mentioned by Janko (Azra, 2014; Meliha, 2014). Additionally, the theme of the victimization of Smilja’s son by his own people in a situation when he was reluctant to fight against Bosniaks was also part of the reframing of ordinary Serbs as victims. Smilja’s grief was also associated to the frame of empathization of the Serbs by Jasmina (2014) and Zehra (2014) who had otherwise been framing Serbs as undeserving empathy because of the genocide in Srebrenica they had committed and the war they had caused.

Importantly, the genocide in Srebrenica was used as the universal proof for the vilification, criminalization and dehumanization of Serbs and the generalization of guilt to the whole nation. Furthermore, the theme of Greater Serbia was mentioned in the sense that since the Serbs had not achieved this goal through ethnic cleansing and genocide, they would not hesitate to repeat the genocide in Srebrenica in the future in order to attain it, thus framing the Serbs as a nation whose evil nature persisted even after the war. From here stemmed the frames of Serbs as untrustworthy and ingroup enemies, frames informed by a broader societal discourse that Serbs were a dangerous extremist nation planning for a new war. It must be said, however, that some Serb and Croat respondents considered Bosniaks as hostile as well, mentioning victimization or discrimination episodes of everyday life. Srebrenica was also strongly linked to the broader societal discourse of Bosniaks as innocent victims of genocide, being used as ultimate evidence for such claims.

On the other hand, the themes that were associated to the corresponding positive frames were mainly linked to outgroup victimization. For the young Bosniaks, the story of Smilja’s son and his forced participation in the war was prominent, while in the case of Franjo and Josip, the central theme was represented by the concentration camp stories of Amir, Janko and Stanislav. In both cases, the generalization of guilt shifted to the instrumentalist argument blaming manipulative political elites (Gagnon, 1994; Oberschall, 2000; Kaldor, 2013) instead of ordinary people, thus exculpating the latter and modifying the discourse on Serbs as aggressors into the alternative discourse on Serbs as victims (Adelman et al., 2016). At the same time, the narratives of collective innocence (Selimovic, 2010) anchored in broader
societal discourses of *ingroup as the exclusive victim* were interrupted by acknowledging *ingroup perpetration* and hearing out the storytellers’ accounts of outgroup victimization. These themes, along with the personal example of Smilja framed as a kind, peace-loving Serbian woman, were then further associated to the shift toward the frames of *initiative and ontological symmetry*, such as devilification, decriminalization, rehumanization, dehatrification, of the outgroup, etc. Therefore, the victimized started to perceive the victimized outgroup as *more similar* to themselves (see Stephan, 2008; Bilewicz, 2007), thus modifying the discourse into a legitimizing one which claims that there are (many) *good people among the outgroup* and that only direct perpetrators and *not ordinary people are guilty* for wartime misdeeds and crimes and individualizing guilt (Akhavan, 1998). Among the young Bosniaks, the theme of *being born after the war* and thus not having participated in it was an important argument for the exculpation of the young Serb generation, framing them as *potential friends*. Yet another prominent theme was acquiring *new information* and the resulting *personal reflection* on the topic of the war, called by Franjo as “putting together the pieces of the puzzle”.

To conclude, the dimensions of *Otherization* have transformed into dimensions of *Similarization* by a shift from discourses of the outgroup(s) as evil aggressors into discourses exonerating ordinary people from war of victimization of ordinary people, hence rehumanizing the latter and reserving the blaming attitude to manipulative elites and direct perpetrators only.

### 6.5.2 The Master Frame of Exclusive Victimhood

**Emotional Exclusion**

*De-empathization*

The first dimension of exclusive victimhood, and one which is quite rare by its focus on the emotional dimension, is de-empathization. It is classified as emotional exclusion since feelings are denied to outgroup members that are normally extended to ingroup members, one of which is the very basic feeling of empathy for the suffering of other people, hence representing the “egoism of victimization” (Mack, 1990, p. 125, as cited in Sabucedo, Blanco and De La Corte, 2003, p. 551). In some respondents, empathy for the suffering of the perpetrator nation was completely denied or significantly weakened. This was mainly
justified by pointing out to major episodes of ingroup victimization, such as the Srebrenica genocide, ethnic cleansing or initiating the war. The prime example of this was Jasmina (2014) who stressed several times that she “could not look at the Serbs” and “had no feelings toward them at all” due to the crimes they had committed. Her frame of de-empathization of the Serbs transformed in one of empathization when she felt sorry for Smiljia and the loss of her son, a feeling that extended to other outgroup members who suffered, too. Not only Jasmina, but also other respondents became aware that outgroup suffering was terrible and felt sorry for it. They understood that some war losses were impossible to deal with, such as the loss of one’s own child. One important aspect was the claim that suffering of all human beings was the same regardless of nationality (e.g. Jasmina, 2014; Zehra, 2014; Franjo, 2014; Josip, 2015). Yet other respondents were partly aware of outgroup suffering and did feel some empathy, however the public testimony raised their awareness and deepended their empathization of the outgroup (Meliha, 2014; Danica, 2014). Furthermore, since empathy includes the category of empathic anger (Davis, 1996, p. 18), some respondents acknowledged the wrath-deserving nature of ingroup perpetration when admitting ingroup guilt for outgroup suffering (e.g. Franjo, 2014). Thus, the initial frame of emotional exclusion transformed into a frame of emotional inclusion, consisting mainly of empathization.

**Asymmetric Morality**

**Outgroup victimhood denial and ingroup as the greatest victim**

Some respondents were applying an asymmetric, exclusive morality to outgroup members. First of all, some sort of moral exclusion (Staub, 1990; Opotow, 1990b) was present in their initial attitudes of outgroup victimhood denial according to which outgroup members did not suffer at all, or at least not as much as the ingroup. At the same time, they tended to perceive their ingroup as the greatest war victim in terms of the highest number of victims and in terms of the largest share of wartime suffering.

These two frames transformed into frames of inclusive morality (Opotow, Gerson and Woodside, 2005; Opotow, 1990a) in which outgroup came to be perceived as a war victim, too, although sometimes with the reservation that they still suffered less than the ingroup (Josip, 2015; Zehra, 2015). At the same time, outgroup members came to be perceived as fellow sufferers of the same losses as the ingroup as all three nations were victims of the war (Franjo, 2014; Josip, 2015; Meliha, 2014; Azra, 2014; Jasmina, 2014). A third frame was also
prominent, which was the *sameness of outgroup suffering*. Just like the negative frame, it had a *qualitative* dimension in the form of the belief that the modalities of suffering were the same: killings, expulsions, refugees, loss of loved ones, etc. (Franjo, 2014; Jasmina, 2014; Meliha, 2014). However, more than that, it also had a *quantitative* dimension as to the relative quantity of suffering. Franjo (2014) as the only one acknowledged that not only the quality, but also the quantity of suffering undergone by all three nations was the same. A partial frame shift of *partial acknowledgement of outgroup suffering* occurred in respondents who acknowledged that the outgroup suffered, too, although not equally. These frames represented a partial or even complete reversal of the physical and material dimensions of competitive victimhood (Noor et al., 2012) and a shift to inclusive victimhood (Adelman et al., 2016; Kleinot, 2011; Furman, 2013; Zembylas and Bekerman, 2008).

*Undesirability of forgiveness*

The third negative frame regarding asymmetric morality is the *undesirability of forgiveness*. Some respondents claimed that the suffering brought upon the ingroup was unforgiveable, and that they have no right to personally forgive such misdeeds, partly also because they were not direct victims of them. While several respondents such as Kasim (2014, 2015) expressed unforgiving attitudes that remained unchallenged, Franjo (2014) and Josip (2015) transformed their initial frame into the *desirability of forgiveness*. They had forgiven personally and expressed the opinion that the war shall be forgiven or forgotten, and the three nations shall move forward. Therefore, the ingroup norm of forgiveness was extended to the outgroup, thus bringing moral inclusion of the latter (Opotow, Gerson and Woodside, 2005). somewhat closer. Thus, *asymmetric morality* based on the moral inclusion of ingroup only transformed into *inclusive morality* encompassing both the ingroup and the outgroup.

*Ingroup Exclusive Entitlement to The Truth*

*Exclusive validity of the ingroup narrative*

In one part of the listeners, one cognitive element consisted of the dimension of *ingroup exclusive entitlement to the truth*, which can be specified into a single frame of the *exclusive validity of the ingroup narrative*. This is coherent with the findings of Kritz and Finci (2001) regarding three competing versions of truth existing in Bosnia. In its simplest version, this frame was underpinned by the narrative that the ingroup story was the only true one, and that
there was no other side of the story regarding the war. The public testimony gave several respondents the first opportunity ever to hear the outgroup story, thus opening them to alternative narratives, which is coherent with findings of other studies (Zembylas and Bekerman, 2008; Furman, 2013; Kleinot, 2011; Bar-On, Kutz and Wegner, 2000). Thus, positive narratives such as that there was an outgroup story worth learning about or that it is worth seeing the war from the outgroup perspective (Jasmina, 2014; Zehra, 2015; Franjo, 2014; Josip, 2015) were expressed. These narratives can be summarized in the frame I call validation of the outgroup narrative, which I classify under the superordinate category of inclusive entitlement of the truth, as opposed to the original ingroup exclusive entitlement to the truth. While the negative frames were often due to simple ignorance, biased or one-sided sources of information or to an emotional blockage due to victimization (see the de-empathization frame), the validation of the outgroup narrative was often associated to the moving narratives of victimization such as the stories of Smilja’s loss of her son or the suffering of the three concentration camp prisoners. Also, Janko’s account of the killings of Serbs near Srebrenica made a great impression on Meliha (2014) who understood that Serbs had been killed, too. This general awareness of the existence of an outgroup story and the newly acquired sensitivity to outgroup suffering were closely connected to the additional frame of questionability of the truthfulness of the ingroup narrative. Several respondents expressed the awareness that the ingroup story and information from ingroup sources needed to be critically examined and complemented by information on the outgroup (e.g. Franjo). This can be interpreted as move toward the adoption of an alternative narrative that could even represent the beginning of a change of collective memory (Bar-Tal, 2013, p. 169) and can be seen as an accommodation of the Other’s narrative that is part of the identity change which Kelman equals to reconciliation (2004).

**Information Asymmetry**

*Refusal to engage with different narratives*

Some respondents claimed that they were not interested in the outgroup narrative or refused to think about it, despite that they were aware of its existence (and in part also legitimacy). They were simply refusing to engage with it as they were more interested in their own ingroup suffering. This was true for both some of the Bosniaks as well as the Serbs. This frame transformed into the willingness to engage with different narratives in the form of
individual narratives claiming that it was good to find out about the outgroup’s version of the story and that it would be good to do so by having an outgroup (Serbian) friend (Jasmina, 2014; Zehra, 2015). Some other respondents did not deny that they were more interested in the ingroup story but admitted that the public testimony had made them think about the outgroup narrative more than usual. This was mainly true for some of the Serbian respondents. Last but not least, the public testimonies were framed as a source of personal reflection that made the respondents “put the pieces of the puzzle together” (Franjo, 2014; cfr. for example Zehra, 2015; Jasmina, 2014). The search for alternative information is, at least on the societal level, a key element in the change of collective memory (Bar-Tal, 2013, p. 169).

Ignorance of the outgroup narrative

The frame of ignorance of the outgroup story was mainly given by some listeners with a simple statement of ignorance of the existence of an outgroup narrative. Reportedly, the parents of these young people were refusing to talk to their children about the war, that the information the listeners were getting from the media was biased and one-sided, or that they simply had never been confronted with the existence of the outgroup story in the environment they lived in. They claimed that they knew very little about the war and the account of outgroup suffering was, to a large extent, new information to them, causing astonishment and surprise (e.g. Azra). Most importantly, for some of them, the public testimony was the very first occasion to hear the outgroup story as they had never heard it before from their parents, friends or relatives (Azra, 2014). After the public testimony, the negative frame shifted into one of awareness of the outgroup narrative, in which respondents claimed that they had learnt more about how the war really was (Meliha, 2014; Azra, 2014; Danica, 2014; Franjo, 2014), and that people should not jump to conclusions before seeing the other side’s perspective (Josip, 2015). Some respondents such as Kasim (2015) said they had become more aware of outgroup suffering, although stressing that their ingroup still suffered the most. The second positive frame opposing the ignorance of the outgroup narrative was increased alternative information. In this regard, the testimony was said to provide a “real picture from the field”, a real image of the crude wartime suffering (Franjo, 2014) or provided information the respondents did not know (e.g. Azra, 2014; Meliha, 2014). On the other hand, the testimony made the listeners research more about the other nations’ destiny in the war (Marija, 2014; Zehra, 2015). These frames represented the stepping of the listeners
out of the “bubble” of the socio-psychological infrastructure of intractable conflict (Bar-Tal, 2013, p. 281) and their exposure to alternative information and narratives (Zembylas and Bekerman, 2008; Bar-On, Kutz and Wegner, 2000; Furman, 2013; Kleinot, 2011 etc.).

Confirmation bias

The last negative frame is confirmation bias, i.e. the tendency to interpret information on the outgroup in the light of what the listener already knows and what is congruent with his ingroup worldview (Klayman, 1995; Nickerson, 1998). The discursive narrative mainly mentioned here was that some respondents used to think about the conflict and the outgroup a lot under the influence of the media. The confirmation bias frame shifted in some cases into confirmation bias correction. For example, Franjo (2014) and Josip (2015) became aware that they could not believe everything they were reading, especially given the fact that the Croat media were strongly one-sided. Some other respondents appreciated that they got the alternative information from someone who really lived the war, instead of from the media (e.g. Josip, 2015).

Prominent Discourses, Themes and Their Framing in the Exclusive Victimhood Master Frame Subcategories

The frame of exclusive victimhood rests mainly on the discourse that presents the ingroup as the greatest victim of the war. From here stems the entitlement to viewing the ingroup as moral that each nation reserves itself. If a group was the exclusive victim and did not make the other nations suffer (due to its denied perpetratorhood), it assumes that it has the right to judge who is entitled to truth, empathy and moral inclusion. I am now going to develop on this by pointing out the topics that underpin such a discourse.

As mentioned before, the initial discourses informing the negative frames were stemming from viewing the ingroup as the greatest victim. The proof of this consisted in naming famous massacres, notably the genocide in Srebrenica. Especially Bosniaks liked to position themselves as the nation that had not committed any genocide, thus praising the ingroup for being the moral victim while using derogatory terms for the Serbs as perpetrators and showing moral superiority comparing to them. Due to this assumed ingroup moral superiority and the gravity and the atrocious nature of the victimization, some respondents claimed that these crimes could and should not be forgiven and that Serbs did not deserve empathy, in accordance with the egoism of victimization (Mack, 1990, p. 125, as cited in Sabucedo,
Blanco and De La Corte, 2003, p. 551). Therefore, the ingroup was framed as asymmetrically moral compared to the outgroup which was framed as deeply and recklessly immoral. At the same time, the outgroup was excluded from the concern and care that are reserved to ingroup members (Staub, 1990; Opotow, 1990b). This was mainly true for Bosniak respondents regarding Serbs. However, the initial attitudes of Franjo (2014) and Josip (2015) also indicated similar patterns. They, too, pointed out the genocide in Srebrenica as a proof of the immorality of the Serbs, despite that it was not their own nation that was victimized there. They, too, had initially very unforgiving attitudes. Regarding the moral positioning of Serbian respondents in this research, they, too, presented their ingroup as mainly moral, although the asymmetry was not so pronounced. They tended to stress that the harm caused by their nation was often unintentional, or that it was the fault of an individual commander. They did not portray the Bosniaks as inherently immoral, although some of them liked to reproach to Bosniaks their rejection and discrimination of Serbs in everyday life. A few of them, mainly represented by Marija (2014) stressed the gruesome nature of the ways in which Bosniak forces were killing Serbs, although even she did not generalize these acts so as to portray the whole nation as immoral. Thus, both Bosniaks and Serbs in this research referred to frames that testify of the presence of societal beliefs about the **positive self-image** of Bar-Tal’s ethos of conflict (1998 and 2013).

A major shift in asymmetric morality and emotional exclusion occurred when the respondents became aware of outgroup victimization and ingroup perpetration. In the interviews, the same themes regarding outgroup victimization that were mentioned above were now used to deconstruct the validity of the ingroup narrative of collective innocence (Selimovic, 2010) and to extend empathy to the outgroup as fellow sufferers of the same losses. In regard of inclusive morality, exhaustive and emotionally charged observations on the newly acknowledged outgroup suffering were used to justify that outgroup deserved empathy and that it was not as immoral comparing to the ingroup as previously thought.

This way, the entitlement to truth shifted to become more inclusive, reflecting and legitimizing part of the outgroup narrative, and the information asymmetry was broken down. The ingroup narrative was thus reframed as questionable and listeners realized they needed more alternative information in order to arrive at a truthful picture of the war. After the public testimony, some of the respondents became willing to get engaged with the outgroup narrative, learn more about it and correct the confirmation bias (Klayman, 1995; Nickerson, 1998) they had initially suffered from when interpreting information provided by the media.

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and people in their surroundings. The prominent themes underpinning this shift were the stories of Smilja’s and her son’s rejection of the war, and opening up one’s eyes to the “real truth”, as Franjo (2014) called the unspeakable torture and suffering of the three concentration camp prisoners Amir, Janko and Stanislav and the realization of ingroup perpetration. Part of this was the face-to-face contact with the storytellers and their emotions, a contact that transmitted the storytellers’ negative emotions and suffering, thus translating them into the empathy that the listeners felt for this suffering (Davis, 1996).

To sum up, I have identified four dimensions of exclusive victimhood: the emotional exclusion in the form of de-empathization transformed into empathization of the outgroup, thus including it, at least to some extent, into one’s own moral community and reducing the moral asymmetry between the former adversary nations. The right to the truth then shifted to become a more inclusive one, after which the respondents became more willing to reduce their own information asymmetry and learn more about the outgroup perspective.

On the next pages, a table providing an overview of my taxonomy of frame shifts follows.

### 6.5.3 Taxonomy of Frame Shifts within Discursive Narratives: Overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Otherization</th>
<th>Similarization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Power asymmetry</strong>&lt;br&gt;Serbs were overpowerful at the war onset*&lt;br&gt;Serbs were overpowerful at the war onset.</td>
<td><strong>Initiative symmetry</strong>&lt;br&gt;In every nation there are extremists, and among Their nation there were ordinary people who did not want to fight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ingroup as victim of oppression of more powerful Bosnian nations</em>&lt;br&gt;Our nation is disadvantaged / oppressed in the current Bosnia and Herzegovina.</td>
<td><strong>Deaggressivization</strong>&lt;br&gt;Serbs were aggressors that wanted to take the whole Bosnia and Herzegovina, clean it from Bosniaks and so create Greater Serbia,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Initiative asymmetry</strong>&lt;br&gt;Aggressivization</td>
<td><strong>Initiative symmetry</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NA</td>
<td>1. Power symmetry*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

*Serbs were overpowerful at the war onset*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>regardless of how many victims that will create (Zehra)</strong></th>
<th><strong>Ordinary people as pacifist victims of war-mongering manipulative elites</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All outgroup members wanted to fight and harm our nation.</td>
<td>Many outgroup members were misled into fighting the war by the people in power (high-ranking politicians) who were the real initiators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members of the other nation(s) support extremism / hate.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They were killing us more than we were killing them.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Guilt generalization</strong></th>
<th><strong>Guilt individualization</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Their whole nation is guilty for the war.</td>
<td>You cannot generalize to a whole nation from the deeds of a few criminals (Franjo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The other nations were the exclusive perpetrators.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All members of the other nation(s) are guilty for what their nation committed against my nation.</td>
<td><strong>Exculpation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Some Serbs were forced to fight by the real war initiators / people in power to fight against their will because they were afraid for their lives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Young generation is not guilty for the war and shall not be blamed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Ingroup as the innocent victim</strong></th>
<th><strong>Ingroup as a perpetrator</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ingroup members did not torture anyone.</td>
<td>Some ingroup members were perpetrators of evil deeds / war crimes, too (Franjo, Josip)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During the war, members of my nation were only defending themselves.</td>
<td>If members of the other nation(s) committed war crimes, it is clear that members of my nation committed them, too.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our nation was only an innocent victim.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not feel guilty for the misdeeds or war crimes committed by some members of my nation.</td>
<td><strong>Oneself as a bearer of collective guilt</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I feel (somewhat) guilty for what members of my nations committed against members of the other nations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Ingroup perpetration as worthy of condemnation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I condemn all perpetrators regardless of nationality, including the ones from among my people.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Shamefulness of belonging to a perpetrator nation**
I felt ashamed I was a Bosniak because ingroup members tortured outgroup members.

**Ingroup perpetrators worthy of anger**
I am angry at the perpetrators from among my nation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Ontological asymmetry</strong></th>
<th><strong>Ontological symmetry</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vilification</strong></td>
<td><strong>Devilification</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outgroup members are all the same / all bad / evil people.</td>
<td>Individuals can be bad, but not whole nations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outgroup members are not all bad, but they are not very good people</td>
<td>Storytellers are nice, therefore outgroup members can be nice, friendly, honest, respectful.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Criminalization (Blaming, prejudice)</strong></th>
<th><strong>Decriminalization</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outgroup members all the same, all war criminals / perpetrators of misdeeds.</td>
<td>Outgroup members are not all perpetrators / criminals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbs used any means to reach their goals, regardless of our and their own victims.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t understand how someone could commit war crimes such as Srebrenica.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbs are shameless evil perpetrators who would commit the same misdeeds again.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Dehumanization</strong></th>
<th><strong>Rehumanization</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perpetrators who hurt our nation are not human.</td>
<td>Serbs are more human than I had thought before the public testimony.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbs are not entirely human.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members of the other nation(s) are humans, but not as much as members of my nation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hatrification (deserve hate)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Dehatrification</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outgroup members deserve to be hated due to what they did to my ingroup / because they started the war.</td>
<td>We must not hate a whole nation because of a few individuals’ crimes. Neighbors do not deserve to be hated as they are not guilty for anything. Hate tears a person apart.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Enemies of ingroup</strong></th>
<th><strong>Potential friends</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is necessary to avoid contact with outgroup members as they could hurt me / get in conflict with me. In a contact situation, members of the other nation(s) displayed threatening / hostile behavior, testifying about the evil intentions of their nation.</td>
<td>It is possible to become friends with outgroup members. I want to have an outgroup friend. We need to meet the young people who did not live the war. I stopped looking at my neigbours with hate as they are not guilty and started mingling again.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Untrustworthy nation</strong></th>
<th><strong>Trustworthy people</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I do not trust members of the other nation(s) as they are able to provoke a new war and commit the same crimes again.</td>
<td>I trust outgroup members. The public testimony testifies about the goodwill of some outgroup members only, it cannot speak for the whole nation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Exclusive victimhood</strong></th>
<th><strong>Inclusive victimhood</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Emotional exclusion</strong></th>
<th><strong>Emotional inclusion</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>De-empathization</strong></td>
<td><strong>Empathization</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outgroup members do not deserve empathy because of their misdeeds (especially Serbs for starting the war and for the genocide in Srebrenica) I do not feel much empathy for the Serbs because they have harmed our nation the most. I used to be somewhat sorry for outgroup suffering.</td>
<td>I put myself in the outgroup members’ shoes and realized that their suffering was terrible. Thanks to the public testimony, I feel (sorry) for outgroup wartime suffering. Outgroup suffering was shattering. Outgroup members deserve empathy for their wartime suffering, just like the storyteller. The war was more difficult than I thought. Human suffering is the equally sad and tragical regardless of nationality. I am sorry for the storyteller as losing a loved person is impossible to deal with.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledging the wrath-deserving nature of ingroup perpetration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am angry at the perpetrators from among my nation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Asymmetric morality

#### Outgroup victimhood denial
Outgroup members did not suffer during the war at all / not as much as the ingroup.

#### Ingroup as the greatest victim
My nation had the highest number of war victims.
My nation endured the largest share of wartime suffering.

### Inclusive morality

#### Outgroup as a war victim
Outgroup members suffered, too, although not equally.

#### Fellow sufferers of the same losses
Most members of the other nation(s) suffered and had great losses in the war, just like my nation.
All three nations are victims of the war.
All three nations are victims of the war.

#### Sameness of outgroup suffering: qualitative
All nations suffered the same way as the ingroup as to the modalities of suffering: killings, raping, loss of loved ones, persecution, refugees.

#### Sameness of outgroup suffering: quantitative
All nations suffered the same quantity of suffering.

#### Partial acknowledgement of outgroup suffering
Outgroup members suffered, too, although not equally. (Josip, Zehra).

### Undesirability of forgiveness
The suffering that other nations have brought upon my nation is unforgivable.
I cannot forgive the other nation(s) for their misdeeds and war crimes.

### Desirability of forgiveness
I have forgiven the other nations regarding the war.
We shall forgive the other nation(s) for the suffering they have brought upon our nation.
The war has to be forgotten and we need to move forward.

| Ingroup exclusive entitlement to the truth | Inclusive entitlement to the truth |
| Inclusive validity of ingroup narrative | Validization of the outgroup narrative |
There is no „other“ side of the story, only ingroup story is the true one.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information asymmetry</th>
<th>Information symmetry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Refusal to engage with different narratives</strong></td>
<td><strong>Willingness to engage with different narratives</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have always been more interested in my nation and its suffering.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I refuse to think about the outgroup or its perspective.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not know much about / I am not interested in the other nations’ destiny in the war.</td>
<td>It is good to find out about the outgroup’s side of the story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I want to have a Serb friend and hear their side of the story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I have always been more interested into my nation and its suffering, but the testimony made me think about the other nations’ perspective, too.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public testimony as a source of personal reflection</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The stories engaged me in a deep reflection and analysis of war-related events: I was putting the pieces of the puzzle together.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The testimony made me think about wartime events more than usual I don’t think about that topic very often.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ignorance of the outgroup narrative</th>
<th>Awareness of the outgroup narrative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I did not know much / enough about the outgroup’s wartime experience.</td>
<td>I learned more about the war and the testimony gave me a clearer image of how the war really was.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We shall not jump to conclusions before seeing the other side’s perspective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Confirmation bias</strong></td>
<td>I used to think about the war a lot under the influence of the media.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Confirmation bias correction</strong></td>
<td>We cannot believe everything we hear/read. The war gave me an image of the war from someone who lived it instead of from the media.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Frame shifts from negative to even more negative</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Enemies:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Increasing the fear of extinction</em></td>
<td>We are young girls and we have to procreate the nation, especially if a new war happens*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reinforced vilification</strong></td>
<td>I did not know the Serbs were so bad as to hurt their own people.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7 Discussion

_Composing a holistic discursive narrative of attitude change_

As a first technique of data interpretation, I am now going to compose the discursive narratives in a rough chronological order to illustrate a hypothetical process of attitude change.

According to Bosniak and Croat respondents, Serbs were overpowerful before the war, as they controlled the army and all the weaponry. They abused this situation, aggressed Bosnia and Herzegovina and provoked a war. They wanted to create Greater Serbia and clean Bosnia and Herzegovina from Bosniaks, hence narratives on these nationalist projects were evoked. As mentioned in chapter 2, the government in Belgrade did, indeed, control the JNA and all its weaponry. The Slovene, Croat or Bosnian governments owned very little of it (Malcolm, 1996, p. 243). The plans for Greater Serbia were declared well before the war, and the Milosevic establishment engaged itself in an aggressive campaign of delegitimization of Yugoslav Muslims, thus making future massacres possible. For this reason, the above discursive narratives of Serb aggression, that are widely shared among Bosniaks and Croats, have their strong backing in firmly established facts. Thus, holding such narratives is not necessary a sign of bad attitudes, but rather, what can testify about bad attitudes is the way they are talked about, and the degree of blaming and prejudice that accompanies them. What can say more about the listeners’ attitudes is the way they speak about wartime violence. Listeners in this research stressed that Serbs used whatever means available and did not have any regards on the number of victims they caused. They were killing Bosniaks and Croats on a massive scale, which culminated in the genocide of Srebrenica in 1994. Indeed, the more the respondents mentioned concrete massacres, stressed concrete numbers of victims, used strong words for the massiveness of the crime, and the more evil intentions they deemed the perpetrators to have, the higher they were in blaming, thus indicating distrust in the other nation(s), as indicated by Petrović’s scale of readiness for reconciliation (2010). Because of these warcrimes and because of the “aggression” on Bosnia and Herzegovina, some respondents strongly disliked or even hated the Serbs and they thought that all Serbs were bad people and war criminals, and they considered all of them to be guilty for what their nation did. Especially Srebrenica was used as hard proof of the claim that all Serbs were evil. Franjo and Josip had similar beliefs regarding the Bosniaks. Indeed, the generalization about a whole group that “they are all the same” and “all bad” corresponds to the basic definition of
prejudice (Allport, 1958, p. 9; Duckitt, 2003, pp. 561 – 566). Also, Jasmina’s lack of positive feelings toward Serbs was an indicator of prejudice (see Stangor, Sullivan and Ford, 1991). She explained this by their supposed aggressive and evil nature, and she refused to think about them, and valued their nation less than the other two nations, which also testifies about negative attitudes. This was also illustrated by Jasmina’s (2014) belief that Serbs are less human than Bosniaks, thus testifying about a certain degree of dehumanization (Oren and Bar-Tal, 2007, p. 113). This is very important, since some of the most widespread prejudice that Bosniaks hold about the Serbs is that they are an aggressive nation (Skoko 2011, p. 16, see also Šalaj, 2009). As mentioned above, such a negative belief is supported by the discourses of Serbs as the nation that started the war, and probably also by the fact that most crimes were found to be committed by Serbs (Orentlicher, 2010, p. 89). When we interpret all the above findings in the light of Petrović’s scale of reconciliation, we find that they fall into the Rehumanization category, however in the negative sense (Petrović, 2010, p. 207).

Bosniaks furthermore considered the Serbs to be aggressive people who like conflicts and threaten Bosniaks in unprovoked situations of their everyday lives, willing to hurt or kill them. Bosniaks believed that Serbs inculcate hate for their nation to their young generations, which manifests as hate speech on the social media. Even some Serbs made a similar observation regarding other nations, though. The explanation of that hate could be that Serbs still want their Greater Serbia which they were unable to obtain through the war. On the other hand, Serb respondents complained that Bosniaks discriminate against them, and that they cannot live in areas where Bosniaks are the majority, such as Sarajevo. All the above beliefs can be interpreted as Distrust on Petrović’s scale (2010, p. 205). To sum up, the above-mentioned beliefs about the other nation as generally and entirely evil apply collective guilt to whole nations (mainly Serbs and Bosniaks in this case) and refuse to distinguish between concrete perpetrators and ordinary people who did not commit any crimes. Indeed, this testifies about the lack of individualization of members of the other nations (Akhavan, 1998, p. 766). The lack of individualization can be interpreted as lack of Rehumanization on Petrović’s scale (2010, p. 207).

Continuing the argument, if narratives about the Serbs’ guilt are not a good indicator of a person’s attitudes the openness toward information about the guilt of one’s own nation for wartime misdeeds can be. Some respondents tended to outright deny the guilt of members of their respective nations for wartime misdeeds and crimes. This is an indicator of outright denial (Cohen, 2001) and corresponds to the “narratives of collective innocence” that are
widely present in Bosnia (Selimovic, 2010). This author does not blame the respondents for such beliefs, as they are widely shared among Bosnians. Some of the young people interviewed have never got the information that their nation has committed war crimes. However, when presented with information about their nation’s perpetration of misdeeds or war crimes, the listeners either accepted such information and acknowledged the guilt of some members of their nation, or they tried to diffuse guilt by different strategies and narratives. The most famous one of these narratives is that “Bosniaks were only defending themselves” (e.g. Zehra, 2014), that they were only present in the battlefield trying to pull through, and they did not commit any such warcrimes as the Serbs did. Especially respondents in the ethnically mixed town tended to stress this in order to explain why their nation was not guilty for Andelko’s suffering, despite that Andelko’s patrol was attacked by Bosniaks. Why this was so is not fully clear: the students may have misunderstood the situation, or they may not have found it as shocking as the stories of the former concentration camp prisoners were. Although this research does not attempt at making causal conclusions, it is interesting to observe that the latter three stories did elicit discursive narratives of ingroup guilt, while Andelko’s story did not. Yet another discursive narrative diffusing ingroup guilt claimed that Bosniaks were killing Serbs during the war, too, but they tended to stress that this was little comparing to the genocide in Srebrenica. Bosniaks in general tend to say that their nation was the least guilty of all three. This relativization does indicate some degree of blaming and a lack of sensitivity toward the perpetration of one’s own nation and implies a comparison of the quantity of victims that is characteristic for competitive victimhood (Noor et al., 2012). Thus, it could potentially testify about negative attitudes. Also, it represents a known strategy of denial of collective guilt, which is the pointing out to the fact that one’s own nation was victimized more than the perpetrator nation (Buruma, 1999, as cited in Branscombe, Doosje and McGrath, 2002, p. 56). On the other hand, it has been proven that most crimes were, indeed, committed by Serbs (Orentlicher, 2010, p. 89), therefore Bosniaks and Croats should not be blamed for such beliefs, and rather, their tone and the way they put such claims in context should be assessed. In this research, both respondents with positive and negative attitudes made such claims. To break such beliefs, respondents would have to acquire a subjective perception that all sides were equally guilty, however this pertains probably more to the modalities and less to the relative quantity of perpetration. Moreover, some respondents adopted a third discursive narrative aimed at diffusing a possible feeling of ingroup guilt, which was the claim that they could not feel guilty for anything, as they were not yet born when the war happened. Although it is true that
they are not personally guilty, they are lacking the “psychological willingness to share in the collective blame for the misdeeds of one’s own group … (May, 1992)” (Cehajic-Clancy, 2012, p. 240). Cehajic-Clancy (2012) stresses that the feeling of guilt is positive, and it is through it that reconciliation in Bosnia should happen. Since the feeling of guilt is a factor of prejudice reduction (Amodio, Devine and Harmon-Jones, 2007), the lack of it would represent unused potential of the stories in promoting reconciliation. Last but not least, some Serb respondents used yet other two strategies of diffusing collective guilt, which is blaming the misdeeds on “a few deviant ingroup members” (Wohl, Branscombe and Klar, 2006, p. 13). Some tended to shift the blame toward the Serb commanders or blamed it on a simple mistake. The second strategy was represented by the discursive narrative that the death toll of the war and of the massacre in Srebrenica were artificially inflated. The respondents who expressed these beliefs held good attitudes, which is also the case of some other people with good attitudes that the author of this thesis has encountered outside of these interviews. Thus, this belief is not uncommon among Serbs, and it can be proven with public opinion surveys.

While over 100 percent of the inhabitants of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina believe that “in July 1995, over 7000 Bosniak civilians and captives were shot in Srebrenica” (Ipsos Strategic Marketing, 2010, p. 44), this belief is shared by only 53 percent of inhabitants of the Republic of Srpska who heard about the massacre, thus with 47 percent denying the facts (Ipsos Strategic Marketing, 2010, pp. 44 – 45). This is somewhat coherent with the finding that while 89 percent of inhabitants of the Federation believe that the most crimes were committed by the Serbs, 24 percent of inhabitants of the Republic of Srpska believe that most crimes were committed by Bosniaks, and 44 percent believe that all nations committed the same number of crimes (Ipsos Strategic Marketing, 2010, p. 136). This testifies about a certain degree of denial, or at least unwillingness to admit ingroup guilt among the Serbs. Also, Serbs tend to advocate reconciliation through forgetting instead of dealing with the past (Bubalo, 2017), and the disproportionate number of Serb convicts in front of the ICTY and the refutation to admit ingroup guilt could potentially explain why. This is, however, an interesting hypothesis that could be tested in future quantitative research. However, to sum up, the lack of admission of ingroup guilt can be interpreted as lack of Rehumanization on Petrović’s scale of readiness for reconciliation (2010, p. 207).

Furthermore, a crucial factor of prejudice reduction is intergroup contact (Allport, 1958; Pettigrew and Tropp, 2011) and the “distorted perception” of the outgroup can be redressed by sufficient alternative information about the outgroup (Stephan, 2008, p. 382). Some
Bosniak respondents in this research said that they had no contact with Serbs, outside of occasional threatening episodes. They simply lived in settings with a Serb minority which rather avoided than sought interethnic contact, as Serbs were being blamed for the war in the ethnically mixed town. Some of them were afraid of or simply not willing to have intergroup contact. This would correspond to a lack of willingness to engage in intergroup contact, that can be interpreted as similar to the willingness to reconcile (Shnabel et al., 2009, p. 1024).

Some of the respondents also were not following nor seeking to follow alternative information about the other nation that would contradict their beliefs. Franjo (2014) highlighted that before the war, media were one-sided and strongly biased, and that people did not even have access to alternative information. It seems therefore that some respondents such as him fell victims of the media propaganda in the immediate postwar period. What Franjo described was the process of freezing of societal beliefs (Bar-Tal, 2007, p. 1444) and their institutionalization in societal discourse, and especially in the media. Although Franjo was getting some alternative information, for some time he was ignoring it. Theory says that indeed, that only information confirming the negative societal beliefs tends to be accepted (Bar-Tal, 2013, p. 291). His account also illustrated how difficult it is in intractable conflicts to obtain alternative information due to the persecution of its providers or control of mass media (Bar-Tal, 2013, pp. 284 – 287). To continue the discussion, not only Franjo but also other respondents initially tended to focus on information that delegitimized the other nation(s) and presented their nation exclusively as a victim, or simply on information where their nation would be valued, so that they could preserve its positive image (the latter two claims concerned mainly some Serb respondents). These claims illustrate the well-known fact that people like to preserve a positive self-image (Bar-Tal, 1998, p. 28, O’Keefe and Delia 1982, as cited in van Dijk, 1984, p. 46; Goffman 1959, 1967, as cited in van Dijk, 1984, p. 46). Some of them argued that they were not interested in the Serbian victims because the Serbs were killing the Bosniaks or vice versa. Thus, the relativization argument appeared once again also in relation to willingness to acquire alternative information about the outgroup, a dimension of willingness to reconcile (Shnabel et al., 2009, p. 1024). The latter thus seemed to be somewhat reduced in many respondents.

Some respondents from the three nations believed that their nation was the greatest, or even the exclusive war victim, and that it was being killed and mistreated by the most gruesome ways. Both Bosniaks and Serbs believed that their respective nations had the highest number of victims. Thus, some Bosniaks, Serbs and also Croats in this research were convinced that
their respective nations endured the largest share of wartime suffering. All these claims testify about the presence of *competitive victimhood*, mainly in its *physical dimension of suffering*. This is congruent with a public opinion survey of Ipsos Strategic Marketing (2010, p. 134), according to which 75 percent of the respondents in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina who had an opinion believed that Bosniaks suffered the highest number of victims, while only 3 percent said the same about Serbs and only 9 percent said that all nations had the same number of victims. Interestingly, in the Republic of Srpska, the picture changes somewhat. Only 3 percent believe that Bosniaks had the most victims, while 32 percent believe that the Serbs did, while 42 percent believes that all nations had about the same number of victims. Thus, the fact that both some Bosniaks and Serbs in this research believed that their nation had the highest number of victims is actually nothing surprising. This fact could probably be explained by studying the respective nations’ narratives about their victimhood and the validity of the established death toll numbers, however this is beyond the scope of this research. What is certain, though, is that a few Serb respondents explained their beliefs about their nation having the highest number of victims by some statistics or research, produced probably by Serbs. If we relate competitive victimhood to Petrović’s scale of readiness for reconciliation, we will find that the above accounts testify of a *lack of Rehumanization* (Petrović, 2010, p. 207).

Continuing the greater narrative of attitude shifts stemming from the public testimonies, we can say that the young people sharing some or even many of the above-mentioned beliefs and characteristics participated in the “My Story” public testimonies. They were presented face-to-face with three war victims from the three adversary sides, sitting side-by-side and telling their stories of trauma and reconciliation. For some of them it was the very first time of their life to hear stories about the suffering of the other nations, or at least in a live setting. The stories were surprising, or even shocking for many of them, as they did not have such insider information from the battlefield from their surroundings or the media. The public testimony thus brought them new and unexpected perspectives and *information*. The young people tended not to know much about the war, as they were not interested, or their parents avoided talking to them about it. Through the stories, they learnt about what the war was like, and about the suffering of the other nations. During the testimony, they were thinking about how the wartime events were happening or how the storytellers’ suffering was similar to the suffering of their family. Some of them were, however, so absorbed by the stories that they were not able to perceive anything that was going around them when the stories were being
told. Some listeners became more aware how terrible the war was and stressed that it shall never repeat. For the respondents who shared negative societal beliefs, this new and unexpected alternative information may have represented, on a personal level, an instigating belief that is, on a societal level, associated with unfreezing of the culture of conflict and adoption of the ethos of peace (Bar-Tal, 2013, pp. 327 – 328). The information provided also counterbalanced the respondents lack of knowledge, or ignorance, about the outgroup, factors that are associated in literature to correction of ingroup members’ distorted perception of outgroup members (Stephan, 2008, p. 382). Importantly, the above discursive narratives testify about the increased willingness to acquire alternative information (Shnabel et al., 2009, p. 1024). Importantly, the side-by-side setting seemed to leave a deep impression in the listeners. They tended to associate it to their understanding that several factors regarding the ingroup and the outgroup were “all the same”, such as the suffering, the wartime perpetration, or their humanity. This research does however not attempt at making a causal link here. The findings are, nonetheless, corroborated by the findings of other authors on such side-by-side storytelling initiatives (Furman, 2013; Kleinot, 2011; Maoz, 2011, p. 120).

A key moment in the listeners’ accounts is represented by empathy. By hearing the stories of crude human suffering, they put themselves in the storytellers’ shoes and viewed the wartime events and suffering from their perspective. Some of them even imagined the story in front of their eyes like a film. They were thinking about the thirst, hunger and torture in a concentration camp and they even imagined themselves to be in the storytellers’ place, which is the strongest form of empathy. They imagined also how it would be to them to lose a child, or how it would be if Smilja’s missing son turned up at her door some day. These discursive narratives can be interpreted as perspective taking, or cognitive empathy, an established factor of attitude change (Stephan and Finlay, 1999, p. 739). The listeners even shared the storytellers’ thoughts and emotions. They tended to mirror the emotions expressed by the storytellers, especially the negative ones. They felt deep sadness and sorrow for their pain, and some of them felt even shocked and shattered, and some were even in tears. These findings can be interpreted as emotional empathy, equally a mechanism of attitude change in theoretical literature (Batson et al., 1997). Some listeners felt physical distress, such as chilling or difficulties breathing. They were sincerely concerned for the storytellers’ well-being and they felt wrath, or empathic anger (Davis, 1996, p. 18) against their perpetrators. Eventually, they realized that human suffering is all the same, no matter the nationality of the person who is suffering. However, the emotional impact of the stories varied: the deepest
impression was left by the saddest stories transmitting negative emotions, while the impression left by stories told with an optimistic tone, such as Andelko’s, was reported by the listeners to be lessened. Given all the strong findings above, we can say that empathy played a crucial role in the testimonies. It was reported by the listeners to leave the deepest impression in their minds, and it was a central theme in the interviews also when talking about other factors. The strongest impression and the strongest empathy were left by the stories from the concentration camps. This fact thus illustrates Davis’s theory that “strong displays of negative emotions” can lead to powerful responses in the observers (Davis, 1996, pp. 14 – 15). Comparing the stories in this research and the reactions to them, it is possible to hypothesize that the saddest stories expressed with the most negative emotions have the highest potential to engender attitude change in the respondents. This is, however, a thesis that should be tested in further, quantitative research. In any case, the findings of this research are corroborated by findings of other studies that also find empathy to be a crucial element of storytelling initiatives (Kleinot, 2011; Furman, 2013; Maoz, 2011, p. 120; Bar-On, 2002 and 2006, as cited in Maoz, 2011, p. 120).

In any case, faced with these stories of crude human suffering, some listeners recognized for the first time and more easily that that the other nations, too, suffered in the war. They realized that all three nations were victims of the war, that the other nations, too, had great losses, that members of the other nations suffered in the same way, by the same modalities as members of one’s own nation, and they finally realized that human suffering is always the same, simply universally human. Some went as far as to recognize that the amount of suffering of the three nations was the same. Also, many respondents acknowledged that victims are simply victims who suffered, regardless of their nationality. A respondent even complained that the suffering of the other nations was not mentioned enough among her own Bosniak nation. The above claims testify about the reduction of competitive victimhood (Noor et al., 2012), both in the physical and emotional dimensions of suffering. The respondents stopped focusing on the suffering of their own nation, and they opened to the understanding that other nations suffered, too, although the degree of this acknowledgement varied. Given the above mentioned numbers illustrating that both Bosniaks and Serbs believe to be the greatest victims of the war and tend to deny some episodes of suffering of the other group (Ipsos Strategic Marketing, 2010, p. 134, 44 - 45), even the mere acknowledgement that the other nations suffered, too, is significant in today’s Bosnia and Herzegovina. The acknowledgement that they suffered approximately in the same way and to the same extent is
then a real break-through. Given that competitive victimhood represents an important obstacle to a peaceful conflict resolution (Noor et al., 2012, p. 351), forgiveness (Noor et al., 2008) and leads to the perception of a dichotomy between the outgroup as a perpetrator, and the ingroup as “the innocent, moral victim (Bar-Tal, 2000)” (Noor et al., 2012, p. 356). Thus, the shifts in competitive victimhood represent an important step toward reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and also a positive progress on the Rehumanization dimension of Petrović’s scale (2010, p. 207).

Seeing that the other nations were victims, a few listeners also questioned their respective nations’ guilt. They came to realize that all three nations committed war crimes, and some said that all three sides are even equally guilty. This awareness thus broke the predominant “narratives of collective innocence” (Selimovic, 2010) whose widespreadness was supported by the above-mentioned survey (Ipsos Strategic Marketing, 2010, p. 44 - 45). A respondent even said that she was “ashamed to be a Bosniak” (Meliha, 2014) or felt empathic anger at the perpetrators, thus condemning their bad deeds. Thus, the discursive narratives elicited by the public testimonies seem to signalize the admission of collective guilt in some respondents, a factor that Cehajic-Clancy (2012) considers to be a crucial step toward reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The admission of guilt represents a positive shift in the Rehumanization dimension of Petrović’s scale (2010, p. 207). The potential backlash of feeling ingroup guilt is meant to be counteracted to the maximum by the storytellers’ nonviolent communication, not saying their nationality (and sometimes the perpetrator side nationality) and avoiding blaming talk.

The respondents also told discursive narratives of rehumanization. They tended to stress that members of the other nations were human beings just like members of their own nation, and that it is a person’s character and not the nationality that counts. Thus, these claims illustrate the very concept of Rehumanization on Petrović’s scale (2010, p. 207). The listeners also put the storytellers and members of the other nations into several common identities, such as simply humans, young people (we were the storytellers’ age when they were taken to the concentration camp), or women (we are all women and as mothers, we would grieve the loss of a child). Recategorization into cross-cutting identities such as gender (Brewer, 2000; Hall and Crisp, 2005; Crisp, Hewstone and Rubin, 2001) and superordinate identities such as humans (Sherif, 1966; Gaertner et al., 1999, as cited in Stephan, 2008, p. 385; González and Brown, 2003) is known to reduce negative intergroup attitudes (although this dissertation is not attempting at making such causal claims). In addition, two identities that are known to
reduce competitive victimhood (Shnabel, Halabi and Noor, 2013) appeared: the common victim identity (“we are all victims”) and the common perpetrator identity also appeared in some respondents (“all nations have committed war crimes, including my nation”). Thus, the public testimonies elicit several cross-cutting or superordinate identities that represent potential mechanisms of attitude change, some of them affecting the Rehumanization dimension (Petrović, 2010, p. 207), which is very positive.

A few respondents reported attitude shifts in prejudice. They realized that members of the other nations were not “all the same”, not “all criminals”, and that there are good and peace-loving people among them with whom it is possible to have a pleasant conversation. Thus, such discursive narratives would signify a prejudice reduction. The respondents illustrated their prejudice reduction on two prototypes of characters of the stories: on Smilja, the mother who is grieving her missing son, and the Serb doctor and other positive war heroes who saved the storytellers’ lives or helped them in their difficult situations. Yet other respondents admired the storytellers as heroes, for example Smilja for founding the organization for the search for missing persons. Yet other respondents said that they had good attitudes toward the other nations, and that they were not educated in hate. Generally, respondents displayed good attitudes toward young people from the other nations, including Serbs. Moreover, interestingly enough, the discursive narratives about Smilja’s story were associated with discursive narratives of individualization (Akhavan, 1998, p. 766) in the accounts of Jasmina (2014) and Zehra (2015), although for different reasons. Both young women realized that Serbs did not want to fight, and that they were forced to. They realized that in the end, Serbs suffered just like the Bosniaks, losing their children and their loved ones (Jasmina, 2014).

The four respondents who reported an important prejudice reduction after the public testimonies were Jasmina (2014), Zehra (2015), Franjo (2014) and Josip (2015). Prejudice reduction is a major achievement and belongs to the Rehumanization dimension of readiness for reconciliation (Petrović, 2010, p. 207).

Franjo (2014) has also reported a shift in hate. He said that hate was tearing him apart, and that he could not look at his neighbors in hate anymore. Thus, the public testimony was a welcome event that opened his eyes and helped him to overcome that hate. He realized that he could not blame his neighbors for the war and hate them for the crimes of evil individuals. Thus, Franjo (2014) and Josip (2015) became aware that the perpetrators of war crimes were evil individuals, and that they could not blame entire nations for their deeds. The discursive
narratives about hate reduction are thus put in context of those of individualization (see Akhavan, 1998, p. 766). Yet other listeners admired the storytellers for not hating their perpetrators, despite their terrible traumas, which corresponds to naratives of opinion leadership. In this research, many respondents liked to stress that they did not hate the other nations, and that they were not educated in hate. They appeared to be quite contrary to hating the other nations, and some of them complained about other nations hating them. The only one who had experienced actual hate was Franjo (2014). His attitude shift can be illustrated by the comparison between his previous attitudes described as outright hate for the evil Bosniak and Serbian perpetrator nations, and his newly acquired attitudes testifying of individualization, lack of blaming, and a relative lack of prejudice and competitive victimhood.

An important theme was the process of thinking during the testimonies and the reflection that followed in the weeks and months to follow. A few respondents became aware that they had one-sided or incomplete information about the war. They got engaged in a process of deep reflection, in which they were trying to put the “pieces of the puzzle” together, as Franjo said. The public testimonies gave him “the whole picture” and a live “image from the field” of what was happening during the war, especially of the suffering of other nations. He considered these accounts trustworthy as they were coming from people who went through such terrible suffering (Franjo, 2014). Him, as well as other respondents including those who expressed predominantly positive attitudes and no attitude change, reported that thanks to the public testimony, they became more interested in alternative information about the other nations, in particular about their point of view regarding the war and their wartime suffering. They also started actively researching new information. Some respondents suggested that this long-term process of reflection is what can change peoples’ attitudes, even if they are adult people with “firm attitudes” (Marija, 2014). These findings correspond to the information about outgroup members’ motives and lives that, according to Stephan’s theory, can “undo the distorted perceptions created by the conflict” (Stephan, 2008, p. 382).

The public testimony was not in vain for in respondents whose attitudes were already positive. They served to strengthen their positive attitudes and confirm that they were correct (Marko, 2014). Indeed, the CRS and the Caritas are hoping to educate new peace activists. It is important that people with positive attitudes be reassured that they are right, so that they do not feel lonely in this way of thinking, and have the courage to speak out about their positive attitudes and engage in reconciliation efforts.
The public testimonies seemed to have two dangers. First of all, they were suspected by some respondents of “heating up ethnic tensions” (the Serb teacher, 2014). This did not show in the Serb respondents, but indeed, Kasim (2014, 2015) reported that the testimony made him realized how bad a nation the Serbs were and that they were able to hurt even their own people. Thus, several of the Serb respondents advocated forgetting, and said that the public testimonies were not a good thing. The Serb teacher’s attitude strongly overlaps with discursive narratives of retraumatization. She felt a strong common identity with Latifa as she was also a child when the war happened, and she, too, lost some loved ones in the war and almost lost her father. She complained that it returned her back to the 1990s. By referring to these two arguments, the respondents in the Serb town stressed that reconciliation shall be built through positive means instead constant talking about the war and reopening the books of the past. If we avail of the words of Goran Bubalo from CRS (2017), the advocation of reconciliation through forgetting (Connerton, 2011; Rigby, 2001) is quite common among the Serbs. However, the author of this thesis believes that the Bosnian past is too loaded with chosen traumas and other victimizing events that have never been dealt with, and that these events and traumas can be used in future mobilization for a new conflict. Thus, she suggests that the establishment of an ethos of peace (Bar-Tal, 2000) on a societal level should be accelerated and facilitated by dealing with past traumas, beliefs and misperceptions that prevent the reconciliation from happening.

Altogether, most (even though not all) respondents liked the public testimonies and believed that they were a good thing as they gave the audience the occasion to empathize with the outgroup (Zehra, 2015). They have brought up the dangerous memories, i.e. wartime events in a sensitive. According to Zembylas and Bekerman (2008, p. 139), dangerous memories enable people to forget the past with its suffering, anger and hatred, which is congruent with the conclusions made here. The CPT trainer Ranka Katalinski (2016) who has assisted to many public testimonies herself says that these events enable people to bring a closure to the painful chapter of the war and get oriented toward forgiveness and reconciliation. Indeed, after the public testimony, Franjo has forgotten his hatred and Jasmina and Zehra their conviction that all Serbs were criminals. Franjo and Josip re-examined the role of his own nation in the war and Jasmina and Zehra have re-examined the reasons for which ordinary Serbs got involved in the war. The author of this thesis has demonstrated that the public testimonies have the potential to set in motion way too many key mechanisms of reconciliation for them to be disregarded. She has shown how the public testimonies elicit
alternative discursive narratives about peace and the reduction of prejudice, hatred and competitive victimhood, as well as an increase in various dimensions of the readiness to reconcile. Although she is also aware of the risks, in this research the benefits have by far outweighed the risks. In internal evaluations of two public testimonies, approximately 80% of the audience indicated that the speaking supported their attitude improvement, 88% indicated that it increased their outgroup trust and 88% indicated that it increased their willingness to get involved in peacebuilding activities (Catholic Relief Services, 2013a, 2013b). At the same time, the design of the public testimonies and the way they are carried out minimize negative impact by not mentioning the storytellers’ nationality, strictly avoiding blaming, using nonviolent communication, and sometimes even avoiding naming the perpetrator side to avoid feelings of ingroup guilt. For all the above-mentioned reasons the author believes that the public testimonies are a good thing that should be promoted not only across Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also in other post-conflict contexts, although only in front of a suitable audience and in a suitable setting.

Interpreting the discursive narratives in the light of the dimensions of reconciliation

The discursive narratives in this research testified in shifts in an important number of conflict-related attitudes, beliefs, emotions and narratives. If we relate them back to the theoretical framework of this dissertation, we can conclude that the dimensions of rehumanization, distrust and partly forgiveness were all affected in some way (Petrović, 2010, p. 205 - 207). The most affected one was the Rehumanization dimension, in which most indicators were matched with positive discursive narratives, including some that signaled attitude shifts. These narratives concerned competitive victimhood, empathy for outgroup suffering, admission of ingroup guilt, individualization and prejudice reduction. The discursive narratives regarding Trust testified about shifts in blaming, ascribing bad intentions to the outgroup, and beliefs about the aggressive outgroup nature. On the other hand, no significant discursive narratives about increase of trust were elicited, except for Franjo (2014) and Josip (2015) who have intergroup contact. The respondents did not express beliefs about the inhuman nature of outgroup members (although Jasmina (2014) believed Serbs were less human), and nobody questioned the idea that all human lives are the same worth. As to Forgiveness, all listeners deemed it to be good and necessary, and many said they had nothing to forgive. The only respondent who was firmly unforgiving was Kasim (2014, 2015) who was also very high in blaming. The discursive narratives of the listeners
did not testify about attitude shifts with the exception of Josip (2015) who said that his faith was the main factor, but the public testimony was a contributory factor.

As to shifts in conflict-related narratives, i.e. in the ethos of conflict (Bar-Tal, 1998), three dimensions seem to be impacted: the societal beliefs about victimization, positive self-image and the societal beliefs that delegitimize the opponent. As to the beliefs about victimization (Bar-Tal, 1998, p. 28), the discursive narratives illustrate shifts in competitive victimhood. Some respondents acknowledged, some of them even for the first time, that the other nations have suffered, too. The extent of this acknowledged suffering seemed to be increased in these narratives. Second, the positive self-image of the respondents’ own nations (Bar-Tal, 1998, p. 28) seemed to be diminished in some cases by the admission of ingroup guilt and perpetration. Thirdly, the delegitimizing societal beliefs (Bar-Tal, 1998, p. 28; see also Oren and Bar-Tal, 2007, p. 112 – 113) were diminished through prejudice reduction, be it stronger, as in Franjo (2014) and Josip (2015), or only partial and weaker, as in Zehra (2015) and Jasmina (2014).

To sum up, the public testimonies did elicit discursive narratives that indeed do correspond to positive changes on the rehumanization, trust and forgiveness dimension of Petrović’s scale of willingness to reconcile, to increased willingness for contact and willingness to acquire new information (Shnabel et al., 2009, p. 1024), and to the change of the societal beliefs of victimization, positive self-image and delegitimization that are part of the ethos of conflict (Bar-Tal, 1998).

**Connecting discursive narratives and frame shifts**

On the next two pages, I present a summary table of my taxonomy of frame shifts. I am going to take an overall look at it and relate it to my findings, to the empirical context of the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and to my previous analysis of discursive narratives and frame shifts.
### Taxonomy of Frame Shifts within Discursive Narratives Related to Reconciliation:

#### Summary

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<th>Otherization</th>
<th>Similarization</th>
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<td><strong>Power asymmetry</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Serbs were overpowerful at the war onset</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ingroup as victim of oppression of more powerful Bosnian nations</td>
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<td><strong>Initiative asymmetry</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Aggressivization</td>
<td>Deaggressivization</td>
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<td>Ordinary people as pacifist victims of war-mongering manipulative elites</td>
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<td>Guilt generalization</td>
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<td>Exculpation</td>
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<td>Ingroup as the innocent victim</td>
<td>Ingroup as a perpetrator</td>
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<td>Oneself as a bearer of collective guilt</td>
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<td>Ingroup perpetration as worthy of condemnation</td>
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<td>Shamefulness of belonging to a perpetrator nation</td>
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<td>Ingroup perpetrators worthy of anger</td>
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<td><strong>Ontological asymmetry</strong></td>
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Sameness of outgroup suffering: quantitative
Partial acknowledgement of outgroup suffering

Undesirability of forgiveness
Desirability of forgiveness

**Ingroup exclusive entitlement to the truth**
**Inclusive entitlement to the truth**

Exclusive validity of ingroup narrative
Validation of the outgroup narrative
Questionability the truthfulness of ingroup narrative

**Information asymmetry**

Refusal to engage with different narratives
Willingness to engage with different narratives
Public testimony as a source of personal reflection

Ignorance of the outgroup narrative
Awareness of the outgroup narrative
Increased alternative information
Public testimony as the very first occasion to hear the outgroup story

Confirmation bias
Confirmation bias correction

**Negative to more negative frame shifts**

*Enemies:*
*Increasing the fear of extinction*
We are young girls and we have to procreate the nation, especially if a new war happens

*Reinforced vilification*
I did not know the Serbs were so bad as to hurt their own people.

Looking at the whole picture of my taxonomy of frame shifts, the analysis showed that most of the frames stemmed from a few larger negative, conflict-related discourses that were generally shared by the whole respective group (nation). In today’s Bosnia and Herzegovina, these discourses clash with each other as each nation claims for itself the right to the ultimate truth regarding the war, and morality regarding innocence and own victimization. The same discourses also inform Bar-Tal’s socio-psychological structure of intractable conflict and thus represent a major obstacle to reconciliation (Bar-Tal, 1998, 2000 and 2013). They concern key themes such as of the responsibility for the war initiation, the responsibility for war-related crimes, the genocide in Srebrenica, the nationalist project of creating Greater Serbia by the means of ethnic cleansing and others. These discourses then framed the following
types of narratives: individual experiences of the listeners with outgroup members, narratives of the war held by the listeners, narratives regarding the storytellers’ experiences and narratives regarding one’s own experience or thoughts regarding the public testimony. Out of these narratives, the former two were initially predominantly negative, while the war-related narratives partly shifted to positive ones thanks to reframing of the events in the light of the frames of *similarization* and *inclusive victimhood* outlined here, and their sub-frames. Referring back to Svarstad (2009, p. 40), I analyze the meaning of this shift in a way that these new, legitimizing, inclusive and empathetic narratives (Zembylas and Bekerman, 2008; Furman, 2013; Kleinot, 2013, Dan Bar-On, 2010; Bar-On, Kutz and Wegner, 2000, etc.) interpreted in the light of new, legitimizing frames, layed the foundations of new, positive discourses, a very desirable fact in the process of reconciliation (Bar-Tal, 2013). This is the main contribution of my thesis. I have shown how not only discourse frames the different themes, events and issues contained in individual and collective narratives (Svarstad, 2009), but also how after an impulse that was storytelling by war victims, i.e. dangerous memories (Zembylas and Bekerman, 2008, pp. 126 – 127) the same war-related events, themes and issues got reframed based on the individual narratives of suffering of the storytellers.

This research showed that the shift in discursive narratives basically occurred regarding the same themes where the frame shifts also occurred. The discursive narratives represented stories that explained what happened to individuals, groups or nations, be it the storyteller, the listener, his or her family or friends, or whole nations. These discursive narratives were categorized into a system that allowed to identify the corresponding dimension of reconciliation when mentioned by a story listener. A number of themes emerged from these narratives that was object of both these narratives and the broader frames, that connected these themes to broader discourses. The negative themes regarded mainly the origin of the war, war-related victimization and massacres with mainly the genocide in Srebrenica standing out, the outgroup members being “all the same”, be it bad people or aggressors and the group the greatest, innocent victim. The themes were interconnected in some very interesting ways. For Bosniaks, the theme of Srebrenica was central. Along with other massacres, it was often linked to the theme of “they were killing us more than we were killing them” and used to explain most negative attitudes, not only blaming and competitive victimhood, but also the lack empathy, forgiveness or trust for the Serbs and the lack of openness to their narrative and to alternative information about them. The theme of “all the same”, linked to war initiation and outgroup-perpetrated massacres, was universally used to
generalize different kinds of negative frames from guilt generalization to vilification and criminalization to the lack of willingness to engage in intergroup contact. On the other hand, the themes that were linked to moral inclusion were the themes representing “dangerous memories” (Zembylas and Bekerman, 2008, pp. 126 – 127) that were the suffering of Smilja and her son, as well as that of the three concentration camp prisoners. These themes were linked to both master frames, both similarization and inclusive victimhood (Adelman et al., 2016; Shnabel, Benhassen and Mor, 2018), and more importantly, moral inclusion (Opotow, 1990a and 1990b; Opotow, Gerson and Woodside, 2005) replacing moral exclusion (Staub, 1990). The theme of the eye-opening information was furthermore linked to all categories of the inclusive victimhood frame (Adelman et al., 2016), from empathization to incusive morality to the inclusive entitlement to the truth and information symmetry. This discussion of the key themes shows that the themes that were part of the discursive narratives in this research were interconnected in all kinds of ways that were sometimes unexpected and surprising and layed the foundations for many different kinds of narratives. I suggest that these interconnections be further tested in experimental research.

Some of the discursive narratives and frames regarding these themes were what I would call “negotiable”, i.e. open to reinterpretation and reframing, while others were not. The themes where reinterpretation was possible concerned several themes. First of all, the origin of the war could be explained by shifting the blame from ordinary people to manipulative political elites, thus creating a shift on the initiative asymmetry frame dimension. Secondly, the blame for the war-related violence and massacres was shifted to the same elites and direct perpetrators only, thus changing all frames regarding the theme of “they are all the same” on the ontological asymmetry dimension. This way, the “monolithic perception” of the outgroup typical for prejudice and negative attitudes was broken down and people got to know each other as individuals (Stephan, 2008, p. 385). The theme of victimhood was also negotiable and open to adoption of alternative discursive narratives and frames. The relative perceived proportion of suffering became more balanced, with outgroup suffering coming to be perceived as much greater than thought. This perception occurred mainly based on themes of the storytellers’ suffering or different massacres experienced by the outgroup that the storytellers mentioned. If this evidence was acknowledged to be perpetrated by the ingroup, both the self and the ingroup could be reframed as bearers of guilt (Wohl, Branscombe and Klar, 2006; Branscombe, Doosje and McGarty, 2002, p. 50). The frame that was, however, not negotiable and prevented the acknowledgement of guilt was the
frame of the ingroup as “merely defending itself” that was firmly held by the Bosniak respondents who reacted to Smilja’s story. I hypothesize that this could be because Smilja was victimized by Serbs, while Azra, Meliha, Franjo and Josip in whom shifts on this frame occurred were confronted with narratives from which ingroup guilt could be clearly inferred. Also, the same respondents were high in narratives of victimization, a factor that is known to reduce feelings of collective guilt (Hewstone et al., 2004, p. 204 – 205). Yet another frame that was used to deny personal acceptance of collective guilt was the theme of being born after the war, a theme otherwise used for justifying reconciliatory attitudes and openness toward the young Serbian generation. I view the mechanism of being the same: since young Serbs were framed as uninvolved in the war and thus not guilty, so were the Bosniak listeners themselves. However, the same Bosniaks who used this argument were those confronted with the story of Smilja instead of the three concentration camp stories in which their ingroup was clearly involved as a perpetrator. Furthermore, even the theme of ingroup as the greatest victim was subjected to interpretation in some cases. While the framing of ingroup as lesser victim than previously thought was not uncommon when being exposed to outgroup suffering, as existing literature suggests (cfr. Kleinot, 2011; Furman, 2013; Braun-Lewensohn and Kitain, 2016), in some cases the suffering of all groups was perceived as equivalent on the qualitative dimension (same type of suffering) and in Franjo’s case also on the quantitative dimension (number of victims). The obstacles to the reframing of the theme of victimhood consisted mainly of instances of ingroup suffering being framed as either greater or too unforgiveable to compare outgroup suffering to the ingroup one. On the qualitative dimension, the cruelty of violence committed by the outgroup was framed as too severe to be compared to ingroup violence. To do this, either vivid description of the violence was given, or, on the quantitative dimension, the ingroup death toll was mentioned. Interestingly, the death toll of the Srebrenica genocide was being used as a proxy for the total Bosniak death toll, proving it to be the highest one.

On the other hand, the themes that were universally not subjected to interpretation at any time. The Srebrenica death toll was universally unquestioned by Bosniaks and the Bosniak ingroup death toll interpreted as the highest were the two most prominent ones. The ingroup death toll was only fully questioned in Franjo (2014) in this research. On the other hand, neither of the Serbs in this research questioned their own ingroup death toll. Despite their otherwise reconciliatory attitudes, many of the Serb respondents framed the Srebrenica genocide as a fraud. I interpret this discrepancy by viewing the narrative of this fraud as a
belief that can prevent people from agreeing on a single version of the events (Kritz and Finci 2001), but that does not necessarily make them hostile toward each other. This is a pattern that I have observed outside of this research as well and I hypothesize that it could possibly be explained by a certain degree of forgiveness that Serbs grant Bosniaks for this alleged fraud. The Serbs’ framing of their own nation as innocent also did not undergo guilt as they interpreted the victimization of outgroup narratives presented to them as human error (the Serbian teacher) or fault of the commander (e.g. Jovan, 2014). Yet another theme that also remained universally unquestioned by Bosniaks and Croats alike was the Serbian power asymmetry and initiation of the war. I suggest that these are large historical facts so universally accepted that they would be hard to disprove even with historical and archive research, let alone individual victim stories. I support this by the claim that unofficial truth projects only focus on some partial aspects of the larger narrative (Yaron, 2006, p. 393; see also Bickford, 2007). Last but not least, part of the Serbian respondents did not frame the public testimony as interesting, source of new information or inspiration for personal reflection. Instead, they framed it as unremarkable and “one more story out of many” in a society overboarded with victim stories and were somewhat skeptical about the truthfulness of the stories due to Andelko reading his from a paper.

There were also frames that underwent a partial change, a fact that I would like to dedicate attention to. First of all, the criminalization and vilification framing of Serbs remained partly unchanged in some cases, but this could potentially be explained by existing literature. First of all, both good and bad attitudes can coexist in people (Potter and Wetherell, 1987, pp. 45 - 46). Second, despite Braun-Lewensohn and Kitain’s study results (2016), my evidence suggests that the long-term attitude change occurs overtime through personal reflection, information search and intergroup contact, therefore it may have been too soon to expect a full attitude change from Jasmina and Zehra.

To sum up, the themes not open to any interpretation or subject to any change after the public testimonies in any case were only those that concerned the broadest historical consensus on some elementary facts regarding the war existing in an ingroup, such as power asymmetry or war initiation. Thus, these master narratives underpinning the broadest societal discourses on guilt remained untouched. However, in the case of attitude change, these frames went unmentioned in the descriptions of the newly acquired attitudes. Therefore, I hypothesize that it is possible that along with the shifts in the frames on the initiative and ontological asymmetry, the master frames regarding these themes lost their importance in justifying any
further negative attitudes. Although these master frames remained, the other accompanying frames shifted, too, thus the framing became predominantly positive. As I observed previously, it is possible that some of the remaining negative frames or their parts changed with the passage of time (Chapman, 2009, p. 156), through personal reflection, information search counteracting ignorance (Stephan, 2008) or contact (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2011).

The generational aspect played an important role here regarding several types of discursive narratives and frames. The theme of “being born after the war” was connected to a relatively lesser traumatization by the war and thus being more easily able to overcome the conflict, the exculpation of the young generation of Serbs and their framing as potential friends, and last but not least, forgiveness in the form of having personally nothing to forgive. However, in the negative sense, it was also connected to a refusal to accept collective guilt for ingroup misdeeds, hence preventing one possible mechanism of attitude change (Čehajić-Clancy, 2012). These data show that indeed storytelling can act slightly differently on young people than on the older generation, and that young people tend to interpret some parts of the information in the light of the fact that they were personally not involved in the war. This is congruent with the finding that the passage of time facilitates reconciliation (Chapman, 2009, p. 156).

Looking at the whole picture, my analysis of frame shifts based on the previous analysis of discursive narratives has provided us with interesting insights regarding the relationship between discourses, frames and narratives in ethnic conflict. First of all, the listeners’ original attitudes were based in negative, delegitimizing, conflict-related discourses that stressed that it was the other nations that started the war against the peace-loving ingroup and committed unspeakable war crimes against it. The same discourses claimed that the ingroup was an innocent victim. From these discourses understood as truth regimes (Foucault, 1976, p. 14), a number of frames stemmed that influenced the interpretation of outgroup-related information in different negative ways. Two separate, yet related master frames emerged: the exclusive victimhood one which presented the ingroup as the exclusive, moral victim that is the ultimate bearer of the truth about the war, while the otherization frame stemmed from this position, portraying the other nations as evil aggressors and the exclusive bearers of guilt. This is in accordance with the Bosniak and Croat narratives of the war as Serbian aggression (Kasapović, 2015; Čekić, 2004). While in protracted conflicts, groups tend to portray their adversary groups as dissimilar (Stephan, 2008, p. 384), my analysis has revealed that among the Bosnian nations, prejudice goes much further so as to
qualify as otherization, a frame that not only describes the others as bad, but that also prescribes what should be done in order to protect the ingroup from them, such as distrusting them, avoiding any kind of contact (cfr. Jamal, 2008, p. 116) and which attitudes should be adopted. Since outgroup members were initially framed in a general manner as evil people and war criminals, the otherization philosophy suggested that they should be viewed as enemies, not be trusted, and contact with them should be avoided. They were framed as a completely different kind of beings, inhuman perhaps (Moshman, 2007). The exclusive blaming of the war and conflict-related violence were associated to emotional and moral exclusion (Staub, 1990), as well as the denial to any possible truthfulness of the outgroup narrative. This only confirms the findings on competitivehood regarding its motivating mechanism that is moral typecasting, i.e. “the tendency to classify moral actors into mutually exclusive roles of agents … and patients … , when making moral judgments (Gray & Wegner, 2009” (Noor et al., 2012, p. 354). In accordance with this definition, the ingroup in this research was presented as the innocent victim and the outgroup as the evil perpetrator (Noor, 2012, p. 354). Moral typecasting is therefore not just a causal mechanism of competitive victimhood, but a dimension underlying my whole taxonomy of frame shifts.

Observing the patterns in the discussion of discursive narratives and master frames above, I suggest that a new meta-narrative (Svarstad, 2009, pp. 38 – 40) has emerged after the public testimonies that embeds them into the broader societal discourse. This meta-narrative, true, does not take away the guilt for the war initiation away from the Serbian warring side, but it claims that the war was imposed on ordinary people by manipulative political elites who organized all the violence for their own benefit. This meta-narrative is connected to my themes of similarization and inclusive victimhood. Similarization exempts ordinary people from wishing for the war and being active, or at least willing, participants in it, thus making it more similar to the ingroup that is framed as good-natured and peace-loving. On the other hand, inclusive victimhood denies that the other nations were exclusive perpetrators, undeserving any empathy (Mack, 1990, p. 125, as cited in Sabucedo, Blanco and De La Corte, 2003, p. 551) and moral inclusion (Staub, 1990) and reverses these processes. I believe that the importance of the shifts I described is highly relevant to reconciliation in Bosnia. In the light of the wish of Bosnian Serbs for a referendum aiming covertly for independence (Toal, 2013), the focus on a moral inclusion of Serbs as fellow victims (Adelman et al., 2016) and moral actors (Opotow, 1990a and 1990b) instead of the attempts at abolishing their entity as being based on genocide (International Crisis Group,
2009, p. 6) could help the process of reconciliation in Bosnia greatly, thus maybe alleviating some of the separatist tendencies and the need for separate entities and institutions protecting the constitutive nations (namely Sebrs and Croats). I believe so because if Serbs, but also the other nations, acknowledge their ingroup perpetration but receive acceptance from their victims, this could, according to the Needs-Based Model facilitate the reconciliation between the nations (Nadler and Shnabel, 2008; Shnabel and Nadler, 2008; Shnabel et al., 2009).

My research has shown that the shifts from the conflict-related discursive narratives and frames into more reconciliatory ones can represent what Kelman calls reconciliation as identity change (2004). On the one hand, the legitimization of the Other’s narrative can also entail its inclusion in the ingroup narrative (Zembylas and Bekerman 2008, 14), namely the inclusive victimhood master frame and the acknowledgement of ingroup guilt, among others. On the other hand, the shift from otherization to similarization represents a shift in the perceived ingroup character, thus representing the most elementary aspect of outgroup identity (Kelman, 1998, p. 16). This is especially important given the blaming, delegitimization and identity denial and war crime denial among the nations of former Yugoslavia (Obradovic-Wochnik, 2013; Raković, 2005).

To conclude this important debate, my research has brought the type of new knowledge on discursive narratives suggested by Svarstad (2009, p. 40) to be much needed. Out of my data, a master narrative has emerged that blames the war on manipulative elites and the war crimes on individual perpetrators, with all three sides being guilty. From this, a number of discursive narratives originate. I have created a categorization of the shifts in discursive narratives involved in the process of reconciliation used by story listeners that corresponds to different categories of the latter concept such as empathy, rehumanization, prejudice reduction, hate reduction, guilt individualization, competitive victimhood reduction, increased willingness to research alternative information and engage in intergroup contact, increased forgiveness and trust. Reanalyzing these discursive narratives inductively, the master frames of otherization and exclusive victimhood emerged that shifted into similarization and inclusive victimhood respectively. They connect the discursive narratives to a new, more reconciliatory discourse according to which the other nations are not to be blamed for the war and can be accepted again as neighbors and friends.
8 Conclusion

The aim of this dissertation was to contribute to the conceptualization of discursive narratives in ethnic conflict by creating an analytical framework for inferring attitude changes from shifts in discursive narratives and a taxonomy of frame shifts embedded within these discursive narratives, as well as to document and describe these changes. The underlying data for this was an interview study investigating attitude changes that occurred in listeners of the initiative “My Story” in Bosnia in Herzegovina, within which war victims tell their stories of wartime suffering in order to promote reconciliation.

Research design and ambitions

Between 2014 and 2015, I conducted a series of 18 interviews with story listeners, mostly within one week from the public testimony. A second round of phone interviews was conducted with a large number of respondents about four months later, verifying possible further attitude changes. Indeed, in a small number of cases, new discursive narratives emerged testifying of further attitude changes or at least an increased willingness to acquire alternative information about the outgroup. These interviews were conducted by myself in the Bosnian language, transcribed and inductively coded in MAXQDA and MS Excel. The analysis of discursive narratives was done by thematic discourse analysis (coding for themes as related to a discourse), while the taxonomy of frames was created by inductively recoding all discursive narratives by the means of frame analysis. The result is a classification of discursive narratives by dimension of reconciliation into negative and positive, and a taxonomy of frame shifts within discursive narratives.

The dissertation consisted of eight chapters and a conclusion. The introduction presented the dissertation, its research purpose, context, importance and research design. It stressed that the aim was to capture shifts in discursive narratives and frames in the listeners of the initiative “My Story”, as well as the presence of variables known as mechanisms of reconciliation.

The second chapter represented the disciplinary context through which this dissertation can be embedded in the field of international relations. I argued that “My Story” falls into the category of unofficial truth projects (Bickford, 2007) that can be categorized into the broader approach of transitional truth-telling, similarly to truth and reconciliation commissions. I presented the debate between liberal and critical peacebuilding and I supported the call of
Richmond (2009) and other authors for a liberal-local hybrid approach to peacebuilding that would aim at promoting reconciliation and empowerment in local communities in a culturally sensitive manner focused on peoples’ everyday. I argued that storytelling is an approach can attain these goals by aiming at reconciliation and attitude change in individual society members, changing the conflict-related narratives that prevent reconciliation, it is done by local people for local people and it gives them voice, thus empowering them. It avoids targeting institutions, power structures and changing the political or economic system of the country. I suggested that in the absence of an official national truth commission, unofficial truth projects such as “My Story” were a good approach to addressing the question of the three conflicting truths.

Chapter three represented a broad literature review aiming at several areas of research in which gaps can be filled with the contribution of this dissertation. First of all, I argued that with this dissertation, I have connected several disparate fields of research in a single framework. These disciplines are conflict studies (or political science), sociology, social psychology, literature on discourse and on storytelling. I argued that these approaches mostly focus on the type and level of variables relevant to its own discipline. Conflict studies often tend to emphasize the political science type of approach, focusing on political events and context, omitting the everyday lives and attitudes of individuals in post-conflict societies. The sociological approach tends to focus on conflict dynamics and omit the broader political context as well as the psychology of conflict. The social psychology approach consists mainly of experimental studies, with Bar-Tal’s (2013) theoretical framework of the socio-psychological structure of intractable conflicts standing out as connected to the conflict studies approach. Some other authors and studies also adopt a similar qualitative approach. I also stressed that I was using the discursive approach to the study of my topic. This consisted of literature dedicated purely to discourse, and of the approach of discursive psychology. The first one of these approaches focuses more on the way reality is portrayed, comparing to the conflict studies approach that highlights the actual events and realities. Last but not least I connected the above disciplines to the literature on storytelling, thus enriching it with insights from the other levels of analysis.

The second major point of my contribution consists in that I created a bridge among these disciplines by creating an analytical framework for inferring changes in conflict-related attitudes, beliefs, emotions and narratives from negative to reconciliatory. This framework contains variables from all of the above levels of abstraction and the disparate research areas.
It was based on analyzing discursive narratives pronounced by the story listeners, and on frame shifts inferred from the changes in the discursive narratives. The strong foundation in social psychology supported my insights from existing storytelling literature. This foundation was set in the context of the broader socio-political conflict-related events and mechanisms such as the start of the war or the genocide in Srebrenica. At the same time, I refocused this syncretic approach onto the discursive perspective, giving my analysis a rare if not unique twist.

My third major point of contribution consists of creating an analytical framework for inferring changes of conflict-related attitudes, beliefs, emotions and narratives from discursive narratives pronounced by the story listeners. This framework was anchored in the scales of readiness to reconcile (Petrović, 2010), willingness to reconcile (Shnabel et al., 2009) and Bar-Tal’s concept of conflict-related narratives that are collective memory (Bar-Tal, 2013) and the ethos of conflict (1998), or its positive version that is the ethos of peace (Bar-Tal, 2000). I created a categorization of discursive narratives, coupling each one of them to one dimension or variable of reconciliation, specifying whether it represents a positive or negative change on that dimension. This type of analytical framework, at least systematized this way, has never been created before in the context of ethnic conflict. The closest current knowledge is van Dijk’s categorization of different aspects of prejudiced discourse (1984) that does, however, not overlap with my findings here.

The fourth major point of my contribution consisted in creating a taxonomy of shifts of the frames embedded in discursive narratives. I based my thesis on Svarstad’s (2009) conceptualization of discursive narratives and as the first author, I systematized my analysis of discursive narratives into inductive categories, and then ordered these categories into two master frames, otherization and exclusive victimhood. In doing this, several categories were innovative in that they highlighted the asymmetrical character of the conflict-related frames and perceptions despite that the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina is usually not classified as an asymmetric one. By creating a taxonomy of frame shifts within discursive narratives, I have advanced the conceptualization of this otherwise undertheorized term, notably in the particular context of ethnic conflict. I stressed that theoretical literature on the concept was very scarce and that most existing studies were purely empirical, not advancing Svarstad’s (2009) original theory.
The fifth major point of contribution consists in that I focused my analysis on young people, i.e. the new generation that did not live the war. I have shown how conflict attitudes are transmitted by traumatized parents to their children, and why changing the attitudes of young people was important. I have shown how reconciliation can be facilitated by the passage of time and change of generations, and how this process could be aided by using unofficial truth projects.

The sixth major point of my contribution consisted in that I opened the black box of gradual attitude change, arguing against other literature that the real attitude changes can only be observed a few months after the storytelling event, since a process of personal reflection and information search seems to be at the foundation of a broader attitude change.

The seventh major point of my contribution concerns several gaps in the storytelling literature by comparing my contribution to a presentation of the state of the art on the single outcomes of storytelling. First of all, I created a typology of the elements of storytelling that are relevant to attitude change: the emotions, the story content and the message of the storytellers. No author has classified the elements of storytelling this way before me. Secondly, I systematized and labelled the manifestations of empathy by using the Organizational Model of Empathy by Davis (1996). As the first author, I have classified the components of the stories related to attitude change into emotions, the story content and the message conveyed by the storytellers. Thirdly, As one of few authors, I have managed to capture how the shift to the acceptance of collective guilt occurred. Fourthly, I have also polemized with Braun-Lewensohn and Kitain (2016) who claimed that one week from a PCFF testimony, attitude changes were not significant. I argue that in such a short lapse of time, the changes only start occurring, and that they become more noticeable only after several months. My data indicate that it could be mainly the process of personal reflection and further information search that continues the public testimony was the initial impulse for. Fifthly, as one of few, my study focuses especially on the young generation of listeners who have not lived the war, hence highlighting some specifics pertinent to attitude change in this age group.

Chapter four represented the basic theoretical framework of my dissertation. First of all, in chapter 4.1. I presented discourses as truth regimes and presented the theories of narratives and discursive narrative. Chapter 4.2., I layed the foundation of my analytical framework by conceptualizing attitudes, beliefs and behavior as essential components of conflict and presented the former two as part of Galtung’s conflict triangle (1996, p. 71) and
components of Fishbein and Ajzen’s theory of planned behavior (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975; Ajzen, 1989), as well as of a theory of the influence of unconscious attitudes on conflict (Ajzen and Dasgupta, 2015). In doing this, all of the above concepts were defined, discussed and related to each other. Chapter 4.3. presented in more detail Bar-Tal’s socio-psychological infrastructure of intractable conflict (collective memory, ethos of conflict and collective emotional orientation), as well as Bar-Tal’s theorization of narrative change (Bar-Tal, 2013). Chapter 4.4. presented a conceptual and theoretical overview of the single negative attitudes, beliefs and emotions that were object of the change observed in this research and culminated in a brief overview of the dimensions of reconciliation applied here.

In chapter five, I explained that my study was an original field research based on analysis of the storytelling events and interviews with their listeners. The originality of my approach consisted in the discursive-narrative approach and the inductive analysis of the interview material. I explained that the interview material was first inductively coded for themes and that this material was then regrouped into discursive narratives. In a second phase, the material was recoded by the means of frame analysis, leading to my taxonomy of frame shifts.

**Summary of the main findings regarding discursive narratives**

Chapter 6 represented the main empirical chapter. It contained a contextual chapter on the public testimonies and their context, an analysis of the components of the stories, a backgrounder on the respondents, and finally, chapter 6.4. in which the discursive narratives were analyzed. On each dimension of reconciliation, the latter were first described and categorized, then summarized in the form of a table. The interpretation was left for discussion in chapter 7.

Chapter 6.4. started by pointing out several important aspects of the listeners’ accounts. Firstly, it pointed out that the listeners often did not understand which warring side the storytellers suffered from, thus being unable to identify their perpetrator. Secondly, the storytellers generally enjoyed the status of trusted witnesses, and with one exception, their accounts were taken very seriously and not further questioned. Thirdly, there was some moderate evidence that the storytellers, thanks to the severity of their wartime suffering, also enjoyed the status of opinion leaders. The discursive narratives about the topic indicated that some listeners deemed the storytellers to be more influential than other people, yet others considered them simply influential, and some respondents practically denied their opinion
leadership. Fourthly, the listeners’ understanding of the storytellers’ message was analyzed and categorized. Listeners were generally well receiving the message, that aimed at reduction of prejudice, hate and blaming, made them aware that all nations suffered in the war regardless of their nationality, that they are all human and shall be respected, that the listeners should be tolerant and build a better, peaceful future.

Furthermore, two mechanisms of attitude change that did not represent attitude change as such were identified: empathy and common identity. The testimonies elicited narratives of common identity as human beings, women, young people, victims or perpetrators. The common identity of humans could, however, be interpreted as rehumanization, a dimension on Petrović’s scale of readiness for reconciliation (2010). However, crucially, the discursive narratives elicited by the listeners gravitated heavily around empathy. All types of empathy as outlined by Davis (1996) were in fact evoked in the listeners. Not only emotional empathy in the form of mainly “sadness” and “grief” were present, but also perspective taking was universally present, and even the strongest form of empathy, the imagining oneself in the storyteller’s place, such as being in the concentration camp, was elicited in some cases. The listeners also felt personal distress from listening to the stories and felt empathic anger at the perpetrators.

Importantly, many types of discursive narratives were elicited that corresponded to possible attitude shifts toward reconciliation. The first of them was the belief that “we are all humans”. Although there was some variation in the degree to which the respondents considered the other nation(s) to be human, none of the four respondents with truly negative attitudes reported shift on this dimension. However, it was clear that the public testimonies did elicit discursive narratives about the common identity of all people as simply humans, regardless of their nationality. The narratives about common humanity indeed corresponded to the Rehumanization dimension of Petrović’s scale of readiness for reconciliation (2010).

Secondly, the public testimonies did elicit common victim identity, i.e. the belief that other nations, too, are victims of the war. This corresponded to a reduction in competitive victimhood, a known factor preventing reconciliation. Indeed, some listeners became aware for the first time that the other nations had suffered in the war just like their nation, yet others became more aware of it. Weaker forms of such acknowledgement consisted of a simple belief that other nations suffered, too. Stronger accounts stressed that the modalities of the suffering and the pain endured were the same. The strongest accounts then deemed the
amount of suffering to be the same among all nations. Not only does the reduction of competitive victimhood represented the rehumanization dimension on Petrović’s scale of readiness for reconciliation (2010) and a change in the ethos of conflict (Bar-Tal, 1998) and collective memory (Bar-Tal, 2013), but also was is a crucially important achievement on the way to reconciliation, and something that was relatively rare in today’s Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Thirdly, some respondents admitted for the first time after the public testimony that their nation has committed war crimes. Some of them felt wrath at these perpetrators. Ingroup guilt is relatively difficult to obtain since its denial is common in today’s discourses in Bosnia. This acknowledgement of ingroup represents a possible factor of attitude change, as well as common perpetrator identity and in terms of Petrović’s scale (2010) also rehumanization. Talking about guilt, some respondents mentioned discursive narratives that testified of individualization of guilt, i.e. the belief that war crimes were perpetrated by evil individuals, thus whole nations must not be blamed for them. At the same time, some of the newly acquired discursive narratives testified about important reduction of blaming for the war and for different massacres. They realized that ordinary people should not be blamed for the war as they were forced to fight by the high-ranking decision makers. And as mentioned above, they stopped blaming ordinary people and their neighbor since they realized that they were not guilty for anything. These findings testified of shifts on the rehumanization dimension of Petrović’s scale (2010) and about legitimizing beliefs of a newly acquired ethos of peace (Bar-Tal, 2000). On the other hand, negative discursive narratives of blaming were largely present regarding the Serbs, blaming them for the war and still wanting to create Greater Serbia, thus cleansing Bosnia from the Bosniaks. Many Bosniaks also kept bringing up the Srebrenica genocide as argument, mainly to prove that the Serbs were bad and could not be trusted. Srebrenica was, indeed, a major theme in the blaming discourse. Relativization of guilt was also present in the narratives: Bosniaks liked to stress that their nation was killing Serbs, too, but to a lesser extent than vice versa, thus trying to alleviate the guilt of their ingroup. Lack of individualization and blaming represent distrust on Petrović’s scale (2010) and beliefs of delegitimization pertaining to the ethos of conflict (Bar-Tal, 1998), as well as current, biased collective memory (Bar-Tal, 2013).

Fourthly, and this was crucially important, in a few respondents the testimonies elicited discursive narratives that may have testified of prejudice reduction. These respondents realized that Serbs were “not all bad” and “not all (war) criminals”, that there are nice and
peace-loving people among them. The respondents also appreciated the theme of positive war heroes in the stories. Yet other listeners not so burdened by prejudice highlighted that the young generation is not guilty for anything, and that they are nice people. These beliefs fall under the rehumanization dimension of Petrović’s scale (2010) and represent legitimizing beliefs of an ethos of peace (Bar-Tal, 2013). On the other hand, the initial attitudes of the respondents who reported attitude shifts were analogous beliefs that all Serbs were bad and war criminals, that they were aggressive people who like conflicts and have bad intentions. Lack of positive feelings as a manifestation of prejudice has also been recorded. Yet other respondents also mentioned that members of the other nation hated their nation, which they proved mainly by hate speech on social media. Such beliefs represented lack of rehumanization (Petrović, 2010) and delegitimizing beliefs of the ethos of conflict (Bar-Tal, 1998).

Fifthly, a respondent described a change from outright hate to reconciliation after he participated in two public testimonies. He had hated Serbs for causing the war and Bosniaks for fighting against his Croat nation. After the public testimony, he stopped blaming ordinary people and transformed his hate into positive attitudes. Reduction of hate could be interpreted as rehumanization (Petrović, 2010). No other respondent mentioned discursive narratives that would indicate hate, but rather, listeners liked to stress that they were not educated by their parents to hate, and that hate was wrong.

Sixthly, a single respondent reported that the public testimonies contributed to his personal forgiveness that was mainly guided by his Catholic faith. He had been angry at the Bosniaks because of the victimization of himself and his family. His forgiveness corresponded to the analogous dimension on Petrović’s scale (2010). Most other listeners expressed a positive attitude toward reconciliation and stressed its importance. Some respondents interpreted forgiveness as forgetting the war as soon as possible, yet others said they had personally nothing to forgive as they were only born after the war. Negative discursive narratives were present, mainly in a listener who was high in blaming the Serbs. These narratives included outright unforgiveness and the beliefs that the outgroup should ask the ingroup for forgiveness. A Serb respondent mentioned that the perpetrator shall only forgiven if he repents for his deeds.

Seventhly, only a couple respondents who had intergroup contact mentioned narratives indicating an increased in outgroup trust. They were generally not afraid of members of the
other nations and mingled with them in their everyday life. This corresponds to trust on Petrović’s scale (2010). On the other hand, many if not most respondents displayed distrust, especially in the Serbs. They were afraid that Serbs could provoke a new war, and some were afraid of being hurt by them in their everyday life situations.

Eightly, some respondents who did not display major signs of prejudice reported that the testimonies confirmed that their positive attitudes are correct. Indeed, this way, the public testimony seems to have impact even when there is no actual attitude change, and it could help educate a new generation of peace activists.

The ninth aspect of the public testimonies concerned the process of reflection and information search that followed the testimonies. Many of the listeners did not have much information about the war, especially about outgroup suffering, and they learned something new about how the war was and how other nations suffered in it. Thanks to the insider stories, they got a live picture from the field. After this, many of them engaged in a process of deep reflection over the following weeks and months. They started thinking about the other nations’ perspective regarding the war much more. Some of them started searching for alternative information about this perspective, as they wanted to know more. This process best corresponded to the willingness to acquire alternative information that was part of the willingness to reconcile scale (Shnabel et al., 2009). Yet some Serb respondents were not interested in the stories due to feeling overwhelmed with victim stories, or they were simply interested in their own nation and its positive image. Some Bosniaks were uninterested in the Serbs with the argument that the Serbs were killing Bosniaks more than vice versa. Yet other respondents reported “firm attitudes” that were “hard to change”.

The tenth group of discursive narratives concerned the willingness to engage in intergroup contact, that this author considers analogous to some items of the scale of willingness to reconcile (Shnabel et al., 2009). A couple respondents with no intergroup contact and negative attitudes expressed the desire to “find a Serb friend to hear their side of the story”. Intergroup contact is a known factor of attitude change (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2011) and it could potentially enable further attitude change.

Last but not least, the public testimonies also engendered critical discursive narratives. The first one was the retraumatization experienced by a Serb teacher. The stories “returned her to the 1990’s” and she accused the testimony of not being a good initiative due to “heating up ethnic tensions”. Along with a couple of her students, she advocated reconciliation through
forgetting. The text of this thesis then explored the debate on whether the testimonies were good or not. The author concluded that Bosnia has too much past that has not been dealt with, and that such past has been used in provoking the 1990’s war, thus the testimonies were good as the dealing with the past helps prevent a new conflict.

To sum up, and returning to the research questions, the discursive narratives elicited by the listeners testify about attitude shifts in several dimensions, such as rehumanization, reduction of competitive victimhood, reduction of blaming and an induction of ingroup guilt, reduction of prejudice and hate, willingness to acquire alternative information about the outgroup and to engage in intergroup contact, forgiveness and trust. Some shifts were more noticeable and more present among the listeners than others. As to the first sub-question, the factors positively affecting reconciliation were empathy and common identity, as well as some of the actual improved attitudes, such as ingroup guilt, forgiveness, trust or reduced blaming. Relating all these findings back to the analytical framework of this dissertation, all parts of the analytical instrument captures corresponding positive shifts in discursive narratives: the rehumanization, trust and partly also the forgiveness dimension of Petrović’s scale of readiness for reconciliation (2010), the scale of willingness to reconcile of Shnabel et al. (2009), a shift from the positive self-image, victimization and delegitimization dimensions of the ethos of conflict (Bar-Tal, 1998) toward the ethos of peace (Bar-Tal, 2000) and some partial changes to collective memory regarding the war (Bar-Tal, 2013).

**Two master frames and their subcategories**

Having categorized the discursive narratives into dimensions of reconciliation and subdividing them by the themes they concern, I re-analyzed all of them inductively for the presence of frame shifts from negative to positive (or reconciliatory) frames that the listeners hold regarding their outgroups. I based this analysis on Svarstad’s (2009) conceptualization of discursive narratives in which frames are the interpretive schemes that embed narratives in broader societal discourses. As the first author, I have created a taxonomy of frame shifts in ethnic conflicts. Since many of the discursive narratives dealt with the same themes and were only looking at them from different points of view, I merged these narratives into a smaller category of frames that was exhaustive yet not redundant.

In this analysis, two negative master frames emerged that shifted into positive master frames, otherization and exclusive victimhood. The first one was the master frame of otherization which was based on portraying the outgroup as completely different from the
I have adopted the term of otherization from existing literature where it designates the portrayal of the Other as radically different from the ingroup and thus deserving different treatment, including less rights (Jamal, 2008, p. 116). In my data, I have classified the dimensions of otherization on yet another underlying pattern, which was asymmetry. Thus, I identified the dimensions of power, initiative and ontological asymmetry. The first one, power asymmetry, designated the relative distribution of power held by the warring sides especially at the beginning of the conflict. Serbs were framed by both Bosniaks and Croats as overpowerful at the war onset due to the fact that they had control of the Yugoslav army. Then ingroup, especially the Croats and eventually the Serbs, were framed as victims of oppression by more powerful Bosnian nations by being outnumbered and overruled in the post-Dayton Bosnia and the entity and canton division. The second frame, initiative asymmetry, focused on the attribution of responsibility for starting the war and for the violence that accompanied it. It contained the frames of aggressivization (viewing the outgroup as aggressive) which shifted into a frame of de-aggressivization; a frame of guilt generalization (seeing all outgroup members as equally guilty for war-related violence) that shifted into frames of guilt individualization and exculpation; and a frame of ingroup as the innocent victim that shifted into frames of ingroup as a perpetrator, oneself as a bearer of collective guilt, ingroup perpetration as worthy of condemnation, shamefulness of belonging to a perpetrator nation and ingroup perpetrators worthy of anger. The third dimension of otherization, which was ontological asymmetry, dealt with the inherent characteristics of the groups, presenting the outgroup as disproportionately more evil than the ingroup. I have identified a high number of frames. The frame of vilification (presenting the outgroup as evil) shifted into one of devilification, the frame of criminalization (presenting all outgroup members as war criminals) into one of decriminalization, the frame of dehumanization into one of rehumanization, hattrification (presenting the outgroup as worthy of anger) into one of dehattrification, the frame of outgroup members as enemies into one of potential friends, and the frame of the outgroup as an untrustworthy nations into a frame of potentially trustworthy people. The second master frame, exclusive victimhood, regrouped four categories of frames. The first category was emotional exclusion consisting of the frame of de-empathization. This frame shifted into a frame of empathy, which I categorized as emotional inclusion. The second category was represented by asymmetric morality, consisting of two groups of frames. The first ones were the frames of outgroup victimhood denial and ingroup as the greatest victim, which shifted into frames of outgroup as a war victim, fellow sufferers of the same losses, qualitative and quantitative sameness of outgroup suffering and a partial
acknowledgement of outgroup suffering. The second type of frame consisted of the one of undesirability of forgiveness, shifting into a desirability of forgiveness. The second category of frames was the ingroup exclusive entitlement to the truth represented by the frame of the exclusive validity of ingroup narrative. The latter shifted into the frames of validation of the outgroup narrative and questionability the truthfulness of ingroup narrative, which I categorize as an inclusive entitlement to the truth. The third category of frames of exclusive victimhood was information asymmetry, which shifted into information symmetry. The subframes within this category were the the refusal to engage with different narratives which shifted into a willingness to engage with different narratives and the public testimony as a source of personal reflection; the frame of ignorance of the outgroup narrative which shifted into frames of awareness of the outgroup narrative, increased alternative information, public testimony as the very first occasion to hear the outgroup story. Last but not least the frame of confirmation bias shifted into one of confirmation bias correction. To complete the overview, I have identified two negative frames that shifted into more negative, which were the increase in viewing the ingroup in danger of extinction, and a reinforced vilification of Serbs (the latter did, however, not prevent a slight overall shift to more positive attitudes in this case).

Looking at the whole picture

I have shown in the Discussion chapter how the discursive narrative not only fit the single dimensions of reconciliation, but also how they can be recomposed in a very rough process of attitude change that starts with beliefs about the onset of the war and the evil nature of the outgroup and shift into more positive and reconciling ones after the empathizing event, culminating in a gradual attitude change involving prejudice reduction, guilt acknowledgement, willingness to involve in intergroup contact and maybe even forgiveness and trust. I have also shown that these narratives are connected to a number of broader societal discourses, or truth regimes, regarding especially the onset of the war, specific wartime massacres and victimization, blaming the outgroup and ingroup innocence. I also pointed out that while most of the above frames have shown to be “negotiable”, i.e. open to reinterpretation and framing, others were not. The frames that were not open to interpretation were those regarding the established observable historical facts regarding the war initiation, i.e. the Serbian power asymmetry and their war initiation linked to a plan for Greater Serbia. Also unquestioned remained the ingroup death toll, with some attempts by Serb respondents
at delegitimizing the death toll of the genocide in Srebrenica as a fraud. I argued, however, that not only are these views extremely difficult to uproot even with systematic historical research, let alone with individual victim stories that focus only on one part of the narrative (Yaron, 2006, p. 393; Bickford, 2007), but in my observation, they can peacefully coexist with otherwise reconciled attitudes. In my respondents, they were associated to attitudes that were more reproachful, or sometimes blaming maybe, but not generally hostile. This is coherent with the findings of Eastmond and Selimovic (2012) who argue that people in Bosnia and Herzegovina can have favorable attitudes despite retaining their ingroup truths and narratives.

The two master frames have shown some interesting dimensions of reconciliation. First of all, the frame of otherization and the interconnections between the single themes and frames have shown that not only do the groups hold prejudice against each other (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew and Tropp, 2011; Duckitt, 2003), but that the far-reaching nature of this prejudice can be classified as otherization, i.e. the presentation of the other groups as so evil that they have a completely different nature from the ingroup and deserve different treatment (Jamal, 2008), such as contact avoidance (Halperin et al., 2003) or lack of trust (Lewicki, 2006). The otherization stemmed also from framing the groups as asymmetrically different in favor of the “good” and “innocent” ingroup. Although this radically black and white picture is widely known in the literature on competitive victimhood (Noor et al., 2012), the inclusion of asymmetry in four of the categories of frames was striking, especially given the fact that the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina is usually not classified as an asymmetric one.

Another observation that was quite striking was the connection between the two master frames. The frame of otherization (Jamal, 2008) in the form of viewing the other nations as the evil and exclusive perpetrators justified the moral exclusion (Staub, 1990; Opotow, 1990a and 1990b) in the exclusive victimhood category, notably the lack of empathy (Mack, 1990, p. 125, as cited in Sabucedo, Blanco and De La Corte, 2003, p. 551), the asymmetric morality aspect and the exclusive ingroup entitlement to the truth (Kritz and Finci 2001). While Noor et al. (2012, p. 354) consider this moral typecasting as a causal mechanism of competitive victimhood, I rather consider it as one of the underlying dimensions of my taxonomy, thus showing how the division of roles into perpetrators and victims connects not only to the categories of competitive victimhood, but also to most of the frame shifts toward reconciliation. At the same time, I my frame of exclusive victimhood has highlighted the importance of some interesting underlying dimensions of this concept that is the emotional
aspect, or the “egoism of victimization” (Mack, 1990, p. 125, as cited in Sabucedo, Blanco and De La Corte, 2003, p. 551), the moral aspect in the sense of excluding the outgroup from the ingroup concern about its suffering (Noor, 2012; Staub, 1990; Opotow, 1990a and 1990b), the aspect of entitlement to the truth (Kritz, and the role of the information asymmetry, representing the ignorance cause of prejudice (Stephan, 2008).

I have argued that out of the shifts described above, a new master narrative has emerged that represents a basic truth on which the respondents in this research seemed to agree. This new master narrative shifts the blame for the war away from the ordinary people away to the political elites, hence reframing it in the fashion of the instrumentalist explanation of the war (Gagnon, 1994; Oberschall, 2000). They also testify about the abolishment of the narratives of collective innocence (Selimovic, 2010) and the adoption of a master narrative that acknowledges ingroup collective guilt, a factor that can contribute to reconciliation (Čehajić-Clancz, 2012). Furthermore, the frame shifts in my taxonomy seem to connect the positive narratives to a shift in the larger societal discourses, or truth regimes (Foucault, 1976, p. 14) about the war. A shift in discourse is a fundamental factor that should accompany the abolishment of the socio-psychological infrastructure of intractable conflict (Bar-Tal, 2013). At the same time, I have argued that the similarization and inclusive victimhood master frames entail a shift in the conflict-related identities from negative and delegitimizing to positive and accepting, and an inclusion of parts of the Other’s narrative into the ingroup narrative, thus representing what Kelman calls reconciliation as identity change (2004).

Disciplinary contribution and transferability

As to my contribution to the conceptualization of discursive narratives, as the first author, I have created a categorization of discursive narratives (Svarstad, 2009) that were spontaneously elicited by young Bosnian story listeners, and a taxonomy of positive and negative frames (and their shifts) connecting these narratives to broader societal discourses. Thus, I have brought an important contribution to the conceptualization of discursive narratives, namely in the context of ethnic conflict. Also, I have shown how the political aspects of the conflict (such as war initiation or victimization events) are interconnected with the more subtle discursive and psychological processes as well as attitude change, and how new, positive master frames and master narratives linked to positive discourses emerge in some listeners after the public testimonies. By pointing out these positive socio-psychological
shifts and by describing the local, culturally sensitive and empowering aspects of “My Story” testimonies, I have shown that this initiative indeed corresponds, in my opinion, to the concept of a liberal-local hybrid form of peacebuilding. It does, indeed, seem to address the underlying psychological issues and negative attitudes present in communities by shifting conflict-related discursive narratives and frames in society members toward positive ones.

As to my findings themselves, they allowed for the creation of an interesting analytical tool for inferring interethnic attitudes from discursive narratives and frames. I have shown how these discursive narratives revolved around a limited number of conflict-related themes such as victimization episodes (war initiation, the genocide in Srebrenica) or outgroup members being “all the same”. These themes were then being used in both discursive narratives and frames, and very often, it was the shift in their framing that allowed for the shift in the discursive narratives. At the same time, these discursive narratives, corresponding to the dimensions and variables of reconciliation, shifted from negative to positive and this temporal aspect of “before” and “after” allowed for inferring of attitude shifts. This analytical tool is interesting as it is firmly grounded in theories of reconciliation and attitude change, hence allowing for a clear identification of what claims or discursive narratives testify of positive or negative attitudes. Therefore, I have brought not only a disciplinary but also a methodological contribution to the study of reconciliation in intractable conflicts.

It can be applied by any researcher dealing with accounts of story listeners in Bosnia and Herzegovina. A limited number of categories can be applied on personal accounts of ethnic relations outside of the storytelling context, under the condition that references to the victimization episodes that are central to the empathizing effect, as well as other particular aspects, be extended to outgroup stories more in general. It is highly likely that my typology of discursive narratives will also apply to people across former Yugoslavia, or at least, to its Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats. I believe this could be the case to a large extent as my research is based on Petrović’s scale of readiness to reconcile which works well for nations across the former Yugoslavia (Petrović, 2010). However, as my thematic analysis has shown, the discursive narratives and frames in my taxonomy revolved around a number of central themes, some of which were specific to Bosnia and Herzegovina. The application to neighboring countries would require the addition of new themes and new discursive narratives, especially regarding important victimization events such shifting the Serb aggression into the context of the war in Croatia and referring to local victimization events such as the siege of Vukovar for the Croats or the NATO bombings for the Serbs.
Also, the limited character of my data suggests that my typology of discursive narratives may not be exhaustive, and more research would probably uncover new national discursive narratives. In addition, some of the discursive narratives are specific to young people due to the argument of being “born after the war”, an argument used to justify positive attitudes toward outgroup young people but also to deny a personal acknowledgement of collective guilt. It is also likely that the discursive narratives will be slightly different in the older generation that has lived the war due to its different experience and a higher degree of traumatization, which could potentially make its attitudes more resistant to change.

Therefore, all in all, I do not claim that my findings regarding discursive narratives can be generalized to other conflicts or even to other age groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but I do believe that my typology can be used in other storytelling contexts involving young Bosnians and eventually adapted to other contexts within the former Yugoslavia. The transferability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) to other contexts may also be possible after a similar local adaptation that I described above. I believe so because not only was academic literature on other conflicts highly relevant to this study, but also because this research was based on well-established concepts, theories and dimensions of reconciliation that were developed and tested on conflicts across the world, from the conflicts in Northern Ireland to Israel and Palestine or Rwanda. These have to do with the very essentials of human nature and reasoning such as empathy, prejudice, blaming, collective guilt, competitive victimhood, forgiveness and trust among others and seem to only differ by the local application of each of them. That said, the same comments on transferability to other contexts are also valid for my taxonomy of frame shifts as it stems from the discursive narratives under study. Besides being firmly grounded in the local context of Bosnia and Herzegovina, it also incorporates the broader theories and dimensions of reconciliation (or lack of it). Therefore, its theoretical grounding (to whose categories I arrived inductively and connected it to existing reconciliation literature) facilitates its possible adaptation to another conflict context, while the empirical grounding allows for a very precise capture of peoples’ attitudes when used in the Bosnian context, or partly also in the former Yugoslavia. Since the conflict-related frames outlined in the literature review chapter above (such as characterization frames) are known to be generalized, my frames providing partial aspects of such frames based on existing conflict theories could potentially be valid in other conflict contexts, too.

To sum up the debate, my research does not attempt at achieving generalization or transferability due to the limitations coming from my data sample and due to the qualitative
and non-causal nature of this research. However, my typology of discursive narratives and
my taxonomy of frame shifts may be adapted to other conflict contexts (which may involve
further research) and I warmly invite other researchers to do so.

Finally, I would also like to give recommendations for future research on the topic.
Such a research should focus on capturing discursive narratives and frames in the full range
of the Bosnian population or on reproducing my study in other conflict contexts. Also,
longitudinal interview research, following the listeners’ attitudes since before the testimonies
until several months or up to two years after the testimony could shed further light on the
gradual character of the attitude change identified here. Last but not least, causal relationships
could be tested with quantitative methods, ideally in a longitudinal design. The caveat of this
consist, however, in the sample size and the quality of the data. The testimonies in this
research were typically done for smaller groups (30 – 60 listeners), while I fear that
testimonies with 100 or more listeners may potentially lose some of the personalizing effect
of the close contact. Also, there 100 listeners would have to all fill in the questionnaire
completely and reliably, which is unlikely in young people. The questionnaire would have to
be filled in one single testimony as each testimony is different (even if done by the same
storytellers) and may engender different effects. Also, any researcher must be aware that
attitude change and especially reconciliation is a sort of miracle and happens only in a minor
percentage of people. Therefore, no researcher can expect to obtain 70 questionnaires
testifying of a strong attitude change, and especially not within a day or even a week from the
testimony. Moreover, having a control group from the same type of population (e.g. high
school students from the same school) would allow for even stronge conclusions. Special
attention should be dedicated to the effect of the storytellers not mentioning their nationality,
and to the effect of their training in nonviolent communication.

Having examined and analyzed all the evidence, I conclude tha in some listeners, the
public testimonies have triggered shifts from negative to positive, reconciliatory discursive
narratives and frames. I also found that there were too many mechanisms of reconciliation
activated to discard “My Story” testimonies as potentially more harmful than beneficial. I
believe that therefore, “My Story” is a model initiative that could, and should, be used in
other post-conflict settings, especially where competitive victimhood is present.
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## 10 Annex

### 10.1 List of Public Testimonies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Storytellers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bosniak-Croat town</td>
<td>Spring 2014</td>
<td>Amir Omerspahić, Janko Samouković and Stanislav Krezić</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serb town</td>
<td>Autumn 2014</td>
<td>Latifa, Vesna Tomić and Andelko Kvesić</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnically mixed town</td>
<td>Autumn 2014</td>
<td>Smilja Mitrović, Andelko Kvesić and Edisa Šehić</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosniak-Croat town II</td>
<td>2013, 2014</td>
<td>Amir Omerspahić, Janko Samouković/Dragiša Andrić and Stanislav Krezić</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 10.2 List of Interviews with The Listeners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Town</th>
<th>Date and place of the interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jasmina</td>
<td>Bosniak</td>
<td>Ethnically mixed town with a Bosniak majority</td>
<td>Autumn 2014 (skype)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>Location Description</td>
<td>Interview Date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
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<td>Croat</td>
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<td>19 November 2014</td>
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10.3 List of Interviews with The Staff of The Initiative „My Story“

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