

Sussex Migration Working Paper No. 2

Bosnians in Chicago:

Transnational activities and obstacles to transnationalism

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September 2000

Summary

In the 1990s, 'transnationalism' became a popular way to describe the adaptation of migrants to their host countries. Rather than assimilating, they maintain strong ties to their home countries through activities that cross national borders. This paper uses transnationalism as a starting point to examine the Bosnian community in Chicago. It details evidence of transnational social, cultural, economic, religious and political activities occurring at individual and household levels and through the collective action of groups. It then examines the obstacles that hinder such activities in Chicago's Bosnian community, the goal being to judge how effective transnationalism is as a tool to describe Bosnians' adaptation to their host country.

Table of contents

1. Introduction	4
2. Theory and Research Design	4
2.1. The concept of 'transnationalism'	4
Transnationalism in a refugee context	5
Bosnians and transnationalism	6
2.2. Research Design	6
3. Formation and development of Chicago's Bosnian community	7
3.1. Bosnians come to Chicago	7
The 'second wave' of Bosnian immigrants	7
The new refugees	7
US resettlement priorities	8
Arrivals from countries of first asylum	9
3.2. Bosnian community development in Chicago	9
4. Links to home	10
4.1. Possibilities for return	10
4.2. Transnational practices	10
Social ties: individual and household activities	11
Social ties: collective activities	11
Cultural ties: individual and household activities	12
Cultural ties: collective activities	13
Economic ties: individual and household activities	13
Economic ties: collective activities	14
Religious ties: individual and household activities	14
Religious ties: collective activities	15
Political ties: individual and household activities	15
Political ties: collective activities	15
Summary: Transnational activities amongst Bosnians in Chicago	16
4.3. Portrayals of 'Bosnia' in exile	17
5. Obstacles to transnationalism	18
5.1. Obstacles to connections with Bosnia: the home state	18
Political barriers: a divided country	19
Economic barriers	19
Bosnian attitudes toward the diaspora	20
5.2. Obstacles to connections with Bosnia: the exile community	21
Lack of resources	21
A divided community	22
Sense of alienation from Bosnia	23
(Lack of) racial exclusion	24
(Lack of) Socio-economic exclusion	24
Other priorities: work and family in Chicago	26
6. Conclusion	27
References	28
Appendix: List of interviews	30

List of abbreviations

BACA	Bosnian American Cultural Association
BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
BiHACC	Bosnia and Herzegovina American Community Center
ICC	Islamic Cultural Center (Northbrook, IL)
IPTF	International Police Task Force (Bosnia)
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
SDA	(Muslim) Party for Democratic Action
SFOR	Stabilization Forces, NATO troops stationed in Bosnia
[t]	Translation
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USCR	United States Committee for Refugees

List of Tables

1. Transnational activities in Chicago's Bosnian community

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Drs. Richard Black, Nadjje Al-Ali and Khalid Koser for helping me to develop an idea for this paper and to Dr. Adrian Favell for supervising it. Special gratitude goes to staff at TIA, World Relief and BiHACC for their assistance, to Haris for showing me around Lincoln Square, to Adin for his translations, and to all of my respondents for their time and patience.

1. Introduction

Chicago has long been a city of 'ethnic' neighbourhoods. Polish, Swedish, Ukrainian and other European immigrants created ethnic enclaves in the city during years of mass immigration in the early twentieth century. While some traces of those earlier groups remain in neighbourhoods named Pilsen, Andersonville and Ukrainian Village, their earlier residents have largely left the city for the suburbs. They have been replaced by new immigrants. Chicago's north side, especially in neighbourhoods like Uptown, Edgewater, Albany Park and Lincoln Square, has become one of the most diverse areas in the United States. A large percentage of the population is Hispanic (about 25 per cent in Uptown), but new residents have also come from refugee-producing countries such as Vietnam, Cambodia, Ethiopia and Somalia. Most refugees are non-European, and many have struggled in Chicago's inner-city environment. Two-fifths of Uptown's residents live in poverty, and more than one-third of Southeast Asian families receive public assistance (Hansen 1991).

In the 1990s, war in Yugoslavia – particularly in Bosnia and Herzegovina – led to the arrival of a new refugee population in Chicago. Since 1993, an estimated 30,000 Bosnians have settled in the city. They have formed the largest Bosnian community outside of Europe, and the community continues to grow. Most Bosnians have settled in Edgewater and Lincoln Square, close to the resettlement agencies that sponsored them.

Those who researched earlier generations of immigrants in Chicago developed theories of assimilation to describe their adaptation to life in America. The classic accounts of Robert Park (1928) and Milton Gordon (1964) describe assimilation as the end of a process of incorporation through which immigrants proceed from an initial period of separation from mainstream society to a stage of accommodation to a final stage in which the values and life styles of migrants become indistinguishable from those of the majority population.

Today, however, many academics have cast aside assimilation theory. On one hand, they criticize past racist and ethnocentric applications that failed to recognize the positive aspects of cultural retention. On the other hand, they argue that the circumstances of migration today lead to different paths of adaptation. In the 1990s, 'transnationalism' has become a popular way to describe the way in which migrants, rather than assimilating, maintain strong ties to their home countries while living abroad. Their activities create new links between sending and receiving countries and in-

fluence social, economic, and political structures. Originally developed to describe the adaptation of migrants from Latin America and the Philippines to life in the US, the concept is being ever more widely applied.

This paper uses transnationalism as a starting point to examine the adaptation of Bosnians to Chicago. A more detailed description of the theory will first explain the various factors that might lead to transnational activities. Combining this with literature from the field of refugee studies provides clues as to whether such adaptations might be expected in the Bosnian community. I will then detail specific examples of various types of transnational activities – social, cultural, economic, religious and political – observed during research in the community over a period of one month in the summer of 2000. Finally, I will explain what obstacles have hindered the development of transnationalism. Based on this fieldwork, the paper will consider whether transnationalism can effectively describe Bosnians' adaptation to life in Chicago or whether we might better understand the activities and priorities of community members by returning to host country perspectives that attempt to describe and measure migrants' assimilation or integration into their receiving society.

2. Theory and Research Design

2.1. *The concept of 'transnationalism'*

"Transnationalism" has been used to describe various political, economic and socio-cultural activities that cross borders, from capital flows to social movements. In the 1990s, it became a popular way to conceptualise a 'new phenomenon' in migration, in which migrants conduct many aspects of their lives in both sending and host countries (Basch *et al.* 1994; Portes 1996). Maintaining transnational ties may prevent immigrants from assimilating into the majority population. Proponents of the theory argue that assimilation perspectives that assume the adaptation of immigrants is a process not significantly influenced by border-crossing transactions have 'overemphasized the container aspects of politics and culture' (Faist 1999: 3)

Researchers have proposed several reasons for the development of transnationalism. Most obviously, improved communications technology makes it easier for migrants today to maintain contacts with home and develop new enterprises (Portes *et al.* 1999). Another factor that may influence the development of transnationalism is the relationship between migrants and the global economy. The Caribbean nations that provided the original context for transnationalism are

unique in that they have been penetrated by global capitalism for centuries and have a particular class and racial hierarchy. The hegemony of Anglo-American economy and culture has also been very strong (Robotham 1998). The changing conditions of global capitalism have disrupted the local economies of these countries, spurring out-migration. At the same time, deindustrialization in migrant-receiving countries has made it difficult for migrants to find economic security in their countries of settlement. Transnational enterprises may help migrants to improve their economic situation under these conditions. Furthermore, political and economic crises at home may catalyse migration, but they may also motivate migrants to retain ties with their sending country when family members are left behind in a difficult situation (Basch *et al.* 1994).

Basch *et al.* (1994) argue that the groups of migrants they have observed are also confronted with racial and social exclusion in their host country. Maintaining transnational ties with their home country may help them to resist this subordination. Through transnational activities, migrants can raise their social standing and validate their self-esteem.

Other scholars have suggested additional factors contributing to the growth and strength of transnational ties. Faist (1999) writes that transnationalism is characterized by reciprocity, mutual obligations, and solidarity in communities between people who share similar positions or symbolic bonds. His argument builds on work on migrant networks and social capital that emphasises interdependence among kin groups, communities, formal and informal associations, and broader groups. Networks, and sets of interpersonal ties between migrants and non-migrants, influence migration decisions, perpetuate migration to certain destinations, and shape the way migrants adapt to new societies. Social capital consists of resources in networks that allow individuals to access information, rely on the good will of other members, and mobilise others for collective action. Trust, reciprocity and solidarity are forms of social capital that increase when individuals, groups and even strangers in a community have a common collective identity, cultural-ideological outlook, and memory of their homeland (Portes 1995; Faist 1997; Faist 1999).

Transnational activities take various forms as participants pursue economic, political and cultural interests that require their presence in two countries. We can distinguish between the private economic undertakings and social ties with family members and friends found among individuals and households and the grass-roots initiatives that require collective action among migrant

community members. Other activities may be initiated 'from above' by sending states that seek to strengthen ties with their migrant populations (Portes *et al.* 1999; Faist 1999).

Transnationalism in a refugee context

According to Wahlbeck (1999), there have been few theoretical contributions in the area of forced migration that deal with its sociological aspects. A handful of authors have distinguished between different types of migrations. Kunz (1973) differentiates between 'anticipatory' and 'acute' refugee movements. Richmond (1988) has created a typology of various forms of 'proactive' and 'reactive' migrations. Others have described how refugees' orientations toward their home state and society determine patterns of settlement abroad. Hein (1993) argues that refugees differ from ordinary migrants in their relationship to the state. Changes in the nation-state cause refugee migrations, and the state also shapes refugees' adaptation in the host country. Joly (1995) writes,

'refugees' pattern of group formation and social interaction with the receiving society must be examined in relation to their position within and vis-à-vis the structure of conflict in the society of origin' (cited in Wahlbeck 1999: 10).

More concretely, Al-Rasheed (1994) describes how, for Iraqi Arabs and Assyrians in the UK, the resettlement process is conditioned by past experiences and refugees' relationship with their origin country. Arabs, who identify with Iraq's majority population, see their exile as temporary and engage in many activities directed toward their home country. In contrast, Assyrians are alienated from the majority population in Iraq and have a low level of politicization. For them, migration to the UK is a permanent solution; they come with a 'settlers' mentality' and disassociate themselves from Iraq, concentrating instead on securing their rights in the UK. From this work, we see that refugees do not form a single category and that attitudes toward the home country may determine paths of adaptation in the host country.

Although use of the term 'transnational' has rapidly grown, few articles discuss transnationalism in a refugee context. Faist (1999) writes that, among communities that have been dispersed because of a traumatic event, a vision of a homeland can evoke solidarity and contribute to transnationalism. Landolt (1999) describes how the conditions of exit and the social context of reception in the US explain the tendency of Salvadorans to invest resources in maintaining transnational relations. To an extent, these con-

ditions were refugee-specific and may be similar to those experienced by Bosnians: rapid and massive flight, a high degree of politicization among some migrants and a fear of politics among others, and a keen interest in co-opting refugees' autonomous political projects. Salvadorans expected that their exodus would be temporary. They saw themselves as 'sojourners', and this shaped their behavior. They left families in a state of violence and poverty, creating a strong sense of social obligation.

Recent work on refugees and transnationalism by Al-Ali, Black, and Koser (2000) has looked for evidence of transnational activities among Bosnian and Eritrean refugees in Europe. They describe these communities as being in a 'dynamic process' of becoming transnational and detail numerous ways in which they contribute to reconstruction in their home countries through transnational activities. Other researchers are also looking at the ways in which diaspora communities contribute to their homelands. For example, Pérouse de Montclos (2000) uses data about remittances to argue that Somali refugees play an important role in rebuilding their country. Such research suggests that, for refugees as well as labour migrants, a transnational perspective helps to explain, analyse and redefine the settlement process (Landolt 1999).

Bosnians and transnationalism

It seems that, in part because Bosnian refugees encounter the same conditions of global capitalism faced by other migrants, and in part because of the specific refugee nature of their migration experience (traumatic dispersal, with families left behind in a violent situation), Bosnians may be quite likely to participate in transnational activities. However, there are also reasons why they might be thought *less* likely to follow this path of adaptation. They are a less racially distinct group in the US than many migrant populations, they are highly educated and may face less economic exclusion, and they are a great distance from their home country. They have also received secure legal status in the United States, where they have full access to welfare benefits and the job market. This contrasts with the situation of Salvadorans, who faced a hostile US government that refused for many years to recognize them as legitimate refugees. Insecure legal status, according to Landolt (1999), encouraged them to keep a 'toehold' in El Salvador in case of deportation.

The context of the former Yugoslavia is also quite different from that of the Caribbean. American influences are less dramatic, and the relationship with the global economy is different. Globalisation has brought a drastic shift in state power and

property relations. Democratisation and privatisation are transforming socialist economies. Thus, although both the Balkan and Caribbean regions are encountering similar forces of global capitalism and communications, they experience them differently (Robotham 1998). Even so, Verdery (1998) argues, the former Yugoslavia may provide a fertile ground for transnational practices because democratisation and privatisation are themselves transnational processes, and nationalism has been deterritorialised.

Many of the activities observed during my research in Chicago are likely to be similar to those observed in other migrant communities, particularly those of Bosnians in Europe documented by Al-Ali, Black and Koser (2000). I am, however, not only interested in highlighting examples of transnational activities. Instead, I want to situate these examples of transnationalism in the context of the community as a whole, to weigh their significance, and to consider how useful transnationalism is as an explanation of the community's activities and priorities.

2.2. Research Design

My introduction to Chicago's refugee communities came through a year of work at a resettlement agency and another year as an English and citizenship teacher in Uptown Chicago. I witnessed the arrival of many Bosnians in Chicago and watched as they negotiated their first trips to the public aid office, furnished their first apartments with donations, and began to tackle English. In 2000, when I returned to Chicago to investigate the community's progress and development, many refugees had been in Chicago for up to seven years, while others were still arriving.

Findings in this paper are based on a 'snowball' survey of the community. I conducted about thirty semi-structured interviews, starting with staff at refugee resettlement agencies and mutual aid associations and with leaders of the Bosnian mosque and community organizations. These people referred me to other respondents, and I met more Bosnians at community events. An effort was made to speak with people of different ages and ethnic backgrounds who had come from different parts of Bosnia. Most respondents were Muslim, as at least 90 per cent of Bosnian refugees in Chicago are Muslims. But I also spoke with Bosnian Croats and several people of mixed parentage, as families with mixed marriages had a high resettlement priority in the US. A few of my interviews were with Americans who had been working with the community since the arrival of the first refugees. Bosnian magazines published in Chicago and news articles about the community provided secondary sources of information. Most

respondents spoke English, but magazine articles were translated by a Bosnian student.

3. Formation and development of Chicago's Bosnian community

3.1. *Bosnians come to Chicago*

The first Bosnians to arrive in the US are difficult to find in census data. At the beginning of the twentieth century, groups of Yugoslav immigrants were classified incorrectly by US immigration officials. Slovenes and Croats were counted together, as were Serbs, Montenegrins, and Bulgarians. A third group was classified by region of origin as 'Dalmatians, Bosnians and Hercegovinians' (Colakovic 1973: 44). It is impossible to know how many Bosnians came to Chicago in this early period, and most written documents about ethnic communities in the city have described its Croatian and Serbian communities but ignored its small Bosnian population (Linton 1996)

It has been written that Bosnian refugees had no immigrant community to receive them when they began to arrive in the US (Maners 1994: 1). But the Bosnian Muslims (Bosniaks¹) who came to Chicago before the war broke out in 1992 emphasize that their community – the largest concentration of Bosnian Muslims in the US – has existed for a century. A few Bosniaks were among the more than thirty million Europeans who, around the turn of the century, fled poverty and repression in the 'old world' for the perceived freedom and opportunity of America. Most came without families. Respondents told me that these 'oldcomers' travelled by ship from Dubrovnik (Croatia), where they were granted free passage in exchange for stoking the ships' boiler rooms. When they reached Chicago, they lined up for jobs, potential employers feeling their muscles as they picked workers from the line for their mines and construction companies.

The Bosniak periodical *Zambak* devoted a recent issue to the history of Bosniaks in Chicago. Chicago's first Bosniak organization, 'Džemijetn hajrije', was founded in 1906 to assist people with health care, funerals, organizing religious rituals and holiday celebrations. The organization purchased a cemetery plot in the northern suburbs so that it could assist people with Muslim funeral rights. Then as now, coffee bars were also important community institutions, used by new immigrants to get information about housing and jobs (*Zambak* 2000a [t])

The 'second wave' of Bosnian immigrants

After World War II, the new country of Yugoslavia introduced communism, spurring a new migration of Bosniaks as the Yugoslav Communist Party attacked traditional religious and communitarian structures (Bougarel 1996). Anti-communists escaped to Austria, Germany and Greece, and some were resettled in Chicago by Church World Service. One of my respondents recalled that his father came to Chicago in 1952. He became a citizen in 1957 and brought his wife and son to join him. Others noted that more Bosniaks wanted to come to the US from their countries of first refuge but found it difficult to immigrate. In fact, during the Korean War, many young men volunteered to fight for the US. Some wanted to fight communism in Korea; others were tempted by the promise that, after their service, they would be eligible to enter the US as war veterans. Chicago's Bosnian American Cultural Association (BACA) was founded in 1954 to help these refugees and immigrants settle into Chicago, find jobs, and remember their culture and religion. In the cellar of Chicago's first Bosnian mosque, established in 1955, was something that demonstrated how 'Bosnian' the organization was: a traditional coffee bar (*Zambak* 2000a [t]).

During the next 50 years, people came from all parts of Bosnia to Chicago, but in small numbers. They had more education than their predecessors, and many quickly became prosperous. Despite this, one of my respondents noted that the community was not well organised '*because people were poor and looking for their own way, their own "piece of bread". We did have BACA, but that was small.*' In the 1980s, the community built a larger mosque, called the Islamic Cultural Center (ICC) because it was also attended by non-Bosnians. It had space for 500 people to pray, but some wondered why such a large building was necessary. Despite a century of migration to Chicago, the Bosniak community consisted of only a few hundred families. One member of the mosque's board told me, '*In 1985, I asked "why are we building this structure, for who?."*'

The new refugees

In 1992, Bosnia followed Croatia and Slovenia in declaring independence from Yugoslavia. But 1.5 million Serbs lived in Bosnia, one third of the total population, and Serb leaders claimed they in turn had a right to declare independence from Bosnia. Bosnia had been celebrated by many of its citizens for its multicultural constitution and historic tolerance. Here Yugoslavia's different ethnic groups were most intermingled; here it was most painful when they were torn apart (Kaldor 1999).

¹ This use of the term 'Bosniak' to refer to Bosnian muslims is contested.

The goal of the Bosnian war was ethnic cleansing, the expulsion of particular ethnic groups from particular territories. Both Serbia and Croatia built their own para-states within Bosnia. Serb forces, the dominant aggressors, gained control of three quarters of Bosnia's territory. Most violence consisted of attacks on towns and atrocities committed against civilians. Although all sides were guilty of atrocities, it was the Bosnian Muslims who bore the brunt of ethnic cleansing, with both Serbs and Croats claiming territory and expelling or killing its Muslim residents (Alcock *et al.* 1998).

By the time the war ended, the population of Bosnia was reduced to 3.4 million, about 1 million less than before the war. About 2.5 million citizens were displaced, 750,000 of these to Europe, about 200,000 to North America, and most of the rest internally (Bojičić and Kaldor 1999). Before the war, 400,000 Muslims lived in the area surrounding the city of Banja Luka. After the war, barely 40,000 remained. Serbian nationalists destroyed 16 mosques in a city that had been known for its religious architecture. In the Serb-held town of Bosanski Novi, military police identified Muslims who were killed or drafted as forced labour. Prijedor, in the northern part of the Serb-controlled territory, was likewise devastated. It was attacked by Serbs in 1992, and many Muslim residents died in a local detention camp. Before the war, the city's population was 44 per cent Muslim, but Prijedor quickly became a Serb town (Alcock *et al.* 1998). It was from places like these that most of Chicago's refugees came.

Among other factors, the extreme brutality of the war at last forced the international community to expand its role from providing humanitarian aid to peacemaking. The war officially came to an end in December 1995 with the signing of the Dayton Agreement. The compromise that settled the war consisted of the creation of two separate and autonomous entities, the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska. Dayton was not exactly a solution; it was a set of compromises that managed to end the war but, as Bojičić and Kaldor (1999) argue, rewarded ethnic nationalists and essentially sanctioned ethnic cleansing. Most involved parties agree that, though it stopped the war, Dayton is an imperfect agreement.

The Dayton Agreement promised that refugees and displaced persons would be able to return to their homes. Return to Bosnia, however, has proceeded slowly, and many returns represent less-than-durable solutions. Nearly five years after the end of the war, according to an Amnesty International report (2000), over one million refugees and displaced persons are still waiting to return to

their pre-war homes. A large number of these were Muslims expelled from the Republika Srpska. Although more refugees are beginning to return to the Republika Srpska in 2000, serious obstacles remain and concern endures about the lack of prospects for successful reintegration of minority returnees. There is a lack of political will on the part of authorities to deal with the legal side of the return process. Returnees continue to face the threat of violence, and they have had difficulty accessing social and economic rights

US resettlement priorities

Between 1993 and 1999, the US admitted 105,944 refugees from Bosnia, a number that has since grown. This number does not include those Bosnians who came from their countries of first asylum through the US Green Card lottery; they would be considered immigrants. The US had five categories of resettlement priorities during the period of Bosnian resettlement (USCR 2000). Of top priority were cases referred by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) or identified by US embassies. Some Bosnians fell into this category, with special treatment offered to children and to wounded and elderly refugees. This was the first time that the US State Department had prioritized the elderly and wounded.

The second priority was for refugees from specific countries facing certain conditions. Bosnians who fell into this category included ex-detainees, persons in ethnically-mixed marriages, victims of torture and violence, and the surviving spouses of people who would have fallen into these categories. This means that the Bosnians who were resettled in the US were at least 90 per cent Muslim and often came from areas now part of the Republika Srpska. Many were wounded or former detainees. In Chicago, the majority of refugees – perhaps a half – came from around Prijedor. Smaller numbers came from Banja Luka and towns like Gacko and Foča in the eastern Republika Srpska. Other refugees came from Sarejevo; many of these had multi-ethnic families.

Several other resettlement priorities explain the rapid growth of Chicago's Bosnian community. Priority Three included spouses, unmarried children and parents. Priorities Four and Five, for grandparents, grandchildren, married sons and daughters, siblings and more distant relatives, were available only to Bosnians (USCR 2000). They are now closed, but these priorities made family reunion particularly easy for Bosnian refugees. Refugees could sponsor others to come to the US within months of their arrival even if they were still unemployed and deficient in English. They did not have to prove their income or pledge to financially support family members, as is the case with most immigrant sponsors. Soon after

the first refugees arrived, the bulk of Bosnian resettlement cases involved family reunification (Orr 1998). This demonstrates a similarity between refugee and immigrant migrations, in that many community members used kin and friendship networks to navigate their passage to the US, just as many immigrants do.²

Besides receiving the assistance of sponsors, every refugee in the US is paired with a resettlement agency. If family is absent or able to offer little help, the agency helps new arrivals to find housing and to apply for public assistance. Employment specialists refer them to literacy and job training and help them to find work. Several agencies also have connections to multi-lingual health clinics and mental health services. In Chicago, World Relief was the agency most involved with Bosnians; it resettled over 6,000 Bosnian refugees. Bosnians settled in neighbourhoods close to resettlement agencies and other social service providers, literacy classes, and health clinics.

Arrivals from countries of first asylum

Bosnian children speak to each other in a mixture of Bosnian and English, but many frequently switch to German as well. Having spent several years in Germany, the primary language of some of the children is German. Although some refugees were resettled in the US directly from Bosnia or from neighbouring countries like Croatia, many came to Chicago from other European countries of first asylum, through the Green Card lottery or family reunification programs, when they were unable to obtain permanent residency and feared being sent back.

Damir, a freshman at Amundsen High School, enjoyed his time in Germany and wishes he could go back: *'There kids can stay out late...here everything is too strict!* His family, however, chose to leave rather than risk being sent back to Bosnia. Most Bosnians, however, do not have such fond memories of Europe. Boris spent two years in Italy before coming to Chicago in 1995. His sister is still in Italy. He found in Italy a great deal of racism and resentment against refugees and Slavs. *'It's much better here,* he said. While living in Austria with her son, Sabrina had to get a new extension on her temporary residency permit every month. She recalled:

'We knew one day we would have to go back...it was 18 months of just waiting. My son might have gotten a scholarship to school

and have been allowed to stay. Young people there could get a chance, but not the adults. Here, it works differently.'

Velibor's family went first to Czechoslovakia from Sarejevo. *'Life in Europe can be difficult'*, he said, *'because you can't get permission to stay anywhere very long.'* In 1997 alone, 3,000 Bosnians came to Chicago from Germany after the German government ordered them to leave (Ilo 1998).

3.2. Bosnian community development in Chicago

When the first refugees arrived in Chicago in 1993, Bosnian 'oldcomers' felt a responsibility both toward them and toward their own families still in Bosnia. BACA grew more active, trying to assist new arrivals while collecting war relief to send to Bosnia. In total, the community sent \$2 million worth of aid to Bosnia during the war, including food, clothes, medicine and school supplies. During the war, oldcomers also worked with new refugees to create a Bosnian radio station that reported on wartime events and still produces a weekly programme. The oldcomers, however, were unable to assist all the new arrivals. As one respondent noted, *'they had family [in Bosnia] and focused on helping people there. They did great stuff, but they couldn't do everything.'*

In 1994, the state of Illinois provided a grant to Travelers and Immigrants Aid, a resettlement agency with a history of working with mutual aid associations and a mental health program that served many Bosnians, to create a Bosnian mutual aid association. Although the Bosnian Refugee Center was not exactly initiated by refugees themselves, it became the Bosnian organization most visible to those outside the community. Now called the Bosnia and Herzegovina American Community Center (BiHACC), it is largely run by refugees and has grown to a staff of eight employees and a budget of \$350,000. Its director, Sabrina, is a 'Catholic' Bosnian married to a Bosnian Serb. The centre provides outreach for wounded, sick and elderly refugees, English classes, children's activities, health education, and other community programs. Sabrina feels that her organization provides a safe place for refugees, many of whom have learned not to trust outsiders, to begin to re-establish connections and to gather with others who suffered similar experiences.

Other organizations that have cropped up in Chicago during the past six years have usually been started by Bosniaks. These include sports and cultural clubs and three magazines (*Zambak, Tribina Bošnjaka, and Novi Zena*). The Bosniak community has been making an effort to work

² This is not just true of Bosnian refugees. Within seven years of the arrival of the first wave of Indochinese refugees to the US, relatives were sponsoring 2/3 of new arrivals from Indochina (Hein 1993).

together to coordinate activities taking place in Chicago and other Bosniak communities. A coordinating body has been established for Chicago organizations, and in May 2000, the fifth Congress of Bosniaks from North America was held in Chicago. It brought Bosnian Muslims from all over the US and Canada together to discuss the creation of a common Bosniak identity in the diaspora and to set goals for the diaspora's future development. Representatives adopted a constitution drafted by a Chicago refugee with a legal background.

Perhaps most noticeably, Bosnians have begun to alter the appearance of their neighborhoods with new businesses. Lincoln Square, once a German neighbourhood, now hosts about 25 Bosnian businesses. To the few businesses owned by old-comers, the new refugees have added restaurants, medical and dental clinics, hair salons, video shops and other establishments that have enhanced the European flavour of the area. It is now possible for many Bosnians to conduct most of their commerce without speaking English. One older respondent, Radha, was pleased that *'every day, something new opens in Lincoln Square.'* She and her husband liked to go there to taste Bosnian food and buy Bosnian coffee. *'We lost everything at home, you know...'* The ability to enjoy some things from 'home' eased her sense of loss.

4. Links to home

4.1. Possibilities for return

In part because many came from areas in the Republika Srpska where they would now be a minority, very few refugees resettled in Chicago have returned to Bosnia permanently. Sabrina estimated that she knew about twelve families who had returned. Another respondent recalled a man in his 70s, a former fire chief from Prijedor known as 'Big Mustafa', who recently returned and reclaimed his house:

'He's a US citizen now – he told them that and used his "power" as a US citizen to get his house back. He was pretty well known in the community. He has a big family, but only his wife went with him. The children stayed here.'

Like Mustafa, most minority returns have been elderly people returning to rural areas (USCR 1999), but not all have been so fortunate. One of my respondents mentioned that some people who had tried to return to Prijedor had been unable to return to their homes and had instead been camping near the city in protest. He described the returnees as having a fatalistic attitude: *'They*

don't care anymore...they just don't want to die here.'

Many younger people have found new opportunities in Chicago and feel they would no longer be comfortable in Bosnia. Dino, a young former doctor who is about to take his US medical exams, commented, *'I've been here for six years. I'm still not at home here, but I can't be at home there either. I've changed too much...I've been forced to change.'* Others would like to go back but do not feel they could find work or continue their education in Bosnia. Saba, a young Muslim woman, wants to return but plans to finish school in Chicago first. She used to study architecture but now wants to work in social services. *'When I was in Croatia,'* she explained, *'many people there helped me. So now I'd like to help others.'* Another young woman who worked in telecommunications thought her profession might also be useful in Bosnia, although she didn't know of any job possibilities there at present.

Many younger people mentioned that the best job opportunity currently available in Bosnia would require them to become US citizens: they could then work for the US army as translators, earning up to \$50,000 a year. Some refugees, like Boris, expressed hope that they would someday be able to retire in Bosnia: *'I don't want to be buried in Chicago,'* he said. But most said that they would first take advantage of opportunities to work in the US, leaving Bosnia as a place to vacation and perhaps keep a summer home.

4.2. Transnational practices

Even if they do not plan to return, many of Chicago's Bosnians retain strong connections to 'home' that might be described as transnational ties. Although many researchers focus on the political activities of refugee populations, my research strengthens Al-Ali, Black and Koser's (2000) argument that refugees engage in a wide range of transnational activities. In this section, I will distinguish between social, cultural, economic, religious and political connections. I will also describe these activities as taking place at either the individual or household level or through collective actions that involve broader community networks. These classifications are meant mainly as an organizational device, not as a definitive typology. Some activities take place at multiple levels, and it is certainly true that many do not fall into a clear-cut category. For example, among a people who were persecuted for their Muslim identity, religious activities are often highly political. Collective activities may also result from individual pursuits.

Social ties: individual and household activities

The most obvious way in which Bosnians are connected with their homeland is through their families. The Bosnian Muslims who came to Chicago in the 1950s had a limited relationship with their homeland. One member of BACA stated that *'it was always in their hearts to support Bosnia and their families there'*, but many could not return home to visit. *'My father died wishing he could see his mother's grave'*, he continued. *'The older people were not allowed to go. They might have been tried for their participation in WWII.'* In 1965, the government of Yugoslavia granted those who were not old enough to have been in WWII amnesty so that they could return to visit their families in Bosnia. Since then, Bosnians have been able to maintain stronger ties to home, visiting family more regularly and bringing their American-born children to visit Bosnia.

Most refugee respondents had very strong family connections to Bosnia. Although communicating with family in Bosnia was difficult during the war, when many refugees lived in constant fear for their families, it has become much easier since 1995. Several people mentioned using e-mail to contact family, and shops in Lincoln Square now sell phone cards that allow calls to Bosnia to be made for 30 cents a minute.

Although it is impossible to quantify remittances sent to Bosnia, almost all respondents were sending money home and remarked that most refugees – 'ninety-nine per cent' – were doing the same. This often meant working two jobs and shouldering a heavy financial burden. Many emphasised that the cost of living in Bosnia was just as high as in Chicago, whereas even a doctor could earn only \$400/month there. Some refugees complained that the 10 per cent fee to wire money was high, and money sometimes disappeared. A safer way to send money to relatives was through others visiting Bosnia: *'We always put some money in an envelope to be sent to our relatives.'* Besides money, refugees often secured medicine for sick family members in Bosnia.

Because many Bosnians in the US were granted permanent residency and have travel documents, it has been relatively easy for people to visit family in Bosnia. This may distinguish the US from some European countries that limit refugees' freedom of movement (Al-Ali, Black and Koser 2000). It also makes Bosnian refugees more similar to immigrant populations in their ability to maintain social relations in their home countries. About two-thirds of my respondents had visited Bosnia, and most planned to go again soon. A few respondents had returned to their hometowns in

the Republika Srpska, but most visited relatives living in the Federation.

A Croatian travel agent in Lincoln Square reported that her business had changed dramatically since the arrival of the Bosnian refugees. She now employs six travel agents who are busy selling tickets to Sarejevo. Tickets in the high season, between June and September, cost around \$800, and every plane is full. But even though many people are able to travel, Yugoslavian passports cause some difficulties. One couple reported that, when trying to visit family in Croatia, they were turned back when they reached Amsterdam because they did not have the required visas. As they have just passed their citizenship tests, they now plan to apply for US passports, which will make such visas unnecessary.

Visits to Bosnia may lead some refugees to eventually return. On a trip to deliver money to relatives in Bosnia, Elma, a university student, met a young man she calls her 'soul mate'. She thinks about going back one day, if the Serb hold on Bosanski Novi ends (Gouring 2000).

Social ties: collective activities

Some people stay connected to Bosnia by maintaining social ties with other refugees in Chicago. Sports clubs have been a popular social activity. Chicago hosts two football clubs, 'Bosna' and 'Ljiljan', that compete against teams in other US cities. BOSNAM is a new organization that offers sporting activities for children. Various restaurants and discos have created more spaces where people can congregate. On Saturday nights, for example, the newly opened Cafe Una on Lawrence Avenue is packed with young Bosnian Muslims, who drink juice and dance to folk singing. On Thursdays, the scene at the BoomBoom Club is like an Eastern European nightclub.

Many groups of refugees in Chicago came from the same communities in Bosnia, and some respondents were engaged in activities that helped them to strengthen their ties with those communities. Mirko, for example, attends parties several times a year where Bosnians from his hometown near Bihac gather to visit and socialize. There are about 2,000 people from the Bihac area in Chicago. The group has assisted some wounded people from the area who were in camps in Croatia, but Mirko said he values these events because it is often hard to find time to visit friends, as life in Chicago offers much less leisure time than life in Bosnia.

Refugees who had originally come from Prejidor collected \$5,000 to help repair a radio station in Sanski Most, the city where many displaced people from Prijedor are now living. 'Glas Bošnjaka', the Bosnian radio station in Chicago that is also

funded by community contributions, is able to patch through to this radio station as well as those in Mostar and Sarejevo. Saba, a young woman from Prijedor, found another way to stay connected with Bosnia. Having received emails from friends in Bosnia about families needing assistance, she sponsored a child from Bosnia and helped organize other young people in Chicago to do the same. Saba sends \$50-100 a month to help with school expenses for her sponsored child, who she has not met.

The most active hometown association in Chicago is the Association of Bosnians from Gacko, a city in eastern Republika Srpska. The society holds social activities in Chicago, and in 1999, they became very involved in assisting a group of internally displaced Bosnian Muslims who returned to Fazlagića Kula, an area near Gacko where there were thirteen Muslim villages. The political activities of some Chicago Bosniaks (described below) helped remove obstacles to the return and secured them an escort by NATO troops stationed in Bosnia (SFOR) and the International Police Task Force (ITPF). The Association collected \$14,000 to provide returnees with items not supplied by UNHCR. They are appealing for donations of vans, school supplies, and computers to help the returnees communicate with the outside world (Tanović 1999a [t]).

The editors of *Tribina* have tried to encourage other hometown groups to follow the example of the people from Gacko and organize around minority returns:

'We have to build our own plan to try to get rid of the consequences of ethnic cleansing...The home country and diaspora must find a way for each town and village to organize with a plan for return. People from Gacko are organizing actions. This should be an example for others. If people are strong enough, they can return through an organized movement' (ibid).

But so far, Gacko is the only example of this type of highly organized hometown association.

Bosnians in Chicago have several other kinds of social links with Bosnia. One connection is through the media. The weekly Bosnian radio programme is a favourite among elderly refugees, providing a much-valued connection to home. As well as 'Glas Bošnjaka', some respondents listened to Chicago's Serbian radio station. 'We know it's all lies', they said, 'but we listen anyway.' Publications from Bosnia and Bosnian communities in New York and Seattle are available in Lincoln Square, and Chicago's Bosnian-language magazines are widely read in the city and also distributed in other US cities. *Zambak* includes

mainly articles about the Bosnian community in Chicago and the US as well as practical information about buying cars, applying for jobs, filling out tax returns, and other matters. *Novi Zena* was launched by a Bosnian immigrant who works as a refugee caseworker at Catholic Charities. It contains the work of women refugees who are Bosnian Serbs, Muslims and Croatians, as well as stories about America and writing by refugee women from Somalia and other countries. Headlines include: 'Better English, Better Jobs', and 'Sarejevo to Chicago: The little strong world of women'. *Tribina* is published by the Chicago chapter of the Muslim Party for Democratic Action (SDA-Chicago), which is discussed below under 'political connections'. It contains articles about the community in Chicago and a great deal of commentary on the situation in Bosnia.

Other connections to Bosnia are created when Bosnians and organisations working in Bosnia visit Chicago. Mental health workers from Tuzla recently visited, reporting on their work in Bosnia and sharing research with US professionals. The UN de-mining commission visited BiHACC to describe its work in Bosnia, and several officials from Bosnian cities attended the Bosniak Conference. In July 2000, the US ambassador to Bosnia spoke at the ICC, answering numerous questions from the audience about the situation in their homeland.

Community leaders are attempting to further institutionalize ties between Bosnia and its diaspora by holding various events. There have been numerous manifestations held at the ICC to commemorate Bosnian Statehood Day and Bosnian Independence Day, with speakers from Bosnia and Chicago and cultural performances. BiHACC has held events to celebrate the anniversary of the adoption of Bosnia's multicultural constitution. The Bosnian Government responded by holding an event of its own. In 1997, it sponsored a fifth anniversary celebration in Chicago of the country's independence, which was attended by the Bosnian ambassador to the United Nations. The Bosniak Conference included among its goals the better coordination of these celebrations. An event of a different sort was a beauty pageant: Miss Bosnia and Herzegovina from USA and Canada. The winner was sent to Sarejevo to compete for the national title. One purpose of such activities is to help the Bosnian community in Chicago maintain its social ties with Bosnia.

Cultural ties: individual and household activities

'Culture', in various manifestations, is an important part of many Bosnians' identity. Miljenko, a refugee and former sculptor, is trying to establish

an arts centre for refugees. He quizzed me: *'After a war, what's the first thing people need? A haircut! And after that? They need culture!'*

To Miljenko, culture meant fine arts. Many respondents expressed pride in the fact that music, painting and other art forms were highly developed in Bosnia. They felt that this distinguished their people from other refugee communities: *'We are different! We are Europeans ... we have culture.'*³ For others, Bosnian folk music and dance remained important. Even a respondent who did not participate in many community activities sang in a Bosnian club on weekends.

For many refugees, maintaining their culture meant preserving the Bosnian language. Parents were concerned that their children were not learning Bosnian. *'Sometimes I think they understand me'*, said Boris about his two children, *'but really they know only the most basic words. They do not understand that words have more subtle meanings.'* Many parents send their children to Saturday language, history and culture classes. BiHACC's language class provided some refugee children with their first exposure to the Bosnian alphabet. *'They didn't teach us this in Germany'*, they explained. For some families, learning Bosnian is important because it allows children to communicate with older family members. For others, however, the Bosnian language is also an important symbol of their country's national identity. A group of Chicago Bosniaks campaigned to have Bosnian recognized as a separate language by the state of Illinois.

Cultural ties: collective activities

Various organizations in Chicago attempt to preserve Bosnian culture and traditions in the United States. There are two large Bosnian cultural societies in Chicago. They teach children traditional Bosnian dances, which are performed at Bosnian community events and at multicultural celebrations sponsored by the city of Chicago. In 1999, the societies also attended large Bosnian Folk Festivals held in Toronto and in Chicago. Performers from Bosnia also frequently visit Chicago. For example, Bosnia's most famous folk singer gave a benefit concert for World Relief.

In the library in Lincoln Square, refugees have established a collection of Bosnian-language books, donated by members of the community. Among them are several books by Bosnian refugees living in Chicago. One, *Crna Duša* (Black Soul) by Ahmet Rahmanović (1999), was begun while the author was living in Sarejevo and finished in Chicago. It tells the story of a Muslim

whose wife was killed by his best friend. He begins a new life in Chicago, but there he runs into his former friend. The novel ends as they kill each other on a Chicago street. One respondent told me that the novel was currently one of the most popular books in Bosnia.

At Amundsen High School, which most Bosnian teenagers attend, the Bosnian Club helps students to share their experiences in Bosnia and Chicago and feel connected with their homeland. The club has performed Bosnian poetry, drama, dance and patriotic music at festivals throughout Chicago. Through the performances they have raised over \$3,000, sent as aid to Sarejevo and Bihac (Marjamaa 1998).

Performances like those of the cultural societies and the Amundsen Bosnian Club represent the Bosnian community at the city level, adding a Bosnian presence to events intended to show Chicago's cultural diversity. Visually and symbolically, such cultural events help Bosnians to preserve their culture and identity in Chicago. One goal of the Bosniak Conference was to support this preservation of identity through Bosnian literature, dancing, music and folklore. Representatives hoped to raise funds to support such activities.

Economic ties: individual and household activities

Individuals and families have strong financial ties to Bosnia. Most, as mentioned above, are sending money to family in Bosnia. Most respondents had also owned property in Bosnia. Some considered their homes – usually those in the Republika Srpska – as lost for good. But even though no refugees were currently involved in campaigning for the return of their property, others expressed the desire to reclaim it. One respondent said that this explained why he diligently followed events in Bosnia: *'It's my property'*, he said of his family's house in Banja Luka. *'I should be able to decide what to do with it.'*

Another common way in which migrants are involved in transnational economic activities is through business or investment strategies that encompass both home and host countries. To a limited extent, such strategies have appeared in the Bosnian community. Some shops sell Bosnian products, and one refugee is now trying to start an import-export business. Businesses like this were common in Yugoslavia. *'He wants to bring things from Bosnia, Croatia, and Italy'*, said his advisor at World Relief's micro-enterprise programme. *'He thinks there is a market here for them.'*

Several respondents had also heard of a small group of Bosnian oldcomers – three men who had

³ I do not wish the reader to get the impression that, in my opinion, other refugee communities lack 'culture'!

been in Chicago for thirty years – who have been investing in a company in Bosnia. This might eventually become an important way in which Bosnian emigrants could maintain ties to their home country. The World Bank and IMF have insisted on a neo-liberal model – based on market competition and the comparative advantage of cheap labour – to integrate Bosnia into the world economy. New economic activity is to come from the privatisation of state owned enterprises and by the entry of new private enterprises into the economy (Young 1999; World Bank 1997). Privatisation of industries and utilities will require foreign capital, as there is very little capital within Bosnia. The expatriate community might be one source of such capital. The US ambassador to Bosnia was asked during his visit to Chicago about the business environment and risk of investment in Bosnia. He replied that Chicago's Bosnian community was *'a unique group who can look beneath the surface for business opportunities, like food processing. Many factories need capital but could get up and running again.'*

Economic ties: collective activities

As previously discussed, many Bosnian groups have collected charitable donations for Bosnia. This activity decreased after the war, but with international aid drying up, it may remain an important way that the exile community can collectively contribute to Bosnia. Representing another type of collective action, in order to increase the type of business activities described above, some Bosniak community leaders have reportedly met with Bosnian officials to discuss investment possibilities. The President of the Bosniak Congress expressed that they would like to promote business investment in Bosnia, by Bosnians and by US corporations, *'because that's what Bosnia needs.'*

BiHACC is trying to make another type of investment in the Bosnian economy. In 1998, staff convinced Loyola University in Chicago to work with them to serve university students from Bosnia. The University of Sarejevo had been hit hard during the war, losing students, faculty and facilities. BiHACC contacted the university and convinced the rector and several deans to visit Chicago in 1998, and Loyola, the centre and the University of Sarejevo signed an agreement to cooperate (Bach 1999).

Because so many of Bosnia's educated workers have left the country, one expressed goal of the program was to send Bosnians back to their country with degrees and career skills. The 'New Beginnings' programme was established to help refugees and immigrants supplement their education with US certifications. In 1999, 36 students completed the first semester of the program. It

had two goals: to enhance refugees' ability to find good jobs in the US, and to provide them with a link to their home country so that they would perhaps return to help rebuild its economy.

At the same time, in Bosnia, an on-line computer science course was set up to allow students in Sarejevo to take a Loyola computer course. Initial funding was provided for 20 students to take the course. The program has lofty goals. Computer training, explained its coordinator, is very necessary in Bosnia. The country needs skilled people to help it overcome a ten-year gap in communication with the world. He continued:

'We think Bosnia needs knowledge, not just money. And although Bosnia is a high risk for investors, if people realize that the country can offer skilled employees, they will be encouraged to invest there. Other programmes like the Open Society Fund are introducing new equipment and technology, but Bosnia needs specialists who can work with it. We are trying to plug them in with the top knowledge.'

The first students have done well. They created a working model for a Sarejevo stock market based on the Chicago Board of Trade, and one student already plans to open a computer programming company. The programme hopes to fund 20 additional students next year.

Religious ties: individual and household activities

The ICC is the only Bosnian mosque in Chicago. Although some devout Bosniaks attend services at other mosques, and some non-Bosnians attend the ICC, it is there that Bosnian Muslims feel most comfortable. Ahmed and Saba expressed similar sentiments about the mosque: *'it's ours'*. The mosque helps Bosniaks to maintain ties to their families and homeland. Dino, for example, does not consider himself very religious, but he described the mosque as a *'way to feel connected with relatives in Bosnia. It's a spiritual thing. That's why it has been so important for the old-comers.'*

The mosque also allows Bosniaks to express their Muslim identity while practicing their own form of Islam. Ahmed feels that Bosniaks are different from Americans, *'because we're Muslim. But we're different from other Muslims because we're Europeans. We're in-between.'* Most Bosniaks describe themselves as *'mild Muslims'*. They rarely follow strict rules about contact between genders, and few women cover their hair. Some, however, have become more orthodox since the war. When Ahmed and I met an orthodox Bosniak friend on the street, he later explained to me,

'You know, he didn't have a beard until he came here.' Ahmed's opinion is that some Bosnians practice Islam more now because they see the US as a Christian society. He argued, 'Even the money here says "in God we trust".' Others explained that, after being targeted for being Muslim, it is natural that they practice their religion more now. In Bosnia as well as in Chicago, orthodox Muslim practices have become more common since the war. This is sometimes interpreted as an expression of Bosniak nationalism.

Religious ties: collective activities

The ICC provides other links to Bosnia. During the war, a number of US charities sent aid to Bosnia, but the BACA was probably the only Bosnian aid organization in the US that was actually run by Bosnians. Charitable contributions for Bosnia have decreased since the war, but collections are still advertised when special needs arise. Most recently, the mosque raised funds to help a young woman in Bosnia undergo a liver transplant.

As a religious institution, the mosque itself has strong Bosnian links. Bosniak literature is distributed there, and some of its leaders at the mosque also have connections to the religious community in Bosnia. The current imam visits Bosnia regularly, and a former imam at the mosque, Mustafa Cerić, is now the main leader (*reis*) of the Islamic Community in Sarejevo. The Islamic Community was a body created by the Yugoslav state in order to communicate with and exert some control over the Bosniak community. It is now positioned in close proximity to the governing SDA party, led by Alija Izetbegović. Cerić's term as *reis* has been notable for the manner in which he has moved the office onto a much more public plane, 'engaging forcibly and articulately in debate about a variety of issues' (Alcock, et al. 1998: 128-9). Respondents told me that both Cerić and some ICC members have been criticized for becoming too involved in politics. This demonstrates how religious connections to Bosnia can be closely tied to political connections.

Political ties: individual and household activities

Many Bosnians in Chicago keep track of political events in Bosnia, through periodicals and the internet. According to some respondents, many Bosnians in Chicago are voting. National elections were held in 1996 and 1998 and are scheduled again for November 2000. Registering to vote is not difficult. The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) distributes a form through community organizations, so refugees can register by visiting BiHACC or World Relief. Voting eligibility is based on pre-war residence, as

determined by the 1991 census. Zlata, an immigrant who came to the US twenty years ago, went back to Bosnia in 1991 to make sure that she would be registered in her hometown's voting list. Sabrina said that she voted because she wanted to keep her name on the voting register in her hometown, 'because we all want to go back someday.' Most of my respondents were familiar with the registration procedure. About half planned to vote in 2000, although many of these had come to Chicago before the war.

Political ties: collective activities

Groups of Bosnians in Chicago have sought direct influence over events in Bosnia in various ways. One is through political party involvement. In 1990, Alija Izetbegović and his allies in the Islamic Community announced the creation of the SDA, a 'political alliance of the citizens of Yugoslavia belonging to the historical-cultural sphere of Islam', to contest the 1990 national elections (Bougarel 1996). A Chicago chapter of the SDA was soon established, and members sent \$5,000 to the party Congress in Sarejevo to represent the Bosnians of Chicago. Izetbegović then visited the community, and an additional \$30,000 was collected for SDA-BiH (Koradžić 2000 [t]). The SDA and the Croatian and Serbian nationalist parties were the big winners in the 1990 election, and in post-war elections they have continued to command most of the vote, although the more moderate Social Democratic Party (SDP) has gained ground among Muslims.

SDA-Chicago has continued to collect assistance for the Bosnian party and has also held events aimed 'to figure out the truth, gain the support of the American public, and to affirm our culture, history and traditional values.' During the war, they tried to influence the US public and Congress through letters and debates that encouraged international intervention. They organized symposia about Bosnia in 1992 and 1993, appealing for the arms embargo on Bosnia to end (Koradžić 2000 [t]). One of the party organizers told me that, especially during the war, the SDA represented to Chicago Bosniaks not a classic political organization but a 'social movement' to protect Bosnian Muslims. 'We wanted to organize our people to help their brothers back in Bosnia.' After the war, SDA-Chicago fought to have the Bosnian language recognized as a separate language by the state of Illinois. They organized a conference about Bosnia in 1997, bringing academics from the US to Sarejevo. Every year, they organize a celebration of statehood day and recognize those who have helped Bosnia. Other branches of SDA have been founded in Michigan and Florida (*ibid.*). The Chicago chapter has not campaigned openly about

Bosnian elections, but it does publish *Tribina*, which is widely known in the community.

Besides providing support, Bosnians in Chicago have also tried to influence their homeland politicians. When fighting broke out between Bosnian Croats and Muslims during the war, Croatian and Muslim immigrants in Chicago tried to lower tensions between the two groups in Bosnia. They held a symposium in 1992 called 'Defending our Shared Homeland' and sent letters to President Izetbegović and Croatian President Tudjman. Their protests, however, had little effect. In *Tribina*, one participant claimed somewhat self-importantly, '*The statements we made were like little stars in the sky, but the politicians did not look at the stars*' (Tanović 2000 [t]).

The Association of Bosnians from Gacko has tried to make use of political connections with both Bosnia and the US to encourage minority returns. When returns to Gacko were obstructed by the presence of Serbian military barracks, members sent letters to President Clinton and to SFOR. Meanwhile, one of the co-founders of SDA-Chicago took letters to Bosnia from the Chicago community. In response, the Office of the High Representative (OHR) in Bosnia helped to remove obstructions to return. In August 1999, a motorcade of 250 people went to Fazlagića Kula; 30 stayed to begin reconstructing burned home and to prepare for the return of the others. When Serbs shelled the returnees in September, Chicago Bosnians sent letters of protest to the US government and to SFOR. Bosnian officials have praised the Gacko society and asked other Bosnian communities abroad to follow their example by organizing similar actions. The Vice President of SDA-BiH described minority returns as '*the most important political, economic and social question in Bosnia*' (Tanović 1999a [t]).

The Bosniak Congress has tried to expand the political role of the diaspora. Some goals that were discussed were strengthening Bosnian media in the US and working with American senators, diplomats and other officials to establish a good relationship between their homeland and host country. Participants also planned to sponsor discussions and seminars to '*tell the truth about Bosnia*' – that the war was a '*classic aggression and genocide against the Bosnian people*.' Finally, they wanted to support Bosnians as candidates for public office.

The diverse political activities of Chicago Bosnians show that they have found various paths of political influence. Through participation in political parties and the campaigning of the Gacko society, they have some direct influence on events in Bosnia. By finding access to US officials and the American media, they may also be able to influ-

ence the relationship between Bosnia and the US. Although the small community of oldcomers had little impact on the United States' role in the war, the much larger post-war community may command more attention.

Summary: Transnational activities amongst Bosnians in Chicago

Table 1 summarizes the various types of transnational activities observed in the Bosnian community. Some activities, like sending remittances to family and attending the mosque on important holidays, were widespread among individual Bosnians and their families. Others were initiated by small groups of highly active entrepreneurs. Still other forms of transnationalism were institutionalised: party activities, educational links and organized events like the Bosniak Conference. Table 1, like the preceding discussion, distinguishes between activities found at the individual and household level and those requiring collective action.

Table 1: Transnational activities in Chicago's Bosnian community

	Individual/household level	Collective level
Social	Contact with relatives in Bosnia; visits to Bosnia; remittances	Hometown associations; sports clubs; clubs and restaurants; assistance to minority returns; Bosnian language media; visits from Bosnian organizations; celebrations of Bosnian holidays; beauty pageants
Cultural	Children's language and culture classes	Cultural societies; folk festivals; library collection; literature; high school Bosnian Club; performers visiting from Bosnia; city level representations of Bosnian culture; support for cultural activities by Bosniak Congress
Economic	Sending money to relatives; ownership of property in Bosnia; import-export businesses; investing in Bosnia	Organizing charitable collections for BiH; rebuilding radio station in BiH; promotion of investment by community leaders; university partnerships
Religious	Sense of identity and connectedness to Bosnia through the mosque	Charity collected through the mosque; connections between Chicago's mosque and religious leaders in Bosnia
Political	Voting; keeping informed on situation in BiH through internet & periodicals	Croat and Muslim petitions to warring parties; campaigns for minority returns; Chicago chapters of Bosnian parties; Bosnian political figures attend Bosniak conference in Chicago; connections with US officials and media; support for Bosnian candidates in US

Source: Field research, July 2000

4.3. Portrayals of 'Bosnia' in exile

Because of my respondents' varied backgrounds and wartime experiences, and because people deal with tragedy in different ways, a diverse range of transnational activities can be observed within the Chicago community. Through these activities, migrants are shaping their own images of Bosnia in their country of exile. These images are varied, but two portrayals of Bosnia became particularly apparent during my research.

Some people are attempting through their community work to portray Bosnia as a multicultural society. In this way, they look back nostalgically to more peaceful and tolerant days in the former Yugoslavia. For example, BiHACC, according to Sabrina, makes a statement about its view of Bosnia by opening its programs to all Bosnian refugees, regardless of ethnic and religious differences. *'It's for all the people of Bosnia'*, she claimed. Holding an event to celebrate Bosnia's multicultural constitution is one way the centre has tried to promote this image of Bosnia. Its staff and volunteers also come from varied backgrounds; some are Serbs and Croats, and others were born in the US. By promoting linkages between universities, the centre hopes to make a connection with Bosnia that is free from the influence of ethnic politics. *'Education is clear'*, said the coordinator of the project.

The magazine *Novi Zena* is also creating an image of multicultural Bosnia by bringing together women from Bosnia's different ethnic groups. One issue contained the story of a Serb woman's friendship with her Muslim neighbour in Chicago, probably a rare example of such a friendship in either Chicago or Bosnia (Scharnberg 2000). This multicultural approach is supported by positive views of multiculturalism in the US. Organizations that claim to be multicultural may have an advantage in selling themselves to state funders. Indeed, BiHACC is the organization that has received the most support from outside the Bosnian community.

Other organizations in Chicago are explicitly Bosniak in name and membership and supported mainly by community contributions. Among the goals of the Bosniak Conference were to promote positive aspects of Bosnia as a newly independent state and to confirm Bosniaks' ability to live in peaceful cooperation with other groups and religions. But other goals focused on the Bosniak community itself: *'clearly defining a cohesive Muslim Bosniak identity'* and *'telling the truth about Bosnia: that it was a classic case of genocide'* (Zambak 2000b [t]). The second image of Bosnia that has been created in Chicago is that of the homeland of the Bosnian Muslims – a people who suffered genocide⁴. This sense of victimhood forms the basis for a more aggressive Bosniak identity.

Some Bosniaks, most visibly those involved with SDA-Chicago, urge the community not to forget

⁴ Rahmanović contributes to this image when he dedicates *Crna Duša* *'To the presidents and governments of powerful world forces and their marionettes in the UN who, possessing absolute power, allowed a genocide to happen to a small people called Bosnian Muslims on the threshold of the 21st century'* (2000 [t])

what happened during the war. For example, *Tribina* features articles on 'concentration camps', and its editorials remind readers that 'in Bosnia genocide was executed over the innocent Bosniaks' nation with the use of brutal violence' (Erović 1999: 21 [t]). Another example of the impetus not to forget occurred during the US ambassador's visit to the ICC. Bosniaks presented him with two pictures as parting gifts: the Ferhadije mosque in Banja Luka and the Old Bridge in Mostar, both now destroyed. The audience applauded loudly as he promised to hang the pictures in the US embassy 'to remind me of unfinished tasks'.

After being persecuted for their Muslim identity, it seems natural that many Bosniaks feel the need to define what that identity is. Resurrected memories of the war are based on the tragic events that befell many Bosnian Muslims. Unfortunately, however, these attitudes and practices may also perpetuate the divided nature of the Bosnian state, reinforcing nationalism rather than offering alternatives to it. In Bosnia, according to a World Bank report, 'many people in each ethnic group see themselves as members of their group, rather than as Bosnians, and are not broadly concerned with the welfare of the entire country' (Fox and Wallich 1997). Critics of the SDA in Bosnia argue that, although the party claims to support a multi-national Bosnia, 'the discrepancy between words and deeds is glaring', and the party's practices are based more on 'a mono-ethnic principle of exclusivity' (Kebo 2000). Many Bosniaks left their country with a nationalist perspective shaped by the war, and, at least among those who cultivate political connections with Bosnia, the links they maintain to their home country often follow nationalist lines. If political attitudes in Bosnia itself gradually become more moderate, some Bosniak emigrants could be more fervent supporters of nationalist politics than their countrymen at home.

The fact that many organized activities in Chicago are limited to Bosniaks and recall the war creates divisions within the Bosnian community in Chicago as well. Bosniak events often exclude multicultural Bosnian organizations. They also exclude Muslims who prefer to avoid ethnic exclusiveness and memories of the war. These divisions are revisited in the next chapter.

5. Obstacles to transnationalism

Faist writes that the concept of transnationalism 'enriches our understanding of adaptation' (1999: 14). Clearly, there are examples of transnationalism that do help us to understand how Bosnians have adapted to life in Chicago. Their culture, religion and politics are not contained within the

country of settlement but are shaped by border-crossing ties. But how much does this focus on transnationalism help us to better understand the community as a whole? This section explores whether Chicago's Bosnians can indeed be considered a transnational community by explaining various *obstacles* to the development of transnationalism in the Bosnian community. The first set of obstacles lies in the home country's ability to encourage transnational activities among its emigrant population. The second set of obstacles is found in the migrant community, where some of the factors that might lead to transnational adaptations appear to be absent.

5.1. Obstacles to connections with Bosnia: the home state

Basch, *et al.* describe a new kind of state formation in the countries of emigration they study. Because states have attempted to incorporate their diaspora communities, their 'geographical boundaries no longer can be understood to contain the citizens of the nation-state' (1994: 260). Sending states have encouraged migrants to invest in their home economies and to participate in development projects at home. At the same time, migrants have demanded greater incorporation in homeland politics and society. By extending membership to migrants, sending states institutionalise a forum for transnational activity (Smith 1999).

Not all sending states, however, are equally capable and supportive of engagement with diaspora communities. Landolt (1999) writes that the political regime's strength, stability and resources determine the impact of transnationalism on the origin country and its capacity to respond to the practices initiated by the migrant population. According to Smith (1999), the durability and nature of transnational life depends in part on the extent to which home society institutions support its continuation. This varies depending on the emigrant population's strategic importance, changes in development plans, and relationships between home and host states.

Despite the reconstruction efforts of the international community, the Bosnian state lacks both strength and stability. Its engagement with Bosnian migrants is hindered by political and economic problems that create barriers to the development of transnationalism. There is no room here to detail all the complicated facets of the reconstruction process in Bosnia, but some main points will highlight the political, economic, and attitudinal barriers to transnational activities.

Political barriers: a divided country

Bosnia's political problems are obvious and apparently intransigent. During the worst phase of the war, there were no functioning state-level institutions. The country's administrative structures disintegrated. The Dayton Agreement established a national government for the country as a whole, consisting of representatives from each constitutive nationality: Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks. Five years after the Dayton agreement, however, the country's three separate administrative entities, the Republika Srpska, the Federation, and to an extent the Croatian para-state of Herceg-Bosna, largely operate as independent states. They have separate constitutions, governments, parliaments, and armed forces (Amnesty International 2000).

Attitudes about ethnic segregation have changed but little since the war. Many Muslims feel the Republika Srpska is an illegitimate creation, something that '*never existed in the history of Bosnia*'. Serbs and Croats are more closely affiliated to Bosnia's neighbours than to the fledgling independent state. Even within the Muslim-Croat federation, there are few functioning joint institutions. The key actors in nationalist parties remain the same, and the ruling parties still control the country's economics, politics and security. Their power base lies outside the formal economy, and existing state structures are little more than an empty shell. Forces of disintegration led by the extreme nationalists may overpower forces of ethnic cooperation and integration. Robert Barry, the head of the OSCE mission to Bosnia-Herzegovina, reported that, '*as long as these par-tocracies exist, the transition to democracy will not happen*' (Barry 1999a). With the Bosnian state so divided, it is small wonder that it has been unable to respond to Bosnians abroad, to incorporate them, or to take better advantage of their resources.

Campaigning for minority returns might be one way in which Bosnian emigrants could influence the reconstruction process in their home country despite the weakness of the Bosnian government. Minority returns have increased recently: in 1999 there were 65 per cent more than in 1998 (Dlouhy 1999). So far, however, the group from Gacko is the lone example of refugees from Chicago who have organized around minority returns. When asked why there are not more similar actions, one community leader responded by referring to the many obstacles to minority returns in Bosnia created by the fact that the Dayton agreement has been but selectively implemented. Freedom of movement is still restricted, particularly between the Republika Srpska and the Federation, and there has been little cooperation regarding the arrest of war

criminals. There has been a lack of genuine progress in establishing the rule of law and the functioning of local authorities (Tanović 1999a [t]; Bojičić and Kaldor 1999: 112-113). Without legal guarantees and strong local authorities to turn to for assistance, many Bosnians do not yet feel safe returning to their hometowns regardless of the expatriate community's willingness to assist them.

Economic barriers

Before the war, Bosnia suffered from debt, inflation and high unemployment. There were also growing links between the ruling elite and mafia types. Nationalist arguments concealed these links and appealed to victims of economic insecurity (Kaldor 1999: 37). Bosnia's wartime economy, as described by Bojičić and Kaldor (1999), involved a strange mix of humanitarian and criminal elements:

On the one hand, the public sector is destroyed and replaced by a humanitarian economy, supported entirely from abroad, based on handouts, in which nobody is paid and no-one works, and in which beneficiaries experience repeated humiliation. On the other hand, the new market economy is largely criminalized; it consists of a 'gangster economy', made up of loot and pillage, black marketeering, arms trade, drug trade, etc. (98)

Since the Dayton agreement, the international community has attempted to revive the Bosnian economy, its efforts primarily focused on rebuilding physical and social infrastructure. There has been some improvement of the economic situation, but according to Barry (1999b), little progress has been made towards the creation of a functioning and viable market economy. In the Federation, unemployment remained at 40 per cent in 1999. In the Bosnian Serb entity, it stood at 60 per cent. Bosnia's rule of law, investment climate and economic strength remain among the worst in Europe. Bojičić and Kaldor (1999) argue that local level institutions in Bosnia have been incapable of handling reconstruction activities. The implementation of projects has lagged because of a lack of cooperation and commitment from local authorities, '*indicating the overwhelming influence of politics over genuine economic interests*' (Bojičić and Kaldor, 1999: 109).

With institutions not functioning, there has been little of the investment required by the neo-liberal model prescribed for Bosnia's economic transition. When I asked my respondents about possibilities for investment in Bosnia – by purchasing shares in privatised enterprises or through business ventures, they gave largely negative responses. Ahmed, for example, took a deep breath and be-

gan detailing the history of Bosnia, starting with Roman times, as if that were explanation enough. Others described how millions have been 'raked off' by state officials: *'it's a spooky thing. People have gotten close to investing but have withdrawn. The current climate has no rule of law.'* Many had lost money in Bosnian banks and lost their trust in the banking system. Boris described other perceived economic obstacles, including patronage networks that he believed would limit his investment opportunities:

It would be difficult to invest in something there, because there is no market for products. You would have to make product and provide the market as well—to do it all from the start to the bitter end. As for buying shares: I would like to get shares in the electric utility. But those are taken by people with connections. I could only get useless shares in some technologically outdated company.

A new rule adopted in February by Bosnia's Provisional Election Commission may improve the investment climate by preventing elected officials from sitting on the boards of public enterprises and privatisation agencies, where they have consolidated their hold over key economic assets. The OSCE (2000) argued that, *'if Bosnia and Herzegovina is to have a future as a viable state with a dynamic market economy, ... the economic development of the country can no longer be held hostage to the short-sighted interests of an elite few.'* This legal reform may improve the situation, but it also demonstrates the extent of the obstacles described above.

Another possible economic connection with Bosnia might be through the provision of skills by returnees or through educational programmes like the Loyola-Sarejevo partnership. Refugees, however, have a much better standard of life in the diaspora than in their villages. Return is limited because there is little possibility of finding a job in Bosnia. Some 50 per cent of people with a BA degree, for example, have left Tuzla, and the exodus continues (Bojičić and Kaldor 1999). The coordinator of the Loyola-Sarejevo programme said that he has tried to make its on-line students promise not to leave Bosnia, but *'they will leave rather than being on the street.'* The presence of a huge number of foreign agencies in Bosnia means that the professionals that do remain are attracted by the relatively high salaries offered by foreign agencies to work outside of their professions, *'thus undermining local capacity building in the long run'* (*ibid.*: 112). The fact that many young Bosnians who are returning to work in Bosnia are also employed by foreign agencies like

the US army means that they, likewise, will contribute little to Bosnia's economic future.

Some Chicago Bosnians had found ways to invest in Bosnia, and others were interested in doing likewise. As refugees gain more resources, that interest may increase. But ironically, as Bojičić and Kaldor (1999: 114) argue, investment and economic assistance that take place within the current framework in Bosnia may help legitimate the separate development of ethnically controlled areas and institutions. The conditions that would allow investment to contribute to economic growth and political stability may not yet exist.

Bosnian attitudes toward the diaspora

Besides Bosnia's entrenched political and economic problems, the attitudes of Bosnian officials and at least some of its population may pose an additional barrier to the engagement of the diaspora community. One respondent complained that Bosnian officials neglect the diaspora:

The government does not recognize how important the diaspora community is. They never approach us to help with economic goals. I have told them many times that they have businessmen here; that Chicago is a great economic power. We could do much to advance Bosnia. They should mobilize us, but we have received little attention. They are in communication with some representatives here, but only before elections.

A small elite in Chicago has connections with the government and has been able to participate in transnational interactions at this level, but the majority of the community seems to be excluded. Even members of that elite would like to receive more attention. For example, although several Bosnian mayors attended the Bosniak Conference, one of its organizers was somewhat disappointed: *'We didn't get anyone big. We were hoping for the foreign minister.'*

The Loyola-Sarejevo project seems like an example of a transnational connection that could further the reconstruction process in Bosnia. But it also exemplifies some of the barriers that would-be transnational entrepreneurs face. At first, many activities were planned for a University of Sarejevo 'campus in exile', with student exchanges and a radio station. Zdenko, the programme coordinator, noted that those who initiated it *'had plans to bring the Bosnian students here, to take them to visit the Chicago Board of Trade. We eventually wanted to connect the University of Sarejevo business school and medical school to Loyola; they could cooperate closely. But everything depends on money.'*

When it came to raising money, the larger aspirations of the Chicagoans involved in the project were quickly stifled. They believed that the funding should come from Bosnia, from those who would benefit from trained workers, and they tried to convince Bosnian officials and companies to support the Sarejevo students by paying their tuition. Zdenko was obviously frustrated by the lack of support they have received from institutions in Bosnia:

I am tired of just receiving verbal support. The government has received a great deal of money. It should support the project. We also spoke to Coca-cola because they have a factory in Bosnia, but they were concerned about investing in anything. This is not big money—only scholarships. We are proud of our program, but we are not happy that we weren't able to do more.

The project has received little coverage in the Bosnian media. *'They like sensation',* said Zdenko, *'but there is nothing spectacular here. It's a slow process, but it must be a priority there.'*

Besides this perceived neglect by the Bosnian government, Bosnians in Chicago may also be resented by some of their countrymen in Bosnia. Some Bosnians view refugees as traitors for abandoning the country during the war. They do not appreciate the arrival of relatively wealthy returnees who increase income stratification in Bosnia. When I discussed the possible roles of the exile community with a student visiting from Bosnia, his reaction toward them was harsh. *'These people have no right to get involved',* he said. *'Where were they during the war, when we were suffering there? Sitting comfortably in Chicago. And would they ever go back to live there? But still they want to tell us what to do.'*

The relationship between newly independent Croatia and its emigrants – some 200,000 of who live in the Chicago area – provides a marked contrast to that between Bosnia and its emigrants. During the war, the Croatian diaspora was highly mobilized, providing funds, arms and even soldiers to President Tudjman (Kaldor 1999). It has since been rewarded by independent Croatia. Croatian officials are frequent visitors to Chicago, and Croatia opened a consulate in Chicago in 1999 to promote economic and political ties between Chicago's Croatians and their homeland. Officials hope the embassy will promote tourism and economic opportunities in Croatia, help Chicagoans to obtain visas to visit Croatia, and serve a cultural focal point for Croatian-Americans in the city (Craven and Janega 1999).

5.2. Obstacles to connections with Bosnia: the exile community

In this section, I will identify barriers to transnationalism found within the exile community itself. Oddly enough, these include both problems within the community that hinder the development of transnational activities, as well as a *lack* of certain problems that might cause Bosnians to seek transnational adaptations. Most of my respondents argued that people lack sufficient resources to get involved in Bosnia. The community also seems to be divided along several lines, and many people feel alienated from Bosnia. But there is also an *absence* of severe racial and social exclusion – factors that arguably lead to transnationalism (Basch *et al.* 1994). Finally, and perhaps most importantly, it seems that the priorities of many Bosnians lie not in Bosnia, but in Chicago.

Lack of resources

Other researchers have described how even relatively poor immigrant populations have become involved in transnational projects. For example, many Eritrean exiles contribute two per cent or more of their monthly income to the Eritrean government (Al-Ali, Black and Koser 2000). But many of my respondents had the perception that, to participate in rebuilding Bosnia, one would need a great deal of money and spare time, assets that Chicago Bosnians claimed to lack. One respondent argued that even among the 'oldcomers',

There's no money to help rebuild Bosnia. You have to have a huge amount of money. Until recently, we had very few people, only 4-5 businesses. Until the refugees came, we were just trying to survive, making sure people had a place to pray. We can send flour and sugar, maybe collect a few thousand dollars. Perhaps later some of the refugees will have money to help, but it's too soon.

Dino agreed that the community is still not rich enough to do much for Bosnia: *'We are still in the process of economic development. We all came with no money; we've only been here for six years. We're still economically dependent. In five years, maybe there will be more initiatives.'* Mirko noted that he felt pressured just to provide money to his relatives: *'It's too expensive to even visit Bosnia. Not only do you have to buy the tickets, but you also have to take presents and money for everyone there. It costs \$4,000-5,000.'*

But others believed that the community could be more active, even now. *'It's not up to me to judge them',* said one respondent, *'but they could do more. Some are very wealthy, but they are doing other things with their money. We have to find a*

way to mobilize them.' People, he believed, were afraid to donate money because they were still afraid for their own futures. *'They arrived without any money and want to make their families secure here.'*

A divided community

As described earlier, social capital is an important resource for transnational communities. It often takes the form of solidarity and mutual trust; communities share symbolic and collective representations that increase their social cohesion (Faist 1999). The Bosnian community, however, is characterized instead by various divisions and a lack of common symbolic representations of Bosnia. Solidarity is often limited to close friends and family. One respondent described how divisions in Bosnia have been brought to the US: *'We have very difficult political issues. The government cannot agree, and this is reflected in our community. The government must represent the three nationalities, and the diaspora should respond by doing the same.'* Obviously, some differences between refugees are based on national and religious backgrounds. But there are also differences among Muslims. These include both divisions between the new refugees and earlier arrivals and among the refugees themselves, who had different wartime experiences and have different attitudes toward their home country and its government.

The most obvious division within the Bosnian community is between those who view Bosnia as a multicultural society and those who characterize it by its ethnic divisions. As previously described, this is demonstrated by the different portrayals of Bosnia that have been created in the exile community. To some extent, these contrasting views of Bosnia reflect differences between people who came from urban and rural areas. In Bosnia, a quarter of the population was intermarried, and a secular pluralist culture flourished around the urban areas (Kaldor 1999). Aleksandar, from a Serbian-Croatian family in Sarejevo, had always considered himself a Sarejevan. He had believed the people in the cities were different. Many of those involved in multicultural organizations were from cities, while those participating in Bosniak organizations seemed more likely to come from rural areas.

The relationship between BiHACC and specifically Bosniak organizations illustrates this division, which is often expressed in personal conflicts. BiHACC's director, Sabrina, admits she feels excluded from some community events. For example, the ambassador to Bosnia did not pay a visit to her agency, speaking instead at the mosque. She did not attend. BiHACC also did not participate in the Bosniak Congress and has not

been included in discussions about possibilities for investment in Bosnia. Sabrina expressed hope that things were getting better, that these rifts were beginning to heal. She appeared quite troubled, however, when the issue came up.

Among Bosniaks, distinctions between refugees and those migrants who came to Chicago before the war are clearly distinguishable. Hein (1993: 50-51) explains how the political causes of refugee crises result in distinct waves of migrants with different backgrounds and attitudes. In the Bosnian case, as the Yugoslav state was transformed after WWII and again in the 1990s, the migrant groups who left indeed had distinct characteristics. Refugees frequently described the earlier arrivals as *'having a different mindset'*. Part of this lay in their different approach to Islam. As most did not live under 50 years of communism, the earlier arrivals are often much more devout in their practice than the new refugees. Among the latter, it is mainly older people who frequent the mosque. Respondents told me that *'many people went a lot after the war, praying to God to help them. Now, they don't go as much.'* The imam confirmed the fact that people go less now than immediately after the war. Most refugees, he said, are more concerned with pursuing wealth and the American dream than with religion. *'Maybe at the beginning I noticed that they were frightened and tried to find comfort in religion, but the longer they stay, the more they feel like nothing happened'* (Manier 1998). Bosnian refugees do attend the mosque for special events, like weddings, but the oldcomers have sometimes been dismayed by their behaviour. One board member protested after a Saturday wedding was held at the mosque by refugees who did not regularly attend: *'These people are not with Allah! They opened champagne in front of the mosque, men wore shorts, the women were wearing mini-skirts. I can't believe this! Someone needs to meet with them before we let them have weddings here!'* When I asked him about the mosque's relationship with the new arrivals, another board member sighed: *'we would like them to practice their faith ...'*

Besides religious differences, the different migration waves have different political outlooks. Oldcomers were frequently described as more 'radical' than the new refugees, and they seemed more supportive of nationalist leaders in Bosnia. This makes sense when one considers that they left Bosnia in opposition to the Communist state. Because other political challenges were disallowed under communism, a nationalist political discourse was seen as the only alternative (Kaldor 1999: 36).

A struggle over leadership roles may create additional divisions between oldcomers and newcomers. Goldring (1999) has described how participation in community development projects and transnational organizations like hometown clubs allows migrants to build social and political capital and gain prestige and status. Leaders who can manage community projects may develop new relationships with authorities in both home and host countries who are interested in the resources they can command. This helps explain individual efforts to claim positions of authority.

The Bosnian community has many aspiring leaders, but competition for authority seems to have caused some infighting. One respondent noted that various people are claiming leadership, *'but nobody's listening'*. When I asked another Bosnian about community leadership, he was reluctant to reply: *'I don't want to say anything bad about anyone'*, he hedged. But someone else explained that, as educated and capable new refugees arrived to challenge established leadership figures, there have been conflicts over who should lead the community.

Even among the new refugees themselves, there are divisions. One Bosnian immigrant noted that among the earlier migrants there is much more trust than among the war refugees:

We oldcomers all trust each other. Any one of us could serve as the treasurer. But when they collect money they have to give it to us for safekeeping because they don't trust each other. I don't know if all refugee communities are like this?

The struggle for leadership is reflected in an exchange between writers in *Zambak* and *Tribina*. *Zambak* characterized the SDA-Chicago party as fragmented, describing how one former member had begun a new branch in an attempt to gain more access to the main party leaders in Bosnia and Herzegovina. To this, *Tribina*, which is published by SDA-Chicago, retorted: *'you have the right to say that politics is bad but not to accuse us ... The other SDA is just an isolated group of several Bosnians who haven't done anything for Bosnia. That organization just exists on paper'* (Kulenović 1999: 62-63 [t]).

Milica, looking sad, attributed the mistrust that divides the refugees to the fact that the war sometimes pitted even Bosnian Muslims against each other. Sabrina also emphasized that refugees had learned not to trust anyone, and that in Chicago, unlearning this wariness of others would be a slow process. Because they have brought the divisions that exist in Bosnia to their host country, it is questionable whether it is accurate to call Chicago's Bosnians a community. There

exist tight family, friendship and political networks among them, but mistrust and a lack of solidarity may hinder the formation of broader ties. Unfortunately, the divisions found in Chicago that prevent Bosnians from collectively engaging with their home country may be the same type of divisions that hinder chances for successful reconstruction in Bosnia.

Sense of alienation from Bosnia

Although some members of the community are trying to strengthen their political, social, economic, cultural and religious connections with Bosnia, the majority of my respondents showed relatively little interest in building links with their home country that reached beyond narrow family and friendship networks. A few respondents mentioned that, in their opinion, those most involved in transnational activities were those with the least direct experience during the war. It may be that refugees who were on the front lines in Bosnia and those who have suffered from trauma have not become as involved. One respondent indicated that political activities in particular were immaterial to the general population: *'Why are political organizing and long tales of people's grandfathers important now?'* The fact that respondents evidenced both an alienation from their hometowns in Bosnia and an aversion to Bosnian politics helps to explain this reluctance to participate.

With respect to hometowns, even though many people are visiting Bosnia, they are not necessarily going back 'home'. Refugees from the Republika Srpska feel particularly alienated from their places of origin. Ahmed recently brought his parents from Banja Luka to live with him in Chicago. He explained why:

In Bosnia, people don't just move. If you move you have to consult with all of your family. You have to consider that your grandparents were from that place. My mother always loved her city. She taught me to love it. One day, I was talking to my mother in Banja Luka. When I asked her how things were, she told me, 'One thing has changed. Now I hate my city.' It's not the place that made her love it. It was the people, and they changed.

Several refugees from Prijedor also expressed their sense of alienation. Although Radha and Ivan have visited their family in London and Croatia, they have not been to Prijedor to visit her brother, who is married to a Serb. *'Why go back if you are a stranger?'* Radha asked. Saba spent part of the war in a concentration camp in Prijedor. She visits family now living in Sarejevo but says she will not return to her hometown:

'They're saying now, "come back, things are okay, let's live together again". But I can't live with them anymore.'

Aleksandar's parents had a mixed marriage. They divorced, and he lives in Chicago with his Serbian mother. He says he feels more accepted in Chicago than he ever did in Bosnia. He has no plans to ever return to Bosnia and does not speak to his Croatian father, still living in Sarejevo. Aleksandar works at BiHACC, but he is wary of Chicago's Bosniak organizations. *'Sometimes I think I should reach out to people',* he said, *'but I'm afraid of being bitten.'*

Some refugees who have returned have found that the experienced confirmed their alienation from Bosnia. When one woman returned to her house in northwestern Bosnia to retrieve books and pictures, she was refused entry by the strangers who now occupied it. *'It was really sad. I called my husband and told him, "I'm coming home to Chicago". It was the first time I believed [it] was my home'* (Orr 1998).

In terms of alienation from political organisations, although some of my respondents were voting in Bosnian elections, others were loath to involve themselves in Bosnian politics. Zlata, an immigrant who had gone to great lengths to secure her right to vote in Bosnia, expressed disappointment that more refugees were not involved. *'People have gone from house to house to register them, but still very few of them vote',* she lamented. *'I think that we oldcomers are more interested in voting than they are.'* She estimated that, of about 200,000 Bosnians in North America, only 10,000 are voting.

The stories of two respondents may help to explain this lack of interest. Milica's husband was wounded in Bosnia. As a former journalist, she helped the radio station to provide coverage of the war when she first arrived in Chicago. Because she suffered from post-war trauma, however, her doctor recommended that she stay away from associations with Bosnia. Although things have improved, and she now has a job and two small children, she remains disinterested in Bosnian politics: *'Politics is poison in any country.'*

Mirko, who was wounded during the war, told me that he was finished with 'organizations'. *'That's what cost me my leg',* he said. He also seemed reluctant to answer a question about voting in the Bosnian elections:

Let me be honest with you. It's not for me to make decisions for people there. Why should I choose a President for them? They have to decide if things are going to be worse or better. I'm sitting here with a job, getting paid

every fifteen days. It's not for me, here, to tell them what to do.

Both Mirko and Milica planned to become US citizens. Despite her aversion to politics, Milica hoped to pass her citizenship interview in time to vote in the US elections. Mirko planned to apply for citizenship in 2001. *'Then I will have my own President, just like you',* he said.

(Lack of) racial exclusion

Basch, *et al.* (1994) list racial exclusion as a factor that contributes to transnationalism by increasing the economic and political insecurity of newcomers and their descendents. The fact that Bosnians are a European population, however, means that racial factors are unlikely to influence their adaptation to the US. Boris recalled that, in Italy, he had felt discriminated against because of his Slavic background. In the US, however, he had not experienced such attitudes. It could be true that Bosniaks face some discrimination based on their religion. Most of my respondents, however, did not express the view that this hindered their chances of success. With a few exceptions, religion is not a visible identifier in the community. Although one Bosniak can identify another on the street, most look and dress much like other residents of Chicago. Lack of language skills is a more potent cause of discrimination. Boris is proficient in English, but he fears that his accent and lack of fluency mark him as different. *'People who have worked with refugees understand, but others know you're not from here and don't accept you',* he complained.

(Lack of) Socio-economic exclusion

A second factor contributing to transnationalism is socio-economic exclusion in the host country. Glick Schiller *et al.* (1999) describe how the global restructuring of capital and trade liberalization have transformed production and labour markets in the US as well as in sending countries, reducing employment security and living standards for unskilled labour. In earlier times, manufacturing jobs offered opportunities to immigrant workers with low levels of education, allowing their children to obtain more education and move up the social ladder. Today, however, deindustrialization has severed the ladder of opportunity represented by the availability of unskilled work with a living wage. Deindustrialization has been accompanied by a polarization of the labour market, with an increase of jobs in both knowledge-intensive white-collar industries (finance, government services and technology) and in low-level service jobs, often part-time or in the informal sector. In this 'hourglass economy', immigrants often fill in the jobs at the bottom; undocumented migrants

are an especially cheap and flexible source of labour. (Cross and Waldinger 1997; Sassen 1996).

Transnational activities help offset households' economic vulnerability under these conditions; migrants adapt to the insecure labour market by maintaining homes and businesses in both host and home countries. Glick Schiller *et al.* (1999: 86) argue that by creating transnational networks, families

maximize their resources in multiple settings and survive within situations of economic uncertainty and subordination. These family networks, spanning across political and economic borders, provide the possibility for individual survival and at times social mobility in contexts of vulnerability and subordination to world capitalism at home and abroad.

In some ways, Bosnians are disadvantaged in the US labour market. Low-level service jobs and temporary or part-time work are common, especially as first jobs in the US. Radha works in a factory; her husband Ivan is a janitor. Their combined income allows them to rent a clean, well-maintained apartment in Rogers Park, but they rely on help from their children, who work as computer programmers in London. Mirko, who has three small children at home, complains that his wife, who had professional experience in Bosnia, makes little more than minimum wage at her deli job. Many Bosnian professionals have been unable to make use of their credentials in Chicago, particularly those who were in law, education or other fields with high literacy requirements. They face language problems and sometimes find their Bosnian qualifications unaccepted in the US. This leads to unmet expectations and frustration.

Other Bosnians face additional challenges that are related to their refugee experience. Dino, a mental health caseworker, estimated that 15-20 per cent of refugees suffer from mental health problems that are severe enough to impair their ability to learn English and adjust to Chicago. Many of them are unemployed and receiving welfare. Others are working but face difficulties. Ivan's memory problems, for example, prevent him from finding a job better than his current position. Although Dino's programme has worked with 600 refugees over 5 years, he is sure that many people who need help have not accessed mental health services.

But Bosnians have also found opportunities. They have legal status and are able to work in the formal US labour market, which grew by 15.7 per cent in the decade ending in 1996 (Cross and Waldinger 1997). Many are skilled workers who fit into the top end of the hourglass economy.

Many young refugees are attending school, often studying finance or computers, professions valuable in a post-industrial economy. Even middle-aged women attend night classes in computers so that they could move into administrative positions, and many doctors, accountants and lawyers are studying to become re-certified in the US. Several initiatives are helping Bosnian refugees to make better use of their previous job experience. World Relief has launched a business initiative to help Bosnians find better jobs or secure loans to start their own business. Loyola's New Beginnings program, described above, is helping other refugees return to school.

Many researchers of immigration have noted migrants' propensity to engage in self-employment. Some have attributed this to discrimination faced by newcomers in the labour market; others dispute this, citing the income advantages of entrepreneurship. Probably for both reasons, entrepreneurship has been a popular option among Bosnians. The community in Chicago is now large enough to support many 'ethnic' businesses like restaurants and Bosnian music and video stores (the one on Montrose Avenue is called 'Dayton Music'), but there are other businesses as well, like printers, real estate agencies, auto dealerships, medical clinics, and law offices.

Some Bosnians still find employment in more traditional immigrant jobs in industry, although this may involve secondary migration to smaller urban centres. For example, it may seem surprising that Waterloo, Iowa, a city of less than 70,000 people, hosts a Bosnian population of 6,000. IBP, a meat-packing company, has recruited Bosnians from Chicago and other cities to work for about \$9.60 an hour in its Waterloo pork plant.⁵ The plant's Bosnian employees include overseers, translators, office-workers and managers, and plant workers can easily get by without English. Branka, a Chicago recruiter for IBP, receives calls from Bosnians in Louisiana, Texas, and other parts of the country. She says that life in Waterloo is more like that in Bosnia – '*things move more slowly*'. The low cost of housing is another draw. In Waterloo, people can rent a house for \$400/month, compared to \$450 for a studio in Chicago. Last year, 350 Bosnians purchased homes in Waterloo. IBP, in turn, is happy to employ Bosnians. Few have left their jobs. '*They're more popular in Waterloo than other immigrant workers*', says Branka, '*because they're more likely to settle and keep their children in school. Our people like to stay put.*' This is facilitated by

⁵Since many of these are Bosniaks, the fact that they are willing to work in a pork processing plant testifies to the 'mild' nature of their religious practices.

the fact that, unlike many migrants, Bosnians have permanent resident status.

Besides those who have relocated to Iowa, other Bosnians have left Chicago's north side to locate better job opportunities and a better quality of life. Many have gone to St. Louis, which has a 3 per cent unemployment rate and plenty of jobs available. It now hosts 15,000 Bosnians. The small number of refugees who were first resettled there in the early 1990s found the cost of living so low that the area soon attracted Bosnians who had been resettled elsewhere. *'St. Louis is seen as a cheap place to live'*, noted one refugee, *'People come from California, Chicago and Florida, where it's more expensive. Bosnians don't care if they start by buying the smallest, ugliest house. At least they feel they have something.'* Almost no Bosnians are on welfare, and they are helping to revitalize an area that had been experiencing out-migration and urban decay. Bosnians have found the city a cheap place to start new businesses, and entrepreneurs have already founded a trucking company and dozens of restaurants, shops and grocery stores (Kotkin 1999).

One problem that results from an 'hourglass economy' is that there are many jobs at the top and bottom of the ladder, with few in between to allow the second generation to move up. Perlmann and Waldinger (1997: 910), however, argue that this crisis *'will not affect the offspring of the very large fraction of immigrants who arrive with useful skills ... These immigrants can and do support an extended education for their second generation children.'* This certainly seems to be the case in the Bosnian community. *'In our tradition'*, Sabrina said, *'it was something very important in family life to go to school, to graduate from school, and to help others in your family do the same.'* Chicago's Swift elementary school, attended by 200 Bosnian children, was once slated for closure. In the last five years, it has jumped 22 places in state rankings and is now receiving funds for expansion because of its performance. Bosnian children have dominated recent awards ceremonies. At Amundsen High School, 23 per cent of Bosnian students are honor society members (Marjamaa 1998). Most older students now receive financial aid in universities.

Another factor that lessens the possibility of socio-economic exclusion is the fact that Bosnian refugees have certain social rights in the US that most migrants lack. Their special status in the welfare system makes them eligible for assistance upon arrival, whereas most immigrants are ineligible for public assistance until they have lived in the US for five years. The state and federal governments also fund special services like language and job training to help incorporate refugees into

the labour market (Hein 1993). Because of the skills they brought with them and efforts to help them gain new skills, many Bosnians in Chicago have found productive activities in their host country that make them less likely to seek transnational adaptations (Faist 1999).

Other priorities: work and family in Chicago

At a celebration of Bosnian Statehood Day held at the ICC in November 1999, Bosnian diplomats described their struggle *'with their neighbours and the sluggish international community.'* The programme attracted a full room, but one speaker lamented the small turnout for many such events:

*Why, of 30,000 Bosnians in Chicago, do only one per cent come to these important events? As organizers of many manifestations – mostly disappointing – we asked ourselves what was wrong. Was it too far? Were people not informed? Were people apathetic? OR has the powerful MR. DOLLAR pushed from our minds and souls the feelings of community, patriotism and nostalgia? (Tano-
vić 1999b [t]).*

The experiences of my respondents indicate the true reasons. Many expressed that, while working multiple jobs, caring for children and attending school, they simply had no time for such activities.

Milica and Zvetlana are perhaps typical of many Bosnian refugee women in Chicago. Although Milica visits the mosque and occasionally assists BACA as a hostess at events, she says she is not very involved in the organization because, with her husband disabled, she must be *'the man and woman'* of the family. Zvetlana works full time, takes care of three children, and is also taking night classes. As I had known her for some time, she agreed to take part in my research but repeatedly cancelled meeting times, claiming she was too busy. I concluded that her busy life in Chicago centres around taking care of her family and reaching her personal goals, and I sensed that she was reluctant to stop to dwell on memories of Bosnia. Boris agreed that many refugees – including perhaps himself – were more concerned with accumulating wealth in Chicago than concentrating on Bosnia. *'They all want to buy nice things'*, he said. *'You know, a few years ago when I went to the mosque, I had the nicest car in the lot. Now I have the worst!'*

Even those trying to organize the community are often more concerned with what is happening in Chicago than in Bosnia. The Bosniak Congress listed among its goals the protection of social and human rights for Bosnian refugees in the US and advocacy related to welfare benefits and rehabilitation programmes. *'The time has come to get*

organized and register our needs and goals in American public life, announced its president (*Tribuna* 2000 [t]). Dino offered another example of this Chicago focus. He participates in a new project developed by Bosnian community leaders and the University of Illinois at Chicago called 'Strengthening Refugee Community Research Capability'. The project is designed to help community volunteers develop new proposals to deal with problems in the community. Fourteen community members participate, representing both 'oldcomers' and 'newcomers' as well as different agencies. The programme has produced four proposals dealing with work, children, the elderly, and mental health. This suggests that the community is starting to come together, but these activities are focused on Chicago, not on Bosnia. Dino explained: '*These are the people around me. This is what I see every day.*'

In some ways, transnational ties, rather than providing creative adaptations to social and economic conditions, may actually be a hindrance to Bosnians in Chicago. Dino argued that the fact that some people's minds and hearts remained in Bosnia prevented them from adapting: '*They have weights on their feet. They would love to be there, especially the elderly. They're still involved emotionally and send money back. But yet they have to live here. Some people feel guilty for getting on with their lives.*'

Bosnians like Milica, Zvetlana and Dino, however, have responded to the conflict by trying to put aside events in Bosnia and focus instead on life in Chicago. It seems that, rather than looking back nostalgically on a multicultural Bosnia or continuing to speak the language of war, many people have found a third option: trying to reconcile the past and move on, putting their energy into goals and pursuits in Chicago rather than expanding transnational connections.

6. Conclusion

Approaching the Bosnian community in Chicago from a transnational perspective produces evidence of various kinds of transnational activities. Bosnian migrants maintain social ties with families and hometowns, and they stay connected to their homeland through cultural and religious practices. Economic ties emerge when remittances and charitable donations are sent to Bosnia and when members of the Chicago community look for investment opportunities there. Furthermore, some members of the community have used transnational activities to establish themselves as community 'leaders', and political events in Bosnia are followed closely in Chicago.

Despite these examples of transnationalism, however, the question remains as to whether

Chicago's Bosnians can really be described as a transnational *community*. In trying to answer this question, the advice of Portes *et al.* (1999: 218) seems useful:

In the case of transnationalism, it is not enough to invoke anecdotes of some immigrants investing in businesses back home or some governments giving their expatriates the right to vote in national elections to justify a new field of study.'

The authors go on to argue that several conditions are necessary to establish the phenomenon, including the involvement of a significant proportion of migrants and their home country counterparts and the resilience over time of the activities in which they engage. Transnational activities require regular and sustained contacts across national borders.

In the case of Bosnians in Chicago, this sort of sustained contact is limited to relatively few people, both because of barriers found in the sending country and because of the situation of the migrant community itself. Although many remain preoccupied with their families' needs in Bosnia, what seemed most important to individual respondents was their work and family life in Chicago. The comments of Davor, a high school student, are telling. He keeps up with events in Bosnia because he has several family members who are still in Tuzla: '*Every day I watch. It's still my country ... or rather, my ex-country*' (McCarthy 1999). Like Davor, even though Bosnians maintain strong family ties with 'home', they now call the US their country.

Rather than focusing on the transnational nature of the Bosnian community, it therefore seems more appropriate to look at the integration of the community in Chicago in order to investigate what is most significant for many individual refugees. This requires a shift in attention from transnationalism to issues like the community's spatial concentration, labour market position, and potential for social mobility. The first six years of settlement in Chicago suggest that Bosnians have begun to rapidly assimilate into US society. It remains to be seen, however, whether they will follow this classic path of adaptation or create a new path of their own. This will eventually be demonstrated by the fate of the second and future generations of Bosnians in Chicago. Many writers have argued that integration should examine the 'multi-stranded' nature of migrants' ties to their homeland instead of confining analysis to the host country (Basch *et al.* 1994; Faist 1999). This paper shows that the converse is also true. While examining transnational connections, we must not overlook the process of integration into the host society.

Although assimilating into Chicago may be the dominant concern for Chicago's Bosnian community, this does nothing to disprove findings about other groups; perhaps the experience of this European population highlights the very different experiences of refugee and immigrant communities who have arrived with fewer skills and suffered a greater degrees of social and racial exclusion. Furthermore, as the situation in Bosnia changes, people may be more likely to participate in transnational activities. Strong family connections may evolve into stronger economic and political ties if obstacles to such connections decrease during the reconstruction process. At the same time, people may have more resources to invest in Bosnia as they advance economically in Chicago. This is not the end, but only the beginning of Chicago's Bosnian story.

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Appendix: List of interviews

Note: to preserve confidentiality, all names of respondents have been changed

Ahmed (18 July 2000). Muslim from Banja Luka studying finance; works for insurance company.

Alan (20 July 2000). Education and employment coordinator at refugee resettlement program.

Aleksandar (30 June 2000). Computer science student; has a Serbian mother and Croatian father.

Avram (20 July 2000). Bosnian Muslim studying computer programming.

Boris (1 July 2000). Caseworker from Prejidor; has Muslim father and Croatian mother.

Branka (14 July 2000). Former lawyer, now works in human resources.

Damir (12 July 2000). High school student who lived for several years in Germany.

Dino (11 July 2000). Muslim former doctor; works with refugee mental health program.

Elma (28 July 2000). University student from Bosanski Novi.

Erol (31 July 2000). Member of BACA who came to Chicago in 1950s.

Ivan (10 July 2000). Muslim from Prejidor employed as janitor.

Jasminka (28 July 2000). Muslim enrolled in welfare-to-work program.

Mary (1 July 2000). Director of refugee resettlement program.

Melissa (15 July 2000). Croatian university student and volunteer at BiHACC.

Milica (22 July 2000). Muslim from Sarejevo/Tuzla; husband wounded during conflict.

Miljenko (14 July 2000). Former artist, now works as employment caseworker.

Milovan (31 July 2000). Member of BACA who came to Chicago in 1950s.

Mirko (22 July 2000). Muslim from Bihac, wounded during conflict.

Mirna (15 July 2000). Croatian travel agent.

Mladen (26 July 2000). Muslim former lawyer and editor of *Tribina Bošnjaka*.

Radha (10 July 2000). Muslim from Prejidor, a factory worker with two children in London.

Rezak (31 July 2000). Came to Chicago in 1970s. Owns a construction company.

Saba (28 July 2000). Children's coordinator at BiHACC, a devout Muslim from Prejidor.

Sabrina (30 June 2000). Bosnian Catholic director of BiHACC.

Seada (25 July 2000). Muslim with two children who works as receptionist.

Tom (23 July 2000). Middle school teacher with many Bosnian students.

Vahida (12 July 2000). Muslim high school student.

Velibor (12 July 2000). Muslim doctor from Sarejevo, now a medical resident in US.

Vesna (19 July 2000). Young Muslim who works in telecommunications; family still in Bosnia.

Zdenko (13 July 2000). Bosnian coordinator of 'New Beginnings' program at Loyola.

Zlata (25 July 2000). BACA member who came to Chicago in 1970s. Parents were from Gacko.

Zvetlana (21 July 2000). Muslim resettlement caseworker; attending night school.

