

# **Towards an Intersectional Understanding of Differentiated Wartime-Violence: A Case Study of Violent Practices in the Serb Detention Camps in the Prijedor Municipality during the Bosnian War (1992).<sup>1</sup>**

Fynn-Morten Heckert

University of Graz, Austria, [fynn.heckert@uni-graz.at](mailto:fynn.heckert@uni-graz.at)

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## ***Introduction***

When studying wartime violence, it is striking that different groups of people experience different forms of violence. The differentiation of people along multiple criteria was for instance well visible in the context of the detention camps during the Bosnian War, which were ‘sites of mass executions, torture, rapes and other forms of sexual assault’ (UN 1994, 52). The population that lived on territories occupied by Serb forces faced different treatment not only based on their ethnicity, but also based on their gender, age and social status (UN 1994, 53-56). Scientific research on differentiated violence in the Bosnian war focuses mostly on one specific form of violence, such as rape (e.g. Allen 1996; Duraković 2008), or on violence against a specific group of persons, such as women or elites (e.g.: Stiglmayer 1993; Gratz 2007). Although the works pursuing such paths provide profound explanations for the studied phenomenon, they fall short of explaining the overarching logic of differentiation. This paper seeks to fill this gap and to explain the group-based differences in the exercise of violence by presenting the findings of my exploratory case study of the detention camps operated by the Bosnian Serb forces in the *Prijedor* municipality.

I argue that the differences can be explained in the light of intertwined social constructions of gender, ethnicity, age, and social status. The constructions of personal attributes translate, in a conflict environment, into the ascription of specific threats to an individual. These nuanced, culturally contingent perceptions of threat associated with different groups of people provide specific possibilities for group-related violence, where certain forms appear legitimate when

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directed against a specific group, while others seem inappropriate. Ultimately, also local Serbs were subject to repression for non-complying with the behaviour expected by the authorities (although they were detained in far smaller numbers). Thus, I argue, that the camps did not only serve as means to exterminate and expulse non-Serbs, but also enforced intra-ethnic hierarchies among the Serbs living on the territory.

Besides the new empirical findings, the study introduces an innovative concept, as it analyses wartime-violence from a comprehensive intersectional perspective, which is considered a desideratum by several scholars of violence (Jones 2008, 247f.; Ferrales & Maves McElrath 2014, 682f.). This proposed framework has the dual aspiration to both enable a deep understanding of the single case, but to be flexible enough that it can be useful to examine other cases of wartime violence, when adjusted to the respective 'webs of significance' (Geertz 1991, 5).

In order to present my findings, I will first develop the conceptual framework of differentiated violence and introduce the idea of different dimensions of socially constructed threat. In a second step, I will briefly give account about my sources and analytical method. As it regards the presentation of empirical findings, I will first shed light on the segregation of different social groups after the take-over of *Prijedor* and then discuss the group-related exertion of violence and its implications following the structure of the different dimensions of threat.

### ***Conceptual Framework***

In order to achieve a multi-categorical understanding of group-related violence, I introduce the concept of *differentiated violence*. This concept shall not replace, but rather integrate other concepts, like gender-based violence, in a broader framework with other relevant social categories. Here, what I suggest is to develop explanations and theory starting from an open analysis of the violent practices, encountered during the research, meaning that relevant categories shall be identified in an inductive manner. Hereby, it shall be established, which categories in their interaction constitute the different social groups, that are subject to certain forms of violence. It proved as very insightful to include strategies of sensemaking, for instance conversations, specific insults or symbols which accompany the violence. After these two steps, theory can be developed. This process can and shall build upon pre-existing literature, such as

about *gender-based-violence*<sup>2</sup>, but shall also explore the role of other relevant categories and their interconnectedness. This inductive approach prevents an overly reduced view on wartime violence focussing on one or two deductively set master-categories and helps to analyse different social categories in their interdependence, as suggested by Katharina Walgenbach (2012).

The concept of differentiated violence is best applied in combination with other concepts. For example, Stathis N. Kalyvas' (2006) classification of *indiscriminate* versus *selective* violence can be well combined with the concept of differentiated violence. Now, regardless of whether violence is applied on grounds of individual behaviour (*selectively*) or group-affiliation (*indiscriminately*), the concept of differentiated violence has the capacity to explain in both cases the forms of violence resorted to, as they in either case coincide with the overall pattern of violence directed against the social group the target is associated with. The activation of the 'crisis frame' of interethnic relations as an explanation for the outbreak of violence in a place where there was inter-ethnic cooperation, as proposed by Anthony Oberschall (2000), can be advanced by asking how different social groups are framed differently in this 'crisis frame'.

My argument is that violent practices directed against an individual are responsive to the specific socially constructed threat associated with a person on grounds of different attributes such as gender, ethnicity, age, and/or social status. Responsive means, that the violence exercised aims at 'neutralising' the threat, a person allegedly poses, that is, that the threatening potential of the individual 'legitimises' certain violent action against him or her, while other forms of violence do not seem legitimate. This is consequently the case, when the violence does not correspond to the specific threat, the detainee is associated with.

The analysis of the logic of differentiated violence in *Prijedor* is based on the Final Report of the UN-Commission of Experts (1994; 1995) and on court files of the International Crime Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY). Because of the large scope of available data published by the ICTY, only a selection of documents could be analysed. Thus, I included the extensive judgements of four cases, which are closely related with the three major detention camps in *Prijedor*, namely, *Omarska*, *Keraterm*, and *Trnopolje*. (ICTY 1997; 2001a; 2001b; 2003),<sup>3</sup> which reconstruct the conquest of Prijedor, its aftermath, the situation in the camps, and violent episodes in the camps. In order to study the violent practices more closely in their

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<sup>2</sup> See for instance: Duraković (2008), Ferrales & McElrath (2014), Harders (2011), Heberle (2014), Jakobsen (2014), Jones (2008); Perry (2001); Žarkov (2007).

<sup>3</sup> IT-94-1-T; IT-95-8-S; IT-97-24-T; IT-98-30/1-T.

symbolic contexts, I additionally analysed the testimonies of 23 witnesses<sup>4</sup> belonging to different groups in terms of gender, age, ethnic identification, and social status, following the method proposed above.

With all due respect to the survivors of the camps, a critical reader could doubt the reliability of the witnesses' recollection of the events, given that they were reported between four and nine years after the events themselves. The detailed accounts of the witnesses and the circumstance, that the testimonies show clear patterns of group-related violence let the testimonies appear as reliable and revealing sources. They do not only address the very acts *per se*, but also provide information about the sensemaking of the violent acts from the perspective of the guards.

### **Creating spaces for a new order**

*Prijedor* was taken over after months of preparation of exclusively Serb parallel structures on 30<sup>th</sup> of April 1992 in an initially bloodless coup exercised by Bosnian-Serb armed forces and the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) (Wieser 2007, 62). The occupiers portrayed their 'ethnocratic' ideology aiming at legitimising their power, by raising Serb flags and renaming the municipality into 'Serbian municipality of *Prijedor*' (UN 1994, 38f.; Wieser 2007, 62f.). Before the coup, the government represented the multi-ethnic structure of the population, of which in 1991 44% were Bosnian Muslims, 42.5% were Serbs, 5.7% were Yugoslavs<sup>5</sup>, 5.6% were Croats, and 2.2% were of other ethnic affiliation (UN 1994, 37f.). When the Serbian forces took over control, non-Serb members of the authorities were denied access to their offices. All power was now exercised by the so-called crisis-staff, which consisted exclusively of ethnic Serbs affiliated with the 'Serbian Democratic Party' (SDS). Besides that, also most of the non-Serb workers were dismissed from their jobs, while the vacant posts were filled with Serbs (UN 1994, 38; Vaulerin & Wesselingh 2005, 41).

In the town of *Prijedor*, the violence against non-Serbs started on 30<sup>th</sup> of May, when a group of 150 citizens tried to regain control over the old town. After their quick defeat, all non-Serb inhabitants were forced to 'surrender' and to gather in central areas of the city (UN 1994, 40),

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<sup>4</sup> Although some witnesses' and victims' names are publicly available in the transcripts, I chose to cite only their initials in order not to expose them and their sensitive histories to a broader public. For protected victims, I use the pseudonym provided by the ICTY. The transcripts of the respective hearings are accessible and searchable (incl. full-text search) at the digital archive of the ICTY: [www.icr.icty.org](http://www.icr.icty.org) (accessed: 9 May 2020).

<sup>5</sup> This identity category was introduced separately to other ethnic affiliations in 1961: Žarkov (1995), 106.

from where they were deported to detention camps, predominantly to the *Omarska*, *Keraterm* and *Trnopolje* camps.

In this process, what mattered was not the self-identification of the people affected, but the classification by the soldiers. Interestingly, the category of ‘Yugoslavs’, with which 5.7% of *Prijedor*’s pre-war population identified (UN 1994, 37), was erased: official records of the *Omarska* camp administration for instance do not include that category in the breakdown of the detainees’ national backgrounds (ICTY 2003, 48). That there was no space in the camps to identify as a Yugoslav also becomes clear in this testimony:

‘In my birth certificate and in my marriage certificate it says, that I am a Yugoslav [...]. But when I arrived the Omarska concentration camp, I realised I was a Bosniak and a Muslim.’<sup>6</sup>

Instead, the detainees were classified in accordance with their assumed ethnoreligious background. For non-Serbs this meant in the context of the conflict, in which the ‘crisis frame’ of inter-ethnic relations (Oberschall 2000) was activated, being an ‘enemy’, and a ‘threat’ to ‘the Serbs’. The erasure of the category of ‘Yugoslav’ is a manifestation of the new authorities’ goal to destroy interethnic solidarities. On the other hand, it appears, that the (exclusive) ethnic identity, which was instructed in the camps was also internalised by the witness. Thus, the camps contributed to the transformation of identities and can be seen as spaces to create a new social order.

But the soldiers’ assumptions on the targets’ ethnicity did not alone decide the fate of the captured population. Evidence suggests that the targeted persons were sent to a specific camp depending on the specific dimension of threat to the ethnocratic project, which the new regime ascribed to persons based on different combinations of personal attributes.

### **Socially constructed dimensions of threat and the differentiated exertion of violence**

I identified three dimensions of socially constructed threats which were ascribed to the detainees by the new regime: *dimension of direct threat (violation)*, *dimension of indirect threat (reproduction & shame)*, and *excluded ‘others’*, who were not perceived as particularly threatening to the new regime, but who had no place in the new social order. The *dimension of direct threat* refers to the alleged capability ascribed to a person on grounds of his/her attributes

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<sup>6</sup> ICTY, Kvočka et al.: Z.C. (03.07.2000), 3299.

to inflict harm or death to members of the 'own' group (always from the perspective of the perpetrator) and thus, to threaten the yet to be violently implemented ethnocentric system. The *dimension of indirect threat* designates the alleged capability ascribed to a person on the grounds of his/her attributes, to 'endanger' the 'own' group by reproducing the 'other', which is constructed as a threat to the survival of the 'own' group in the crisis frame. Also, refraining from reproduction of the 'own' group was constructed as a threat to the group's survival. The *dimension of indirect threat* also encompasses the potential threat ascribed to a person on his/her attributes to inflict shame on the 'own' ethnic group. That is, more precisely, on the male agents of the nation, as they fail to protect 'their' women and 'purity' of the ethnic group.<sup>7</sup> As the analysis shows, these two dimensions are not always mutually exclusive, but can intersect with each other. The third group encompasses all those 'others', who are not constructed as particular security threats by the nationalist agents on the grounds of their personal attributes, but who 'undermine' the project of the ethnic homogenisation of the occupied territory simply by existing on it.

#### ***Singling out 'Direct Threats': Segregation and Deportation to Different Camps***

In the process of the segregation and deportation of the non-Serb citizens of *Prijedor*, those who were perceived as a *direct threat*, i.e. non-Serb men in military age (predominantly between 18 and 60 years, but apparently not younger than 15) were mostly brought to the *Omarska* or *Keraterm* camps.<sup>8</sup> In both camps detainees were kept in conditions of severe overcrowding, lack of hygiene which led to the spread of diseases, and in a general atmosphere of psychological and physical violence (UN 1995, 72, 82). However, *Omarska* appeared to be an even more horrifying place than *Keraterm*, as the potential transfer was used by guards to threaten detainees of *Keraterm* (ICTY 2001b, 25). Those non-Serb men in military age with a higher social status were more likely to be detained in *Omarska* (UN 1995, 67), while those with a lower social status were imprisoned in *Keraterm* (UN 1995, 81). A lower social status also raised the chances to survive the ordeal. Those citizens who were not considered as direct threats, predominantly women, elderly men, and children, were kept in *Trnopolje* (UN 1995, 86). From here, detainees were deported to territories, which were not controlled by Serb forces. Before that, they had to relinquish all their belongings to the new authorities (ICTY 1997, 63).

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<sup>7</sup> For the idea of ethnic purity in this context, see Žarkov (2007), 123.

<sup>8</sup> For *Omarska* see: ICTY (2001a), 8, for *Keraterm* UN (1995), 81.

While no systematic interrogations took place here, beatings and murders occurred on a lesser scale than in the other camps, whereas sexualised violence against women was commonplace (UN 1995, 88). The 36-37<sup>9</sup> women, who were detained in *Omarska* represent a special case: They had a distinguished social status, worked for the security institutions or were politically active (UN 1995, 67).<sup>10</sup> Thus, evidence suggests that the place of detainment and imprisonment in different camps was predominantly determined by the circumstance, whether or not the non-Serb individuals were considered as potential *direct threats* to the new regime (non-Serb men, military age).

### **How socially constructed dimensions of threat (de-)legitimise group-related differentiated forms of violence**

#### *Dimension of direct threat*

The dimension of direct threat encompasses mostly non-Serb men of military age. These are targeted on an *indiscriminate* basis solely on grounds of their personal attributes of gender, age, and ethnicity. Besides the non-Serb detainees, also *some* Serb men in military age were *selectively* constructed as direct threats based on their behaviour.

#### *Destroying the 'hostile agent'*

The violence perpetrated against non-Serb men in military age in the camps consisted mainly of savage beatings often conducted using weapons (ICTY 2001a, 24),<sup>11</sup> which caused severe injuries and frequently led to unconsciousness, coma and death (ICTY 2001a, 35).<sup>12</sup> Besides that, also distinct executions, also *en masse*, occurred (ICTY 2003, 58-68). Many detainees of this group, especially those of higher social status were regularly subject to this kind of mistreatment, even on daily basis, during their detention.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> The numbers differ between different documents: (ICTY 2001a, 8); ICTY (2003),48; UN (1994), 41; UN (1995), 67.

<sup>10</sup> ICTY, Kvočka et al., S.S. (9 June 2000), 2971f; Witness J (5 Sept 2000), 4758-4761.

<sup>11</sup> See also: ICTY, Kvočka et al., E.M. (7 June 2000), 2825; K.M. (11 Sept 2000), 5163; Witness J (5 Sept 2000), 4750-4755; S.S. (13 June 2000), 3017; ICTY, Tadić, Written Statement E. B. (14-15 Dec 1994; 18-19 Jan 1995), 11; E.B. (19 July 1996), 2488-2494.

<sup>12</sup> See also: ICTY, Kvočka et al., Witness J (5 Sept 2000), 4766f; ICTY, Tadić, A.B. (13 June 1996), 1654f; ICTY, Sikirica et al., A.T. (5 Aug 2001), 1963f.

<sup>13</sup> ICTY, Kvočka et al., N.S. (11 July 2000), 3980f; ICTY, Tadić, E.B. (19 July 1996), 2490-2498; Written Statement E.B. (14-15 Dec 1994; 18-19 Jan 1995), 14.

These practices, which aim at the destruction of the ‘other’ man’s body, must be understood in the light of intersecting constructions of gender, age, and ethnicity: following nationalist discourses, men are constructed as *agents* who act in the name of the nation (Kesić 2002, 70f.). Furthermore, the *power to violate* is ascribed to men (Duraković 2008, 60; Harders 2011, 142; Iveković & Mostov 2002, 9f; Meuser 2006, 104f.), which enables the construction of ‘other’ men as potentially harmful agents of the other nation, and thus, as direct threats to the ‘own nation’. That this imagination exceeds the dimension of ‘agents vs. agents’ and affects the ‘whole nation’ manifests in the norm, that men have to protect ‘their’ women, children, and elders, constructed as passive and vulnerable, from the ‘other’ men (Iveković & Mostov 2006, 9f.; Meuser 2006, 104). which lets the threatening potential ascribed to the ‘other man’ even more severe.

The violent practices of ‘beatings’ and killings aim at neutralising the harming potential ascribed to the other man’s body by destroying it. The association of men in general with the power to injure may explain why not only soldiers are affected by such violence, but also civilians. However, age plays a significant role here: predominantly boys and men in the age between 15 (especially 18) and 60-65, which is the age associated with the ability to serve in the military, comprise the group of inmates mostly affected by this form of violence. Younger and older men instead are associated with the ‘passive’ part of the nation, which is considered vulnerable and in need of ‘protection’. Thus, the combination of age, ethnicity, and gender in the case of non-Serb men between ca. 15 and 65 years of age provides for the construction of those men as direct threats.

These imaginations of threat ascribed to the ‘other men’ in military age are often found in the testimonies, as violent practices are contextualised within the Serbian nationalist version of Southeast European history: genocidal acts against Serbs during the Second World War, and the Ottoman rule are narratives the guards commonly relied on while performing violence. Thus, violence directed against male Croat detainees was accompanied by calling them *ustaše*,<sup>14</sup> while Muslim men were called ‘Turks’,<sup>15</sup> which assigns them the role of the ‘eternal oppressor’ of the Serbian people – a crucial *topos* in Serbian nationalism (Kaser 1999, 413). Thus, by exploiting the historical narrative of the ‘eternal suffering’ of the Serbs (Ramet 2007) the guards shifted the responsibility for the violence executed to the detainees by holding them

Commented [FH1]: Perica?

<sup>14</sup> ICTY, Kvočka et al., Witness B (19 May 2000), 2374; K.M. (11 Sept 2000), 5159f.

<sup>15</sup> ICTY, Tadić, Statement E.B. (14-15 Dec 1994; 18-19 Jan 1995), 11.



responsible for historical episodes ascribed *ex post* to 'their' ethnic collective. This shall be seen especially in the context of the propaganda displayed in the media, which frequently broadcasted such historical narratives and further securitised non-Serbs for planning genocide against the Serbs (UN 1994, 39; UN 1995, 28, 35). Corresponding to that, abuses against Muslim detainees were as well contextualised in terms of religious alterity for example by calling them '*balija*', a derogative word for Muslims in the region (ICTY 2001b, 29).<sup>16</sup> In one incident, a guard ridiculed a detainee whose wife owned a flower shop,<sup>17</sup> and who bandaged his injured head, on grounds of his injuries and religion: '[W]hy do you wear that white scarf? You are not an Iman, (religious leader) [sic!] you are a florist.'<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, the idea of the general possibility, that Muslims and Serbs could peacefully live together in a common society is negated during the 'beatings':

'There was crying, begging, pleading. "Don't beat me. I haven't done anything. [...] Brothers, don't do this." I remember one saying, "Brother, why are you beating me so?" And the answer was, "we're not brothers"'.<sup>19</sup>

The recourse to 'brotherhood' likely refers to the Socialist Yugoslav *credo* of 'brotherhood and unity' which promoted solidarity among the nationalities (Kesić 2002, 66). By denying the mutual brotherhood, the guards do not only break with the multi-ethnic system, but also express the absence of a symmetric relationship, which further 'legitimises' the violence exercised.

The violence was often inspired by folkloristic imaginations, as an inmate who served in the first aid station in *Trnopolje* reports:

Then we had a patient who [...] had the left knee pierced through. Later I would also see another man with a similar wound, except on both knees. They apparently told him to cross legs, because the Muslims especially sit that way, and then with a bayonet they would pierce through his knee.<sup>20</sup>

Another incident of clearly folklore-inspired act of violence occurred on 12 July 1992, the Serb-Orthodox holiday St. Peter's Day in *Omarska*:

[Witness AM]: ,On the eve of St. Peter's Day, it is customary among the Serb people to light bonfires, to rejoice, to drink, and we would see that in the past, and the same

<sup>16</sup> ICTY, Kvočka et al., Witness B (19.05.2000), 2374; K.M. (11.09.2000), 5159f.

<sup>17</sup> ICTY, Tadić, Statement E.B. (14-15 Dec 1994; 18-19 Jan 1995), 3.

<sup>18</sup> ICTY, Tadić, Statement E.B. (14-15 Dec 1994; 18-19 Jan 1995), 15.

<sup>19</sup> ICTY, Kvočka et al., K.M. (11 Sept 2000), 5187; for other reports of this typical dialogue see: Witness B (19 May 2000), 2374; Z.H. (14 June 2000), 3128.

<sup>20</sup> ICTY, Tadić, V.G. (01.08.1996), 3061.

happened that year. In that bonfire, they [i.e. the Serb guards] set fire to a large tyre of at least two metres in diameter, and as they orgied, they threw individuals into that fire. [...]

[Prosecutor]: ,When you say ,individuals ‘, do you mean prisoners? ‘

[Witness AM]: ,[...] [T]hey are prisoners, Muslims who were thrown into the fire by the guards who were standing around.’<sup>21</sup>

As it becomes clear, this execution of Muslim men, was put in the context of a Serb Orthodox holiday. This can be understood as a manifestation of the exclusive ‘Serbian’ claim to the occupied territory by the nationalist agents and thus, produces the territory as exclusively Serb/Orthodox while expressing the absence of Muslims’ place in it.

Status does matter insofar, that men in military age in high economic or political positions were subject to beatings and killings more frequently than others. But the forms of violence perpetrated against them are similar to violence exercised against people with a lower social status, as they aimed in both cases at the destruction of their bodies. The even more excessive use of violence against men of higher social background can be understood with Dennis Gratz, as he points out that the elites ensure the social cohesion of their respective group. By liquidating them, the communities lacked cultural and strategic leading figures, which weakened resistance. Besides that, the liquidation of non-Serbs from leading functions ensured that privileged positions were re-assigned. This was not only lucrative to those Serbs with close ties to the new regime but facilitated the longer term ‘Serbisation’ of the territory, as minority returnees in the area were dependent from officials appointed by the new regime (Gratz 2007, 223-227).

The interplay between age and class in the case of non-Serb men is here particularly interesting, as it seems, that elderly men of a higher social status are more likely to be killed or severely abused than old people with a less distinguished social status.<sup>22</sup> In *Trnopolje* for instance, where among others elderly men were kept, especially wealthy detainees were at risk to be murdered (UN 1995, 88). As it regards preadolescent children, there is only one reported murder in the sources, which occurred under specific circumstances, and was (albeit mildly) punished by the guards’ superiors,<sup>23</sup> which suggests, that non-Serb elder men of elevated status were rather targeted by this kind of violence. In the light of the propaganda portraying (especially prominent) Muslims as extremists it appears that this group of detainees could be more

<sup>21</sup> ICTY, Kvočka et al., Witness AM (11 July 2000), 3929f; see also: Z.H. (14 June 2000), 3134-3136.

<sup>22</sup> Testimonies on specific cases e.g. ICTY, Tadić, S.B. (21 June 1996), 3112, and Statement E.B. (14-15 Dec 1994; 18-19 Jan 1995), 20 in combination with ICTY, Kvočka et al, Witness AM (11 July 2000), 3959.

<sup>23</sup> ICTY, Tadić, S.B. (21 June 1996), 3130f.

successfully constructed as threats, and thus, violence directed against them could appear more 'legitimate', than if directed against children. Besides that, liquidating business-owners or directors could provide a profitable business opportunity for some Serbs connected to the new regime, as businesses were systematically taken over by the latter.<sup>24</sup> Although, as Kalyvas suggests, that violence is not necessarily 'ethnic' in nature, the violence exercised on the ground had still to be 'justified' by referring to ethnic alterity. This appears even more so, as it is not reported, that the guards as the main perpetrators of violence took over the businesses of their victims personally. Thus, ethnicised violence and violence driven by greed are here inseparable: the new order distributes privilege and disadvantage conditionally, although not exclusively, on ethnic affiliation.

As the violent practices are often accompanied by specific symbolics, they display the perception of the local actors about the nature of the conflict, as the reason why the individual is attacked is portrayed within the action itself. In this very context, ethnic affiliation and its importance for mutual accommodation in a common society is not debatable anymore. Where before ethnic identities remained abstract categories, they hereby manifest as undebatable matters of life and death – especially for men in military age of the 'other' ethnicity. Here, the violence is staged not as a victory of a soldier over a soldier (however, the detainees were as said before, far and foremostly civilians), but as a victory of the own ethnic group, which is macabrely celebrated as superior, embodied by the 'triumph' of the 'own' male agents, over the devaluated 'other' by ritually destroying the other agents' bodies in a folkloristic ceremonial context.

#### *Drilling the 'own' agents*

The sources give clear evidence, that also Serb men in 'military age' were detained in small numbers in the *Omarska* and *Keraterm* camps. While unclear for *Keraterm*, for *Omarska* the ICTY speaks of 11 Serb detainees, relying on the numbers provided by the Serb authorities. One detainee was accused and killed for favouring the SDA-party, a party associated with Bosnian Muslims. During the beating the guard reportedly commented: 'That is how we punish Serb traitors. You, a Serb, joining the SDA. You should be scalded like a sheep for Bajram [i.e. an Islamic holiday]' (ICTY 2001b, 28). Here, the norm becomes visible, that Serbs were

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<sup>24</sup> Also E.B. reports, that one of his businesses, the café 'pink' was taken over by persons unknown to him: ICTY, Tadić, Statement E.B. (14-15 Dec 1994; 18-19 Jan 1995), 3.

expected to vote for the 'ethnic party' claiming to represent their respective ethnic group, namely SDS. For supporting the 'Party of Democratic Action' (SDA), predominantly favoured by Bosnian Muslims, he was found guilty of treason and his punishment was demanded to be inspired by folkloristic imaginations of Islamic traditions, as he 'as a traitor' was identified as a 'hostile agent' of the others. Also, the guard M. C. was most probably killed by his peers for distributing food, messages, and clothes to the detainees. According to the witness, the guard told the prisoners before he was exposed, that 'it will cost him his life.'<sup>25</sup>

This also reflects the notion expressed by a detainee about the 'Serb duty' to participate in the warfare or otherwise being identified as 'traitor',<sup>26</sup> as a milder approach towards non-Serb detainees was severely punished. The high level of cooperation between different institutions in repressing those deviating from the expected behaviour becomes visible in an occasion, in which an employee of the Red Cross wanted to bring milk powder for the infants in *Trnopolje* camp.<sup>27</sup> He afterwards was dismissed from service and severely beaten up by soldiers at a checkpoint near *Prijedor*.<sup>28</sup>

Thus, it becomes clear that being a Serb man (in military age) did not imply only to fulfil certain religious and cultural expectations (language), but also to exercise a militant type of masculinity in order to be accepted as an appropriate agent. Although Kalyvas' concept of *selective violence* is surely applicable, I want to take this concept a step further, as it was shown that the interplay of intertwined constructions of gender, age, and ethnicity lead to certain expectations towards the individual's behaviour, which must be met in order to prevent being constructed as a threat to the ethnocratic regime. The reason why the violence aims at destroying the men's bodies here can be found in the association of men with agency and their power to violate, which is 'neutralised' by the destruction.

#### *Dimension of indirect threat*

The *dimension of indirect threat* comprises mostly non-Serb women, in the age between 16 and 35, as well as non-Serb men in military age. But also, Serb women could fall into this category, if they did not meet the behavioural norms imposed on them. Social status in this case plays a secondary, but still important role, as the case of the women of *Omarska* will show.

<sup>25</sup> ICTY, Sikirica et al., A.T. (5 Aug 2001), 1991f.

<sup>26</sup> ICTY, Tadić, Statement E.B. (14-15 Dec 1994; 18-19 Jan 1995), 6.

<sup>27</sup> The witness V.G. estimates a number of 800 detained infants: ICTY, Tadić, V.G. (1 Aug 1996), 3055.

<sup>28</sup> ICTY, Tadić, V.G. (1 Aug 1996), 3055.

### *Controlling fertility*

The violence aimed against non-Serb women was mostly sexualised and often included rape. According to the ICTY, young women in the age of 16 to 19 were at the greatest risk, while the youngest reported victim of rape was 12 years old (ICTY 1997, 62). Most victims of rape were less than 35 years old (Kaser 1999, 418). Besides the guards, who were mostly the perpetrators, also external soldiers came to rape the detained women.<sup>29</sup> In *Trnopolje*, women were especially targeted prior to their deportation.<sup>30</sup>

Non-Serb women were also killed by the guards, though in a significantly smaller number than men. This is for example to be seen in the circumstance, that in total most likely five women were killed in the *Omarska* camp.<sup>31</sup> In *Trnopolje* killings occurred mostly in the context of sexual violence.<sup>32</sup> If the murder was an end in itself or was committed in order to complicate future prosecution remains unclear. Witness B however reports that while she was brought to the camp, the driver told her how detained women were treated: 'We first fuck them and then we will kill them so that there should be no witnesses.'<sup>33</sup>

In fact, most women survived the rapes as most of them were deported afterwards,<sup>34</sup> and thus, the main pattern of violence against non-Serb women to be observed in the camps of *Prijedor* consists of rape and other forms of sexual assault. As it regards detained Serb women, one of them, J. D., was married to a Croat man,<sup>35</sup> while the other, Gordana, helped wounded Muslim civilians.<sup>36</sup> Both were released after 10-15 days.<sup>37</sup> For J. D. no information is given about an incident of sexual violence but the prevalence of sexualised violence lets it appear likely that she was also targeted. For Gordana, sexual abuse cannot be stated with security, but a witness described her condition when she returned after she was taken by a soldier similarly to the condition of rape-victims after they came back from nightly call-outs in *Omarska*:

<sup>29</sup> ICTY, Tadić, V.G. (06 Aug 1996), 3069.

<sup>30</sup> ICTY, Tadić, V.G. (06 Aug 1996), 3069.

<sup>31</sup> S.M. and E.D. were killed on a bus transportation along with 42 other male detainees of *Omarska* in July 1992, see combination of ICTY 2003, 60; ICTY, Kvočka et al., Z.C. (3 July 2000), 3340. Furthermore, five women stayed behind in *Omarska*, when the camp was dissolved, out of which three women were never seen again (ICTY 2001a, 156).

<sup>32</sup> ICTY, Tadić, S.B. (21 June 1996), 3129.

<sup>33</sup> ICTY, Kvočka et al., Witness B (19 May 2000), 2325.

<sup>34</sup> ICTY, Tadić, V.G. (6 Aug 1996), 3069.

<sup>35</sup> ICTY, Kvočka et al., Z.H. (14 June 2000), 3127.

<sup>36</sup> ICTY, Tadić, A.B. (12 June 1996), 1619.

<sup>37</sup> For J.D., see: ICTY, Kvočka et al., Z.H. (14 June 2000), 3127; for Gordana: ICTY, Tadić, A.B. (13 June 1996), 1645.

[A.B.]: , [...] one of the soldiers asked her [...] to come out, and she came back after about, perhaps, half an hour.’

[Prosecutor]: ,What was her condition when she returned? ‘

[A.B.]: ,She was distressed, almost hysterical. [...] We asked what happened and where had they taken her, and all she said was that she had to show them her flat. ‘<sup>38</sup>

Undoubtedly, non-Serb women were the most affected by the rapes in the camps, as they were targeted on *indiscriminate* basis. On the other side, Serb ethnicity did not seem to prevent victimisation.

Much has been written about rape, on which this analysis can draw. Barbara Perry for example introduces the idea of masculinity and femininity as classes in this context, ‘meaning that sexual access to women as a class is perceived as the inalienable right of men as a class’ (Perry 2001, 96). This suits well to the experiences of the survivors of rape in the camps, as the guards treated the female detainees as sex objects, which they felt entitled to access as they pleased:

‘I was pleading with him to let me go [...], but he was very rough. I was trying to tell him that I was menstruating, that he should let me go [...]. He said that that was what each one of us told him. [...] He said that that was the way all of us were trying to avoid what he wanted. ‘<sup>39</sup>

Also in another occasion, a high ranked JNA soldier expressed his perceived entitlement by pointing to the allegedly good conditions the women were kept in in the camp.

‘that we women always had a problem with that, that we always wanted to avoid that under that pretext that we were not feeling well, that we women in the camp were doing fine; whereas other Serbian women who are in the [...] cities under Muslim control were being raped.’<sup>40</sup>

That desperate attempts to escape their ordeal by pointing to health problems or menstruations were dismissed as acts of truculence, which ultimately sought to victimise the perpetrator can be explained with the underlying myth of rape, that the victim would actually enjoy the crime, which ultimately seeks to ‘legitimise’ the abuse (Perry 2001, 104). Interestingly, in the official’s imagination this only applies to the women of other ethnic groups, as he selectively problematises the rape of Serb women by Muslim men. Second, this statement reproduces ‘other men’ as threats and ‘legitimises’ violence aimed at destroying the ‘other’ man’s body.

Catherine MacKinnon on the other hand conceptualises rape as an act, that ‘symboli[s]es and actuali[s]es women’s subordinate position’ (MacKinnon cited in Perry 2001, 96) and thus, is ‘one means by which men as a class enforce conformity of women as a class’ (Perry 2001, 83).

<sup>38</sup> ICTY, Tadić, A.B. (12 June 1996), 1619.

<sup>39</sup> ICTY, Kvočka et al., Witness J (5 Sept 2000), 4777f.

<sup>40</sup> ICTY, Kvočka et al., Witness J (5 Sept 2000), 4781.

This is closely connected to the *dimension of indirect threat*: in the late 1980s, the discourse on the ‘white plague’ emerged, which problematised the declining birth rates among Serbs. Serb women were the ones blamed for that, as they were accused of rather pursuing careers, instead of devoting themselves to the reproduction of the nation (Helms & Jansen 2009, 222f.). The strengthening of traditional patriarchal family conceptions, constructed as ‘natural’ in opposition to the rather progressive policy towards women in Socialist Yugoslavia (see Kesić 2002, 68f.), which was demanded to be reversed, was seen as the precondition to the revitalisation of the Serbian nation (Drezgić 2012, 187). In contrast to that, Muslim women were widely depicted as ‘over-reproducing’ the ethnic ‘other’ (Helms & Jansen 2009, 223), which allowed for their construction as threats to the Serbian nation (cf. also Iveković & Mostov 2002, 11). The detention of the Serb woman married to a Croat may be explained by the imagination of patrilineal reproduction of the ethnic group, meaning that ethnicity is ‘transmitted’ via the child’s father (Drezgić 2012, 185; Duraković 2008, 113; Ferrales & Maves McElrath 2014, 675). A Serb woman could consequently be perceived as a threat either by transcending the domestic sphere, where the patriarchal order places her, or by partnership with a man of different ethnicity. The ambiguous position of women’s ethnic affiliation becomes visible also here:

[...] policeman Cvijić handcuffed me and pushed me into the Mercedes [...] and to the cries of my wife, who pleaded with them, explaining that she was Serb, that I was innocent, [...] Cvijić just said: ‘If you don’t shut up, you will go with him, you Muslim whore.’<sup>41</sup>

This quotation illustrates that a woman’s ethnic affiliation was understood as dependent from her male partner’s.<sup>42</sup> Thus, also Serb women can be constructed as ‘indirect threats’, when suspected to reproduce the ‘inimical ethnicity’. Consequently, in order to ‘preserve’ the nation, all female bodies must be controlled by the men of the group in the eyes of the nationalist agents (Iveković & Mostov 2002, 11).

While women were unlike men not made responsible for ‘periods of suffering’, female detainees are often described as mothers of ‘hostile agents’. The frequently used curse ‘*balija* mothers’ (ICTY 1997, 115) is one example. Also Alexandra Stiglmayer (1993, 119) reports about the Muslim woman Hatiza detained in *Trnopolje*, whom a guard on the transport to the camp told, that she would soon have a Serbian child in her womb. Pregnancies which occurred

<sup>41</sup> ICTY, Kvočka et al., K.M. (11 Sept 2000), 5156. See also: 5143.

<sup>42</sup> That women’s social status and group-affiliation is more effected by their male partner than vice versa is also found in Morokvasic Müller 2004, 137.

in the context of such rapes were for instance wished for and the children considered as Serbs by the nationalist agents (Duraković 2008, 114). As patrilineality provides for the imagined 'possibility' to ethnically appropriate women and children, who were sired through rape, women are in an especially vulnerable position for sexualised violence in the context of ethnicised warfare. The act of rape can be thus understood as an 'answer' to the alleged capacity of women to give birth to 'hostile agents' by 'controlling' it. The circumstance that especially women up to the age of 35 are subjected to rape (Kaser 1999, 418), while the youngest victim of rape reported in the camps, was 12 years of age, largely coincides with the widely shared construction of 'fertile age', which supports this finding.

The fates of Serb and non-Serb women however are significantly different: the circumstance, that Serb women were released after 10-15 days lets the detention appear as a 'disciplinary' custody in order to enforce compliance with the behavioural norms directed towards them. After the persecution of their partners, they do not seem to be considered as a particular threat to the nation anymore, as they then are 'accessible' to the collective of Serb men. 'Other' women instead were mostly deported, given that their threatening potential to reproduce 'other' agents is controlled by the rape by the Serb agent. As the *power to violate* is solely described to the male agents, the killing of women was likely not found to be 'necessary' on a systematic basis, as their threatening potential of reproduction can be 'controlled' via rape. This is especially so, as according to Duraković (2008, 113,153) survivors of rape often faced stigmata and were considered 'unworthy' of continuing a family lineage.

The case of the detained women in *Omarska* of higher social status brings up the question if social status 'beats' gender when it comes to the attribution of threatening potential, as Beverly Allen (1996, 64) reports, that the women in *Omarska* were supposed to be murdered and could only be saved (except five female detainees) through international intervention. That the negotiators managed to persuade the leaders to release most women underlines the finding that the threat women allegedly pose to the regime was considerably lower than the one ascribed to non-Serb men in military age, even if higher ranked in the social hierarchy. Thus, in this context it is gender, which trumps class regarding the application of group-related violent practices. As the act subordinates the victim to the imagined collective of men, the rapes of these detainees can be understood as aiming to neutralize the perceived threat to 'feminise' the perpetrators by having a higher social status than them and thus, symbolically 'aligns' their social status with their gender role in the patriarchal order.



*Getting rid of competitors: destroying fertility, preventing humiliation*

Also, non-Serb men were victimised based on their alleged capacity to reproduce children of the 'ethnic other'. The patrilineal imagination of ethnic production puts men in a far less ambiguous position, as it imagined, that the father's ethnicity is transmitted to the child. This leads nationalist agents to construct 'other' men besides their alleged ability and will to harm as an indirect threat to the nation, as they can reproduce the 'ethnic' other.

This can also translate into sexualised violence, but of a significantly different kind compared to the violence directed against female detainees, as the following incident in Omarska camp shows:

[F.H., name redacted], who was naked and bloody from beating, was made to jump into the pit with them, and Witness H was ordered to lick his naked bottom and G to suck his penis and then to bite his testicles [...]. G then bit off one of F. H.'s testicles and spat it out (ICTY 1997, 73).

This kind of genital mutilation is not a singular case: as a Bosnian court states, also a second detainee was abused in a similar manner (Tzivaras 2013, 77-79).<sup>43</sup> Furthermore it is known, that beatings in many cases aimed particularly at the testicles of the detainees, while the victims were told, that 'you'll never make Muslim children again' (Tzivaras 2013, 62f.). In this testimony the destruction of testicles is placed exactly in the context of ethnic reproduction. Here, the threat of the reproduction of 'hostile agents' can only be 'neutralised' by mutilation, as the man unlike the woman is constructed as the definite carrier of ethnicity. As Dubravka Žarkov (2007, 165) points out, the imaginations of power, heterosexuality, and masculinity are inseparable in patriarchal discourses in the region. Consequently, the castration of 'the other man' takes away his 'insignia' of power. As visible in the quotation above, it is noteworthy, that prisoners were also forced to commit sexual acts with each other in the camps.<sup>44</sup> This can also be read as an attempt to 'emasculate' the other agent, as heterosexuality is a defining feature in the construction of powerful masculinity. Furthermore, as it regards sexual intercourse, both participating men are constructed as homosexuals in local discourse (Žarkov 2007, 164f). This may explain, why there is no reported case of rape of detainees by guards, as such an act of sexual violence would pose a threat to the guards' masculinity. The absence of this practice in

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<sup>43</sup> Also E.B. mentions in his statement, that later in the Manjača camp a fellow detainee told him, that he had to bite off the man's testicles: ICTY, Tadić, Statement E.B. (14-15 Dec 1994; 18-19 Jan 1995), 17.

<sup>44</sup> See also Tzivaras (2013).

the sources does however not necessarily mean, that it did not happen at all. It is likely, that those victims were rather killed in order not to have witnesses (Žarkov 2007, 167).

Besides that, Muslim men were depicted as rapists of Serb women. In a patriarchal context, the rape of a woman means shame, and as women symbolize the national community, shame is also inflicted on the nation in the perception of nationalist agents. Furthermore, rape has been conceptualised also as an act of communication between men (Seifert 1993, 91f.), through which the rapist signifies the inability of the 'other' men to protect 'their' women. As the norm to protect is crucial to patriarchal masculinity, it inflicts shame on the 'other' agent and thus, questions his masculinity (Seifert 1993, 92; Duraković 2008, 56). Accordingly, Žarkov shows that it is the Serb man, who is constructed by the Serbian press as the ultimate victim of the rapes of Serb women, as he is 'seeing his ethnic stock polluted' (Žarkov 2007, 123). By emasculating the 'other man', also the threat to inflict 'shame' on the 'own' nation and its agents, is symbolically neutralised.

In conclusion, 'other men' are constructed in addition to their potential to directly harm as *indirect threats to the nation* due to their reproductive capacity. This 'threat' cannot be 'eliminated' by appropriation of the body as in the case of women, but by destruction, as the man is constructed to be the definite carrier of ethnic identity. Furthermore, as the 'other' man's sexuality is constructed as a threat to the honour of the male agents, also the mutilation can be seen as a response to that specific 'threat' posed by the victim. As heterosexuality is part of the notion of powerful masculinity, forced intercourse between detainees and genital mutilation also reduces the threatening potential ascribed to the 'other man' in the perpetrators' imaginations. Although Serb men were victimised in the camp, no acts of sexualised violence or violence aimed at destroying the genitals are reported. This supports the argument, that violence is largely responsive to socially constructed dimensions of threat ascribed to a person on grounds of his/her personal attributes, as Serb men, as definite carriers of ethnicity cannot pose the threat to reproduce the 'other' or to put shame on the nationalist agents by 'polluting the ethnic stock'.

#### *Threatening by existence*

Non-Serb children and elderly people were foremostly detained with the goal to be expelled via the *Trnopolje* camp. Although it is important to acknowledge, that no one in the camps was safe from abuses, violence in the camps against this group did not occur in a systematic manner.

In one case, the announced murder of an elderly detainee was contextualised within personal revenge.<sup>45</sup> As the victim was a member of *intelligentsia*, also this murder corresponds with the overall pattern of greater exposure of old men of higher status. Apart from that incident, a group of elderly men was killed, because they resisted to soldiers, who raped girls detained in the same room.<sup>46</sup> Here, the killing of the respective men must be rather seen as a response to their behaviour rather than as responding to the threatening potential ascribed to them on the grounds of their attributes. This impression is confirmed by one occasion, in which only men under 60 years of age were allowed to board buses under the pretext to be released. In fact, the approximate 200 passengers were killed *en masse* (ICTY 2003, 61).<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, it indicates, that the men's role as 'agents' is limited to the so-called military age, namely 15-16 to 60-65 years, as the killing of a boy younger than 15 is also only reported in one case, which occurred under very specific circumstances of personal issues, which was followed by (albeit mild) consequences for the soldier.<sup>48</sup> This general pattern is also to be found in the *Srebrenica* massacre, in which almost exclusively Muslim boys and men in 'military age' were murdered (ICTY 2001c, 179).

In the sources, non-Serb elderly women, or girls younger than 12 years do not appear as victims of violence besides their detention and deportation in the sources. This matches the overall impression, that the elevated risk of rape coincides with the 'fertile age'. Thus, girls and elderly women do not seem to pose an *indirect threat* to the new regime in the eyes of the agents.

However, the question remains open how to explain the phenomenon that women were targeted by sexualised violence based on the 'indirect threat' ascribed to them, whereas young boys, were not systematically targeted by violence, although they would enter the 'military age' much sooner than fictional hostile agents born by 'other' women. One plausible explanation could be that children are denied political agency. This becomes also clear in Anna Bogić's autoethnographic study about schooling during the dissolution of Yugoslavia, in which her classmates were told to stop talking politics, as they were 'too young for it' (Bogić 2018, 136). Here it becomes clear that the children's political agency gets denied on grounds of their age. Thus, it appears that regarding the construction of personal attributes, the present matters far more than the future, as 'other' children, who were constructed as lacking political agency, were far less targeted - quite in contrast to women, whose recreational capacity was highly

<sup>45</sup> ICTY, Tadić, S.B. (21 June 1996), 3112.

<sup>46</sup> ICTY, Tadić, S.B. (21 June 1996), 3129f.

<sup>47</sup> ICTY, Tadić, V.G. (6 August 1996), 3072.

<sup>48</sup> See for this occasion footnote 58.

securitised in the misogynous discourse of the ‘white plague’. Furthermore, in a patriarchal environment raping a woman is likely to be perceived as less atrocious than killing of a child. Besides that, as rape constitutes according to Monique Plaza an act, in which ‘men become men and women become women[...]’ (Plaza cited in in Heberle 2014, 63), rape allows men to use rape as an ‘identity resource’<sup>49</sup> with which they portray their masculinity (e.g. Seifert 1993). However, raping or killing children constructed as innocent, may not be incorporable into the myth of ‘heroic’ soldierly masculinity and can thus, less likely be used to embody ‘soldierly masculinity’. That this behaviour is perceived as inappropriate by other guards can be seen in an incident in *Trnopolje*, where a mother and child were shot. After that incident, the responsible guard was temporarily arrested and removed from service. On the next day he returned to service. This episode shows that the possibility space for the killing of women and children was at least limited and not encouraged.<sup>50</sup>

In conclusion it can be stated that this group of people is not perceived as particular threatening to the new Serb regime on the grounds of class, age, gender, and/or ethnicity. But as ethnic homogeneity was propagated as the only means to prevent genocide against the Serbs and became the new norm for societal organisation, this group still undermined the new ethnocratic order by simply existing on the claimed territory. But given that these people were neither perceived as direct, nor as indirect threats in the defined manner, the response to the threat they posed by existence, was given in the massive deportations of this group of people, as their remaining would dislocate the newly created society’s myth of ethnic homogeneity and thus, undermine the credibility of the whole murderous project pursued by the ethnocratic SDS party.

## Conclusion

This paper has shown that different forms of violence were directed against different groups of detainees, depending on the specific threat they allegedly posed to the new ethnocratic regime and its henchmen. The specific kind of threat associated with an individual is rooted in intertwined constructions of various personal attributes such as ethnicity, gender, age, and social status in the context of the activated ‘crisis frame’ in the Bosnia-Herzegovina of the early 1990s. The violence directed against the detainees can be understood as specific responses to the *dimension of threat* the individual was associated with on the basis of her/his personal

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<sup>49</sup> Term is borrowed from Harders (2011), 143.

<sup>50</sup> ICTY, Tadić, S.B. (21 June 1996), 3132.

attributes with the aim to 'neutralize' it. Therefore, these constructions of threat do not only enable the 'legitimate' use of certain forms of violence against a group of detainees, but simultaneously 'delegitimize' the use of other forms of violence against the same group, when they do not 'correspond' with the threat ascribed to the target. This logic also structures events, in which violence is committed in order 'to settle old bills', as the perpetrators follow the overall pattern of violence directed against detainees of the same group.

At last, I want to share some suggestions on the role of the camps in the establishment of a new social order pointing to the transformative dimension of violence expressed by several scholars (e.g. Jakobsen 2014; Kalyvas 2006; Žarkov 2007). The analysis showed that with the expulsion of non-Serbs privileged positions and businesses were taken over by Serbs with ties to the new regime. But the social order which was to be established reached far beyond the expulsion and the take-over of the positions and businesses made available, as it is observable in the case of the Serb detainees. This violence was exercised, speaking with Kalyvas, on a selective basis, aiming at ensuring the compliance of individual's behaviour with the authority's demands. The detention of Serbs enforced not only ethnically exclusive behaviour by criminalising interethnic solidarities, but also patriarchal gender roles for both genders, and thus enforcing certain masculinities (militant) and femininities (only partner with Serbs, domestic) among the remaining Serb population.

In conclusion, the proposed inductive method to research violence proved to be fruitful to develop an intersectional understanding of differentiated violence and the documents provided by the ICTY proved to be suitable sources. As this study was mainly explorative and limited to the case study of the camps in *Prijedor* in 1992, further research would be necessary to verify or adjust the findings of this study, especially in rather under-investigated categories such as age and class. It would be also interesting to include further categories, such as disability or sexual orientation, if suitable material is found. The sources examined for this paper do however not include sufficient evidence in that regard.

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