MESA 35

TABLE 35

Trauma, transtorno y memoria
Trauma, Upheaval, and Memory

CHAIR
Mark Cave

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Sanela Bajramovic Jusufbegovic (Sweden):
“What am I without my children?” A mother’s life with memories, and coping strategies as a returnee to a town in eastern Bosnia.”

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Ekaterina Burla (Russia):
“When They Took Away All Our Lands: Land Seizures in 1929 and Nowadays Recounted and Commented by the Moscow Region Long Residents.”

—

Sean Field (South Africa):
“Speaking through Shadows: The Holocaust, post-memory and ‘transmitted trauma.’”

—

Polly Vauquiline (India):
“Power in Intimate Human Relations and the Marginal Voices”

—

Sara Makowski (Mexico):
“Locura y espacio público: Una travesía de voces y palabras”
What am I without my children?” A mother’s life with memories, and coping strategies as a returnee to a town in eastern Bosnia.

Sanela Bajramovic Jusufbegovic
(Sweden):

Resumen: El Este de Bosnia sufrió, durante la guerra de los noventa, una gran perdida humana. Aparte del genocidio en Srebrenica, en donde murieron miles de personas, muchas más, primordialmente mujeres y niños, fueron forzados a dejar su lugares de origen. Debido a los fuertes vientos nacionalistas que nunca han cedido, el retorno de los refugiados y la reconciliación ha sido un lento proceso. Aunque no es poco común que muchos refugiados se nieguen a volver a sus domicilios previo a la guerra, también hay mujeres que, habiendo perdido miembros familiares, optan por volver a domicilios vacíos, desolados y lleno de memorias.

Conocí a Tima en el local de la organización de mujeres, Forum Zena, en Bratunac, un pueblo situado a pocas millas de Srebrenica. Su historia, casi imposible de oír, me obligó a reflexionar sobre el poco interés que los historiadores han mostrado por los relatos de los sobrevivientes del genocidio y la limpieza étnica en Bosnia. Conmemoraciones anuales nos recuerdan a aquellos que perdieron sus vidas, pero rara vez, se enfoca en las voces de los sobrevivientes. Cómo encuentra uno fuerzas para continuar su vida después de éste tipo de traumas? Cuáles son los recuerdos y el rol que estos cumplen en la vida actual? La historia de Tima es multidimensional. Así como encontré a una mujer que debido a sus perdidas questionaba su propia existencia, también escuché a alguien comprometida, con fuerza y que luchaba por su derecho a retornar. A pesar de todo, Bratunac, es el lugar que alberga los recuerdos de sus hijos, sus vidas y sus muertes. Detalles de esto último siguen sin ser narrados.

Abstract: Eastern Bosnia had during the war in the 1990’s suffered great human losses. Besides the genocide in Srebrenica, resulting in several thousand deaths, many more, primarily women and children, were forced to leave their places of origin. Due to strong nationalistic winds that never stopped blowing, the return of refugees and reconciliation has been a slow process. While it is not uncommon that refugees themselves refuse to return to their pre-war homes, there are also women who have lost several family members and still chose to return to empty, devastated houses full of memories.

I met Tima at the local women’s organization, Forum Zena, in Bratunac, a town located just a few miles from Srebrenica. Her life story, almost unbearable to listen to, prompted me to reflect over how little interest historians have showed for the life stories of those who survived the genocide and ethnic cleansing in Bosnia. Yearly commemorations remind us of those who have lost their lives, but seldom focus on the voices of the ones who stayed behind. How does one find the strength to go on after this type of trauma? How does one remember and what role do memories play in one’s current life? Tima’s life story is multidimensional. As much as I met a woman who due to the losses she had to endure even questioned her own existence, I also heard a strong, engaged returnee with the will to fight for the right to live in her hometown. After all Bratunac was the place holding the memories of her children, both their life and death. Details of the latter remained though unsaid.
INTRODUCTION
I was born in 1983, in a place called Bratunac.
Our house was not the most beautiful, but for me it was the most precious.
I still don’t understand why they forced us out when it was ours.
They killed my dad. Mahira and Nejla have gone away to a country called Germany, to a city called Stuttgart,
and mum, me and Edhem are in a place called Živinice.
We live in a school and we eat in a canteen.
There’s a lady there I call auntie Refija, who likes me a lot, and every day she asks me:
‘Enes, my son, what would you like?’
I say: ‘Auntie Refija, I’d like mum not to cry, because when mum doesn’t cry it is a happy day. I would like to dream, auntie Refija, I would like to dream of Bosnia like a person, in place of my dad.
And auntie Refija, I’d like two swings.
So Mahira could swing on one, and I on the other...
(Hadžihafizbegović cited in Hadžifejzović 2002)

This is an excerpt from the play “A dream of Bosnia” written by actor and playwright Emir Hadžihafizbegović. Written in the midst of the war, the play depicts the reality of thousands of refugees who due to the ravages of Serb forces were driven out from their prewar homes in eastern Bosnia-Herzegovina (hereafter Bosnia). Through the protagonist, 11 years old boy named Enes, the play tells about many hardships that survivors had to deal with: death of and separation from family members, loss of their homes, and insecurities of the refugee life (Hadžifejzović 2002).

The wartime period in this region is mostly known through the genocide in Srebrenica that occurred in 1995, which has during the postwar years become a symbol of Muslim suffering. However, both in the play cited above as well as in this particular paper the focus is rather on the town of Bratunac, located just a few miles from Srebrenica, and separated from Serbia by the Drina River. Due to the geographical position of Bratunac it was one of the first places besieged by the Serb army which in May of 1992 resulted in murders and expulsions of Muslim population. Hundreds of men of different ages were shortly detained at the local school and then executed. Their bodies were afterwards moved and buried in hidden graves (Leydesdorff 2009:126-128).

Families of those who were killed in Bratunac had to wait for nearly 15 years for the first bodies to be found and identified. Even before the remains of their loved ones were reburied properly, some survivors began returning to their hometown. One of them is Tima. In May of 1992 she lost her whole immediate family, her husband and two sons. A decade later she had already returned to her rebuilt house in Bratunac. In 2007 and 2008 respectively she buried her sons and her husband at a graveyard in the town.
In this paper I listen to and analyze the life story of Tima Delic, with special emphasis on the losses she suffered during the war and her life as a returnee in Bratunac. I am interested in how she interprets and understands her life as it came to be. How does she remember the prewar years in her hometown, and what role do memories play in Tima’s current life?

Yearly commemorations held across Bosnia remind us of those who have lost their lives, but seldom focus on the voices of the ones who stayed behind. And those who stayed behind are in the majority of cases women. As Selma Leydesdorff calls upon in her important book on the history of Srebrenica women, survivors are, not at least by historians, seldom regarded worth interviewing. There is little space in traditional history writing for emotional and subjective narratives told by traumatized individuals. Perhaps it depends, as Laydesdorff suggests, on our reluctance to be exposed to the worm of grief that comes with talking to survivors (Leydesdorff 2009: 42-43). However, those of us who do make the choice to engage in the process of interviewing survivors must know that it requires plenty of consideration. Speaking out of
experience it is an arduous endeavor. Therefore, throughout this paper I will also dwell upon responsibilities of researchers when interviewing trauma survivors and possible impact the narratives might have on the interviewers themselves.

INTERVIEWS WITH TIMA: ON SOLIDARITY AND TRAUMA

I was not aware of the tragic events that occurred in Bratunac during the early days of the war in Bosnia when I in the fall of 2012 visited the town. What I though did know due to my current work with women’s NGOs, was that this town, not at least due to its geographical proximity to Srebrenica, was a strong nest of Serb nationalism. Indeed, it has been an extremely difficult area to work in for anyone who was in favor of creating a multiethnic community similar to the one that existed before the war, and thus questioned the nationalism that had come to imbue people’s minds and even showed in the practice of local authorities. Thus, the goal of my visit to Bratunac was to do interviews with activists from Forum Zena, a local women’s NGO that had made substantial efforts in facilitating the return of refugees and their reintegration in the town. For a long time their office had been the only meeting place for women belonging to different ethnic groups.

Arriving at Forum Zena’s office I realized that a group of women gathered to meet me consisted of activists, but also a couple of Muslim returnees that previously had been helped by the organization. Tima was one of the returnees that had been invited by the leader of Forum Zena to tell her story. Even though I within the first minute of our interview realized that she was not a suitable informant for the study I was doing at the time, I chose to proceed with the interview. Neither as a fellow being nor a researcher could I deny Tima to finish her narrative. Acting differently would not be ethically right. Working with oral history involves meeting people of flesh and blood that cannot be set aside as easily as documents in an archive (Thor 2005:65-66). Further, in front of me I had a trauma survivor who had just told me about her great loss. How could I say to this former mother of two that I was not really interested in her story? Would I not then, if not purposely, offend both her and her deceased family members?

It is generally known that majority of trauma survivors avoid talking or remain completely silent about the experiences that have led to their traumatization. Having researched on sexual war violence, I was also acquainted with the possibility that every occasion (read interview) where the victim has to recount unpleasant memories puts her at risk of retraumatization (Rahmanovic-Koning & Zecevic 2006:5-6). Therefore, I feared that I did not have the skills to respond appropriately in case our conversation evoked severely traumatic memories. Considering the fact that Tima actually agreed to be interviewed does not free me as an oral historian from responsibility or at least a reflection over the issue of possible retraumatization. As researchers we are used to stepping into people’s lives for a period of time and then leaving them. But, as Jacquie Aston had wisely put it: “We need to be careful that in our interest to probe a little deeper into people’s stories we maintain boundaries of respect” (Aston, 2001:151). My strategy became letting Tima tell her story without unnecessary interruptions, and even avoiding certain questions that I believed would be too painful for her to talk about. For me it was more important what she decided to tell me.

As my encounter with Tima was a result of a misunderstanding, I was less prepared on my own reactions to her story. Prior to that, I had done plenty of interviews, including some interviews with survivors of sexual war violence. At least to say, I did not expect to be moved to tears. Mark Klempner experienced in interviewing Holocaust survivors stresses the importance of sensitivity and empathy when dealing with trauma survivors. At the same time he throws light on the vulnerable position of the interviewer, stating that the interviewer might lack the defense mechanisms that the interviewee probably has and thus can experience problems with handling the information she receives (Klempner 2006:202-204). Quite unprepared for the intensity of the narrative I was listening to, where especially the pain of losing children weighed heavily upon us, I thus found myself in a delicate situation.

I assume that the interviewer completely failing to control her emotions could disrupt the interview. That scenario did not happen during my encounter with Tima. Surely, she noticed that I was crying, and even
confirmed it by gently urging me to stop. This episode did not compromise the flow of her story; if anything it tended to prolong her current answer. In retrospect I have come to view this as a moment of solidarity, as I, at least for a short time, could ‘understand’ her reality (Davies & Esseveld 1989:24). My experiences of encounters with Tima also prove the validity of the statement made by the Swedish historian Malin Thor. Namely, inspired by Martin Buber Thor has stated that genuine encounter between the two parties in an interview situation affects the researcher as a professional but also as a human being (Thor 2001:336, 342). The first encounter with Tima has indeed left trace on me. Although emotionally a challenge it has been an inspiration in both my personal and professional life. Almost exactly a year later I returned to Bratunac for a second interview with a woman whose voice as a survivor has neither been a priority of historians nor especially appreciated in a still tense state of postwar Bosnia.

**ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS WITH TRAUMA SURVIVORS AND THEIR LIFE STORIES: SOME GENERAL REMARKS**

Oral history continues to play a significant role for making women’s lives visible, especially in societies where their stories have been overlooked and thus are threatened to remain undocumented (Armitage, Hart & Weathermon 2002). When it comes to survivors of persecution and war, their voices have historically proved to be of crucial importance for informing about atrocities such as genocide and mass killings (Leydesdorff 2009:47). Does this then imply that survivors stand in line wanting nothing else but to share their often painful stories with oral historians? Not at all actually, because traumatic war experiences often in combination with postwar treatment of survivors can bring them to choose silence. Those who do decide to tell their stories tend to do it for particular reasons and through the story of Tima Delic this paper will among other things show why some survivors of the Bosnian war cannot see silence as an alternative.

It is common that oral history interviews have a chronological structure. They might start with questions about the childhood of the interviewed, and then proceed with the rest of her/his life. As my first interview with Tima was ‘an accident’ (I thought she was an activist) and happened in quite a hurry, I never had a chance to pose a first question. Right after I informed her about my wish to record the interview she started telling her story:

Tima: I came back here ’90...2001. I am sorry if I...

Sanela: That’s nothing. It doesn’t matter.

Tima: I am a housewife, and have always been. I never went to school (Sanela: Mm). So...I learned with my children, with my husband, with...I know how to write my name, I know capital letters, I watch soap operas. So I grew up in company with others so I do not consider myself as backward and I never lacked anything. I had a nice husband...I always had his salary in my hands. Even later I had the support of my children. Unfortunately, I lost all that 1992, both my husband and two sons. (Sanela: Mm) One was...one is born ’71 and the other ’73. My husband was born in ’49. He was 43 years old when he was killed. The children...the older one was 20 years old, the younger one had just turned 18. (Sanela:Mm) That is my...my sad story. As I said, I came back here in 2001.

Obviously, the information was overwhelming for someone who came to Bratunac to interview activists of a local women’s organization. With no type of interview guide available I felt rather unprepared, but stopping the interview was not a choice that could have been made at this stage, because Tima had already told me about the largest trauma of her life. The solution was to listen carefully to the story being told and create questions in dialog with Tima’s answers. We talked mostly about her return to Bratunac and her current life there. Not until the second interview, carried through a year later, was I able to organize the interview chronologically, trying to find out more about the life before and during the war years.
Analyzing life stories we will most probably find at least one central theme. It can be one or a number of life-changing events that the interviewee often refers to and that run as a red thread either through the whole narrative or different parts of it (Thor 2006:48). Studying the stories of Holocaust survivors, Gabriele Rosenthal has come to a conclusion that “the life story of these survivors is only told within the framework of the Holocaust” indicating that the stories of trauma survivors can contain just one central theme (Rosenthal 1998:37). Although there may exist numerous factors which can influence how interviewees tell their stories Rosenthal’s findings are interesting when compared to Tima’s story. If we take a look at the first part of her story cited above, we can see a theme emerging, namely the war of the 1990s and the changes it brought including the loss of her family and the expulsion of Muslims from Bratunac. One could, of course, argue that the focus of her story may depend on the information she was given prior to the first interview by the leader of Forum Zena, the questions I posed or, maybe her own presupposition of what researchers wanted her to talk about. Nevertheless, it is without doubt the central theme of her story.

MEMORIES OF THE PREWAR LIFE: IDEALIZATION AS A COPING STRATEGY?

Tima was born in the early 1950s in a village called Redžići situated just outside of Bratunac by the Drina River. This is where her family had lived for several generations before they were driven away during the last war. She grew up in a family of five children; a sister and one of her brothers were also killed during the war. She never went to school, but had learned to read and write as a grown-up. When asked to remember her life before she got married, Tima is of quite few words. She remembers it as “without worries”. Apparently, there was not a lot of money in her parental home, but she does not recall “ever being hungry”. One of her priorities as a young girl was finding a boyfriend and possibly a future husband:

Well I found…I managed to find my soul mate (Sanela: Mm)...I think still today I do not regret it. I lived with that husband of mine for 21 years. I did not marry him out of interest. I never had any interest and I do not have it today. Not even today I have any interest.

Chronology is generally hard to maintain. Despite of my questions, Tima responded by travelling back and forth between different periods, as interviewees usually do, in order to make sense of her life. As we can see, while answering the question about her life before marriage she also shortly made references to her married life. When I later on specifically asked her to recall her marriage, the answer was short stressing her current dependence on those “beautiful memories”. According to earlier mentioned Gabriele Rosenthal it is not uncommon that trauma survivors have difficulties remembering the life before the tragedy occurred. Her research has showed that survivors who were “abruptly and irreversibly severed” were not able to include the memories of the prewar life into their life stories (Rosenthal 1998:37). However, when they did succeed in integrating prewar memories in their life stories the image of those tended to be idealized and concise. Rosenthal sees this as a coping strategy because speaking extensively about one’s previous life could put the idealization of the same in danger (Ibid.).

Surely, some of Rosenthal’s results correspond to observations that I have made in Tima’s story. She does not talk at length about her prewar life and the image we do get is indeed idealized. However, one segment of her prewar life gets quite a lot of space in her life story, namely her children.

Already in my first interview with Tima, a clear picture of a proud mother emerged even though we at that particular occasion barely touched the theme of her children’s lives. Within a few sentences she described a loving relationship she once had with her two sons, a relationship based on mutual respect and friendship. In our second interview Tima still expressed her pride:

Sanela: How do you remember your children?

Tima: I remember them being successful. They obeyed me. My husband was a driver. He would be on the road. With me they were as with a friend, not a mother. They tell me
everything. They never...From the first grade I went to parent-teacher meetings. Usually, I went. All the teachers knew me. (Sanela: Mm) Even when they went to senior high school I did not find it disturbing, I always went. They had never any non-attendance. Nothing. I wanted my children to be successful and I enjoyed it. (Sanela: Mm) And, if you believe me, I am still proud of them.

This time Tima even gave concrete examples of her children’s actions that had made her proud. Besides what was mentioned in the citation above, I heard a story about two talented and diligent young guys. Both had graduated from high school and the older one even considered going to the university. To what degree the image of Tima’s children is idealization constructed by their grieving mother I intend to leave unanswered. What is evident though is its significance to Tima, who at times cannot even find the right words to describe how much her children meant to her. At one point she utters: “And the children were so...I do not know...I do not know...for me the children were really...” and then continues by talking about their achievements. Missing the appropriate words, or maybe avoiding being overrun by grief, she chooses to honor her sons by talking about their actions, preferences and dreams. It is apparent that the children had been the center of her world prior to their death. Talking about her deceased children the way she did, describing vividly their actions and dreams sometimes even using present tense, indicate that memories of them play a significant role in her current life.

MEMORIES OF WAR YEARS: MUTUAL SILENCE

From beginning of the April the region of eastern Bosnia was in a desperate situation (Hadzifejzovic 2002:42-47). Several towns along the Drina River were subjected to the violence of Serb forces. The war came to Bratunac in the mid of April of 1992 when the Serb army, headed by paramilitary formations from Serbia, started pillaging and murdering non-Serb inhabitants of the town. Two weeks later Tima was driven away from her house and deported to the territory controlled by the Bosnian army. Her husband and sons fell into the hands of the Serb army a day later, were taken to the local school and then executed.

The war and the tragedy that it caused in her life is the central theme of Tima’s life story. It is present on every page of the transcripts and almost referred to in all of her answers, merely because there are still numerous reminders of war in her current life in Bratunac. The political, social and economic issues that emerged during the war were very much present both in 2012 and 2013 when the interviews were conducted.

Despite of strong presence of war theme there are no detailed stories about her war experiences and feelings about the expulsion and separation from her family. Neither is there any reference to the sufferings of her murdered loved ones, other than a short praise to God for sparing her from witnessing their death.

It is important to say that the silence on this delicate issue was not only Tima’s, but mine as well. It was an active choice to refrain from questions that would risk Tima’s health. I never pushed her to give me a fuller answer and never dared to ask her to describe her last moments with her family or whether she was familiar with the way they died. According to the sociologist Anna Johansson silences are something the interviewer and the interviewee create together (Johansson 2005:268) Witness accounts of the few that survived horrors of the local school, situated in the center of the town, tell about brutal beatings and systematic shootings of Muslim males. Did she know some of these details, but found them unbearable to put into words, or was she content with what she believed was God’s will to spare her from seeing their death with her own eyes?

THE POSTWAR PERIOD: RETURNEE LIFE IN BRATUNAC

After she was deported from her hometown in 1992, Tima lived for almost 10 years as a refugee in a small town of Zivinice. When the return of refugees originally from Bratunac officially started she was one of the first to return. This is what she told me about her choice to return during our first encounter:
That [Returning home] is my only wish. Considering my case [loss of her family] I could by no means get that [Returning home] out of my head. (Sanela: Mm) I just told you about that. (Sanela: Mm). I simply had to return. My beautiful memories are calling upon me. (Sanela: mm) I have nothing else left. And then I came here...I did not want to insult anyone, but nor did I put up with...I did not allow anyone to insult me. (Sanela: Mm) I fought. Simply, I know that my children and my husband did not harm anyone, and why they were killed...I suppose the world knows that. I know that too, but mainly they were killed because they were Muslims. Then Muslims were being killed.

For a woman who was a refugee living in a someone else's home in a town not far from Bratunac, and who had not yet had found dead bodies of her family members, returning home, even though her house was destroyed, appeared to be the only alternative. Both her house and the rest of Bratunac were full of memories that reminded Tima of her prewar life. But, during the war years the town had changed, and Tima seemed to be well-aware of that. While it just a decade ago was inhabited predominantly by Muslims, at the end of the war basically all inhabitants of Bratunac were Serbs. Moreover, as a neighboring town of Srebrenica, considered to be the symbol of Muslim suffering manifestations of Serb nationalism were a daily routine in Bratunac. Return of non-Serbs to the town has thus not been easy.

In spite of the obvious obstacles such as a destoryed house and a fairly hostile atmosphere in the town, Tima persevered in her wish to return. She visited the builders of her house on a daily basis making them coffee and sometimes even food. She was open to her both Muslim and Serb neighbors, greeting and visiting them. When asked by the local NGO Forum Zena to participate in workshops with Serb women encouraging reconciliation, she accepted it gladly:

Anyways, that was the beginning of our reconciliation, meeting each other. I accepted it immediately. It did not disturb me. I say, whoever of my neighbors greets me...they say to me "You are nice. There are those who will not [greet]". I say "I was brought up that way. (Sanela: Mm) I will greet everyone who greets me. Who does not want, they do not have to. I do not live of somebody's greetings" [...] So I did not care. I was prepared on anything [...] I fought against insults, because I returned to my own house! I do not live in somebody else's spot. I was expelled from here '92, expelled, and they killed all I had. My children and husband were killed at the Vuk Karadzic school [...] and no one was ever prosecuted for that.

As many survivors from eastern Bosnia that were interviewed by Leydesdorff (2009), Tima is honestly positive towards reconciliation and a life in a more multiethnic community. Time after time she criticized the presence of nationalistic symbols in the public spaces of the town. It is noteworthy to mention that even though Tima herself was a practicing Muslim, the critique was also aimed at exposure of religious symbols and religion as a school subject. As we have seen, Tima has nothing against meeting with women from other ethnic groups, as long as the contact is imbued by mutual respect. Bratunac she remembered and wanted to see in the future was of a multiethnic character, different ethnic groups living side by side in respect.

However, during both of my visits to the town the current state in it was quite different from the ideal imagined by Tima. A local activist showed me around this little town. We went by the local school where Tima’s family was murdered. The building stood intact and was still in use. Its name had though been changed. We took a walk by the football's stadium where in May 1992 Muslims of Bratunac were collected for a separation of men and women. On that day teenage boys played football. In the centre of the town, people sat at the street cafés and enjoyed the sun. Nowhere

1 In 1991 there lived 64.2% of Muslims and 34.2% Serbs [Laydesdorff 2009: 89]
were there any physical signs of war nor were there any monuments acknowledging the atrocities suffered by the Muslim population. It was as if they had never existed.

Fighting ignorance is usually a significant reason to why female survivors in this part of the country, if given a chance to speak, choose not to remain silent. Indeed, they appreciate the opportunity to talk about their dead in order to save them from oblivion (Leydesdorff 2009:399-400). In a country highly marked by segregation, not only of people, but also institutions, public spaces and even memories of the latest war there is a constant battle over remembrance (Miller 2006). Living in an environment where the majority of people do not acknowledge the mass killings that took place in Bratunac in 1992, Tima is anxious about informing me about her family being murdered. It is something that was repeated during our encounters. Refusing to be silent about this is of great importance to her, but at the same time she underscores that she is only interested in telling the truth, not lies: “By God, I would not lie. I never have, but now I am even more convinced about what was done”. Stressing her own truthfulness is a reminder of the fact that during the process of telling their life stories our interviewees engage in what Lynn Abrams has called “a three-way dialogue”, with themselves, the interviewer and relevant cultural discourses (Abrams 2010:59). Having that in mind, we learn quite a lot from Tima’s story about the social and political context she lived in. It gives us indications of considerable distrust and tensions between the unwanted returnee population (Muslims) and those (Serbs) who had never left Bratunac, which then also helps us to better understand Tima.

In fact, even though there were some indications during our first interview that the life for the Muslim minority in their hometown was difficult, especially regarding a high rate of unemployment, Tima was overtly positive. She had a clear vision of Bratunac in the future. A year later her view of the same was considerably different and the critique was openly displayed:

We are a minority here. And even we I am telling you...if a child graduates from high school there is no work. No! No one gets employed. They are destroying everything. Their children do get to work somewhere, ours do not. (Sanela:Mm) And they say there is no discrimination. There is my fellow, there is…

One of the turning points that affected Tima not long before our meeting was the arrest of a relative of hers, and his dismissal from work. This young man and his family lived nearby Tima and had become close to her. As she told me “he was there instead of her own children”. Witnessing his arrest was a traumatic experience for her, even though there was no violence. She could not grasp the fact that the special police forces were engaged in what she saw as insignificant case as that one, instead of prioritizing war crimes. To her it was a token that justice might not be reachable.

The engagement was still there, but as she said, her optimism had recently decreased. However, on my question whether she would stay in Bratunac, the answer was clear:

I am staying. I am staying...there is none who could...I will hit him with anything. It is enough! (Sanela:Mm) I am not living somewhere else and everything I have is here. I was born here. I do not recall that any of my family came from somewhere else. I am...my father was born here, my grandfather...

SOME FINAL WORDS

In the beginning of this paper a little boy named Enes, a protagonist in the playwright “Dream of Bosnia”, leads us directly into the wartime sufferings of the Muslim population of eastern Bosnia. He, along with his mother and siblings, is a survivor forced to collect the shattered pieces of their previous lives. The present paper is focused on the life story of another survivor, Tima Delic, who saw her whole immediate family disappear in May of 1992.
**Sources and Literature**

**Sources**

Interview with Tima Delic
September 9, 2012 in Bratunac (Bosnia-Herzegovina)
Language: Bosnian

Interview with Tima
September 20, 2013 in Bratunac (Bosnia-Herzegovina)
Language: Bosnian

**Literature**


Rahmanovic-Koning, Augustina & Zecevic, Jasna, Civil Victims of War in Bosnia Herzegovina: Justice or Stigmatization, in TRN Conference, St. Moritz, 14-17 September 2006.

Power in Intimate Human Relations and the Marginal Voices.

Polly Vauquiline  
(India):

Abstract: Domestic violence is an evil that never dies. It is an indicator of inequality, injustice and discrimination of the social system. Though there is no justification for its existence in a civilized society, then why it is so difficult to root it out? Why it persist to exist even after the prevalence of legal provisions to combat domestic violence? The causes maybe imbedded on the fact that it involves intimate human relation where there is variation in the exercise of power relation at different level. These power relations put women in disadvantages position which are prominently gendered in nature.

Assam, a state in the north eastern corner of India is unique in its own distinction. It is a region with myriad of communities with varied culture, ethnic and social background. Distinctive statistical differences of domestic violence exist among these communities. These variations may categorically be due to the nature of power relation in intimate relations among these communities which can be probe with the application of oral history method.

An effort is made through this study to explore the societal attitudes concerning power in intimate human relations. The focus of this paper is to search for the social believes attached with the power relation that have been governing them or promoting them in the form of social values, customs, rituals and tradition which maybe the nucleus of domestic violence in Assamese society. This study intends to investigation the power relations amongst the tribal and the non-tribal communities. It will give a deeper understanding to the gendered nature of power in intimate relation.

Key words: power, intimate relation, domestic violence, marginal voices, tribal and non-tribal, social values, Assam.
INTRODUCTION:
Domestic violence is a form of violence which has existed in the past and is still one of a major form of gender violence across the globe. In Indian context the historical records are a witness to it. Both the epics, Ramayana and Mahabharata, give us glimpses of the life of royal families during that period of time. It also provides an account of violence that the two legendary women, Sita and Draupadi, faced which can also be understood as domestic violence in the modern context. Again in the Manusmriti it is mention that women are supposed to be in the custody of a man (a wife under her husband). In Tulsidas’ Ramcharit Manas the author legitimised the subjugation and maltreatment of women and girls. He mentioned that, ‘Drums, the illiterate, lower caste, animals and women deserve a beating to straighten up and get the acts together.’ The only distinction over the period of time is it being recognised as a form of crime against women and legal jurisdiction attached to it by different countries.

Alabama in USA in 1871 became the first state to retract the right of the husbands to beat their wives [Office of Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice]. Again in 1882, Maryland (USA) become the first state to impose legal provision on wife-beating and made it punishable according to the law [Hart, 1991]. The need for protection of the rights of women gained global recognition during the International Decade of Women (1975-1985) and was steadily gaining momentum since then [United Nation Observances, A/RES/3520 (XXIX)]. This recognition became international law in 1979, when the UN General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). It established a universal set of standards and principles that are intended to serve as a template for shaping national policies towards the long term goal of eliminating gender discrimination. India became signatory to the Convention in 1993 and ratified CEDAW and committed itself to work for the elimination of all types of discrimination against women.

In Indian despite of the existence of strong legal provisions against domestic violence, it is on rise. ‘Dowry Death’ cases have increased by 2.7% during the year 2011 over the previous year (8,391 cases). Cases of ‘Torture by husband and in-laws’ in the country have increased by 5.4% over the previous year (94,041 cases). The cases under the Dowry Prohibition Act have increased by 27.7% during the year 2011 as compared to 2010 (5,182 cases). The Minister of State in the Ministry of Home Affairs, Shri R.P.N. Singh, informed in the floor of the Indian Parliament that a total number of 9873 and 4547 cases of domestic violence cases under Domestic Violence Act, 2005 were registered during 2011 and 2012 respectively [Ministry of Home Affair, Govt. of India].

In India, violence against women and more so domestic violence need to have a social and cultural understanding. The uniqueness of Indian society is that it is progressive but at the same time it is imbedded with rich tradition and culture values. These may adhere to domestic violence to in a society.

CONNECTING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, SOCIALISATION PROCESS, POWER RELATION:
The very definition and understanding of a home as a place where people co-habit in peace and harmony, is increasingly becoming questionable in today’s context. With the increase in the number of incidences of domestic violence ‘home’, the very supposition that the entire members feel safe and are at peace, is at stack. It has now complex and multivalent meanings. Along as a site of privacy and freedom of expression,

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1 The Ramayana is one of the two great Indian epics. It depicts the life in India around 1000 BC and offers models of paths to righteousness.
2 The Mahabharata is the other Indian epic and provides an insight on the development of Hinduism between 400 BCE and 200 CE and is regarded by Hindus as both a text about dharma (Hindu moral law) and a history.
3 Sita is the central female character of the Hindu epic Ramayana. She is the wife of the Hindu god Rama. She is esteemed as a standard-setter for wifely and womanly virtues for all Hindu women.
4 In the epic Mahabharata Draupadi, is the “emerged” daughter of King Drupada and the wife of the five Pandava.
5 Manu-smriti or “Laws of Manu”, traditionally, the most authoritative of the books of the Hindu code in India. It is attributed to the legendary first man and lawgiver, Manu. In its present form, it dates from the 1st century BC. It prescribes to the Hindu his moral responsibilities.
6 Tulsidas (1532-1623) was a Hindu poet-saint, reformer and philosopher renowned for his devotion to the god Rama.
it has also become a site of oppression (Domosh and Seager, 2001). According to a study, one in every four women report experiencing domestic violence in their lifetime.7 The number may be more as it represents only the reported cases. So for many women, home is a battleground, not a safe haven. Violent acts in married couples when understood in the context of “family systems” it is viewed as instances endemic to society, which needs to be condemned (Brush, 1990). Straus research has contributed to our understanding of the household as a dangerously violent place for many people (Straus, 1987) and more so to the women. Until recently, in most parts of the world, a husband enjoyed a legal right to his wife’s body (Arthur and Clark, 2009).

Domestic violence against women by men is often caused by the misuse of power and to control the women within the context of male privilege. They operate this privilege on the women to maintain a situation of dominance, where men have the power over the women.8 The very definition of domestic violence as “a pattern of abusive behaviour in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner” (United States Office on Violence Against Women) also describes the power relation attached with the act of domestic violence (Babble, 2011). Abusers behave violently to get what they want and gain control over the women. Violence is an ultimate resource used to derive power within relationships. Recent work has examined the mechanisms through which this structural inequality influences domestic assaults (Anderson, 1997).

Johnson and Ferraro also suggested that a promising development has been work around violence as a mode of control, in heterosexual relationships as well as in same-gender relationships. Feminist scholars argue that domestic violence is rooted in gender and power and represents men’s active attempts to maintain dominance and control over women (Anderson, 1997). The heart of the debate centres on the relative importance of patriarchy in the etiology of domestic violence. Feminist researchers argue that violence is part of a system of coercive controls through which men maintain societal dominance over women (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Martin, 1976; Stark & Flitcraft, 1996). Again, according to the Societal Structure Theory, domestic violence is “caused by an underlying power imbalance that can be understood only by examining society as a whole”. It emphasises on patriarchy or male domination over women and children through physical, economic, and political control. Domestic violence depicts women’s inequality in the culture and strengthens this reality by various institutions9.

Individual in a society goes through a process of socialisation from their childhood to their adulthood. It is a lifelong process (Pilcher and Whelehan, 2004). Socialisation is defined as a continuing process whereby an individual acquires a personal identity and learns the norms, values, behaviour and social skills appropriate to his or her social position10. Several scholars propose that every member of the society, men or women, knowingly or unknowingly but actively construct gender through social practices designed to differentiate men from women (Connell, 1987; Segal, 1990; West & Zimmerman, 1987). These social practices and behaviours construct and maintain the notion that men and women are different. It strengthens and patronises men’s dominance in both a real and a symbolic fashion. The cultural depiction of the husband as breadwinner has supported, indulged and even encouraged greater rewards accorded to men in the workplace and in the family. It has also provided a social legitimacy to male power within the family, and provided men with a resource for demonstrating their masculinity (Ferree, 1990; Stark & Flitcraft, 1996). On the other hand the wife had her subservient but complimentary role as caretaker (Domosh and Seager, 2001) and nurturer. Very often when men feel their masculinity is challenged or even otherwise, violence is a culturally appropriate means for men to exert dominance and control (Campbell, 1993). Whereas, due to gender constructions of femininity as passive, supportive, and nurturing may discourage women from employing violence as a means to gain power in their relationships (Campbell,

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10 http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/socialization
Gender theory proposes that violence is a resource for constructing masculinity, and thus the use of violence will have different meanings for women and men. Additionally, gender theory emphasise that domestic violence will be affected by social processes that support men’s societal dominance, such as cultural support for couplings in which men have greater resources than their female partners (Anderson, 1997). Social Learning and Development theory suggests that domestic violence is learned behaviour that is modelled, rewarded, and supported by families and/or the broader culture (Emery and Laumann-Billings, 1998). Scholars also suggest that cultural support for violence facilitate domestic assaults (Gelles & Straus, 1988). These investigators analyze abuse of an intimate partner (“battering”) as a social relation. They focus on relationships of domination rather than individual acts of violence (Brush, 1990).

Again, a growing body of work on gender suggests that an adequate understanding of gender relations must entail concurrent analyses of power structures formed around race or ethnicity, social class, and sexuality (Connell, 1987; Segal, 1990). Many studies suggest that cultural constructions of masculinity and femininity are not monolithic. Rather, meanings of masculinity and femininity may differ among racial or ethnic groups (Majors & Billson, 1992) and working and professional classes (Connell, 1987; Messerschmidt, 1993). Patriarchal family structures vary in their intensity from one society to another and for one sub-society over time (Arthur, 2009).

Feminist sociologists contend that issues of gender and power are the ultimate root of intimate violence (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Stark & Flitcraft, 1991; Yllo, 1993), but sociologists from other substantive traditions (e.g., family sociology) argue that patriarchy is just one variable in a complex assemblage of causes (Gelles, 1993; Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1980). Patriarchy may be one of the variables of the many cause of violence but can be understood as one of the major causes of domestic violence. The power relation that often exists in home between the husband and the wife is promoted by the principles of patriarchy. So power relations that prevails in intimate relations (married couples in Indian context) can be attributed to patriarchy that have been endorsed through social values, traditional norms, cultural rituals and social practises attached to it. These have been carried forward generation after generation through the process of socialisation by different agencies.

WHY THIS STUDY?

Scholars have framed up different strategies to combat domestic violence and studies are still going on. One of measure is prevention strategy. It involves efforts to reduce the incidence of a problem before it occurs. It tries to implicate that as long as domestic violence is disregarded as accepted behaviour by public attitudes and institutions, there is little chance of preventing it (Wolfe, 1999). Literature reveals that there are hidden forces which nurtures unequal relations in a society and leads to domestic violence. They are very deep rooted social beliefs attached with social values but promote power relations within the family, between husband and wife. They are at the same time upheld and promoted as social values through certain customs, rituals and traditions. They maybe considered as nucleuses of domestic violence in a traditional Assamese society.

Again these are certain questions which calls for more pondering like ‘why do some people perpetrate acts of domestic violence, and why do so many victims remain in abusive relationships?’(Umberson, 1998). These can be substantiated by the Patriarchal Theory on family violence which submits that, throughout history, males have dominated society and women were treated as men’s possessions. These norms have historical roots that emphasize female subordination. There maybe variations to the extent to which patriarchal norms remain intact. There is a need for investigating the evidences of the continuing presence of these practices that restrict women’s freedoms in society at large or within the family particularly. It will also provide answers to why women remained in abusive situations and still continue to do so. Certain studies emphasise that due to psychological factors individuals-typically women- intend to remain involved in abusive relationships (Bowker, 1983; Walker, 1984). Historical understandings to the various aspects of domestic violence will definitely unveil the unheard stories of the marginal voices of the victims of violence if probed through oral history method.
METHODOLOGY:
Qualitative in-depth studies have given insight on a range of issues such as women’s support-seeking behaviour, intergenerational effects, the culture of silence, and the adherence to social norms that encourage tolerating, accepting, and even rationalising domestic violence for the sake of preserving family honour [Hassan 1995; Miller 1992; Jaisingh 1995; Koenig et al 2006] and also for the sake of their siblings. Also, very few studies have been carried out to examine these issues from the perspective of the victims of violence. Keeping these in thought an effort is being made in this study to probe into the lives of the victims of the domestic violence and their process of socialisation, in their childhood days and in other stages of their life. The values they have nurtured, consciously and even unconscious, from different agents in their lifetime which have adhere to their abusive life are investigated. To get an insight of the process of transferring of these customs, tradition, cultural and societal values from one generation to another which are deep rooted in a traditional Indian society an intergenerational exploration is carried out. It has provided a better understanding of the power relations between the husband and wife that still continue to prevail in majority of the Indian families and also from where it begets.

Oral history method using a feminist perspective is applied to probe into the lives of these women who have experienced domestic violence. Feminists believe that the personal experience of every woman has worth and should be understood in all its complexity and richness. Feminists give emphasis to the social and political context of women’s experience because their experiences are structured by gender [Thompson, 1992] and put them in a disadvantages position. Again, there are voices and experiences of women which are never recorded or even considered to have any historical significance and dangle within the margins or are completely invisible or silent in historical knowledge. Application of oral history method has provided a tool to hear these marginal and the unheard voices of these victims. Documenting women’s oppression empowers the women, the historians and the movement and contributed to a very critical re-visioning of women’s history [Gluck, 2011]. Through oral history method the ‘normal’ life of a woman is ruptured and the critical areas and the crisis that women encountered are exposed. For this study five cases are taken from Guwahati city. All of these women follow Hinduism as their faith but they represent different ethnic groups.

The study area is Guwahati, which is the largest urban area of the North eastern region of India and has a population of 9.6 million people [Census of India, 2011] and has been attracting people from the surrounding areas. It is located on the crescent shaped south bank of river Brahmaputra in the Kamrup district, Assam, covering an area of 298. sq. km. It holds a commanding position in the form of the gateway of the North East India. Guwahati as an administrative and commercial city occupies a unique position in the capital cities of the region and provides better economic and social opportunities as compared to the surrounding rural areas. On the contrary such opportunities also create opportunities to specific crimes specific to urban areas. It is also reported that the overall reported crime rate (gender related) has increased phenomenally in Assam within recent years and Guwahati reports the highest.

FINDINGS:

Types of violence and submissive attitudes of the victims:
Domestic violence are of different types but they are broadly categorised as physical, mental and physiological and sexual violence in this study. From the narratives of the women it is found out that both physical and mental violence are common among these women and none of them have stated about sexual violence.

Antara Sharma reveals her experiences of violence through the narratives.

‘Till my daughter was 9 months all was well. After my father expired when I went back home (in-laws) he physically assaulted me. He wants me to stay in the village and raise my daughter there. But I insisted that I would stay with him wherever he was posted. Actually he was angry with me for
She mostly went through mental violence. They were insulting words by her husband to hurt her sentiments and make her feel low.

‘He used to tell me, “You are a Brahmin (her father belonged to Brahmin[11] Caste) but you have more of Bodo[12] blood in yourself [her mother belongs to Boda tribe]. Why didn’t you get married with a Brahmin if you are so good?” Whereas his mother is a Bodo and his father is a Rabha[13]. He used to tell me... “just because you are wearing a makhala chadar [a traditional attire of Assamese community], your Boro blood will be lost from you or what?” I always felt he never liked my family members.’

Faguni Majhi is one of the women who experienced the extreme forms of physical violence.

She initially confessed that she was physically assaulted only once by her husband. But later on her narratives disclosed that it was almost a daily affair.

‘My husband first hit me first when my first son was born. I ran away to my brother’s place. Later on he came to fetch me and I came along ....after that it happened a number of times. He used to get drunk and beat me with whatever he finds within his reach. I then leave my kids and run for my life to my bother-in-laws house and stay there (who used to stay next door). One day he chased me with a sharp knife. I took one huge leap and jumped over a bamboo fence as I was young then and run across the paddy field and hid myself in a bamboo grove. Those fears are still there. Even today when I think about those days I can feel my body shivering.’

In the other cases also the women initially denied of any form of physical violence or mention they are only once physically assaulted by their husband but gradually when they reveal their past life instances of violent atrocities unfolds. Again none of these women has confronted their husbands physically and they had their explanations regarding their submissive attitudes.

Faguni explains

‘I never hit back. If I would have hitted him back he would have become more violent and he might have held my neck tight...and my kids were so small. I used to tell him, don’t hit me... our kids are so small. I was afraid of him because his hands were very strong.’

Minu states

‘No no no... never. It is a sin because he is elder to me and after all he is my husband and I have to respect him. He used to tell me many things but I never retaliated. I used to get angry, very angry and also feel like hitting back but I could not. My mind did not let me do so. I used to find it difficult to do it.’

[11] Brahmins are the highest and the first of the four Hindu castes.
[12] Bodos are the plain tribes and the earliest settles of Assam, India.
[13] Rabhas are the tribal community leaving in Assam, India.
Agents of socialisation:
Most of these women were taught certain forms of social values by their mother or by their mother-in-law or by some female members of the family except for Antara where her father played a proactive role in socialising her. They are either reminded of the values that a girl is supposed to follow from time to time or they have learnt by observing their mother, sister or the other members of their family. The family played a distinctive role and was a primary place of socialisation for all of them.

Anuja narrates

‘I got married at 22 years and maybe I took some time to understand the values of these traditions. My parents taught me be truthful and be a good person. They taught me to an active member of the society. They were not bother about the traditional things about dress, work and all.’

Anuja’s mother’s emphasis that

‘She has seen how I lead my life and have learned all these from me. In this circumstance how can she be different from me? All these virtues didn’t they go to her? Didn’t she learn all these from her childhood? She has seen and learned how she is supposed to stay with her in-laws, in a joint family. She has seen all these. I did not have to teach her separately...all these are values and learning. One need not teach them separately from books. These are taken over by the daughters and sons.’

For Minu her mother was her mentor and says

‘She never taught us anything particular but I learnt on my own staying in that environment. Don’t know how? I used to hear my mother telling or giving advice to some people and thereby I learnt. I learn all these from my mother. I grew up in her shadow and her principles. Even today when I have to do anything I think about her and act.’

Susmita (Faguni’s daughter) had totally a different story to say. She grew up in a house where she used to work as a maid. She stayed with them from the age of seven and returned at eighteen years of age. The owner’s wife had immense influence on her and narrates

‘Where I used to work, there I used to see how the wife treat her husband and learned from her. She also taught me many things. I did not realise it initially but later on it had a strong imprint on my mind.’

SOCIAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE POWER RELATION:
In all these cases a strong power relation is observed where women are always placed in the inferior position, irrespective of race and ethnicity. There are various ways in which the power relation is explained winding social as well as spiritual rudiments to it understanding. From the life story of all these women the various social practises followed by married Hindu women are brought to light. They are different forms of patriarchal practises followed generation after generation and holds great significance to majority Hindu women. These create power relations among husband and wife and also discourage the women to come out from their abusive marital relations. Anuja is staying in her natal home for the past 5 years. Her mother and her close relatives do not want her to return back to her husband place fearing that she might have to face severe physical abuses and her life might be on threat. However Anuja is constantly pressurised by the members of the society in different ways to go back to her in-laws and also made to realise that she is breaking the traditional norms of the society.
‘I stopped putting sindur on my forehead\textsuperscript{14}. I do my work independently all by myself, work in the media [need to stay till late hours at night]. Started wearing clothes according to my own convenient [salwar kameez\textsuperscript{15}]. I stopped putting sindur because it is convenient for me to work otherwise I need to answer many questions, “why I am staying with my parent? Where is your husband?” etc etc... Now my sindur has become a burden for me. If I don’t put people ask me “why” and if I put it people again questions, “How can I?” When I go to attend any social functions people enquire about my husband....intentionally or unintentionally I have no idea...as though I do not have any identity of my own!

On the other hand Anuja’s mother also has to face many questions posed by the society for keeping her married daughter along with her child at home.

‘Every step she makes people see fault in it and she also feels it. People do not like to talk to her or avoid her. So she is now breaking down physiologically. My neighbours have stopped talking with me too because I did not follow what they said. They called me to their house one day and instructed me to send her back to her in-laws. They said “they kill her, beat her it is their problem and their wish, you send her back. You are creating problem for your son and his future. You will have problem to get him married and also to run the family then. Let them keep her in whatever way they want. She is a married girls... why are you keeping her with you? It doesn’t look nice.” Do people of modern age talk like this?’

Minu stayed with abusive husband fearing the social ostracism that may crop on her and her daughter.

‘Very soon I will have to get her married. Her father’s identity will be required then. What answer will I give then? Father plays an important role in a child’s life. It was for these reasons, looking at the future of my daughter I stayed along. My sisters used to tell me that after a girl gets married, her natal home do not have responsibilities towards her. Our house is a respected one in the village and if anybody from the village say, “Oh! She has back to her natal home” I will die of shame...it’s like going to the hell. I can’t bear it. I have lots of self respect’.

Susmita daughter of Faguni was taught to accept the power relation for the peace and harmony of the family.

‘The lady owner used to tell me that if I respect my husband my married life will always be blessed one and everything will go well with me. Our home will be in peace and I will be in peace. But if I don’t know how to respect him my house will never be in peace and me too.’

THE POWER RELATIONS: THE UNEQUAL POWER STRUCTURE

The power relation between the husband and the wife are an unequal one and it used to be governed by the social believes attached with it. The women have learned them through observation or are promoted by their social customs and the social committees. All of them believed and sincerely abided them as doctrine truths except Anuja.

Susmita believed that

‘I should always be small in front of him. I was smaller to him by age and pay him respect as a husband. I was told to cover my head with a veil in front of the male members and if I don’t I am not respected’.

\textsuperscript{14} Sindur is red vermillion put by married Hindu women on the parting of her hair to signify that her husband is alive and it is also believe to bring long life of the husband.

\textsuperscript{15} Salwar kamiz is traditional attire but is generally not worn by the married Assamese women.
Falguni followed

‘According to our society tradition we are not suppose to hit our husband but I can be beaten by him. Our societies say that the husband is bigger/elder and I am smaller than my husband so I should stay under his feet. According to our tradition my mother-in-law and my husband can beat me. The elders of our society taught me all these when we got married. Then I had to salute my husband as ”Ram”. It is known as ”Ram Salam”. I have also seen my brothers and my sisters following them. I will be punished by the society if I hit him. He feeds me and so if I hit him my hands will become rotten/ become handicap’.

Minu abided that

‘Once I am married off, it’s done. Even if I am beaten, bruised I should stay in my husband’s place. She (her mother) used to think that he (my father) is her god on earth so I too believe my husband to be the same like my mother. My mother used to tell me, ”In your husband’s place even if you have to shed tears you have to stay with him. How much hardship you have you will always have to stay with your husband”.

CONCLUSION:
The study reveals that because of the power relation, which was an unequal one, domestic violence occurs. The husbands feel that they have the right to mentally as well as physically abuse their wife. Their actions are patronised by the social values and the traditional norms which are patriarchal in nature. When women resist to these violence it becomes more intensive and brutal in nature (Susmita’s case). It also becomes difficult for the women to come out from it to a lead a better life because of the social ostracism than pushes them back to their abusive situation. Deeper insight into the life of ethnic groups (Anuja, Faguni and Susmita) depict that domestic violence equally exist among them and patriarchal values governs their life to a great extent. Patriarchal values creating power relations among intimate relations is unacceptable and only if it fade off from the society domestic violence will also cease to exist in the society. Along with the strong legislations educating the society and the coming generation about gender relations and the various aspects of it, from very childhood will definitely play a vital role to combat violence against women.
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21
Locura y espacio público: Una travesía de voces y palabras.

Sara Makowski
(Mexico):

Resumen: El trabajo explora una modalidad radiofónica de compartir diálogos disidentes y socialmente silenciados como lo son las voces de la locura.

Se trata de Radio Abierta, la primera radio en México realizada por personas que tienen experiencias psiquiátricas. Es una iniciativa que se desarrolla desde el año 2009 en la Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Unidad Xochimilco.

Las voces marginadas de los locos circulan por la esfera pública y en su transcurrir van propiciando una travesía de voces y palabras que generan lazo social.

El trabajo expone los principales efectos de desestigmatización y de inclusión social que esta experiencia radiofónica tiene tanto para las personas con diagnóstico psiquiátrico como para el público que los escucha.

El énfasis del trabajo estará en la potencialidad que tienen las voces y las palabras para fisurar el silencio social y para restituir, en el espacio público, las presencias hasta entonces invisibles de las personas con trastorno mental.

Abstract: The paper analyzes the results of the implementation of a community intervention device, consisting of a radio program created by psychiatric patients named Radio Abierta, in the field of mental health in Mexico. Radio Abierta is a project being carried out at the Xochimilco Campus of the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana (UAM). It will additionally describe the operation and organization of the device in question, presenting the results in four dimensions related to mental health patients: the layout of relationship bonds, the development of expressive and communicative abilities, subjective positioning, and inclusion.
PRESENTACIÓN

Los pacientes internados en instituciones psiquiátricas en México sufren diversas formas de violencia. Así queda también indicado en el Informe, “Numerosos pacientes en instituciones psiquiátricas en México informan de violencia física y sexual dentro de las instituciones. Con extremadamente poco personal en la mayoría de las instituciones, los pacientes deambulan por los pasillos y se les deja solos en los cuartos sin ninguna supervisión. Debido a la cantidad de personal, es imposible proteger a los pacientes de la violencia” (pp. 11).

La acuciante realidad de las personas con trastorno mental en México, y el trato denigrante, discriminatorio y violatorio de los Derechos Humanos que reciben en las instituciones y en la sociedad en general nos obligan repensar las formas de gestión e intervención en el campo de la salud mental.

Anclado en el modelo biomédico, psiquiatrizante y manicomial, el sistema de salud mental en México va a contracorriente de las perspectivas más contemporáneas que abogan por reformas psiquiátricas ancladas en un enfoque comunitario, humanista y participativo en el campo de la salud mental.

 Como una forma de contribución al replanteamiento de las modalidades de pensar y hacer la salud mental en nuestro país, en junio del año 2009 se crea en la UAM-Xochimilco una experiencia novedosa de intervención comunitaria: Radio Abierta.

Se trata de un dispositivo de intervención psicosocial y comunicacional para personas que tienen o han tenido alguna experiencia psiquiátrica.

Radio Abierta es una radio realizada por personas con padecimiento psiquiátrico, orientada a crear y fortalecer los lazos sociales entre las personas con trastornos mentales y la sociedad en general, y a combatir los estigmas asociados a la locura y a quienes la padecen.

Es un dispositivo de intervención comunitaria que apuesta por incluir en la esfera pública las voces y las presencias de sujetos sociales que han sido siempre excluidos y discriminados de la sociedad.

A partir de la circulación de las voces de estas personas con sufrimiento psiquiátrico se pretende generar miradas y formas de escucha no estigmatizantes y no discriminatorias, que permitan realizar intervenciones comunitarias con miras a la inclusión social.

Los objetivos centrales de Radio Abierta son los siguientes:

- **Producir inclusión social al incluir las voces de las personas con experiencia psiquiátrica en el devenir social.**
- **Generar efectos de des-estigmatización sobre la locura, los enfermos mentales y los miedos asociados.**
- **Defender los Derechos Humanos de las personas con trastorno mental**
- **Restituir el derecho a la libre expresión de las personas que padecen trastorno mental, y recuperar a través de la palabra la dimensión humana.**

EL DISPOSITIVO PRODUCTOR DE VOCES Y PALABRAS

La parte medular de Radio Abierta lo constituye su modelo de intervención, pensado como un dispositivo metodológico para la producción de sonoridad humana y lazo social.

Una de las premisas medulares del dispositivo es la de llevar al primer plano a los propios sujetos que padecen algún trastorno mental: sus voces, sus experiencias, sus mundos y sus realidades tomarán la palabra con nombre propio.
De allí que el propósito central del dispositivo es el de producir las condiciones de posibilidad para la emergencia y toma de la palabra por parte de las personas con trastorno mental, habilitando procesos de resubjetivación a nivel individual y grupal.

El dispositivo se convierte en una caja de resonancia a través de la cual la palabra circula, y en este transcurrir por el espacio público genera lazo social: efectos de conexión con otros, y efectos de recuperación de la condición humana al ser escuchados por otros, y por sí mismos.

El dispositivo de Radio Abierta es abierto, grupal y radiofónico. En su dimensión material, está conformado por unas treinta sillas que se disponen en forma de U y que son ocupadas por los participantes de la radio y por personas de la comunidad universitaria y público en general (estudiantes, profesores, trabajadores de la UAM, personas externas a la universidad) que acompañan todos los miércoles de 10 a 13 hrs. el desarrollo de esta experiencia.

Se utilizan tres micrófonos con cables los que, al desplazarse al interior del dispositivo cada vez que uno de los participantes solicita la palabra, metafóricamente producen lazo al enlazar los fragmentos discursivos que van enunciando los hacedores de la radio.

La mesa de producción en la que se encuentra el equipo técnico (consola, computadoras, bocinas); el pizarrón que sirve de planilla programática a partir de las diferentes propuestas temáticas planteadas por los participantes; y un techo-lona que sirve para acotar el espacio y dar contención física, son otros componentes materiales del dispositivo.

Cabe señalar que este dispositivo funciona al aire libre (en un jardín de la universidad) y que pueden asistir todas aquellas personas que se interesen por esta experiencia, realizada con y por personas que tienen trastorno mental.

En su dimensión simbólica, el dispositivo es un espacio de convergencia de materiales diversos y heterogéneos, tales como fragmentos de delirios, recuerdos, experiencias, música, canciones, interacciones, cuerpos y gestos que de forma liminar se articulan para la producción de sonoridad y vínculo.

Las formas de articulación de esas convergencias son siempre efímeras, acontecimetales, producto del encuentro con el deseo de otro, de otros, por alojar hospitalariamente esos otros decires.

La potencia del dispositivo de Radio Abierta reside, precisamente, en la caleidoscópica posibilidad de resonancia -grupal e individual- que tiene la sonoridad humana que allí acontece.

Sonoridad humana que devuelve en su transcurrir, ni más ni menos, presencia, reconocimiento, recuperación de la dignidad humana, visibilidad y existencia social.

Los participantes de Radio Abierta toman el micrófono y con absoluta libertad hablan, se expresan y comunican sus puntos de vista y sus experiencias, bordeando las fronteras de la cordura y la locura, de la sensatez y la insensatez.

Estos diálogos colaborativos, disidentes y disonantes que se generan en el marco del dispositivo de intervención de Radio Abierta se graban en audio.

El dispositivo de la radio tiene una duración de tres horas, y sólo una hora es transmitida en vivo a través de FM 94.1 UAM Radio.

El material grabado, posteriormente, es editado por el equipo operativo en diversos formatos radiofónicos tales como cápsulas, microprogramas y rúbricas.
Estos distintos productos radiofónicos son retransmitidos en las distintas plataformas comunicacionales de Radio Abierta (FM, radio por Internet, página web, retransmisión en otras radios comunitarias, etc.)

Los distintos productos radiofónicos cumplen dos funciones medulares. La primera es una función de exterioridad: la circulación de estos materiales en la esfera pública para la producción de inclusión social y desestigmatización. La segunda función tiene un carácter interno: los materiales editados sirven para que sean reescuchados por los propios participantes, generando de ese modo formas de reconocimiento/desconocimiento de la propia voz, y de apropiación/reapropiación de las palabras, con profundos efectos terapéuticos a nivel individual y grupal.

Este dispositivo de intervención psicosocial y comunicacional incluye, también, la participación activa de la sociedad durante la transmisión en vivo por FM 94.1 UAM Radio. Con el uso de las redes sociales como Facebook y Twitter, y de correos electrónicos, la audiencia de la transmisión en vivo se incluye en el dispositivo a través de los mensajes que envía, y que son leídos en vivo.

De ese modo, los radioescuchas no sólo alojan solidariamente las palabras de las personas con experiencias psiquiátricas, sino que al mismo tiempo colaboran para ensanchar los horizontes de la comunicación.

A lo largo de los casi dos años de transmisión en vivo por la radio de nuestra universidad, se han ido produciendo efectos de lazo social entre los hacedores de Radio Abierta y el público que los escucha: algunos participantes ya tienen admiradores y seguidores que les escriben cada programa, los radioescuchas se incluyen en los diálogos a través de preguntas o comentarios, y en algunas ocasiones han venido a la transmisión en vivo para traerles de manera solidaria ropa y otros objetos.

En relación a la producción de datos y de registros, el dispositivo de Radio Abierta genera distintos materiales altamente fructíferos para el análisis y la interpretación.

Por una parte, se efectúa un seguimiento individual a través de una planilla específica con la cual se registran y analizan los efectos del dispositivo sobre el desarrollo de competencias y habilidades (comunicacionales, de socialización, de empoderamiento) de cada participante, y también los movimientos subjetivos y las producciones a nivel de enunciación y de posicionamiento.

Por otra parte, a nivel colectivo, se lleva también un registro de los devenires grupales que se van habilitando a partir del propio dispositivo: lazos y vínculos, modalidades de reconocimiento del otro, sociabilidades, formación de diálogos y participación colectiva.

**EFECTOS DE INCLUSIÓN SOCIAL**

A continuación se presentan los principales resultados de esta experiencia de intervención comunitaria en salud mental a lo largo de sus casi cuatro años de funcionamiento.

**A. Socialización y pertenencia**

Uno de los principales resultados que arroja el transcurrir ininterrumpido del dispositivo de Radio Abierta es el alto potencial para la construcción y reconfiguración de los vínculos sociales. Cabe señalar que, en el caso de las personas con experiencias psiquiátricas, en su gran mayoría tienen sus vínculos rotos y algunos de ellos provienen de un albergue en el cual se encuentran en situación de abandono familiar y social desde hace varias décadas.

El espacio de Radio Abierta ha incentivado el contacto físico, la convivencia, el intercambio de ideas y de saberes, y ha potenciado un mayor conocimiento entre los participantes.

Poco a poco se ha ido constituyendo un sentido de pertenencia y de comunidad entre los y las participantes, y se ha significado a los pares como hermandad, familia y “un mundo común”.
Adicionalmente, los participantes han diversificado sus vínculos al establecer relaciones entre ellos mismos, con los estudiantes e invitados que acuden a la transmisión en vivo, con los radioescuchas y con los profesionales del equipo operativo.

Cabe destacar que el hecho que Radio Abierta se desarrolle en un jardín de la UAM-Xochimilco habilita no sólo la interacción de las personas con experiencia psiquiátrica con miembros de la comunidad universitaria (estudiantes, profesores, personal administrativo y de vigilancia), sino que les posibilita también el acceso a los recursos y a la oferta cultural de la universidad: biblioteca, el coro, espacios verdes, foros, conciertos y talleres. Y los incluye en un entramado social comunitario, no hospitalario ni psiquiatrizante.

B. Desarrollo de habilidades expresivas y comunicativas
A lo largo de las sesiones de Radio Abierta se observó que, paulatinamente, los participantes más retraídos comenzaron a participar voluntariamente con mayor frecuencia, adquiriendo más seguridad, mejor articulación de lenguaje e ideas, y obteniendo mayor reconocimiento de sus compañeros

Un cambio interesante ocurrió en relación a los temas propuestos por los participantes. Al comienzo de Radio Abierta, los temas que se proponían para el diálogo estaban muy vinculados a la problemática de la experiencia psiquiátrica: las vivencias en torno a los padecimientos psiquiátricos, los cambios experimentados a partir del diagnóstico, las internaciones, los conflictos familiares, los efectos de la medicación, el aislamiento, la pérdida de los horizontes vitales.

En los últimos años de funcionamiento del dispositivo se produjo un desplazamiento de los temas “psiquiátricos” hacia temas más generales que posicionan a las personas con trastornos mentales como seres humanos y ciudadanos que comparten la realidad con la sociedad en general. Y se descubrieron, así, como personas que pueden, a partir de sus diferencias, aportar y enriquecer el flujo social.

Asimismo, se destaca que la permanencia en el dispositivo de la radio permitió a los participantes desarrollar la capacidad de escucha y de participación en los diálogos, a partir de la recuperación de lo dicho por otros pacientes. Este es un asunto no menor si se tiene en cuenta que en los casos de psicosis las personas quedan muchas veces atrapadas en el hermetismo de las producciones delirantes.

C. Posicionamiento subjetivo
Por “posicionamiento subjetivo” entendemos las distintas posibilidades y posiciones que puede tener una persona en el marco de un juego identitario y referencial plural. Aún en los casos de personas con diagnóstico psiquiátrico, sostemos la capacidad de distintos posicionamientos subjetivos que desafían los etiquetamientos y las posiciones “asignadas”, tales como enfermo, paciente, discapacitado psicosocial, etc.

En este sentido, Radio Abierta habilita la posibilidad de movimientos –reales, psíquicos, simbólicos, dramatúrgicos, etc.- que refuerzan la condición de sujetos cuyas identidades y referencias se juegan más allá de su condición de enfermo mental.

Uno de los posicionamientos subjetivos más significativos que hemos observado es el desplazamiento del lugar de “paciente” al de sujeto o persona. A medida que transcurrieran las intervenciones de Radio Abierta, los y las participantes asumían un rol más activo y se volvían sujetos de su propia enunciación.

Este posicionamiento es notablemente significativo en el marco de aquellos padecimientos mentales en los que los pacientes se sienten habitados por voces externas. La posibilidad de hablar en nombre propio y de reconocer la voz propia, al mismo tiempo que se recuperan fragmentos de la historia biográfica a través del recuerdo y de la reapropiación subjetiva, habilitan procesos novedosos de agenciamiento con fuertes impactos positivos en las trayectorias socio-individuales de los y las participantes de Radio Abierta.
D. Inclusión social
La participación en el dispositivo de intervención de Radio Abierta genera efectos de inclusión social, en varios niveles.

Por una parte, y como ya fue señalado, al tratarse de una intervención comunitaria en el espacio de la universidad, se genera un efecto de inclusión que "despsiquiatriza” al sujeto y lo hace parte de una comunidad que lo reconoce e interpela en su carácter de persona.

Por otra, al incorporar las voces y las presencias de las personas con vivencia psiquiátrica en la esfera pública (radio, Internet) se producen efectos de visibilidad e inclusión social de quienes hasta entonces estaban borradas y marginadas de la sociedad.

Finalmente, la inclusión social a la que se hace referencia se pone en juego en los terrenos del reconocimiento social de la diferencia, en el ejercicio del derecho a la libre expresión, y en la aceptación de la contribución que estas personas pueden hacer a la sociedad.

IV. LAS GRIETAS EN EL SILENCIO
En general, las personas que tienen algún padecimiento psiquiátrico son objeto de discriminación y exclusión tanto en el ámbito privado-familiar como en el social.

Los etiquetamientos de peligrosidad, contagio, delito, exceso y depravación funcionan desde tiempos remotos, y han servido para aislar, separar y estigmatizar a personas con trastorno mental.

Las diferentes operaciones de exclusión social han generado, entre otros efectos, el silenciamiento de las voces de los denominados “locos”.

Uno de los efectos centrales que ha generado Radio Abierta es un quiebre paulatino del confinamiento al silencio.

En la medida en que este dispositivo de intervención comunitaria en salud mental hacía su trabajo de contención y sostén, se habilitaba la posibilidad de la palabra en las personas con experiencias psiquiátricas. Poco a poco se iba generando un espacio de sonoridad humana donde otros decires comenzaban a tener el estatuto de palabra dicha por alguien para que alguien otro la escuche: decires dislocados, palabras que se caen de la estructura del discurso, sinsentidos, palabras llenas de ruido que no admiten resquebrajamiento alguno y que sucumben a la certeza delirante fueron encontrando un espacio de resonancia y producción de sentido que generaban un “efecto de lenguaje”: la posibilidad de que se produzca sentido social. reconocimiento mutuo y anclaje en el campo de las significaciones.

Escuchar y ser escuchado, y que lo dicho sea alojado y contenido en un dispositivo grupal y comunicacional como el de Radio Abierta es producir acciones de salud; es generar las condiciones de posibilidad para que personas que han vivido en el exilio social recobren, a partir de sus propias palabras, el estatuto de sujetos que tienen una historia, que tienen potencialidades y recursos, que tienen Derechos Humanos. y que cuentan con la posibilidad de encontrarse con otros, con nosotros, en todo aquello que nos es común y que nos concierne como seres humanos.

La emergencia de la palabra habilitó la posibilidad de atravesar los territorios oscuros del silencio, del abandono y de la negación.

Radio Abierta, por otra parte, posibilitó que los y las participantes se interrogaran sobre su propia locura, y cuestionaran los distintos etiquetamientos que socialmente se les asignan.
A lo largo del devenir de la experiencia de la radio, los participantes discutieron ampliamente las distintas nominaciones que socialmente se les imponen: loco, discapacitado psicosocial, esquizofrénico, bipolar, alucinado, enfermo, paciente psiquiátrico, entre otras.

Los intentos de salirse de esas etiquetas y las maniobras semánticas de recaptura al interior de las mismas no llegaron a resoluciones definitivas, pero permitieron la emergencia de ciertas “zonas de normalidad” en las que también se podían reconocer.

Y desde allí se abrió la posibilidad de producir ciertos extrañamientos y críticas respecto del funcionamiento de los estigmas, y la comprensión de que los etiquetamientos sociales negativos no agotan la existencia del estatuto de personas que tienen la capacidad de observar el mundo (y no sólo de ser observados) y de expresar sus puntos de vista sobre la realidad que los rodea.

A partir de estos juegos semánticos de entrada y salida de la normalidad/anormalidad, y de sentir que no están tan locos, los y las participantes recuperaron la posibilidad de opinar sobre temas y situaciones del mundo que también habitan, y del cual son también ciudadanos con derechos.