Generating social capital for bridging ethnic divisions in the Balkans: Case studies of two Bosniak cities

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Abstract

One of the major goals of the international community's intervention into the Balkans is the rebuilding of "viable multiethnic societies". Such societies require support from a population that builds inclusive social capital. I applied social network theory to interethnic relations to help identify the conditions under which minorities could embark on this arduous task in divided, war-torn societies, like Bosnia-Herzegovina. Analysis of data from interviews and participant observation indicate that institutions support positive interethnic relationships when they help people to address practical concerns; allow for individual norms and repeated, mutually dependent interethnic interaction; are rooted in local culture; and are difficult for people to avoid. Nominally mixed urban workplaces and certain types of civic organizations, not advocacy groups or neighbourhoods, meet these criteria. These findings urge scholars working on the role of civil society in rebuilding divided post-conflict societies to look more closely at venues beyond voluntary organizations.

After nine years of intensive efforts by the international community to rebuild Bosnia-Herzegovina, the society remains deeply divided and key local elites remain wedded to different visions of what the fundamental nature of the nation should be. The international community has intervened into four different areas of the Balkans with the intention of developing a 'viable multiethnic society' (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe 1999a) and poured more than six billion dollars into Bosnia alone (US Agency for International Development 2000). Such a stable and heterogeneous

society requires support not only from political elites, but also from ordinary people willing to engage in interethnic cooperation. In an atmosphere where many have been radicalized by war and exclusivist politicians, under what conditions can minorities in Bosnia build bringing social capital, or cooperative ties to the dominant ethnic group? Understanding the mechanisms that ordinary people use to develop interethnic cooperation should contribute to theory on interethnic relations in, and efforts to rebuild elements of, divided post-conflict societies, which are increasingly common in today's world.

In this article, I first discuss how theories on social networks and social capital suggest the conditions under which people can generate cross-ethnic cooperation. Then I describe how the Bosnian context influences possible venues for promoting mutual help. Drawing on data from interviews and participant observation in several urban areas of Muslim or Bosniak[1]-majority Bosnia, I identify the institutions and circumstances in which Bosnians build positive interethnic relations. Next, I corroborate these findings with data from recent surveys of Bosnia and other post-socialist states. By extending social network theory to the problem of interethnic cooperation, I show how certain types of voluntary organizations and mixed workplaces aid in developing the cross-ethnic ties necessary to help minorities integrate and contribute to stable, heterogeneous communities.

Social networks and social capital

The connectedness of ordinary people to those who are culturally different helps to determine their susceptibility to ethnic mobilization. Portes (1998, p. 6) defines the popular but contentious concept of social capital as 'the ability of actors to secure benefits by virtue of membership in social networks or other social structures'. I focus on the 'bridging' (culturally inclusive) and 'bonding' (exclusive) dimension of social capital. In ethnically diverse, transitioning societies high levels of bonding social capital can threaten democracy by providing increased opportunities for ethnic entrepreneurs (Dowley and Silver 2002), while bridging social capital can support it. Most individuals need strong ties that bond them together with similar persons and provide them with social support (Hurlbert, Haines, and Beggs 2000). To integrate (Putnam 2000, pp. 22–3) and advance (Granovetter 1973; Burt 1997), however, individuals need weak ties that more often cross the salient social cleavage—ethnicity in this case. I avoid problems of conceptual fuzziness found in some investigations of social capital by specifying the benefits that arise out of social networks – interethnic cooperation.

Lin argues that empirical work on social capital should be rooted in individual interactions and networking, because social capital is 'captured from embedded resources in social networks' (2001, p. 3). Social network theory suggests the necessary characteristics that institutions must have in order to enable people to forge ties that bridge ethnic divisions. First, institutions must be culturally diverse. Diversity is partly determined by the ability of individuals to select into them (Mondak and Mutz 2001, p. 16). The more institutions are based on self-selection, the more likely they are to be homogeneous and exclusive. Second, institutions need to promote ties that are acquaintance- rather than friendship-based. Because individuals seek out those similar to them (culturally, socio-economically, and ideologically) for strong, intimate relationships (Laumann 1973; Finifter 1974; Huckfeldt 1983, Marsden 1987), it follows that strong ties do not promote diversity. Third, institutions must possess a norm that at least allows for interethnic cooperation. Finally, venues need to promote repeated, mutually dependent interaction among individuals from different groups. This helps to build trust, even if the initial interaction is mistrustful and the relationship remains acquaintance-based (Seligman 1997). Even where no effective authorities promote it, cooperation can emerge if individuals rely on reciprocity (Axelrod 1981, p. 69).

Neighbourhoods, voluntary organizations, and workplaces allow individuals to develop these weak ties. While these venues may overlap (some voluntary organizations are also workplaces), social networks that minorities form are initially rooted in a specific venue where they emphasize a particular role (e.g. paid-activist/employee, volunteer, or beneficiary). My focus on domestic, not international, voluntary organizations and 'ordinary people' rather than elites, who are most often employed by NGO as activists, decreases though does not eliminate these complications.

Patterns of interethnic relations in Bosnia

History shapes the possibilities for generating interethnic cooperation in Bosnia today. Throughout Bosnia's history, multiple social cleavages, sometimes overlapping, have influenced social relations. Prominent social divisions until the late nineteenth century were class, urban-rural; and religion; ethnic differences, which were rooted in religious tradition and practice, were not constructed and politicized until the late nineteenth century (Donia and Fine 1994, p. 84). To cultivate communal cooperation, Yugoslav elites used modernization, economic experimentation, balancing, control, and socialization (Shoup 1968; Schöpflin 1993). For example, communist policies sought to create an urban working class that recognized but relegated 'traditional' ethnic identity to a subordinate identity (Bertsch 1976;

Hodson, Sekulic and Massey 1994, p. 1538; Bringa 1995, ch. 1). Modernization contributed to ethnically mixed marriages in many cities.

Modernization, however, also prompted interethnic competition (Hodson, Sekulic and Massey 1994).[2] Furthermore, many of socialist Bosnia's citizens still lived in rural areas, where small ethnically homogeneous communities often harboured resentment toward urbanites and co-existed with minimal interethnic contact and ethnocentrism (Lockwood 1975, pp. 197–8; Pantic 1991, p, 176). In the post-1995 period, surveys revealed ethnicity, urban–rural heritage, and war experience as the most prominent social cleavages (Dani *et al.* 1999). Bosnia's three constituent nations possess 'contradictory traditions of conflict and accommodation' (Burg 1983; Burg and Shoup 1999, ch 2).

Ethnic distance increased between 1966 and 1990, as did conflicts among regional elite for power (Bertsch 1976; Pantic 1991, pp. 171–84; Siber 1997). In an atmosphere of crumbling socialist legitimacy, regional devolution, elite competition, economic decline, and mass frustration, (Ramet 1992; Cohen 1995) elites propagated a 'crisis' frame of hostile interethnic relations that had been dormant since WWII to replace the 'normal' frame of positive interethnic relations (Obserschall 2000). Ethnic entrepreneurs exploited the situation. Western governments exacerbated these tensions by responding inconsistently to sovereignty claims (Woodward 1995a, chs 6, 7, 10; Burg and Shoup 1999, chs 3–8; Bose 2002, pp. 161–5). With the leaders of Bosnia's national communities unwilling to compromise and Serbia and Croatia massively arming and militarily assisting their ethnic kin, (Magaš and Zanić 2001; part II) elements of Bosnia's Serb and Croat communities fought to partition the state between 1992 and 1995. Extremists targeted sites of interethnic cooperation.

Following NATO intervention, the 'international community' imposed a political system that further discourages cross-ethnic cooperation. Although the Dayton constitution supports interethnic cooperation, for example, by encouraging the return of refugees to their homes, it also reinforces divisions among Bosnia's three constituent nations. It institutionalizes ethnonational cleavages, Bosniak, Serb, and Croat, in a tri-ethnic collective presidency, ethnic-based federalism (the Bosniak-Croat Federation and Republika Srpska), mutual veto, and ethnic keys in the bureaucracy and state-owned companies. Political elites manipulate these institutions to thwart multi-ethnic governance and favour the local majority group in power (Cox 1997; Ombudsmen of the Federation 1998; Stubbs 1999; Burg and Shoup 1999, pp. 367–73). Local nationalists and international officials typically categorize individuals in Bosnia either by ethnicity or as a 'majority' or 'minority', a practice criticized as promoting conflict (Bringa 1995; Woodward 1995a, p. 210).[3]

To understand the impact of these policies, I focus on those whom policy-makers label minorities, or persons belonging to ethnic groups other than the dominant group in a locality.[4] While Bosnia's population remains largely ethnically divided, international pressure for return has helped to create pockets within predominantly Bosniak areas especially that contain significant numbers of minorities. These individuals of Serb, Croat, or 'mixed' backgrounds comprise from 10 to 22 per cent of the population of the predominantly Bosniak-area (UN High Commissioner for Refugees 1997, 2003; Medjunarodni Forum Bosna 1999).[5] It is within these mixed areas that opportunities for forging interethnic cooperation and stability are particularly important. A successful process of reconstruction is likely to bear first fruit in the pre-war strongholds of interethnic cooperation – many urban areas. Ultimately, a stable Bosnia also requires alleviating rural-urban cleavages and cultivating interethnic accommodation across the three ethnically dominated regions.

Sites for generating bridging social capital

Before the war, urban neighbourhoods in the Balkans served as a primary site for promoting cross-ethnic ties. Because urbanites in socialist Bosnia could not typically choose their place of residence,[6] ethnically diverse city neighbourhoods emerged that, to some degree, survived the war. Combined with the poverty in socialist Yugoslavia, these neighbourhoods forced individuals of different backgrounds to work together. Furthermore, the Balkan tradition of the neighbour-hood (*komšiluk*) promotes cooperation. A middle-aged Serb, Ljubo, believed this meant 'you should be able to turn to your closest neighbour for help, before you turn to your own brother'.[7] Tone Bringa (1995, p. 66) found that neighbourhood coffee visiting in mixed rural areas of Bosnia promoted practical exchange, interethnic com-munication, and multiple collective identifications. Yet the neutral institutional structure of good neighbourliness, which is based partly on *communal* belongings rather than on individualism, can easily be used nefariously. During the war, political elites demonized communal differences, disrupted mechanisms for mutual respect, fomented fear, and encouraged intimate violence, particularly in rural areas (Bougarel 1996). Nationalist authorities have also manipulated property laws and other regulations to try to create and solidify homogenous neighbour-hoods, a process against which the international community has fought. Formal neighbourhood organizations (*mjesne zajednice*) estab-lished in socialist Yugoslavia are weak (Poggi, *et al*. 2002, pp. 69–76).

Voluntary organizations, which play several roles in civil society, can also generate bridging social capital. One role is political, by helping citizens to hold authorities accountable (Tocqueville 1994). Less

studied is how voluntary organizations help ordinary people to forge
ties that cut across ethnic lines (Bell 1975). Ashutosh Varshney (2001,
p. 7) argues that heterogeneous civic associations in India have
increased communication and created shared interests among persons
of different backgrounds, thus promoting interethnic peace. But,
unlike Indian civic organizations, whose traditions stretch back to
the 1930s, Bosnian organizations lack such deep roots. Socialist
Yugoslavia did create opportunities for local participation, for
example, in voluntary civic associations (*udruzenje gradjana*) that
focused on sports or culture and were only loosely tied with the
Community Party (Poggi *et al.* 2002, p. 80). Yugoslavia's one-party
state, however, constrained other opportunities for participation until
the early 1990s (Supek 1975; Zupanov 1975; Križan 1989; Pusic 1992).
The tendency for individuals to join organizations with members in
their own social group and the salience of ethnicity meant that many
new organizations were mono-ethnic. Some were connected to
nationalist parties and contributed to the conflict, overpowering local
groups opposed to exclusivism (Oberschall 2000, pp. 994–5). During
the war, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) grew out of inter-
national projects providing services to victims of the war (Sali-Terzic
2001, p. 139). Promoting such NGOs is a strategy that the West has
embraced to support democratization after war.

Workplaces also suffer from nationalist pressure, but several
characteristics make them better suited than neighbourhoods and
voluntary organizations for building bridging ties. Workplaces gen-
erally promote weak ties and create opportunities for repeated,
horizontal interaction focused on tasks that promote interdependent
relationships (Minard 1952; Romann and Weingrod 1991, pp. 144–5;
Mondak and Mutz 2001). Putnam (2000, p. 87) overlooks the
possibilities of interdependent work relationships when he mentions
the racial diversity of the American workplace but bemoans the fact
that most workers have 'merely' acquaintances among their colleagues.
Before 1990, workplaces in Bosnia were difficult for individuals to
select. Just before the war, citizens overwhelmingly viewed interethnic
relations in the workplace as good, even when they evaluated them as
bad in more general contexts (Bacevic *et al*. 1991, pp. 144–9). The
failure of Socialist Yugoslavia to sustain economic growth (Comisso
1979; Woodward 1995b), facilitate cooperation among republics
(Ramet 1992), or maintain avenues for social mobility (Denitch
1973), produced frustrations that politicians manipulated. After the
1990 elections, victorious nationalists continued the Balkan tradition
of patronage (Woodward 1999). Discriminatory hiring and firing was
accelerated during the war and immediately following it across Bosnia,
especially in predominantly Serb and Croat areas (Organization for
Security and Cooperation in Europe 1999b; Ombudsmen 1999).

Nonetheless, urban minorities desperate for work could hardly avoid interacting with Bosniaks. In post-war Bosnia, *all* the institutions hypothesized by social network theory to generate ties across ethnic lines have suffered politicization that limits their ability to cultivate interethnic cooperation.

Multiple methods

I take an innovative approach to studying how these marred institutions could help minorities to develop interethnic cooperative networks. First, I complement scholarship on elite politics by examining the development of social roots for resisting interethnic conflict. Specifically, I focus on how ordinary people embedded in social contexts interpret and react to the policies of elites. The effectiveness of international strategies to rebuild plural post-conflict societies or of domestic elites to tear apart these societies depends partly on whether such strategies resonate with ordinary people. My theoretical emphasis on social networks acknowledges the East European tradition of using personal networks to cope with a distrusted public realm (Smolar 1997; Cushman 1998). In applying the social network approach to interethnic relations, I combine interviewing and observation to focus on *concrete*, rather than perceived, ties.

Scholarship on ethnic conflict management in the Balkans focuses on the important roles that international and domestic elites have played in manipulating ethnic relations (Woodward 1995a, Burg and Shoup 1999; Hayden 1999; Chandler 2000; Bose 2002), without much attention to how social relations may facilitate or constrain elite mobilization. Empirical studies of social networks and the capital they generate have generally used large surveys that rely on *reported* networks and their impact on social support or resources, despite lingering questions about the reliability of self-reported data (Marsden 1990, p. 440–8). Putnam's work on social capital suffers from conceptual ambiguity (Kadushin 2004, p. 84).

I collected data through intensive interviews with fifty-two Bos-nians[8] and observation of nearly half (twenty-five) of these inter-viewees in at least one setting outside the interview. I also informally talked with and observed 130 informants. I used snowballing, by asking my neighbours and local gatekeepers in separate social networks to link me to other minorities. Sensitive to the vulnerability of minorities in the post-war environment, I chose an open-ended questionnaire that allowed respondents to describe their social ties.[9]

To understand actual interethnic exchanges in natural settings, I lived with six local families in ethnically mixed apartment buildings in chiefly Bosniak areas for fourteen months in 1999, 2002, and 2004.

This strategy enabled me to focus on *ordinary* people, not activists, and to cultivate their trust. Bosnian culture's expectations that neighbours interact frequently through coffee visits and barter networks provided opportunities to view neighbourhood social behaviour. To investigate the role of indigenous groups in integration, I volunteered for several mixed local NGOs. I also 'soaked and poked' (Fenno 1978) among minorities as they interacted in workplaces, cafés, markets, and farms. In these settings, I gauged the strength of a tie by looking at a combination of the amount of time, the emotion, the degree of confiding, and the services (such as material aid, socializing, or interaction) which characterized the tie (Granovetter 1973, p. 1316; Marsden 1990, p. 442). I also noted the ethnic and social background of those involved in the tie.

I studied two towns in chiefly Bosniak areas, Sarajevo and Bihać, to focus on the living spaces where interethnic interaction occurs. This design allows comparison of minority views and behaviours between sites that differ demographically, socio-economically, politically, and historically.[10] Sarajevo has historically been a cosmopolitan city,[11] while Bihać is merely a small town with a history of good interethnic relations nestled in the northwest (Burg and Shoup 1999, p. 23–5). The violence in these cities was inflicted overwhelmingly by Serb extremists besieging the city, though Sarajevo also initially suffered violence inflicted by Bosniak gangs in the centre and extremist Serbs in the suburbs. Bihać was also targeted by Bosniaks loyal to the Bosniak autonomist Fikret Abdić, which means political oppositionists and ethnic minorities are often considered 'enemies' there. In another difference, Sarajevo has many more voluntary organizations than Bihać (International Council of Voluntary Agencies 2000).

My in-depth approach and the fact that local peculiarities influence interethnic relations mean that I seek to make an analytic, not a statistical, generalization (Yin 1994) to bridging networks of minorities in urban areas of Bosnia that did not suffer intimate neighbour-on-neighbour violence. This suggests that the dynamics I find in Bihać and Sarajevo cannot be extended to cities such as Mostar, which experienced ethnic cleansing within the city. Theoretical insights from this study should be tested in other cases to clarify the conditions under which minorities can generate interethnic cooperation in urban areas of deeply divided countries just recovering from violence.

I used the qualitative data-analysis program NUD*IST (Scolari 1997) to uncover patterns in the data I collected. Database searches gather all instances of interethnic contact and keep them within contexts. I also examined large surveys (US Information Agency 1997; Poggi *et al.* 2002; UN Development Programme 2003a, 2003b). My aim is to investigate the usefulness of social network theory in

describing under what conditions minorities can glean benefits from ties with persons of another ethnicity in post-war urban environments.

Wading upstream to build interethnic cooperation

Bosnians interested in forming bridging ties struggled with raw wartime memories, propaganda, impoverishment, an influx of rural Bosniaks, an outflow of intellectuals, and nationalist rule. Data gathered about the effectiveness of neighbourhoods, voluntary organizations, and workplaces in building interethnic cooperation suggested that minorities were better able to use reciprocity to build bridging networks in mixed workplaces. This is because the comparatively limited selectivity of the workplaces promotes relative diversity. Also, mixed workplaces still allow colleagues to focus on tasks and remuneration while they repeatedly interact with co-workers who are often of different cultural backgrounds (Figure 1). While nationalist control of many workplaces drastically reduced the number of mixed workplaces, most minorities in Sarajevo and Bihać simply *had* to work somewhere to get by, and the vast majority had few opportunities to work only among those who shared their ethnicity. The second most useful venue for building bridging networks is the mixed civic association. The high level of selectivity of civic associations means that few choose to participate in them and that most organizations are not mixed. Nonetheless, those rare mixed associations that do exist provide the individual norms and opportunities for repeated, mutually dependent interaction that supports bridges.

Interviews and participant observation indicate that minorities engaged in, or reported, a higher percentage of positive interethnic interactions in the workplace than they did in the neighbourhood. F-tests confirm that these differences are statistically significant at the .001 level. Analysis of data by NUD*IST indicated that 83 per cent of

Figure 1. *Dimensions of venues that may facilitate interethnic interaction*
Dimensions of venues that may facilitate interethnic interaction

Choice of interaction partners
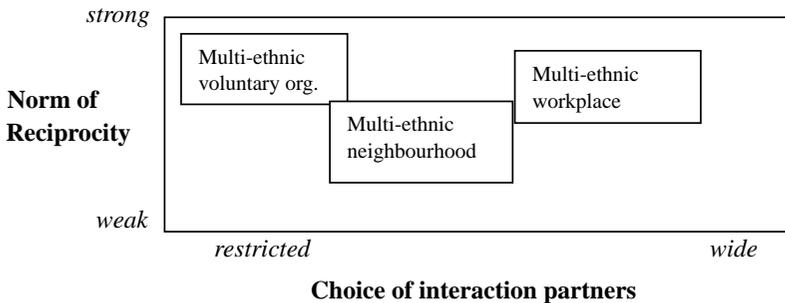
interviewees' interethnic interactions in the workplace were neutral or positive, and that 95 per cent of interactions were between members of minorities and the majority (n = 111). In contrast, 64 per cent of interethnic interactions in the neighbourhood were neutral or positive and only 60 per cent of interaction occurred between members of minorities and the majority (n = 159). While interethnic interactions in mixed local voluntary organizations were overwhelmingly neutral or positive (95.5 per cent), interactions were largely among activists and again, much interethnic cooperation, 39 per cent, occurred exclusively among minorities (n = 80).[12] Furthermore, fewer ordinary minorities belonged to voluntary organizations (one-third) than worked, despite high levels of unemployment, ranging from 33 per cent in the Federation to 47 per cent in the Republika Srpska (Bukvic 1998; Poggi *et al.* 2002). A look at Bosnians' views about, and behaviour in, neighbourhoods, voluntary organizations, and workplaces reveals the conditions under which the venues are successful in cultivating cross-ethnic ties.

Hobbled neighbourhoods

Minorities had difficulty building inclusive ties in their neighbourhoods, largely because of a combination of demographic changes that occurred around the war and the type of ties expected. These changes threw together small numbers of urban minorities and their long-term Bosniak neighbours with many newly transplanted Bosniaks. Many of these Bosniaks, either displaced from rural areas or politically connected, were shuffled into the property of minorities who fled during the war, even if only temporarily. This massive upheaval turned urbanites against the cultural expectations of relatively close relations with neighbours and discouraged the forming of weak ties with neighbours focused on mutual help. Interviewees who were long-term urbanites, regardless of ethnicity, most often characterized their relations with new neighbours displaced from villages as 'superficial' or confined to the exchange of greetings. While the improved implementation of property rights allowed more Bosnians to return to their prewar homes by 2002, urban neighbourhoods remain chiefly Bosniak and tense. The behaviour of informants in their neighbourhoods clarifies the neighbourhood's role in integration.

The views of Mirsada and her husband Alija, Bosniaks who remained in Bihać throughout the war, illustrate what many minorities confront in neighbourhoods. Mirsada and Alija led the most ethnically exclusive lives of my host families. As members of the majority group, they have fewer incentives for engaging in interethnic cooperation than do minorities. Even so, Mirsada not only ignored Serbs, she considered their silent exodus from Bihać just before the war as a betrayal that

freed her from any obligation to engage in reciprocity with them. She ruled out friendship with Serbs and believed that refusal to accept their re-incorporation into *komšiluk* would discourage Serbs from return-ing. Norms of interethnic betrayal and reciprocal punishment permeated her neighbourhood.

Vera, a Croat and Catholic informant who survived the war in Sarajevo, demonstrates a common reaction of minorities to such an inhospitable atmosphere. Despite her fears of new Bosniak neighbours from the countryside, Vera realized that she needed to interact with them, so she did so strategically, through the practice of specific reciprocity. Vera reached out to one Bosniak neighbour to establish enough rapport for a relationship of mutual help. She took care of her neighbour's children when they were locked out of their apartment, an act that allowed Vera to ask her neighbour to take care of her apartment when she later went on vacation. As with the players in Axelrod's (1981) prisoner's dilemma game, Vera is not motivated by friendship, but by the knowledge that she has a large enough stake in future interaction with at least selected Bosniaks to cooperate. 'I help them and they help me. I'm forced to do this; I have no other choice'. In this manner, Vera successfully developed a weak tie to her neighbour that revolved around practical help, not intimacy indicated by confiding.

Another host, Zlata, a Serb returnee to Sarajevo, found the environment in her neighbourhood so stifling that she confined her ties to members of her ethnically mixed family and a few non-Bosniak neighbours who embraced reciprocity or the notion, 'pay back in kind' (*milo za drago*). Because her Croat neighbour fixed her toilet, Zlata would help him with something he needed, such as mending or cooking. Zlata repeatedly expressed disappointment in the unwilling-ness of her new Bosniak neighbours to engage in reciprocity as urbanites did. After returning from the store one morning, she shouted, 'my neighbour just greeted me with 'merhaba!' ['hello' in Turkish] . . . This is no kind of neighbourhood . . . . I will use a greeting that communicates with people regardless of their nationality!' Her neighbours' use of exclusive language symbolized their aversion to forming even weak ties that bridged divides of culture and upbringing. Zlata's status as a former refugee who *returned* and her neighbours' status as formerly displaced persons who *relocated* emphasized competing group interests and further soured the possibilities for cooperation. While Zlata always intended to move to Serbia to be closer to her late husband buried there, her decision to leave Sarajevo was hastened by the lack of cross-ethnic ties developed there.

Scepticism of voluntary organizations

Tense neighbourhood environments could encourage individuals interested in cultivating bridging networks to turn towards inclusive voluntary organizations, whose norms are hospitable to mixing. I found that ordinary people, however, have a different perspective than civic activists on the role of NGOs. While activists relish the opportunity to use voluntary organizations to build bridging networks with fellow activists, ordinary people in Bosnia avoid participating in voluntary organizations because they do not feel that these organizations meet their needs. Only when they are broad-based and responsive to local communities can voluntary organizations help to build grassroots-based bridging social capital in Bosnia.

International donors have focused on building NGOs that *advocate* for liberal democratic ideals. Due to their structure, these advocacy groups foster horizontal connections and repeated interaction among tiny groups of activists. Networks of activists make up the 'mid-level' segment of a peace constituency critical to rebuilding post-conflict societies (Lederach 1997, pp. 94–7; Gagnon 2002, pp. 216–7). To be an effective bulwark against war, however, this mid-level segment needs support from below. Advocacy groups do not generate such support, because the ties they promote between activists and ordinary people, while largely positive, are often hierarchical. A World Bank study found that a large majority of Bosnians who were members of NGOs expected 'the one-way delivery of various public services and benefits' (Poggi *et al.* 2002, pp. 80–1). Unlike associations (such as neighbourhood or professional associations, cooperatives, youth groups, sports clubs), advocacy groups do not provide ordinary people with opportunities for repeated horizontal interaction that generates 'mutual reciprocity . . . and the broadening of social identities' (Putnam 2000, p. 76).

Interviews I conducted and local surveys suggest that minorities who feel their rights have been violated turn to local advocacy groups for help (Srpsko gradjansko vijece 1998; Helsinki Committee for Human Rights 2001). In this way, advocacy groups are also successful in encouraging ordinary people to use the legal system to settle disputes. Unfortunately, interviewees were rarely satisfied with advocacy groups and often did not stick with them. A common complaint of my contacts was that advocacy groups were impotent in the face of opposition from authorities. The experience of Serb returnee Tamara, who was trying to repossess her apartment, illustrates this. Despite traipsing to three local voluntary organizations offering assistance with property rights, Tamara could not enter her home for two years.

Bosnians who remained aloof from local groups frequently told me that voluntary organizations were not interested in *their* everyday

needs.[13] These opinions did not vary by site. Scepticism of the intentions of voluntary organizations stemmed partly from international funding. Bosnians believe that local voluntary organizations pay more attention to the demands of international donors than to the needs of Bosnians. Many minority interviewees viewed NGO workers in Bosnia as opportunists. Dragan, an unemployed young Serb returnee to Sarajevo, fumed that international donors funded organizations that he considered corrupt instead of directly supporting aspiring entrepreneurs like himself. Multiple studies (Chandler 2000, Poggi *et al.* 2002, Stuart 2003, p. 10) confirm this public scepticism, with USAID concluding that many NGOs in South Eastern Europe 'still have tenuous links with their communities' because of their orientation towards international donors.

Scholars have warned that international assistance to NGOs can wreak havoc on local social relations by creating new 'haves' (local NGO activists who enjoy high salaries, travel, and other privileges) and 'have nots' (Sampson 1996; Stubbs 1999; Mertus 2001, p. 22; Wedel 2001, pp. 84–122; Richter 2002, p. 56; Ghodsee 2003). Donor policies can harm the spontaneous development of bridging social capital by imposing goals. Donors have sometimes compelled women's organizations that focus on concerns that already appeal to women regardless of ethnicity, to work towards 'ethnic reconciliation' (Helms 2003). Assistance that targets only one group, for instance, minorities, merely pits groups against each other (Demichelis 1998). A recurring complaint of Bosniak interviewees was that international aid that prioritized minority returnees over those who stayed and suffered through the war was unjust. A World Bank report urges international actors to take a holistic approach by encouraging bridging ties *and* incorporating existing bonding ties into reconstruction (Poggi *et al.* 2002, p. 2).

Those civic organizations that may successfully build ties across ethnic lines include groups responsive to local needs and supportive of interests that are not ethnically defined. A teenager of 'mixed' background who returned to Bihać boasted of her work in forming a youth group that organized meetings for 500 youths from areas throughout Bosnia. The first meeting was successful, she asserted, because 'kids want to meet people from different places and they can talk about [shared] concerns ....' In Mostar, three teenagers of different backgrounds asserted that their youth group produced interethnic cooperation as a by-product of working together on concrete tasks.

Further, I found some support for the assertion that women's voluntary organizations can be particularly successful in transitional societies when they take up issues of immediate interest to their constituents; include urban and rural members; and attract committed

leaders (Cockburn 1998; Carothers 1999, p. 217). For instance, a women's organization with mixed membership helped reintegrate Sladjana, a Serb returnee, by teaching her skills and connecting her to like-minded people.

> Aside from my family, at the beginning of my return, [a women's organization] was the number one thing that helped me feel included in life. There were computer exercises and workshops to meet people with the same problems, people who think the same, people who can help others find work .... It's very important to meet people and not to fear them.

Sladjana appreciated this organization because it met some of her pressing needs. In support of Varshney's (2001) research, an ethnically mixed network of small business associations recently formed in central Bosnia produced concrete benefits for participants by changing laws and increasing profits. Implying the importance of weak ties for interethnic cooperation within the network, an implementer emphasized, 'people participate to improve their businesses, not to find a spouse'. Broad, multi-ethnic organizations that build on indigenous ideas and traditions (Gagnon 2002, p. 227) and reach out to their communities with 'practical services that have immediate, tangible effects on people's lives' (Richter 2002, p. 56) promote bridges.

Possibilities in the workplace

Networks initially formed in mixed workplaces were more useful than those formed in mixed voluntary organizations for several reasons. First, Bosnians need work, and at work, they are focused on fulfilling responsibilities. Also, the lack of expectations for forming intimate ties in the workplace freed them to establish ties of varying strengths with colleagues. Most minorities I interviewed had no choice but to work in predominately Bosniak workplaces. To reiterate, of the institutions I examined, mixed workplaces had the lowest ethnic selectivity and relatively individualist norms (Figure 1).

The mixed workplaces that best promoted cooperative interethnic behaviour encouraged repeated interaction among colleagues of different backgrounds on a horizontal basis, which promotes mutual interdependence. This reinforces findings by Lin (2001) that engaging in reciprocity is the most feasible when strangers are in similar functional positions. The workplace is necessary at least initially to develop ideals of professionalism, which can then facilitate interethnic cooperation at work and even among colleagues in other social venues. Those who found workplaces useful for interethnic cooperation were most often involved in white-collar jobs in the public sector, though

quite a few had only a high-school education. Several interviewees worked in the private sector, including a cobbler and a journalist.

For Zorica, a 'mixed' informant who had limited contact with her Bosniak neighbours, the workplace was helpful in developing cross-ethnic identifications and cooperative relationships. She played down ethnic markers and emphasized shared beliefs in professionalism, self-criticism, and inclusivity with selected Bosniak co-workers and students at the public school where she taught. She met some of her colleagues after work, visiting them in their homes, sharing coffee and cigarettes at cafés, or hosting them. Their views and behaviour contrasted with the nationalist ideology of the students' parents and the school's administration. The connections of weak to moderate strength that Zorica formed at work were important since most of her friends left Bosnia.

One of my hostesses, Ana, also depended more on Bosniaks from her multi-ethnic workplace than on those from her neighbourhood, where experience with betrayal and discriminatory housing allocation prevented her from drawing on resources that could have been generated by interethnic ties there. This was the case, even though she disagreed with the ethnic quotas in her workplace.[14] Ana, a Serb, formed relationships of varied strength across ethnic lines with her colleagues. To earn extra income, she sold black-market textiles to colleagues. Visits to Ana's workplace revealed that she also frequently drank coffee and socialized with colleagues of different backgrounds during and after work. On religious holidays, she exchanged cakes and celebrated with them. Though she did not describe her Bosniak colleague Anisa as a friend, Ana occasionally saw movies with Anisa and confided in her about her children. They established inclusive identifications based on professionalism and mothering. To express solidarity with her colleagues, Ana displayed in her office a 1994 newspaper photo of her and Anisa peering out from the window of their mortar-pocked office during the war, suggesting also the unifying experience of working together during war. Ana's connections at work provide psychological support and help her to solve practical problems. The mutual confiding, the time spent together outside the office, and perhaps also the photo indicate that Ana and Anisa have ties of moderate strength.

A common theme expressed by interviewees was the belief that their professional skills, which could only be demonstrated in the work-place, enhanced their public reputation. Davor, a Croat and Catholic interviewee who was a cobbler by trade, boasted that his customers included the mayor and Muslims from neighbourhoods with a great number of other cobblers. Serb returnee Blagoje believed his reputation from his pre-war work in Bihać facilitated his current relations with Bosniaks: '. . . because of my trade, people know me.' Nela, a Serb

returnee to Sarajevo, appreciated that fellow teachers (mainly Bosniaks) successfully advocated for her re-employment. Consistent with Granovetter's findings, cross-ethnic connections with acquaintances helped minorities improve their financial situations and reintegrate.

Because a stable salary was and remains their primary concern, Bosnians often saw the most valuable role of international NGOs, international organizations, and to a lesser extent internationally supported NGOs as providing jobs for locals. In addition to offering good salaries, many international NGO workplaces allowed Bosnians to develop bridging ties around professionalism and shared experiences. Consider Nikola and Selma, displaced persons of 'mixed' and Bosniak backgrounds, respectively, are good examples. During a break in one of my several trips with them to visit returnees, Selma volunteered, 'Nikola and I are united by the fact that we are not in our original homes'. Moreover, they had both sought to return, and Selma had helped Nikola to try and reclaim his apartment. International humanitarian organizations offer financial rewards and temporary havens that insulate those inclined towards individualism from the more chauvinistic Bosnian society, but most do not offer sustainable alternative employment. Internationally supported local NGOs are even more precarious.

Even retirees kept some former colleagues in their personal networks. Ana's husband Jovan sometimes hosted former colleagues of Bosniak background, hospitality that was returned. Both of Jovan's colleagues had fought for the Bosnian army during the war, but he had fled to Serbia. This did not stop Adil, a former colleague, from using his connections in the Bosnian army to help Ana and Jovan's family during and after the war in ways that their friends could not, since none of Jovan's friends had fought with the Bosnian army.

What the social ties of these Bosnians have in common is that they were *initially* formed in a workplace setting where their primary (though certainly not only) role was as a co-worker. They were able to appeal to professionalism and non-ethnic values and interests to establish ties of varying strength, including simply weak ones. What is interesting for social network theory is that minorities took advantage of the workplace's freedom to form ties of varying strength to forge weak to moderate connections that met their desired level of interethnic cooperation, from material aid to confiding. In *none* of these workplaces were relations between top officials and minorities very positive. Ana knew that her boss supported the Party of Democratic Action [SDA] and his deputy the Croatian Democratic Union-Bosnia and Herzegovina [HDZ]. What mattered most for ordinary minorities were dependable salaries, bosses who were not hostile, and sustained horizontal relations with colleagues.

People without regular work lacked both a salary and a source for social ties. One evening a neighbour who had recently returned from Belgrade stopped by the home of my hosts Sandra and Stipe, of Serb and Croat backgrounds, respectively. The guest envied Sandra, asserting, 'You are a successful case of return: you and your husband work, your children study [at Sarajevo university]; you were accepted'.

Returnees to ethnically homogeneous hamlets had far fewer opportunities than urbanites to engage in interethnic cooperation with colleagues. Nevertheless, everyday economic activities (shopping in town stores or markets) or work served as the primary venues for interethnic interaction for these rural returnees. Work for returnees to hamlets sometimes required cooperation with predominantly Bosniak businesses in nearby towns. One Serb who had recently returned to a Serb hamlet and found employment as a lumberjack in the nearby town that is predominantly Bosniak. He boasted that a colleague, a Bosniak, had already visited him. This case indicates the *potential* of workplaces in small towns to help reintegrate returnees to nearby rural areas dominated by another ethnic group. Most returnees to this Serb hamlet, however, either commuted to jobs in areas where their ethnic group predominated or remained in their hamlets to farm.

Large surveys corroborate my findings on the possibilities for cooperation in the workplace and are consistent with social network expectations on intimacy and bridges. A survey conducted by the World Bank in 1999 indicated that Bosnians of all ethnicities expressed the greatest support for interethnic cooperation in the venue of the workplace (Dani *et al.* 1999, para. 69). The majority of Bosniaks and roughly half the Serbs and Croats expressed willingness to share the workplace with members of other ethnic groups. Moreover, respondents expected to work in ethnically mixed environments. A survey by the UN Development Programme (2003a, pp. 48–50) indicated that 63 to 85 per cent of Bosnians were willing to work together with a colleague of another ethnicity while only 50 to 59 per cent of Bosnians were in favour of interethnic cooperation in schools or the neighbourhood. A 2002 survey by the World Bank (Poggi *et al.* 2002, p. 9) found that while citizens in Bosnia reported a decline in socializing since before the war, they reported less of a decline in socializing with colleagues (35 per cent) than with neighbours of another ethnicity (47 per cent). Less than one per cent of the survey's respondents who reported that they socialized less with colleagues blamed an atmosphere of political or ethnic intolerance. According to another survey, even Serbs, Croats, and Bosniaks living in areas where they are in the majority expressed more support for cross-ethnic economic cooperation than for autarky (US Information Agency 1997, chs 5–6). These findings on possibilities for economic cooperation reach beyond Bosnia. A recent survey conducted by the UN Development

Programme in Macedonia (2003b, pp. 70–1) found that more ethnic Macedonians and Albanians are willing to do business (61 per cent) or share a workplace (70 per cent) with a person of another ethnicity, than they are to share a neighbourhood (54 per cent).

   High unemployment rates and nationalist control of many Bosnian workplaces significantly limit the current ability of workplaces to reintegrate minorities on a large scale. Minorities who held jobs during the war or, to a lesser extent, those who returned to them immediately afterwards faced a less competitive environment than those who returned later. An increase in unemployment heightens competition over the few jobs available and provides opportunities for elites to mobilize people along ethnic lines (Olzak 1992; Woodward 1995a, p. 56). Several studies found a positive relationship between intense ethnic competition for scarce resources at the local level and the outbreak of violence in Bosnia (Hodson, Sekulic and Massey 1994; Slack and Doyan 2001). High unemployment further sours relations between ethnic elites and between the employed and the unemployed. I did not, however, find it exacerbated interethnic relations between those employed, unless job security was particularly tenuous. Nationalist control of many workplaces drastically reduces the employment opportunities for ordinary people who do not support nationalists. Several outspoken non-nationalist informants were fired during the war. As Gagnon (2002, p. 208) suggests, the creation of sources of stable employment and resources beyond the control of political parties would significantly contribute to building social capital supportive of democratization.

Conclusions and implications

A mix of modern and communitarian traditions means that peoples in Bosnia will seek positive interethnic relationships that vary in strength and frequency. This study found that Bosnian minorities in several towns recognize the need to develop multi-ethnic networks and to seek out selected Bosniaks for practising reciprocity. These urban minorities found it easier in the workplace to reach out to ordinary people belonging to the majority, than to do so in their neighbourhoods or in most voluntary organizations. Mixed workplaces may provide opportunities for repeated interethnic interaction among colleagues of equal status, allow for norms of professionalism, and enable people to form relations of varied intimacy with colleagues of another background. These characteristics and much-needed salaries make the mixed workplace the most fertile environment for promoting interethnic cooperation.

   This study encourages the application of social network theory to social capital that crosses ethnic, rather than merely political, lines.

Social network theory anticipated correctly that minorities would best be able to form ties that bridged ethnic differences if they were at least initially acquaintance-based. It also helped to explain why ethnically mixed workplaces, which foster weak ties, rather than mixed neighbourhoods, which traditionally work to cultivate stronger ties, would better facilitate cross-ethnic cooperative relationships. Social network theory emphasized the need for voluntary organizations to provide for repeated, horizontal interaction among ordinary people of different ethnicities, characteristics supported best by responsive, broad-based civic associations, not advocacy groups. The specific venues most suitable for building bridging social capital will be influenced by the particular context of the case. Interethnic cooperation in post-war Bosnia contributes to social network theory by demonstrating the importance of venues that allow individuals to establish bridging ties of intimacy that *vary* from weak to moderate, according to needs.

Social capital is one of several factors, along with elites and institutions, that shape interethnic relations. Comparative research suggests that interethnic cooperation among ordinary people cannot prevent campaigns waged by well-armed groups to destroy ethnic coexistence (Minard 1952; Varshney 2001, p. 9). More extensive and durable bridging social capital requires an interactive process in which inclusive grassroots initiatives build strength and compel domestic elites to support them, provide opportunity, and develop institutions such as schools, a civil service, a judiciary, and police that reward merit regardless of background**.** The international community could fertilize this process in Bosnia by supporting mixed civic groups responsive to local communities and mixed workplaces. The most productive approach would encourage nondiscriminatory workplaces, as well as expand the economy in general, rather than radically redistribute employment among ethnic groups. This would still be difficult, because of the ramifications of challenging nationalist control over patronage, especially in more segregated urban areas where nationalists are entrenched, such as Mostar and Banja Luka. The international community could make a difference by investing in, and monitoring, open and heterogeneous small businesses and civic initiatives that build on some local willingness and talent and show good potential to deliver *concrete* benefits that will improve the lives of ordinary people. The sustainability of mixed areas in Bosnia will rest partly on the ability of minorities to find employment and arenas for reaching beyond ethnicity to establish relationships of reciprocity and inclusive identifications.

More generally, these findings suggest that further research on generating grassroots cooperation across ethnic lines in new democracies investigate informal institutions like personal networks, as well as formal organizations. Systematic observation of interethnic

interaction in different plural workplace environments and a survey of workers and their networks in Bosnia and beyond it in states like Macedonia, would help to test my propositions and clarify the mechanisms that build bridging social capital.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1.   The Congress of Bosniak Intellectuals in 1993 voted to use 'Bosniak' for the Bosnian Muslim nation to reinforce national – rather than merely religious – distinctiveness (Bringa 1995). I use terms (Bosniak or Muslim) that my contacts use. Otherwise, I use the term Bosniak. 'Bosnian' is a regional term that includes all citizens of Bosnia.

2.   Simić conceptualizes modernization as a multifaceted process involving urbanization and an increase in scale, complexity, and efficiency of technology and production, as well as a change in social structure, culture, and world view (1983, p. 204). Change may occur at a different rate or not at all in each of modernization's areas.

3.   Many of the individuals whom these elites would characterize as minorities do not identify as minorities.

4.   Serbs who live in predominantly Serb areas of Bosnia, and Croats who live in predominantly Croat areas of Bosnia have fewer incentives for, and less interest in, engaging in interethnic cooperation than Serbs and Croats in predominantly Bosniak areas.

5.   Population estimates vary because of displacement and the lack of a post-war census.

6.   In cities, housing was largely socially owned; Bosnians most often were assigned apartments for rent by their state employers (Pickering and Jenness 1996).

7.   All names of interviewees and informants are pseudonyms. I use those cultural labels that interviewees and informants use to describe themselves.

8.   While I generally conducted interviews in the local language, I hired locals to conduct several interviews in each site, as a check against bias. Answers to local interviewers were slightly more pessimistic about interethnic relations. I factored this into my analysis.

9.   I asked about social ties interviewees had in the neighbourhood--both with long-term domiciles and newly arrived neighbours; whether and under what conditions those ties changed; and how important they judged ties with neighbours in comparison with other social connections. I also asked about participation in local voluntary organizations. I queried them on their attitudes towards the role of local and international voluntary organizations in their community. In a question that often elicited discussion of work, I asked them to describe the everyday steps they take to increase their sense of security and well-being. When the environment for minorities improves, I intend to use more specific instruments (Marsden 1990, pp. 441–4).

10. Sarajevo's population is more ethnically mixed, wealthier, better educated, and politically more moderate than Bihać's population (UN High Commissioner for Refugees 2003; Sociajalisticka Republika Bosna i Herzegovina 1990; Izborna Komisija 2003; Zavod za zaposljavanje 1999).

11. Hannerez (1990, as cited in Baubock and Rundell 1998, p. 335) describes cosmopolitanism as a perspective 'towards the co-existence of cultures in the individual experience.'

12. I calculated these percentages after dividing data from interviews and observation into paragraph-sized text units. I spent most time observing or listening to Bosnians talk about interacting with neighbours (953 text units), followed by colleagues (937), and then local NGOs members (699).

13. While activists and other elites make distinctions between two types of voluntary organizations – state-subsidized citizens associations and NGOs (*nevladine organizacije*) (Poggi *et al*. 2002, p. 80) – many ordinary people I spoke with lump voluntary organizations together

14. The influence of quotas on interethnic cooperation deserves further research.

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