Abstract: The creation of a Yugoslav state and its collective memory was highly influenced by the state imposed cultural policies. While the nation itself violently collapsed in the 1990s, whereby creating a large victim diaspora, in the aftermath, its population recalls it as an economically and politically stable and safe, a phenomenon deemed as Yugonostalgia. This paper seeks to present and critically observe the current multigenerational existence and interpretation of Yugonostalgia through theoretical perspectives and field work in Yugoslav Detroit Diaspora, while explaining its past, current, and future discourse as a product of collective memory.

Keywords: Diaspora, Detroit, Yugonostalgia, Cultural Memory, Collective Memory

I. Historical Context

Upon initial stages of building the Yugoslav nation, its leadership created a platform intended to unite citizens and provide an everlasting composition of values. The concept and rhetoric of brotherhood and unity was essential for Yugoslav pluralism while allowing for the pursuit of cultural pluralism that would mirror each comprising republic’s individual pasts, cultural traditions, and generally foster an inclusive outlook necessary for national progress. In other words, the invention of tradition [1] was in part necessary due to ethnically inclined outlooks from the remnants of Balkan history and conflicts, which, during the former Yugoslavia quietly remained on the outskirts of the nation’s discourse. The pluralism of the Yugoslavian experience was sustained by the state wide definition of nations and nationalities [2] which were constitutionally, linguistically, and culturally deemed equal and artificially linked by brotherhood and unity. State ran establishments, such as the JNA (Yugoslav National Army), allowed for cultural exchange and promoted a dialogue between different nationalities and ethnicities in Yugoslavia, nurturing mutual acceptance and understanding, while rebuilding and fostering an all inclusive outlook of a new imagined community. (B-92, SFRJ Za Pocetnike, 2012)
After World War II, the nationalization of Yugoslav resources included direct control, both financial and substantial, of the cultural sector, including libraries, museums, theatres, etc. (Majstorovic, 1980: 23) Limitation of artistic expression, due to statist control and funding, created a sense of conformism in variety. Tito's rejection of Stalinist domination in 1948 allowed for Yugoslav, rather liberal, cultural progress, giving the citizens an ability to travel, experience Western and Eastern popular trends, while still maintaining their Yugo-centricness. Although a majority of the population enjoyed freedom, cultural policy was affected by the statist nature of Yugoslavian leadership.

In its decision-making process, the Yugoslavian cultural sector experienced a transformation to a somewhat democratic and self-governing framework during the national leadership decentralization of the 1970s. The self-management system was applied to industries and places of business which appointed members of the work force to create a body of representatives that had the power to decide on the funding of cultural institutions, as well as cultural programs. (Majstorovic, 1980:57-71) Throughout the process of decentralization, the creation of working class cultural boards provided a chance for the underrepresented to partake in intellectual developments. (Majstorovic, 1980: 68-71) Unfortunately, the late arrival of institutionalization of cultural changes and, thus their inability to take effect, was hampered by the disintegration of Yugoslavia.

A declining economy and growing dissatisfaction with Tito's succession of presidential replacements eventually resulted in rise of nationalism and subsequently political and ethnic fragmentation of the country. At the XIV Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, the political leaders of six Yugoslav republics were unable to reach a compromise over the internally declining cohesion and manner of federative regulations, thus resulting in the Civil War and disintegration of Yugoslav republics. (Paukovic, 2008: 23-25)

II. YUGONOSTALGIA

Peace and economic stability experienced by Yugoslavs during the nation's prime, countered by the current lack of favorable living standards, was highly influential in the development of positive sentiments towards then regime, contributing to the present day Yugonostalgia. (Ajdacic, Yugo-Nostalgia Grows as Harsh Realities Note, TRI Interantional Institute for War and Peace Reporting) The essence of Yugonostalgia is explained by Zala Volcic as, "...emphasis is placed on the positive elements of life in Yugoslavia: reasonable economic security, low crime rates, multiculturalism, freedom of movement, international recognition of the country (i.e. the politics of non-alignment), and the overall perception that life in Yugoslavia was more rewarding than it is today in the newly independent states." (2011: 194)

Currently, Yugoslav paraphernalia is displayed on street stands of former comprising republics: T-shirts, badges, and collectibles are purchased by older and younger generations alike. Coffee shops in Sarajevo, Skopje, or Ljubljana celebrate Yugoslav identity, with pictures of Josip Broz, prominent partisans, and relics denoting brotherhood and unity. A rise in Yugo-
slav tourism, academic exchanges, re-fabrication of memory, and so forth is vastly present. (Petrovic, 2010: 59-71) Preservation of Yugoslav past, ‘our past’, is demonstrated by the emergence of establishments such as Muzej Detinjstva (Museum of Childhood) in Belgrade which displays belongings of the Yugoslav childhood. Also, a recently released series of 16 episodes called SFRJ Za Pocetnike (SFRY for Beginners) by B-92 in Belgrade, humorously and nostalgically recounts myths, events, cult personalities, expressions, and other aspects of the nation’s culture responsible for influencing the formation of one’s identity, but also an identity of a community. Another factor of this reminder of the past is that Bijelo Dugme reunited, fully, in 2006 for widely attended concerts in Zagreb, Sarajevo, and Belgrade.

Furthermore, Zala Volcic mentions that nostalgia is becoming a lucrative industry: images of Tito, his name, and places of residence or points of visit are used as marketing schemes that often lure considerable profits. (2011: 194-195) Profiting from Tito nostalgia, nostalgia for Josip Broz Tito, many hotels previously frequented by Tito sell his aura and are designed to attract foreign and local visitors alike for an experience lost in time. (Velikonja, 2008: 44-55) Among many, statues as replicas from the original Tito bust sell in high numbers, with one artisan noting the sale of 15,000 in one year, while other metal shops export similar mementos to countries both East and West. (Velikonja, 2008: 41) Different organizations such as Sojuz na Titovu levi sili (The Association of Tito’s Left Forces) in Macedonia or Drustvo Josip Broz Tito (Josip Broz Tito Society) (Velikonja, 2008: 42-43) in Bosnia and Herzegovina allow visitors to write to or about the great leader, leaving heartfelt messages and notes about the disparity experienced today.

Finally, Yugoslavia is vastly present in cyberspace, which has become a transnational converging point for Yugonostalgics; a unique shared space that modernizes Anderson’s imagined community. The memory is materialized through various websites, groups present on social networks, and is preserved by digitalizing and publishing the past via photographs, music, and history. From a virtual Yugoslavia, where anybody who adheres to Yugo-influenced values can become a citizen, to a space where nostalgics can express their sentiments about a candy bar or a pop-rock band from the ’70s alludes to display and enhancement of a shared memory. Yugoslavia’s on-line presence enables the Yugoslav Diaspora, which is away from physical memory triggers, to have a connection to the lost homeland and their compatriots and an ability to enable and control such memory triggers. These virtual activities, where Yugoslavia comes alive, are a private materialization of nostalgia, a reflective and restorative nostalgia at the same time, a travel package through time.

### III. Theoretical Perspective

The building of an imagined community is undertaken through various mediums. Initially, Anderson notes that emergence of print media and its use of common language contributed to the building of a given state’s imagined community. He begins with the definition of a nation as, “an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.” (1991: 6) The community is imagined be-
cause of the rather virtual relationship formed among its compatriots bound by an image of communal participation within the borders of their country. (Anderson, 1991: 7) These communities are limited because every nation has finite and established borders, beyond which are other nations and communities. (Anderson, 1991: 7) Nations are known to be sovereign because they seek freedom within a state that was not to be controlled by hierarchy of the dynastic realm. (Anderson, 1991: 7) And finally, Anderson states that a nation is a community due to an underlining sense of comradeship and horizontality that exists despite of inequalities and various political and social hindrances. (1991: 7) Because imagined communities are inherently political and influenced by the state (and its politics), the continuation of its memory is perpetuated by being a part of totality of thoughts common to a group, which are concurrently influenced and displayed by various collective institutions. (Halbwachs, 1951: 52, 24)

"So it is that when people think they are alone, face to face with themselves, other people appear and with them the groups of which they are members." (Halbwachs, 1951: 54) Margalit notes that individual memory is signified by the verb remember a form of direct knowledge; whereas collective memory is signified by believe as a part of closed memory, one approved by the entire community. (2002: 51-59) The distinction between common memory and shared memory is notable, as the first is comprised of an aggregate of groups who remember a certain episode that is experienced individually, while shared memory requires communication between the members within a group. (Margalit, 2002: 51) The construction of shared memory depends on individual’s placement within that event and channels through which they were involved influencing its transmission. Viewing of the past is, through a shared memory, observed in form of a myth knowing that communal past can be altered but not restored. In turn, these indispensable memories and their altered perceptions reinstitute the past in a vital form, a timeline alive where a group is based on existing within and of it.

Margalit notes that thick relations, consisting of family members, friends, lovers, and fellow countrymen, perpetuate the captivation of sympathies of our fellow nationals more than foreigners as a result of collective suffering, rather than collective success. (2002: 45) Thick relations strengthen diasporic networks and structurally enable materialization of collective memory, outside of the borders where they were inherently created. The extent of the accuracy of memories and degree of transmission is questionable in diaspora since those groups are continuously interacting with the host nation and its collective memory. Furthermore, what is remembered depends on the induction of events into the shared memory as its ingredient for construction of future identities.

Diaspora studies provide a path for critical observation of communities and predicting, eventually, their present and future behavior in sociological, economic, and political contexts. The birth of these communities occurred in the homeland and was modified to accompany the hostland’s values and limitations, viably integrating, or at times assimilating, to the unknown. Reasons for dispersion of such groups vary, thereby influencing their type, makeup, collective behavior, and a manner of remembering.
In defining diaspora, Burbaker borrows from Tölölyan and Clifford by stating that the nation state is, “the primary conception ‘other’ against which diaspora is defined.” (Burbaker, 2005: 10) Tölölyan notes that, “I call ‘diasporas’ those communities of the dispersed who develop varieties of association that endure at least into their third generation.” (2005:8) According to Cohen, some features are common to diaspora groups such as the initial dispersion from an original homeland and a sense of collective memory, idealization, and myth pertaining to it; an existence of strong ethnic, transnational, and distinctive consciousness that pervades over an extended period supported by common history, and transmission of alike cultural and religious customs; inherent sense of empathy towards members of the same ethnic communities in other countries; an extensive possibility of creative and enriching life that is distinctive, yet accepting of the anticipated pluralism experienced in the host country; etc. (Cohen, 2008:17) Among different types of diaspora, as coined by Cohen, is victim diaspora, defined as dispersal of a population from their homeland due to a traumatic event, such as a war. (2008: 53) Forced loss of a homeland often influences the manner in which the past is remembered; in such diasporic networks provide a haven for recreation of a collective memory previously within the initial borders of the group, along with nostalgia for the lost which inevitably becomes the other against which the diaspora community is created in such cases.

Evolution of the study of nostalgia is significant, being first identified as a mental illness, with creative propositions for its cure, to present as a conceptual basis in Diaspora studies, sociology, and the evolving of post-socialist nations, among others. In the realms of modernity, nostalgia is used as a tool to repulse the progression of time and its modification, while simultaneously longing for a better past. Nostalgia immerses communities in reflection on their past, as a means of remembering, while becoming an active ingredient in the construction of the future. (Ghassan, 2010: 416-427)

To better understand the scopes of nostalgia, in the spectrum of individual and collective interpretation and relationship to the past, Svetlana Boym notes its two aspects: restorative and reflective. Restorative nostalgia, “puts emphasis on nostos and proposes to rebuild the lost home and patch up the memory gaps.” (Boym, 2001: 41) It uses nationalism and idealization of a myth that has a dormant toxicity leading to fanaticism and a trajectory of two possibilities: restoration and conspiracy. Reflective nostalgia is concerned with historical and individual time, as well as with the terminality of past in a human finite state, with elements of deep mourning and melancholia. (Boym, 2001: 55) Furthermore, these nostalgics are well aware of the present state of their home, its destruction, and the finality of that loss. Reflective nostalgia calls upon internal contemplation of home, with conscious knowledge of its inexistence, it calls for freedom and creativity, and exploration of various planes of consciousness. A nostalgic in this aspect can be, “homesick and sick of home, at once.” (Boym, 2001: 50)

In the realms of collective memory, Svetlana Boym insists on social frameworks of memory as ingrained in comprehension of human consciousness in continuous interaction with cultural discourse. (2001: 53) A traumatic experience that marks a forced extraction of group from a homeland awakens a sense of loss, dispersion, and is often claimed through the aforementioned collective
framework, thus, also reshaping the discourse of a diasporic group and its behavior.

Boym also notes the concept of armchair nostalgia, “nostalgia without lived experience or collective historical memory.” (2001: 38) Similarly, Sewite Solomon Kebeda refers to Neda (2010) who observes second generation immigrants as having an ‘inherited nostalgia’ which they attempt to manage and weave into their identity through consumption of the homeland’s music. (2010: 10) The aforementioned concepts are particular to 1.5 and second generation immigrants, the first being those who have left their homeland before the age of 12 and have a direct and limited experience due to spending adolescence in the hostland (Rumbaut, 2004: 1162), while the latter are born or do not possess any direct experience with the homeland. For those belonging to 1.5 generation, memory is often influenced by their community, family and limited experience in the homeland. Although nostalgia for the 1.5 or second generation immigrants may not be influenced by their direct and consistent presence within the events of the collective memory, the binding through thick relations establishes them as a factor of the continuum of the collective past and makes them the derivatives of the shared memory.

IV. Former Yugoslavia in Metropolitan Detroit

The interaction between the first generation (those who were born in the homeland and have extensive direct memories pertaining to it) and 1.5 generation immigrants in the Yugoslav Detroit Diaspora is significant as it explores various planes of memory transmission via the historically created imagined community and collective memory. It further explores the replication of various rituals, such as gatherings, frequenting of establishments, and continued interaction.

A. Gatherings

While informal gatherings are rather common within immigrant communities, spectacles that openly display one’s cultural heritage in a night club are, more often than not, rare. In Detroit, a group of young Bosnian DJs host a soiree called the Balkan Night which generally occurs, and has been for a number of years, on a monthly basis. Musical repertoire ranges from Croatian, Bosnian, Serbian to Macedonian songs with genres ranging from turbofolk [3] to pop and some soft rock. On all occasions, the discernment of names, accents, and expressions demonstrated a former Yugoslav 1.5 generation demographic. One DJ stated that the reason for such music and the creation of Balkan Night is to replicate a ‘night out’ in the homeland. Noticeable amicable interactions of the attendees demonstrated a comradeship that transcended the division lines created by the conflict of the 1990s via the enjoyment of the common music.

Concert of Lepa Brena, a legendary singer from the former Yugoslavia who is known for her beauty and popularity was also held in Detroit and well attended by the Detroit Yugoslav Diaspora. At the event, one was able to hear accents and dialects from all republics of former Yugoslavia, with the exception of Slovenia, while mixing and forming their own ethically based circles. However, they congregated to enjoy the music and insert the past into the reality of the present moments.

The star kept the audience waiting, but, finally,
Lepa Brena came out in a sparkly golden suit, looking just as she did when Yugoslavians first saw her on their little screens in the 1980s, with a full band. Many, young and old, rushed to the stage to take pictures of the singer, while others were stationary and enjoyed seeing one of the biggest pop emblems of the former Yugoslavia. After a few recently released songs, Lepa Brena reverted to the pre-war hits with the audience singing along, dancing, and cheering restlessly. Any signs of potential quarrels between the groups vanished during the musical spectacle. After three hours of this trip down memory lane, Lepa Brena left the building and the DJ continued spinning old Yugoslavian pop-rock to the inebriated crowd. (Personal Attendance, May, 2012)

B. Establishments
Another aspect of diasporic network is the existence of at least 10 Yugo-centric establishments throughout metro Detroit. These places are primary locations for advertisement of events and general encounters between populations. Names such as Balkan Food, Sarajevo, Mesnica Market are often replicas of grocery stores that were found in the former Yugoslavia and specialize in edibles and non-edibles alike: meats, spices, desserts, baked goods, newspapers, and journals. While some carry books and deliver individually ordered comic books, others are connected to travel agencies and other specialists that help diaspora members with their basic needs in the United States. Existence of such places as meeting points also make them suitable for contact between members of different ethnic groups that are bound by the wish for Yugoslav made products available for sale. While visiting American European Market, the owner noted that they used to witness ethnic disputes over political opinions, but over the years they have subsided. Furthermore, he noted that they sell products from all countries of the former Yugoslavia and that the customers specifically purchase them, regardless of their origin, "I don’t know why they still keep buying all of these products when there is such a variety here, but they keep coming back." (Personal Interview, July, 2012)

However, bars and restaurants that specialize in Yugoslavian food are very few in numbers in the metro Detroit area. One in particular is the B&H Hall, a place carrying the acronym for Bosnia and Herzegovina. Upon entering, one notices the assortment of liquors that originate from Serbia, Bosnia, and Croatia; the jukebox is filled with ex-YU rock and turbofolk, and the TVs show satellite programs from Bosnia, Serbia, and Croatia simultaneously. Also, a small map carefully demonstrates Bosnian ethnic demographic just before the civil war. The owner of the bar mentioned that she owned a café/bar in former Yugoslavia and after moving to Detroit decided to open a place where every nationality is welcomed. (Personal Interview, Hamtramck, July, 2012) Close to B&H Hall is a restaurant named Palma which serves a variety of dishes from the former Yugoslavia with the décor resembling the pre-90s restaurants with square tables covered in white cloths.

C. Interviews
Considering those born in or around the 1980s, the 1.5 generation, memory of former Yugoslavia is fogged and embellished with kitsch and romanticized past. However, it was found that Yugoslavia rather embodies unity and longing for stability that was dis-
rupted by migration and exile in the early years of one's life. However, the cultural and social transformation of these young immigrants is often reproduced through a parallel scope where they retain memory tales told by their parents and through personal comparisons of the times before and after the war. Common factor of the 1.5 generation was the perception of the former Yugoslavia as a country where everyone was equal, regardless of their ethnicity or religion. Yugoslavia, as an era within group history, was also noted as a binding and common factor within the diaspora group.

It was expressed that some members of the Yugoslav community embraced nationalist sentiments due to extensive losses during the Yugoslav Civil War. But all interviewees strongly believe that the members of diaspora should stop differentiating between their ethnic backgrounds and treat each other accordingly, as this is how they once used to live during the former Yugoslavia under *brotherhood and unity*. Interviewees noted that they own former Yugoslav paraphernalia, such as pictures of Tito, Yugoslav Flag, and other collectibles that stand the test of time and remind them of their origins.

All interviewees noted that they would not return to their current home country because of their already established social ties in the hostland. They added that if Yugoslavia still existed they wouldn't even be in the United States at the moment, a crucial component of the definition of the *victim diaspora*. In addition, the 1.5 generation criticized the life in the United States as unfit and too fast for its citizens and without soul as it was 'back home'.

The generation of the 1950s and 1960s that was surveyed stated that they are nostalgic for Yugoslavia, specifically its stability, security, economic permanence, and positive progress. The integration to the hostland is rather difficult for this generation due to the already learned and established values to which they adhere, which are quite different to those of the United States.

Men at the B&H Bar unanimously concurred that the former Yugoslavia was a significantly better place to reside in. They often swayed away from the subject by elaborating on anecdotes of the summers on the Adriatic coast, friends of different ethnicities, and freedom and prosperity unparalleled in Detroit. After concluding each conversation, interviewees, consistently, admitted and reiterated the current inexistence of Yugoslavia, a direct example of Boym's *restorative nostalgia*.

The 1st generation continuously buys Yugoslav products and frequent Yugoslav ethnic stores, carry and own pre-war paraphernalia, observe ex-YU pop culture, and generally form amicable relationships with immigrants from the former Yugoslavia. They also noted that they attempt to transmit positive aspects and values of the former Yugoslavia to their children, such as *brotherhood and unity*.

It was expressed that many members of Diaspora who adhere to their religious and ethnic groups are often confused as to what national identity to adopt after the break-up of Yugoslavia, thus creating cleavage in diaspora groups. While many community members enjoy their respective religious and ethnic freedoms, in the United States and elsewhere, their memory of loss and adversarial disposition to the other can at times linger. Such was manifested by bullying and at times physical altercations, predominantly between the 1.5 generation members, between groups; however, it was noted that such instances were cur-
tailed over time. Although the interviewees, regardless of their age, still continue to miss the former Yugoslavia and harbor positive thoughts of its time, they believe that the war is a wound that will not heal soon.

V. CONCLUSION

It is important to recall the existence of former Yugoslavia as it once was a haven of peace, brotherhood, and unity. The population’s ability to live and build together was worthier than the civil war that insisted on nationalist hatred, ethnic cleansing, and expulsion of neighbors. The currently dismal political and economic atmosphere in countries of the former Yugoslavia and a forced exile for those in the diaspora enacts the individual nostalgia which fuels collective manifestations of the same.

A state’s ability, such as Yugoslavia, to reinvent the tradition, reconstruct the memory, and foster the collectiveness through cultural and other policies, all while providing for a secure, peaceful, and prosperous nation easily fosters a positive reflection upon its fall. However, even in the finality, a question arises as to why did Yugoslavia have to fall if it was such a haven? Why did neighbors turn against each other in the civil war? Finally, why did the war occur and how is this Yugonostalgia so prevalent through the former comprising republics and Diaspora?

Yugonostalgia is a catalyst to a dialogue, a conversation about the past’s past, as it should be utilized in the transitional justice initiatives. To have a better future, dialogue of the past must be open, not only about the positives, but about the unspoken of, so that reconstruction can be lasting. The future reconstruction of identity within the republics of the former Yugoslavia, namely Bosnia and Herzegovina, should be in sync with the understood and agreed upon collective past.

Nostalgia, which often functions on the basis of selective memory, presumes the insertion of positive experiences into the present and the construction of the future. Perhaps this Yugonostalgia will disappear with the upcoming generations who will induct different events into their shared and collective memory, namely because of temporal progression, but as well in junction with their immediate surroundings – Diaspora or Yugoslavian territory proper. However, the upcoming generations should remember the former Yugoslavia in a collective reflective nostalgia and without the toxic elements of Boym’s restorative nostalgia.

In respect to Tölölyan, Yugoslav diaspora technically does not exist, as it has not reached a third generation; however, the groups and individuals dedicated to perpetuation of the late nation’s memory, regardless of their age group, continue to preserve its positive memories. The once existence of Yugoslavia will continue to bind its former citizens and their children simply because of a common history as an individual who is inherently a member of one or many groups. Thus, it is important to observe the transformation of Yugoslav collective memory in the future, dependent on its adoption within different and reconstructed group identities of the territory proper and abroad.

ENDNOTES

[1] "Invented tradition is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values or norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally
attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past.”

(Halbwachs, 1953: 1)

[2] Nations and nationalities refers to the concept of pluralism in the former Yugoslavia, where nations represented proper citizens of a certain republic, i.e. Croatsians in Croatia, whereas nationalities were minorities throughout Yugoslavia.” (Sekulic 1997: 165-197)

[3] Developed during the 1990s, turbo folk is a popular musical genre comprising a mélange of techno beats and folk lyrics with a physically kitsch and sexualized appearance.

[4] Dubravka Ugresic in her novel, Ministry Developed during the 1990s, turbo folk is a popular musical genre comprising a mélange of techno beats and folk lyrics with a physically kitsch and sexualized appearance.

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