

Aussie Bosnians from Germany: Reconstructing Identity

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Sažetak

Prognanici ili izbjeglice su obični tj. normalni ljudi koji su prošli kroz nenormalne okolnosti kao rezultat socijalnih i političkih nereda u njihovoj domovini. Vrlo često, iznenada i bez povoda, oni postanu „nepoželjne“ grupe i predmet organiziranog nasilja s ciljem otuđenja, protjerivanja i/ili kulturnog i fizičkog uništenja. Bez obzira na činjenicu da skoro svako može postati predmetom ovakvog nepravednog tretmana i biti „preobražen“ u izbjeglicu bez ikakvog razloga, generalna percepcija izbjelica u zemljama utočišta je takva da tretira sve izbjeglice kao jednu homogenu grupu, koja je nekako bliža tamo nekim „njima“ nego „normalnim nama“. Zbog toga riječ „izbjeglica“ (prognanik) ima negativne konotacije, reducirajući različite ljude na jedno zajedničko iskustvo, iskustvo bježanja ispred nasilja i napuštanje njihovih domova. U ovom kontekstu izbjeglice izazivaju različite reakcije u zemljama domaćinima, počev od onih koji krive izbjeglice za njihove patnje, do onih koji ih smatraju egzotičnim i patroniziraju ih.

Ovaj članak nastoji preispitati stereotipične percepcije o identitetu izbjeglica i sagledati aspekte izbjegličkog iskustva koji nisu samo negativni. Razmatrajući načine na koje su izbjeglice pozitivno iskoristili svoje iskustvo prognanika, članak nastoji pokazati njihovu „normalnost“ ili „običnost“. Uz dužno uvažavanje prema preživljenim osobnim traumama, patnjama i teškoćama vezanim za prognanički život, članak analizira efekte prisilne mobilnosti tj. „biti u pokretu“ iz jedne zemlje u drugu, te opisuje neke pozitivne utjecaje izbjegličkog iskustva, pogotovo na mlađe osobe i formiranje njihovog identiteta.

Abstract

Refugees are ordinary people who go through extraordinary ordeals as a result of social and political upheaval in their homelands. Very often, 'out of the blue' they become 'unwanted' groups targeted by organized, violent campaigns aimed at dispossessing, expelling and culturally and/or

physically annihilating them. Regardless of the fact that almost anyone could become subject to such unfair treatment and be turned into a refugee for no reason, there is a general perception in host countries that refugees are a homogenous collective, which somehow has to do more with 'them' than with 'us'. Hence the word 'refugee' usually has negative connotations, reducing the identity of diverse groups of people to only one of their life episodes – that of fleeing persecution and leaving their homelands. In this context, refugees continue to attract diverse reactions from the dominant culture, ranging from being blamed for their own misery to being patronized and perceived as exotic.

This paper attempts to challenge stereotypical notions of the identity of refugees and move beyond viewing their experience as only negative. By considering the ways in which refugees have benefited from their experience, the paper aims to reveal their ordinariness. While acknowledging the personal trauma, hardship and difficulties associated with the refugee experience, the article analyses the effects of 'being on the move' from one country to another and describes some positive impacts of the refugee experience, especially on younger refugees and the shaping of their identity.

Introduction

Last year, I interviewed a group of young Bosnians¹ about how they saw themselves in relation to Australia (where they live now), Bosnia² (where they were born), and Germany (where they spent a number of years as refugees in temporary asylum). This refugee path has been shared by thousands of Bosnians, as Germany asked more than 400,000 refugees from Former Yugoslavia (most of them being from Bosnia) to leave the country once the war in the region was officially declared over in late 1995.³ For thousands of Bosnian refugees, the fact that a 'peace deal' was finally reached did not mean much in practice: they had already lost family members, their homes were either destroyed or occupied by people from a different ethnic group, their communities shattered and erased ... In addition, many of the perpetrators directly or indirectly involved in ethnic cleansing and the killing of more than 200,000 people were rewarded for their crimes by being allowed to keep ethnically cleansed areas under their control as politicians, mayors, policemen and company directors.

Having to choose between returning to what remained of their country or looking for a safe haven somewhere else, many Bosnians, traumatized by the war, opted for the latter option: to be resettled to a third country. The USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Scandinavian countries were the destinations on offer. Thousands chose Australia, some because of family and other links, others because it was far away, hoping that physical distance would help them to forget the misery they underwent. For many this also meant leaving behind everything that was familiar to them: they hoped to make a new start and to finally shake off the refugee label, or to provide safety and opportunities for their children. For me, also a refugee, it was a combination of all the above.

In this article I argue that while most of the older Bosnians retained their identity as ‘displaced Bosnians’, refugees and war survivors, the younger generation was generally able to adapt to the new situations more easily. Furthermore, the younger ones succeeded in participating more fully in the culture of the country that received them, embracing the language of the countries they found ‘refuge’ in and in resisting their social location as ‘outsiders’. Focusing on young people in particular and drawing on data collected during fifteen interviews with these ‘Aussie Bosnians from Germany’, I argue that there is a direct relationship between their refugee experience and their sense of belonging. I characterize that relationship as one of cultural hybridity⁴, and contrast that with traditional, more exclusive forms of group identity based on one culture, language, ethnicity, territory or nationality. Indeed, Aussie Bosnians from Germany are crossing imagined and real boundaries of identity exclusiveness and integrating different cultural domains in their self-identity in a way that resonates with the concept of cultural hybridity. The aim of this article is to tease out the particular strategies and experiences that enable younger Aussie Bosnians in particular to adopt different cultures as their own.

Refugee Identity: Transnational, Hybrid or Something Else?

Identity, or our sense of who we are and to which social groups we belong, is a multifaceted and evolving process influenced and shaped by diverse psychological and social factors. While we may have a clear idea about our identity such as that based on sexuality, colour or family background, our personal identity is not only defined by the way we feel about ourselves, but it is also critically dependent on how others perceive and ‘categorize’ us. As Steven Shapin puts it, identity at once belongs to an individual and to the social networks and groups of which that individual is a part.⁵

This is especially true in the case of refugees, whose ‘refugee identity’ – as a category defined by others – ends up, in many cases, disregarding the individual aspects of refugee experience. Being treated as a group with a ‘common experience’ and ‘common background’, refugees are so labelled and must accept the new collective categorization that defines their legal and political obligations and rights as much as it defines their membership to a given ‘identifiable’ social group. In such circumstances, developing and exploring the sense of personal and group identity is, arguably, much more complex than for individuals who have not gone through such a dramatic and traumatic experience. This is particularly true of refugee adolescents who might have witnessed or been subjected to serious violence and loss.

As ethnic identity was one of the main reasons behind the persecution and forced displacement of the researched group, it deserves special attention as an important factor of group identity. Similar to other forms of collective identity, ethnicity is an exclusive social construction based on commonalities shared between its members that differentiate them from others. As Michael Moerman argues, the common elements in defining ethnicity include: an association with place and territory; history and destiny; language; and such features of culture as basic values, religion, distinctive traits or practices and ecological adaptation. He

also points out that none of these elements is 'fixed and stable', as ethnicity is 'a network of interacting social and historical processes'.⁶

As there is no single Bosnian ethnic identity but rather three separate ethnicities – Bosniak, Croat and Serb – that share more similarities than differences in terms of language, history, territory and common Slavic origins, the confusion of adolescents from Bosnia about their ethnic identity may be even more complex than for their peers from countries with one dominant ethnicity or where the differences between single ethnic groups are more strongly demarcated.⁷

It is, however, important to insist, as does Michael Fisher, that ethnicity and ethnic identity are phenomena reinvented and rediscovered in each generation rather than something passed on from generation to generation.⁸ Hence, as Benedict Anderson famously argued, national identity and ethnicity as a constructed social phenomenon are 'imagined' in each new generation, where new elements are added to existing shared cultural practices, religion, customs, language, history and myths. In regard to refugees, new elements may include references to exodus, survivorhood, suffering, pain and loss.⁹

'Imagining' a national identity differs somewhat between citizens of an actual state and diasporas. While for nationals of a nation state, a feeling of home and sense of belonging may coincide with a physical living place and be expressed through active participation in its socio-political realities, the main shared feeling of home in a diaspora is the absence of place. This absence of, or search for, a home typically results in a metanarrative comprising historical facts, myths and memories of the homeland.¹⁰

Steven Shapin argues that identity is constructed out of materials at hand, while the 'stuff' out of which identity can be made is presented by the local culture.¹¹ Identity in refugee adolescents with experience of multiple resettlements and exposure to a number of local cultures may then prove to be made of a combination of 'materials at hand', integrating a cultural mix of 'stuff' as part of their personal identities. How then to define such a complex identity?

The notion of 'trans-national identities' inadequately reflects the complexities of refugee identities that very often lie beyond the national identities in their ethnic, religious and tribal points of reference. Further, 'trans-national' is very often used in regard to market activities carried out by transnational corporations (TNCs). When it comes to identities, it could suggest different nationalities crossing the borders of the nation states or other formal categories such as multiple citizenship, nation-state alliances and other forms of cross-border contacts. Regardless of the degree of such transnational co-operation between two or more nation-states, such alliances, based on common interests, usually go without national amalgamation as nations still remain very exclusive forms of group identity.

On the other hand, hybridity, in both its organic and social contexts, stands as an opposite to ideas of purity or essentialist ideas about group identity based on conceptions of 'distinctive origin'. In a socio-cultural context, 'purity' often refers to 'blood relations' and other exclusive monocultural markers – such as language, history, religion and territory – commonly used to define a nation.

In contrast to trans-nationality, hybridity involves cultural reflexivity and interaction between various cultural domains synthesizing different cultural elements into a functional and experientially meaningful form of cultural identity.¹²

These theoretical reflections form the backdrop to the ethnographic research carried out in Melbourne and Adelaide in 2003–2004 as part of a research project at RMIT University. The project explored the impact of displacement and ‘living in transition’ on identity formation in adolescent refugees who have spent most of their lives living outside their country of birth. The subjects of this research included seven young Bosnian men and eight young Bosnian women, who fled Bosnia when they were between five and eleven years of age and, after living up to ten years in Germany, were resettled under the refugee and humanitarian program to Australia. They are all multilingual. More than half of them lost relatives and parents in the armed conflict that took place in the country of their origin, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Here in Australia, they belong to a unique subgroup within the Bosnian refugee community based on their shared refugee experience and their attachment to German language and culture.

I selected the participants using both random sampling and the ‘snowball method’. The main selection criteria for participation in the study were that they were Bosnian adolescents who had lived in Australia for at least two years and that their refugee path included a number of years as ‘temporary refugees’ in Germany. Language skills in all three languages – English, German and Bosnian – was an additional criterion.

As follows, I go on to identify the following seven themes as critical in shaping cross-cultural hybrid identities.

‘Sprechen sie Deutsch, English, Bosanski ...?’: A Lingua Franca of Your Choice

Language is both an important identity marker and also very much a central factor in interpreting cultural identity in the young Bosnians I talked to. It proved to be far more than just a means of verbal communication and social interaction. All the young people are authentic polyglots, speaking, writing and thinking in their daily lives in three different languages: English, German and Bosnian. Their memories are also inscribed in one of the three languages, each belonging to a cultural cluster of time and events. The different languages, however, play a different role and are used selectively depending on the audience, situation and theme. While the most used language in public interaction at school and other public spheres is English, German is almost the exclusive language of use at home with German-speaking siblings and when socializing with friends who belong to the informal network of ‘Bosnian adolescents from Germany’. In addition to shared experience, German, in this case, is also the main factor of cohesion among the group. Bosnian language is mostly reserved for interactions with parents, relatives and non-English and non-German speakers from the wider Bosnian community.

Remembering the 'First Home'

This part of the interviews, concerned with 'remembering the first home', was conducted in Bosnian, which most of the participants had mastered, as well as the other two languages. For many participants, Bosnia was a painful memory that they could not or did not want to recall in detail. They mostly gave general statements describing their lives as 'normal' and 'happy'. Most of their families were middle class and 'well-off working class' as they lived in their own houses and owned a car. Some even had their own holiday houses, while a number of the participants reported regular holidays on the Adriatic.

Only three of the participants gave brief, more personal, accounts of their lives in Bosnia before the war. Aida¹³ talked about her childhood with her grandmother:

I remember picking cherries with my grandma and going to school. I was very happy then ...

Almir said that his life was normal and that he could vividly recall camping and fishing with his father on the river Drina.¹⁴

However, all the participants had clear memories of the time when the war was about to start and they fled the country, in most cases accompanied only by their mothers. Emina described that moment in the following words:

There were a number of buses waiting to take women and children to Slovenia. My mother argued with my father long into the night. She didn't want to leave without him. He convinced her in the end by saying that this was going to be a holiday for us and that he had to look after the house. He also needed to look after grandma and grandpa ... I was very excited about the idea of going somewhere with all the kids at the town's main bus station ... Every school excursion after that reminds me of the day I left home ... My father drove us to the station. He and my mother were both silent and looked worried. He put us on a bus and kissed us good bye. My mother cried ... My brother and I waved to him through the window when the bus was leaving. He was waving with both his hands among a countless number of hands of other children's fathers and relatives that farewelled us. He had a blue shirt. That was the last time I saw my father ... I cannot recall his face, but I will never forget his waving hands and that blue shirt ... My mother cried all the way to Slovenia. Not far from our town, we were stopped by Chetniks. I don't remember seeing them, but I know that I was very scared ...

A year after I completed the interviews, I was invited to attend Emina's wedding in Melbourne. She married a young Aussie Bosnian who grew up in Australia. He never visited Germany, nor did he ever return to Bosnia. He spoke colloquial Bosnian but clearly his first language was English. It looked almost like a 'cross-cultural' marriage as the bride's and groom's experiences of cultures, languages and refugeedom were very different. Like in good old fairytales, this did not play a divisive role as love was the common shared ground on which they were to start building their new life together.

Being in Transit in the 'Second Home'

Shifting from English into German also meant entering a new sphere of cultural identity in the participants. They proved to be great narrators in German, using a much wider range of vocabulary than in English. Nostalgia for Germany was present in all interviews. While all ten participants would love to move back to Germany, only two have made clear decisions to do so once they complete their studies in Australia. The other eight preferred to keep Australia as their home base and to live and work in Germany only temporarily if an opportunity arises.

All agreed that 'the best things' about Germany were their friends, teachers and personal relationships with people there from both German and non-German backgrounds. Additional positives included the high living standard, excellent education and healthcare system, and peace.

While they praised their friendships with ordinary people in Germany, they had all experienced active institutional discrimination by German authorities as 'unwanted' refugees and foreigners. This included regular visits to *Die Ausländerbehörde* ('The Department for Aliens'), sometimes on a weekly basis, to extend their temporary refugee visas – *Duldung* – which translates into English as 'being tolerated'.

All of the participants had experienced or knew of *Ausländerfeindlichkeit* (xenophobia) and had seen anti-immigrant and racist graffiti such as the most common one: *Ausländer Raus!* ('Foreigners out'). However, they did not always feel they were the target of such graffiti themselves as their skin colour and language protected them – or as Suad said, made them 'invisible foreigners'. On the other hand, they reported that asylum seekers and refugee centers were fire-bombed by Neo-Nazis and people were killed in these attacks in Germany during the 1990s when they lived there. None of the participants witnessed such an attack directly.

Finding the 'Third Home'

In the interview conducted in English, I started by asking all the participants the same set of questions to explore their most recent experience of living in Australia.

Except for two of the participants, everyone was, to varying degrees, happy with his/her life in Australia so far. Most of them, however, remembered being unhappy initially as they missed their friends in Germany and their previous way of life. A common description of the 'cultural shock' experienced upon arrival was that 'everything was different', referring to the houses, streets, public transport, shops, driving on the 'wrong side of the road', food and even people. Those who already had relatives here found it a little easier to feel welcomed. But all experienced stress around settlement issues, which included finding accommodation, enrolling at school, registration with government and other institutions to get 'all the numbers and plastic cards'. The unpleasant task of being their family's interpreter from the moment they arrived here is something that was frequently mentioned.

In terms of what they liked here in Australia, most of the young people spoke about multiculturalism and the Australian way of life. Multiculturalism was described in such terms as 'not being important who you are', 'opposite of racism', 'many cultures living together', 'sharing the classroom with all sorts of people' or 'different food'. The Australian way of life was described as 'casual style', 'slower than in Europe', 'having a BBQ', 'addressing people with the first name' and 'owning a house'. They also mentioned Australian egalitarianism: equality, the right to apply for Australian citizenship and 'lack of racism', which Almir saw as the absence of racist graffiti like '*Ausländer Raus!*' – commonly seen in Berlin.

Being a Refugee: What Doesn't Kill Me Makes Me Stronger

All of the participants have spent half or more of their lives as refugees after having fled from Bosnia and Herzegovina in the early 1990s. Their options have been limited in many ways by their refugee status. Being a refugee has meant, for most of them, displacement, dispossession, discrimination, homelessness, dangerous flight, exposure to violence, lack of basic necessities, loss of relatives, grieving, refugee camps and being subject to charity and bureaucratic regulations. On the other hand, the experience of being a refugee has created some positive opportunities such as learning other languages, adopting other cultures, creating new social networks and migration to Australia under Australia's refugee and humanitarian program.

Aida's account of her refugee experience captures many of the negatives mentioned by those interviewed:

It is the worst thing that can happen to anyone. From a normal and happy life, losing everything and having to go without having a destination. Then people look at you like you are an alien from Mars. They ask you stupid questions and think you never had a home and a life that was better and happier than theirs. They ask you, where do you come from? Are you a refugee? And you start hating these questions and being called *izbjeglica*, *Flüchtling*, 'a refugee' ... Kids laugh at you at school because of your name or accent. Then, after school, you go to a *Flüchtlingsheim* (refugee camp) instead of going home. You walk down the streets with shops full of food and all the goodies while you know that people in your country are starving and kids are being killed ... You wait until life returns to normal and then one day you realize that life will never be normal again ... Then you start a new life, but you really never recover and never forget ... You know that there is no-one behind you and you have to succeed. That's what gives me strength. Sometimes when I have hard times and I worry about something, I only remember how it was when I was in Bosnia in 1992 and 1993.

After the initial experience of being singled out and discriminated against by non-refugee peers and other individuals, it is important to note that positive experiences were also frequently mentioned:

I met a lot of good people in Germany and Australia. Many people wanted to help me and my family. They were strangers but they became my best

friends. In Germany, I was good at school and had a lot of friends. We had such a good time ... But it was bad being a refugee and waiting to be returned somewhere I didn't want to go. What I like best on my life here in Australia is that I am not a refugee any more. I am a migrant. I am a free person and can do everything that other normal people do. I can study, work, travel, have a house ... (Interview 2004, Suad).

In some cases, participants demonstrated a remarkable capacity to place a positive interpretation on a nominally 'adverse' set of historical circumstances:

It makes me feel really mature having lived in different countries and speaking three languages. It is such a great thing understanding other cultures and feeling part of them and also knowing both the bad and the good sides of life. It makes you appreciate things better. I feel that my life has been enriched through my refugee experience ... like I have been living three different lives ... Instead of feeling homeless, I feel like I have many homes (Interview 2004, Maya).

Being a refugee is definitely not a desirable status, as Aida elaborated. The participants have, however, shown great resilience, creativity and adaptation skills in resisting – even rejecting – the status of disadvantaged group, and by actively participating in the everyday life activities of their peers and the social surrounding in which they live/d. To a great extent, they have turned around the role defined by their refugee status by gaining benefits from their refugee experience.

My Queen Kylie

We talked about nation, nationality, nationalism and what all that might mean to each of them. Their answers on Bosnian nationality included many elements that commonly define a nation such as: Bosnian people, Bosnia and Herzegovina as a country, the map of Bosnia, its flag, language, golden lilies, three religions, borders, war and the Bosnian army. Australian nationality and their place in it was most frequently described in terms of multiculturalism, English language, citizenship, equality, right to vote or having a home and an address here.

One amusing detail in particular captured my attention during an interview. The room was decorated with an old Bosnian flag with golden lilies (not the contemporary flag of Bosnia), a poster of the famous German Soccer Club *Bayern München*, and a large poster of the Australian pop singer, Kylie Minogue. All the icons were placed next to each other on the largest wall in the room and seemed to be of equal importance and to be equally admired by my host. This shows that sports and popular youth culture, shared with other young people in Germany and Australia respectively, make an important link with other, non-refugee young people who identify themselves as fans of FC Bayern or Kylie. In addition, the Bosnian flag is a clear statement that this young man, at least politically, sees himself as a Bosnian.

All You Need is Friends!

When exploring the experience of social connectedness, all the young people repeatedly emphasized the importance of friendship. Friendship seemed to be a much more important identity factor than belonging to any of the defined broader communities. In many ways, what the participants said about friendship recalls the observation of Nobel-prize winning Czech writer, Milan Kundera, in one of his latest novels: 'Friends are our mirror; our memory; we ask nothing of them but they polish the mirror from time to time so we can look at ourselves in it'.¹⁵

Memories of the German part of their lives included a great deal of talking about their friends and the good times they had together. Without hesitation, all the participants referred to their friends as the greatest asset they had had in Germany and in Australia. Possibly reflecting their younger age, social connections with Bosnia were more in relation to the members of extended family still living there, with whom most of the participants did not have an opportunity to develop a closer relationship.

In Australia, friends continue to play an important part in the participants' everyday lives. In addition to socializing with young German-speaking Bosnians, their friends also include young people from a variety of backgrounds:

The worst thing when I came here was that I didn't have any friends. I felt very lonely and I was missing my friends back in Germany. I felt misplaced and I didn't believe that I would ever feel happy in this country. Now I feel much better. I've got a lot of very good friends here. They are from all sorts of backgrounds: Anglo, Greeks, Italians, Chinese, Bosnians, Lebanese, Croats, Sudanese ... I also keep in touch with my friends in Germany (Interview 2004, Edo).

They have also become friends with young people from the 'enemy background' – the Serbs – and such contacts have helped them to think about issues of collective responsibility, blame and individual suffering. Possibly without realizing it, they are starting a grassroots reconciliation process:

My best friend is a Serb. Her parents are refugees from Croatia. My mum doesn't like me being with her and neither do my friends' parents. But we are best friends at school and we help each other. I told her that Serbs killed my father and she was really sorry. I cannot blame her for something some bad Serbs did. She told me that she believed all Croats and Bosnians were bad before she met me. That's what she learned at school when she was a refugee in Serbia. Now I also know that not all Serbs are bad (Interview 2004, Merima).

Conclusion

This article provides a snapshot into the cultural richness of the lives of young people from a refugee background. I have attempted to describe them as what they are: ordinary young people with extraordinary experiences. The problem I generally find with most literature on refugees (maybe even more so as I

myself am/was a refugee) is that it is problem-oriented and usually reinforces stereotypes about refugees as a homogenous group of desperate people. My hope in my research was to be able to break away from the existing black and white presentation of refugees where the word 'refugee' generally has negative connotations, reducing many diverse groups of people to only one of their life episodes – that of fleeing persecution and leaving their homelands.

The findings of the research indicate that the refugee experience and the years of displacement have had an impact on Bosnian adolescents' identity, especially in its cultural domain. While some of their earlier stages of psychosocial development, as described by Erikson¹⁶, might have been disrupted due to separation from fathers and other important relatives, they are managing any such 'identity crisis' quite well, sometimes even bypassing traditional essentialist classifications such as ethnicity and nationality. This is represented, for example, in the fact that their cultural identity is not 'pure' Bosnian, German or Australian, but rather a combination of all three.

The experience of 'being on the move' as refugees has given the young people an opportunity to pick up and adopt different languages and customs and to form a variety of social relations. While being quite aware of their refugee past and the reasons for 'being on the move', and constantly swinging between cultures, they have become a living embodiment of cultural hybridity with at least three distinct cultures presented in one. This is not only reflected through their language skills, but also through the established social networks, personal relations with a number of social groups and geographic areas, and through a 'healthy' integration of personal and collective memories into their self-identity. In moving away from a victim role they have not developed a perpetrator mentality, justified by their personal and collective sufferings, but, on the contrary, have even become more open-minded and tolerant.

Unlike Ballinger's¹⁷ 'authentic hybridity' of Istrians, which is based on the exclusion of 'others' from the territorial and cultural cohabitat of the local Italian, Croatian and Slovenian communities on the Istrian Peninsula, Bosnian adolescent refugees in Australia are much more inclusive and ready both to interact with other cultures and also to become part of them without losing their distinctive identity. This may come from the fact that identity in Bosnian refugees is not based on a common territory but rather on an experience and culture that they mutually share.

Given the lack of studies on identity issues and Bosnian refugees settled in third countries, I hope that my research will inspire other similar studies on Bosnian refugees elsewhere.¹⁸ Future research concerning Bosnian adolescent refugees should explore the impacts of the refugee experience on self-identity in Bosnians resettled in other countries, whose refugee path might have been somewhat different. Furthermore, it would be very interesting to compare some of the identity characteristics of Bosnian refugee adolescents living in these countries with their compatriots living as 'internally displaced persons' within Bosnia and Herzegovina. Such comparative studies on differences and similarities between non-refugee and refugee adolescents as well as between refugees from different

cultural backgrounds would provide more insights into the complexity of issues surrounding identity in adolescent refugees.

Endnotes

¹ The group included ethnic Bosniaks, Croats and children from 'mixed' marriages.

² The term Bosnia is commonly used instead of the country's official name Bosnia and Herzegovina.

³ The 1992–1995 war in Bosnia ended in late 1995 when all the parties signed the US-brokered Peace Agreement at Dayton. The agreement, which became known as 'Dayton', did not provide a 'just peace' but it did end years of bloodshed and suffering. It recognized the Republika Srpska (Serb Republic), which was a direct product of ethnic cleansing, as a political entity with a high degree of autonomy within the Bosnian state. The rest of Bosnia (51 per cent) was named the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and included territories controlled by Bosniaks and Croats. The results of war were devastating, including some 200,000 killed, 40,000 missing, more than 2 million displaced, 800,000 destroyed homes ... See, for instance, S. Ramet, *Balkan Babel*, Westview Press, Cambridge, 2002; S. Power, *A Problem from Hell*, Harper Perennial, New York, 2002; N. Cigar, *Genocide in Bosnia: The Policy of 'Ethnic Cleansing' in Eastern Europe*, Texas A&M University Press, College Station, 1995.

⁴ P. Werbner and T. Modood eds, *Debating Cultural Hybridity: Multi-Cultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism*, Zed Books, London, 1997: an excellent introductory reader on cultural hybridity.

⁵ S. Shapin, *A Social History of Truth*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1994.

⁶ M. Moerman, 'Ariadne's Thread and Indra's Net: Reflexions on Ethnography, Ethnicity, Identity, Culture and Interaction', *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, vol. 26, no. 1, 1993, pp. 85–97.

⁷ As described by M. Imamović, *Historija Bošnjaka*, Preporod, Sarajevo, 1996; N. Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History*, MacMillan, London, 1994 and I. Lovrenovic, *Bosnia: A Cultural History*, Saqi Books Publishers, London, 2001.

⁸ See M. Fisher, 'Ethnicity and the Post-Modern Arts', J. Clifford and G. Marcus eds, *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1986, pp. 19–233.

⁹ Cf. B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, Verso, London, 1983; P. James, *Nation Formation: Towards a Theory of Abstract Community*, Sage, London, 1996; G. Kibreab, 'Revisiting the Debate on People, Place, Identity and Displacement', *Journal of Refugee Studies*, vol. 12, no. 4, 1999, pp. 384–410.

¹⁰ As outlined by E. Barkan and M. Shelton, *Borders, Exiles, Diasporas*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1998.

¹¹ S. Shapin, *A Social History of Truth*.

¹² H. Bhabha, ed., *Nation and Narration*, Routledge, London, 1990; H. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, Routledge, London, 1994.

¹³ All the names used in the article have been changed.

¹⁴ The river Drina is the fastest-flowing and the second largest river in Bosnia. Most of its 360 kilometres length also separates Bosnia from neighboring Serbia. Some also call it the largest mass grave of the Balkans, as thousands of bodies of Bosniaks killed by Serb Chetniks were thrown into the river during the Second World War and the Bosnian war in 1990s. For more information see, for instance, M. Sells, *The Bridge Betrayed: Religion and Genocide in Bosnia*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1996; and N. Cigar, *Genocide in Bosnia: The Policy of 'Ethnic Cleansing' in Eastern Europe*.

¹⁵ M. Kundera, *Identity*, Harper Collins Publishers, New York, 1998, p. 88.

¹⁶ Contrary to Freud, Erikson does not believe that the main part of identity formation and emotional development is completed by the age of five. He identifies eight stages of psychosocial development, the first starting during the first year of life and the last towards the end of the life cycle. Each stage represents a 'crisis' that needs to be successfully resolved by an individual in order to complete a developmental phase of the self. If, however, a conflict or crisis has not been resolved at an earlier stage, it is possible for an individual to 'catch up' and resolve it at any later stage of development. See E. Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis*, Faber & Faber Limited, London, 1968; E. Erikson, *Identity and the Life Cycle*, W. W. Norton, London, 1980.

¹⁷ See P. Ballinger, *History in Exile: Memory and Identity at the Borders of the Balkans*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2003.

¹⁸ Here I need to point to the pioneering works of Val Colic Peisker in Australia, Barbara Franz in Austria, Eliza Gibson in the USA and Aida Hozic on 'Digital Diaspora'. They all have written about different aspects of identity in displaced Bosnians. See V. Colic-Peisker, 'The Process of Community and Identity Building Among Recently Arrived Bosnian Muslim Refugees in Western Australia', *Mots Pluriels*, no. 21, May 2002; B. Franz, 'Ethnic Identity and Gender Roles in Flux: The Adaptation of Bosnian Refugees to Austrian Programs of Humanitarian Relief and Economic Integration: 1992-1999', *e-merge: A Student Journal of International Affairs*, Volume 1, January 2000, <http://www.carleton.ca/e-merge/v1_art/v1_fran/v1_fra8.html>; E. Gibson, 'The Impact of Political Violence: Adaptation and Identity Development in Bosnian Adolescent Refugees', *Smith Studies in Social Work*, no. 73/1, 2002, pp. 29-50; and A. Hozic, 'Hello. My Name Is ... : Articulating Loneliness In A Digital Diaspora', *Afterimage*, Gale Group, January 2001, <http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2479/is_4_28/ai_76560784>.