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Yugoslavian immigrant youth and the negotiation of their identity within the Canadian context : the effects of post-traumatic stress disorder

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YUGOSLAVIAN IMMIGRANT YOUTH AND THE NEGOTIATION OF THEIR IDENTITY
WITHIN THE CANADIAN CONTEXT: THE EFFECTS OF POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS
DISORDER

by

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A Major Research Paper
presented to Ryerson University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
In the Program of
Immigration and Settlement Studies

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ABSTRACT

Within the Canadian context, there has been limited literature on the topic of immigrant youth from war-torn countries and the negotiation of their identity upon arrival to Canada. Furthermore, there is even less literature pertaining to the experiences of a particular group, for instance, the youth from Former Yugoslavia (Bosnia, Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia, Montenegro, and Macedonia). Through individual interviews, this study explored how Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) influences identity development and whether PTSD can create barriers to integration within the Canadian society. Elements such as family and language proved to be the most influential in helping research subjects integrate into the receiving society. Contrary to previous literature, the results of this study showed that going through trauma may not prove to be the ultimate detrimental factor in life; rather it can prove to be a catalyst for positive change and growth.

Keywords: Youth; immigrant; refugee; identity; Former Yugoslavia; Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

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DEDICATION

This Major Research Paper is dedicated to all those who were forced to flee the regions of Former Yugoslavia. I hope you have found your new home, a new life, and I wish you only the best in all of your future dreams, endeavours, and successes. Sve najbolje i najlepse!

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INTRODUCTION

Imagine yourself in complete darkness; imagine a world full of chaos and disorder. Envision an environment where there is a lack of food, little to no shelter, and you are never certain if the next day will be your last. This was the reality of war survivors from Former Yugoslavia and still is the reality for many individuals that live in countries that are plagued by war. Even though numerous research projects have talked about these realities, there has been very little research conducted on the impact of these environments on the formation of one's identity, especially with regard to youth. Furthermore, the literature gap between formation and negotiation of identity by immigrant and refugee youth as they arrive into new cultural settings is highly evident; and even though Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is an anticipated outcome of these types of situations, the link between identity and PTSD is rarely discussed.

The disintegration of Former Yugoslavia from 1991-1995 left a devastating and lasting effect on the victims of this civil war. Since the disintegration of the country, there has been great segregation across ethnic lines and thus, being "Yugoslavian" is a term often used to self-describe someone who feels like they don't belong to just one of the nationalities that were a part of Former Yugoslavia (Serbian, Croatian, Slovenian, Bosnian, Macedonian, Montenegrin), but who are a mix of two or more. However, some youth from Former Yugoslavia might not want to associate themselves with the Yugoslavian identity at all, seeking to draw clear boundaries between ethnicities, making it easier to negotiate their sense of belonging to one specific group.

Therefore, this paper is an attempt to construct a possible link between PTSD and components of identity, such as education, language, parental influence, peer relations, and religion in order to create a better understanding of the factors that play a key role in the

construction of identity amongst youth from war-torn countries, with a specific focus on youth from Former Yugoslavia. This paper will deal with the existing literature and make note of the research gaps that need to be addressed in order to better understand all of the existing issues pertaining to this topic. The following questions are addressed in my qualitative research:

- How would you describe your own identity?
- What was your experience like in terms of fitting into the Canadian society?
- How would you define yourself?
- What was your experience like during the civil war?
- Do you think the war had an impact on your cultural identity?
- What kind of advice would you give to future generations? (Please refer to Appendix B on pp. 70-71)

The main reason why I was so interested in the topic of PTSD and immigrant and refugee youth from war torn countries is because I am a perfect example of it. I have often found it hard to give myself a specific identity as well, seeing as how I not only came from Former Yugoslavia during the war, but rather I was raised in a multiethnic family, where after the country fell apart, I felt like I never really belonged anywhere because of my dynamic ethnic background.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

In this section I will discuss theories related to identity and hybridity, acculturation, and resilience and risk as these perspectives seem to be most suited for this subject area.

Identity and Hybridity

For immigrant youth, there seems to be a sense of “being in between”, that is to say the notion of being stuck between two cultures, two worlds. Yet identity can be identified in numerous ways. The two key conceptions stem from modern and postmodern literature. The modern literature describes identity as “a stable and fixed attribute developed and

attained during adolescence. In the conception, answering the question ‘who am I?’ would call upon a person’s culture, race, gender, age, nationality, and religion” (Racicot, 2001, p. 5-6).

The post-modern concept of liminality, in comparison to a fixed identity in the modern literature, is meant to address this issue of being “in between” life stages, belonging nowhere until one can permanently move away from transitional passages. Bhabha (2006), named this experience as “hybrid identity”, where an individual can belong to more than one culture at a time and yet to neither at the same time (Racicot, 2001, p. 6-7). Davoliute (2005, p. 116) mentions “hybridization”, as a term that describes the constant shifting within both cultural and structural discourses. Since immigrants are confronted with notion of discontinuity through migration, their identity begins to be undermined and thus they start searching for continuity in order to feel at “home” (Devoliute, 2005, p. 117). Furthermore, since people feel the need to relate themselves to their past, identity becomes a question of memory and memories of past home. Thus, according to Devoliute (2005), the new hybrid identity is constructed from both past memory and current experiences in the host society. Most importantly, Devoliute (2005) mentions that identity is not created by one’s origins, but rather “the stories that are told about one’s origin, and the (big) picture created by these stories, also contribute to the notion of ‘who I am’ at a certain moment in one’s present history” (p. 121). Thus, identity is not fixed, but its formation is an ongoing process.

In a research report on *Immigrant Youth in Canada*, created by the Canadian Council on Social Development (2000), the youth interviewed had mentioned that “if you forget your roots, you forget who you are.” It was agreed by all that their homeland’s culture, traditions, and language formed a vital part of their personal identity.

Perhaps the best concept that can identify identity is the notion of belonging. It can be seen as meaning to be safe, understood, and recognized. This doesn't necessarily mean to belong to a one distinct nation, but rather as individuals move, they seek to find belonging in new communities and nations (Racicot, 2001). Thus, along the same line of reasoning, it can be said that once a youth is ready to transition from childhood into adulthood, they experience both a pre-liminal and post-liminal situations. Pre-liminal in the sense that they are holding on to their childhood experiences while they are becoming adults (post-liminal) (Racicot, 2001).

Acculturation

Jandt (2007, p. 309) defines the process of acculturation or cultural adaptation as “an immigrant’s learning and adopting the norms and values of the new host culture.” The author mentions that this is a two dimensional process of maintaining one’s own cultural identity while maintaining relationships within the new culture. There are three main predictors of acculturation. One, the similarity of culture helps in adjusting to the new environment. Two, personal characteristics and experiences have a role, for example, youth may adapt to change faster than older immigrants. Finally, there is the effect of media and transportation advances, for example, being able to retain contact with one’s original ethnic identity (reading newspapers, watching TV shows, calling home with no pressure to assimilate) allows one to more comfortably participate in a within the host society (Jandt, 2007).

Tong et al. (2006) suggest that because immigrant youth “experience uncertainty as to what degree each of their cultures should comprise their new identity” (p. 203) there is a certain amount of stress that can be associated with acculturation, particularly because the youth are trying to retain their original cultural heritage to please their parents and stay within the zone of

comfort ability, while trying to blend and avoid being ostracized in the new cultural surroundings.

Also, much of the literature suggests that monolingualism among immigrants contributes to acculturation stress, while bilingualism allows many to better adapt to bicultural settings (Karilian-Konyalian, 2008). This suggests that there is a direct relationship between acculturation and the learning of a new language, where the proficiency and attainment of the second language is influenced by ethnic identity and the acculturation strategy (Karilian-Konyalian, 2008). The acculturation strategy can be divided into three categories that can either help or hinder in the integration of immigrant youth into the receiving society. First, acculturation can be linear, unidimensional, where the original ethnic culture is replaced by the new culture and the ethnic language is replaced by the dominant culture (Karilian-Konyalian, 2008). This process is known as “subtractive bilingualism”, in the sense that there is greater promotion of assimilation rather than integration (Karilian-Konyalian, 2008, p. 19-20). Second, acculturation can be seen as a multidimensional process, where the ethnic language is preserved while the host language is attained. This process is better known as “additive bilingualism” (Karilian-Konyalian, 2008, p. 20). The third type of bilingual learning is known as “retractive”, this is the instance when an immigrant decides to psychologically reject the language of the receiving country in order to retain his or her native language. However, due to the functional needs of the host language, the immigrant cannot fully ignore the language and thus will seek out additional opportunities to speak his or her mother tongue (Karilian-Konyalian, 2008, p. 20).

To further apply the unidimensional, multidimensional, and retractive process of acculturation to immigrant youth, the research of immigration and integration studies must be examined. This area can be separated into two categories; mainstream absorption and underclass

absorption models (Wilkinson, 2008). The mainstream absorption model advocates the same approach as the multidimensional aspect of acculturation, suggesting that the integration experiences of youth are usually unproblematic and simple because unlike their parents, the youth lack “cultural baggage” and nostalgia that would make them idolize their own culture above others (Wilkinson, 2008, p. 155). Underclass absorption model, on the other hand, just like the retractive process of acculturation, focuses on the persistence of ethnic and immigration inequality, proposing that “youth who reject mainstream values are more likely to quit school, get into trouble with the law, and practice deviant behaviours as forms of resistance to mainstream culture (Wilkinson, 2008, p. 156).

According to Jandt (2007), the process of acculturation should be easier for youth than for older immigrants. However, this observation may prove to be false in the case of individuals who have experienced war-trauma, regardless of their age, because, as Robila (2010) mentions, trauma and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) are proven barriers to integration within a new setting.

Risk and Resilience Theory

Green (2008) notes that studies that have sought to understand how people cope with the aftermath of severe trauma, the risk and resilience theoretical approach has become a multitheoretical approach to understanding how people maintain and rediscover their well-being when faced with adversity. To date, the concept of resilience has not been clearly defined but rather used interchangeably with other terms such as being persistent or being able to successfully cope with individual situations. The term is often thought of as the capability of any person to lead a productive life even in the face of abrupt change. In addition, risk can be thought of as a factor that usually increases the likelihood of stress due to difficult events. Such

events can include family conflict, childhood abuse, peer rejection, academic failure racism, or war. According to Green (2009) “a small percentage of people may develop posttraumatic stress (PTSD),...However, when people face traumatic events, some may, in their search for meaning, overcome these tragedies and experience a sense of transformation or unexpected growth or self-actualization” (p.317) According to Boyden and Mann (2005), traditionally, the idea of resilience refers to the ability to “bounce back” from any adverse conditions and resume the previous course of lifestyle. Initially, the idea of resilience originated in health sciences and applied physics and engineering, but it was also used in medicine to describe the recovery of patients from accidents or surgery. Resilience can also be attached to three different categories of outcomes: a) good outcomes despite high-risk status, b) sustained competence under threat, and c) recovery from trauma (Boyden and Mann, 2005). To expand on the definition of resilience that Green (2008) and Boyden and Mann (2005) propose, Mcadam-Crisp (2006) also agrees that resilience is the ability of an individual to “bounce back” once faced with adversity. Similarly, Mcadam-Crisp (2006) mentions that resilience is always defined in relation to risk, risk being the possibility of adapting to a maladaptive identity. The factors that increase this potential include gender, race, and ethnicity. Risk traits, on the other hand, are considered biological predispositions that may hinder survival, such as physical or mental disability or low birth weight.

Resilience can be defined in two ways. The process can either be adaptive or maladaptive in the face of adversity. For example, since traumatized children usually show a range of symptoms such as anxiety, increased helplessness and aggression, as well as temper tantrums, depressive and suicide like behaviour may result. In the instance of the Rwandan genocide, those children who joined militias can be classified as showing adaptive behaviours

when faced with adversity. In comparison, child soldiers often develop maladaptive forms of resilience, an example being drug abuse. Through psychological and physical development, these youth are exposed to a certain type of vulnerability, that is the need to belong. This factor, which promotes a sense of community, has been identified as one of the protective factors, yet when the community is unstable and corrupt, the youth will become in illegal activities just to retain that sense of belonging (McAdams-Crisp, 2006).

Through her research, Green (2008) also proposes that the process of resilience only begins when a threat or a challenge is identified, motivating the person to overcome these challenges by setting goals. This way, people do not have ongoing resilience but rather draw from it in particular conditions such as:

1. Exceptionally challenging experiences, for example, in a new challenging job
2. Developmental transitions, including the transition to parenthood
3. Individual adversity, for example, discrimination or persecution
4. Collective adversity, for example, the aftermath of natural disasters or war
5. Organizational change, including the use of technology
6. Large-scale sociopolitical change, such as Glasnost event (p. 325).

Greene (2008) notes that according to the risk and resilience theory, youth who were at a higher risk of encountering poverty were able to overcome their obstacles by the simple fact that they were protected by five major factors:

- 1) temperament, being easy going; 2) skills and values, taking responsibility and being positive; 3) family support style, promoting child self-efficacy; 4) support networks, relating to support outside the family; and 5) macro-level opportunities, accessing societal resources (p. 315).

Resilience can also be seen as a multifaceted reaction to biopsychosocial and spiritual phenomena. In other words, an individual's resilience is impacted by biological functioning, the genetic, health, and physical components; psychological functioning, cognitive and behavioural

dimensions; and social functioning, cultural, political, and economic life as a member of a group. A spiritual phenomenon refers to an individual's personal pursuit for meaning, relationships, and even God. Out of all these components, biological aspects of resilience may be the hardest to explain or understand but may still contain certain innate predispositions for particular behaviour, specifically the capacity to heal (Green, 2008).

Greene's (2008) conclusions are echoed in the work of Mcadam-Crisp (2006) who agrees that spirituality is a very important protective factor and that the survivors of Holocaust were able to cope better and overcome their environmental circumstances when they maintained their religious ideology. Green (2008) draws from other researchers that have conducted studies to prove just how resilient human nature can be. She mentions Moskowitz (1983) and her interview with twenty-three Holocaust survivors following World War II. Moskowitz (1983) notes that even though these survivors experienced PTSD symptoms as children, later on in life they were able to overcome their symptoms and become adults who demonstrated "an affirmation of life" (p. 315). Moskowitz concluded her study by stating:

Despite the persistence of problems and the ashes of the past, what we note in the [lives of survivors is] endurance, resilience, and great individual adaptability... Contrary to previously accepted notions, we learn powerfully from these lives that lifelong emotional disability does not automatically follow early trauma, even such devastating, pervasive trauma as experienced here. Apparently, what happens later matters enormously. Whether it is the confidence of a teacher, the excitement of new sexual urges, new vocational interests, or a changed social milieu, the interaction can trigger fresh growth (p. 316).

In addition, Green (2008) states that some of the other noted protective factors for psychosocial resilience in children and youth include: good cognitive abilities, positive self-perceptions, close relationships with caregiving adults, positive family climate, close relationships with supportive adults, connections with prosocial and rule-abiding peers, effective

schools, and high levels of public safety. In addition to this list, Mcadam-Crisp (2006) adds that other protective factors may include: gender, sense of humour, intelligence, coping techniques, sense of direction or mission, and realistic appraisal of the environment. Boyden and Mann (2005) agree with all the protective factors that both Greene (2005) and Mcadam-Crisp (2006) propose and add that “a healthy strong child is likely to be more resilient emotionally and psychologically (p. 6).

Boyden and Mann (2005) however also argue that the extent to which children are successful in maneuvering through difficult situations and adversity reflects how well their culture has prepared them for such circumstances by encouraging children to develop skills in problem solving and communication. Therefore while some societies and cultures think of disasters and hardships as a matter of misfortune, teaching their members to accept their fate, others keenly train children to be resilient and to learn how to deal with unpredictable and agonizing situations.

YOUTH AND CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITY

In this section I will discuss important concepts of ethnic and cultural identity, focussing on the main conceptual frameworks dealing with identity development as they pertain to immigrant and refugee youth, and discuss the challenges that youth face in their integration and identity development process, with special attention to literature pertaining to youth from Former Yugoslavia.

Ethnic vs. Cultural Identity

In order to understand the composition of one's identity, it is important to understand both specific environmental circumstances, such as experiencing war, as well as more continuous factors such as ethnicity and culture, which can contribute to identity construction.

Therefore, to be able to grasp and understand the complexity of the construction of an individual's identity, a clear and concise definition must be provided. The term *identity* comes from the Latin root *idem*, meaning "the same", and has been used in the English language ever since the sixteenth century (Gleason, 1996, p. 461). One well known definition of identity as it pertains to transnationalism and youth in the Canadian diaspora is described to be:

about questions of using the resources of history, language, and culture in the process of becoming, rather than being: not 'who we are' or 'where we come from' so much as what we might become, how we have been represented, and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves (Dlamini and Anucho, 2009, p. 229).

Ethnic identity, on the other hand, is a little more specific, being defined as:

Ethnic identity is allegiance to a group – large or small, socially dominant or subordinate-with which one has ancestral links. There is no necessity for a continuation, over generations, of the same socialization or cultural patterns, but some sense of a group boundary must persist. The can be sustained by shared objective characteristics to a sense of "groupness," or by some combination of both. Symbols or subjective attachments must relate, at however distant a remove, to an observable past (Papatia and Michelle, 1994, p. 37).

Depending on the social or political situation, the fundamental components of ethnic identity may vary. For example, in some cases religion may be essential (India or Ireland), while in other cases, nationality or country of origin may be crucial (Ukrainians in Western Canada). At times, language or identifying with a particular group of people may be the most important (e.g. in the case of Quebec) (Papatia and Michelle, 1994, p. 47-48). There is also a component of cultural

identity that strictly focuses on customs, traditions, and values of any group while ethnic identity is linked to nationality, heritage, and ancestral roots of any given group.

Furthermore, Mah (2005) referring to the work of Isajiw (1990) points to the existence of an operational definition of ethnic identity, where this concept is divided into internal and external aspects. Internal aspects involve feelings, images, ideas, and attitudes, while the external aspects involve observable tendencies such as speaking a particular language and practicing ethnic traditions. With time, the nature of ethnic identity may change through subsequent generations, where ethnic attachment becomes symbolic, thus making a factor like language be seen as a symbol rather than a skill.

Phinney et al. (2001) suggest that in order to define ethnic identity one needs to clearly understand the two theoretical elements which are encoded within the term. This includes a group membership component and development component. The first of the two, better known as ethnic affirmation and belonging is based on social identity theory, “ethnic identity is thought of as a subjective sense of belonging to an ethnic group and the feelings and attitudes that accompany this sense of group membership” (Phinney, et al., 2001, p.136-137). On the other hand, the second component, development, is “the extent to which adolescents have engaged in the development process of ethnic identity exploration” (Phinney, et al., 2001, p. 136-137).

Identity-development is seen to be the major task among young people who are the focus of this study. Adolescence as a life stage is complex, filled with rapid physical and cognitive changes that bring about confusion and uncertainty. At the same time adolescents face new responsibilities as they are seeking to assert their identity (Papatia and Michelle, 1994, p. 95). The transition from adolescence into adulthood can occur in numerous ways in different societies. “In more traditional and homogeneous societies the establishment of self-identity and

initiation into adult roles can be less complex than that of a society with greater social differentiation and a more diversified set of values and beliefs” (Papatia and Michelle, 1994, p.96). “The development of a stable sense of identity is one of the central processes of adolescence” (Tyyskä, 2009). In addition, as Tyyskä (2009) mentions, adolescence is generally seen as a time to develop peer relationships rather than getting more involved with family relationships. “While relationships with family members are still important in adolescence, peer relationships and friendships become particularly central” (Tyyskä, 2009).

Kilbride et al. (2000) note that the age of arrival in Canada plays an essential part in how easily immigrant youth can adapt into Canadian society. When these youth arrive in Canada at an earlier age, they have more opportunities to learn about the Canadian system, establish new relationships and social networks. However, those who arrive in Canada during their adolescence feel more isolated due to the fact that they have to abandon well established relationships and social networks in their home country. Thus, once they are faced with a new situation and environment, it is not as easy for them to recreate the connections that they have lost by moving.

A study conducted in six European countries (Sweden, Netherlands, Great Britain, Germany, Greece, and Italy) on children from Africa (Congo, Somalia, Ethiopia, Morocco, Angola) Latin America (Columbia, Ecuador, Peru), Asia (Iraq, Turkey, Afghanistan, Syria) and Europe (Kosovo Albanians), found that cultural identity specifically is a “complex of collectively experienced values and standards that allow for a group community to imagine itself or to be imagined by others” (Davoliute, 2005, p. 116). Cultural identity is often redefined in the receiving country, regardless of the subject’s strong affiliation to original ethnic or religious background. For this reason, family events and celebrations are better maintained in the

receiving country rather than in the country of origin in the hope that they will preserve the cultural identity of an immigrant community (Davoliute, 2005). Most immigrant parents also indicate that they wanted to transmit their cultural values to their children, by encouraging them to have friends from the same background, to speak the native language at home, and travel to the country of origin (Robila, 2010). One way of encouraging children to learn their native language and encounter friends with the same cultural background is through enrolling them in ethnic schools.

Characteristics of Identity

In addition to certain factors that may impact the construction of one's identity, there are, certain characteristics and influences that can impact an individual over their lifetime in order to be able to a) construct a stable internal and external vision of themselves as well as b) be capable of easily adapting to various situations and environments. These are language, family/parental guidance, peer influence, education, and religion.

Language

Research has shown that among other factors, language is one of the strongest links to retaining one's cultural identity (as stated above) as well as a vital indicator of academic success among immigrant youth (Karilian-Konyalian, 2008). There are two important aspects to language, one being its symbolic value and relating to social interactions, and the other being the relations of language to the institution of education.

“Among the most important factors in keeping one's cultural background is knowing and using the language” (Robila, 2010, p. 97). Robila (2010) and Karlovic (2004) propose that due to the fact that children start speaking the language of the host country sooner than their parents, allowing for faster integration, retaining one's cultural identity becomes increasingly difficult.

Mah (2005) also believes that language is an important marker of identity, yet points to the lack of literature on the relationship between identity and heritage language acquisition, maintenance or loss. Phinney et al. (2001) also cite language as the biggest contributor to ethnic identity. However, the authors also note that what fails to be recognized is that there are situations, such as being at school with peers from a similar cultural background, where language is not necessarily needed for group identity; it simply is not an important component because cultural attributes such as customs and traditions take precedent over language.

Additionally, it is important to note the difference between voluntary and involuntary immigrants (refugees) as it pertains to their willingness to acquire and learn a new language. Voluntary immigrants, those who have willingly immigrated to a new country, usually show more willingness to learn the new language because it is viewed as an additive advantage to their culture (Karilian-Konyalian, 2008). On the other hand, involuntary immigrants, usually refugees, who were most likely forced to leave their home land due to war or other hardships, recognize their need to learn the new language, but generally have difficulty with this notion because they are afraid of jeopardizing and possibly losing their own ethnic language and culture to that of the arrival country's language and culture (Karilian-Konyalian, 2008). Kilbride et al. (2000, p. 11-12) advocate that "language proficiency difficulties comprise one of the major struggles newcomer youth face in attempting to adapt and integrate into Canadian society." The authors contend that the notion of language is much more than syntax, but rather that it is embedded in the traditions, values and cultural understandings of a society.

In addition, according to Orellana (2009), immigrant who were the most active translators for their parents, had higher scores on tests of reading and math achievements than did those who had very little experience in translating. Thus, through translation, youth learn to adapt and thrive

in the new conditions that are presented to them. Linguistic diversity can be viewed as a positive quality to possess in the school system because it promotes academic success and prevents academic failure (Karilian-Konyalian, 2008).

Tyyskä (2007) notes that since youth generally acculturate and learn the official language faster than their parents, either through school or their peers, intergenerational problems arise. Language differences can create conflict in intergenerational communication and relations in that there is a shift in customary parental authority as children become mediators for their parents, interpreting the social institutions of the receiving society.

When adapting to the new country, it has been demonstrated that minority language retention at home is beneficial for post-secondary education, while being able to establish links outside of the minority community for possible job opportunities entails the need to be proficient in one of the official languages of Canada (Abada and Tenkorang, 2009). Those who maintain their minority language while growing up are twenty-two percent more likely to have a university education than a high school or community/vocational education (Abada and Tenkorang, 2009).

Family/Parental Guidance

Yet another significant link in retaining one's ethnic traditions is family. Without this important factor, it has been proven that youth would quickly lose their sense of heritage. In addition, social capital, parental education and socio economic status contribute to youth's desire to attain a greater education.

Mah (2005) argues that family represents the most significant source of knowledge in terms of being able to understand and practice ethnic customs and traditions. In agreement with

Mah (2005), Phinney and Ong (2007) claim that “ethnic identity is assumed to exist in childhood in only rudimentary form, as a self-label together with basic information about ethnicity and attitudes about one’s group derived largely from one’s parents” (pp. 54). Furthermore, they argue that in fact, family, more than any other socialization agent provides the basic groundwork for the establishment and development of ethnic identity. The role of parents remains highly important to the development of ethnic identity as children enter adolescence, where parental cultural maintenance predicts ethnic identity, as well as contributes to greater ethnic language proficiency.

According to Phinney and Ong (2007), some youth are able to continually maintain their ethnic ties due to the fact that they experience a positive family environment. In other words, when the family environment can be described as controlling, autonomy promoting, yet warm, there is a higher likelihood of greater ethnic pride amongst the youth. In other words, if the family provides the youth with some autonomy but enforces a clear family structure, it is most likely that the youth will continue to feel good about their cultural heritage as they grow older. In addition to family, ethnic identity can evolve in relations to other structures such as “school, community, and work contexts, as well as broader contextual factors such as density, status, and history of one’s ethnic group” (Phinney and Ong, 2007, p. 57).

Cultural socialization, according to Kerivan-Marks et al. (2010), can be defined as “parental practices that teach children about their racial and ethnic heritage and history; that promote cultural customs and traditions; and that promote children’s cultural, racial, and ethnic pride, either deliberately or implicitly” (p. 246). It has been found that where parents promoted and encouraged their children to be proud of their culture, the youth were able to achieve higher

academic standings whereas those youth who were informed of racial barriers usually exhibited lower academic achievements (Kervin-Marks et al., 2010).

Yet another aspect of developing one's identity can be linked to social capital. Social capital is defined as "a unique resource generated from social relationships (Johnson De Feyter and Winsler, 2010, p. 52-53) or in other words, "the resources that are available through our connections to others" (Mcmullin, 2009, p. 149). Johnson De Feyter and Winsler (2010) go on to explain social capital as being important and influential in family processes in immigrant families. The authors note that social capital, in addition to human capital, helps create strong parent-child bonds in addition to reinforcing educational expectations that many immigrant parents possess. In many instances, immigrant parents encourage resilience and promote adaptation to adversity in their children.

Parental education and socio-economical status (SES) have also been shown to have a strong, positive influence on educational accomplishments of immigrant children, especially when it comes to years of education completed and earnings mobility among children of Canadian immigrants (Abada and Tenkorang, 2009). However, lack of language proficiency among first-generation immigrants may encumber their pursuit of post-secondary education, therefore also hindering the educational aspirations of their children (Abada and Tenkorang, 2009).

In addition, according to Tong, Huang, and McIntyre (2006), when immigrant youth embrace English and mainstream values, home culture teachings and expectations can contrast with the expectations that are taught in the Canadian school system. In order to be successful in the process of this transition, one should develop a secure "crosscultural identity" (p. 203). This is the idea that there is a combination of positive beliefs, customs, and values that are associated

with both cultures. Hence, the two cultures are seen to function in unison and are complementary rather than competitive, making it easier to adapt without feeling a sense of loss of culture.

Peer Influence

Peers also proved to be influential when adapting to a new cultural environment. However, some found it more important to retain their cultural heritage through peers from back home, some preferred to acclimatize to their new settings, while others preferred to create a fusion of the two, creating a new hybrid environment for themselves.

In a case study conducted by Phinney et al. (2001), social interaction with peers from one's own ethnic background proved to be significantly related to ethnic identity, even more so than the element of ethnic language. Kilbride et al. (2000) also mention that forming relationships with indigenous members of the host society may help newcomer youth not only learn about the new society's traditions and values, but it may also reduce feelings of isolation. However, many newcomer youth do in fact feel isolated in Canada and their lack of satisfaction prevents them from seeking friendships. They may then feel justified in experiencing Canadian life in isolation.

Isolation is sometimes the result of ethnic bullying in the school setting:

Bullying that targets another's ethnic background or cultural identity....This form of bullying may include direct forms of aggression such as racial taunts and slurs, derogatory references to culturally-specific customs, foods, and costumes, as well as indirect forms of aggression to culturally-specific customs, foods, and costumes, as well as indirect forms of aggression, such as exclusion from a mainstream group of peers because of ethnic differences. (Mckenney et al., 2006, p. 242)

Thus, first generation youth may become conflicted between retaining their original cultural identity and adopting an identity that is more consistent with the Canadian peer culture.

(Mckenney et al., 2006).

Moreover, if an immigrant student feels accepted by the teacher as they are learning the language of the dominant culture, while retaining their own mother tongue, the post-migration stresses seem to be reduced (Karilian-Konyalian, 2008).

Religion

Lastly, religion can also serve as a secondary factor in retention of culture in the sense that it provides institutions where people of similar ethnic backgrounds can socialize and practice their beliefs.

Ebaugh and Saltzman Chafetz (2000) contend that religious and ethnic identities are so entwined that it is often very difficult to separate them. According to the authors, the relationship between religion and ethnicity has a threefold typology. There is ethnic fusion where religion is the foundation of an ethnicity (e.g. Jews). An ethnic religion may constitute one of several foundations of ethnicity (e.g. Greek and Russian Orthodox Churches). Lastly, religious ethnicity refers to cases where an ethnic group is linked to a religious tradition shared by other ethnic groups (such as Mexican, Italian, and Irish Catholics).

According to Ebaugh and Saltzman Chafetz (2000) as well as Robila (2010), in creating their own religious institutions, immigrants can go to church and practice rituals, where the physical and social spaces in which those who share the same cultural identities can reproduce many elements of their native cultures and allow parents to educate their children about holidays, traditions, and celebrations. In congregational settings, youth groups and activities provide the second generation with support to continue behaving and dressing in a culturally and/or religiously acceptable manner. In addition, since many second-generation youth confront identity problems, many of these issues can be discussed and contemplated better with peers who share their ethnic and religious backgrounds.

Ebaugh and Saltzman Chafetz (2000) also note that physical structures, amongst other components, can serve as reminders to immigrants of their ethnic ancestry and function to maintain ethnic identity. The authors emphasize that “church architecture, interior furnishings, and other visual representations are part of the “localization of immigrant cultures” that reinforce ethnic identity and a sense of ethnic community.” (p. 81)

Other components of religion that can aid in retaining ethnic identity are ritual, or better known as cultural practices. According to Ebaugh and Saltzman Chafetz (2000) rituals contribute to the reproduction of ethnicity by re-enacting ceremonies in ways that are often exclusive to specific ethnic groups. The authors claim that ritual is in fact a major mechanism for the maintenance, reinforcement, and inter-generational transmission of ethnic identity. Furthermore, all congregations seem to sponsor some sort of a social event at one time or another at the central religious site. Most of these events are marked by the preparation of ethnic foods, cultural music, and use of native languages.

Conclusions about Obstacles to Integration

The above section has given some ideas about the process of identity development among immigrant and refugee youth, while discussing some of the obstacles to smooth integration. According to Robila (2010), migration can bring about a number of challenges for youth from Eastern European immigrant families, in areas such as social encounters, academic achievements, and health. Relationships within the receiving society can be negatively affected by negative actions such as bullying and victimization. Another major concern of researchers is that not much is known about immigrants from Eastern European countries, as Robila (2010) mentions:

compared to the other immigrant groups, such as Asians or Hispanics, the Eastern European group is significantly less known and has fewer social support programs and organizations serving them. This increases the difficulty of these immigrants to adapt to a new society such as the United States, due to the lack of awareness about their cultural background, which can trigger a lack of opportunities (p. 110).

Thus, in order to successful transition into a receiving society, one must be well-equipped and prepared for the many obstacles that lay ahead.

YOUTH FROM WAR TORN-COUNTRIES WITH A FOCUS ON FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

Former Yugoslavia: Formation and Disintegration

The civil war in Yugoslavia started in 1991 is still present in the unresolved crisis in Kosovo. It involved large-scale killings better known as “ethnic cleansing” (Stubbs, 2005, p.53). The events are rooted in the complex history of Yugoslavia beginning in World War I, when Archduke Ferdinand was assassinated in Sarajevo by the “Black Hand”, a Serbian group who opposed the Austrian Empire and wanted to establish Serbia’s independence (Tomovic, 2002). At the end of the war, the Austrian and Ottoman Empires collapsed and out of the ashes arose Yugoslavia. It consisted of many diverse ethnic groups such as Serbs, Croatsians, Muslims, Slovenians, Albanians, and Macedonians (Tomovic, 2002). They all came together under the rule of the Yugoslav Kingdom and their King, Petar Karadordevic. However, after World War II began and Hitler’s forces were established, Yugoslavia became a part of the war zone. Two distinct groups of Hitler’s followers were formed. On the Croatian side there were the Ustase, great friends of Hitler and for an independent Croatia. On the Serbian side there were the Cetnici, Hitler’s followers and liberators of Serbia. Soon after the war began, a new leader came to light, known as the protector of the common people and liberator of the oppressed. His name was Josip Broz Tito and he believed in a strong and united nation where anyone, no matter what

ethnic background, could live in peace. He opposed Hitler and refused to give up on Yugoslavia. He created a group called the Partizans who fought the Nazis and protected the people from Ustase and Cetniks. The war was a long one and many lives were lost, but Yugoslavia did not fall to Hitler. Instead, it became a communist state under the leadership of Tito, uniting Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Macedonia (World Geography: Yugoslavia, 1988).

In 1980, after the death of Tito, Yugoslavia slowly began to follow in the footsteps of all of the Eastern European countries, shifting from a communist economy to a market economy. However, instead of disintegrating in a peaceful manner, Yugoslavia became a war zone once again. Perhaps the main reason why the disintegration of Yugoslavia was so violent is the fact that Yugoslavia was composed of many different ethnic groups co-existing in the six major republic plus two autonomous states, with a bloody and brutal history of clashes between them, consequently making it almost impossible to resolve disputes peacefully. Yugoslavs seem to have possessed two ethnic frames in their minds, one of ethnic cooperation and peace frame for normal times and another crisis frame anchored in World War II memories. With the spread of nationalism and mass media propaganda, fear and insecurity prevailed, triggering the crisis frame (Oberschall, 2000).

The breakup of Yugoslavia is a classic example of nationalism from the top down – a manipulated nationalism in a region where peace has historically prevailed more than war and in which a quarter of the population were in mixed marriages. The manipulators condoned and even provoked local ethnic violence in order to engender animosities that could then be magnified by the press, leading to further violence (Taras and Ganguly, 2002, p. 235-255).

The manipulation of public opinion by political leaders in Yugoslavia was with the specific intent of creating a state based on nationality. The Serbians wanted a greater Serbia; the Croats a greater Croatia and the Muslims just wanted a state to call their own (Oberschall,

2000). It was easier for politicians to employ “nationalist appeals thus providing the easiest route to politics for politicians without establishing constituencies and party organization” (Oberschall, 2000, p. 995).

In Yugoslavia, the economic crisis during and in the aftermath of the war manifested itself in unemployment, rising poverty, and inflation with the inability to ensure stable supplies such as coffee, cooking oil, and medicine. There was uneven development for different republics and regions, the richest being Croatia and Slovenia who wanted to seek independence in order to focus on their own prosperity rather than having to support poorer republics like Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, and Montenegro (Coulson, 1993, p. 86-101). The wealthier regions complained bitterly about the huge income transfers to the poorer republics.

Therefore, it has been argued that the war in Yugoslavia “erupted as a result of the inability of Yugoslavia’s constituent parts to resolve their differences by purely political means” (Magas, 1993, p. 336). With the coupling of nationalistic tensions, decentralization of the federal system, and the widespread propaganda perpetuated by leaders, Yugoslavia did not stand much of a chance of dissolving in peace.

Yet, the civil war did not end with the disintegration of Yugoslavia but the problems were repeated once more as conflict arose between Serbia and one of its territories know as Kosovo. The history of this conflict for Serbians and Kosovo Albanians, better known as Kosovars, is rooted in 1389. In the fourteenth century, Kosovo was the centre for Serbian culture. After the Serbs were defeated by the Turks at Kosovo Polje in 1379, Kosovo became a key national symbol for Serbia. Gradually, Albanians replaced the Serbian population after the defeat, but Kosovo became a part of Serbia once more in 1878. During World War II, Albanian forces

operating under Hitler's rule conducted "ethnic cleansing" against the Serbian population in Kosovo. After the war and the annexation of Kosovo by Italy and Albania, the territory became re-integrated once more into Serbia. In 1974, Kosovo became autonomous and had the access to the federal structure of the Yugoslav government. Albanians constituted approximately eighty-five percent of the Kosovo population. In 1931, Serbs represented one-third of Kosovo's population. However, by 1991, the Serbian minority represented only eleven percent of the population (Ilic, 2001, p. 252). Albanians still wanted to achieve full independence and completely separate from Yugoslavia. They wanted their own culture, language, and institutions. In 1991, once Slovenia and Croatia were able to successfully separate from Yugoslavia, Albanians in Kosovo became even more hopeful of achieving their independence. Many Serbians fled the region even before the Kosovo Crisis started in 1999, claiming that they were mistreated and harassed (Stone, 2005).

Once Yugoslavia began to disintegrate, a new president came to power in Serbia. His name was Slobodan Milosevic and he desperately wanted to centralize power in Serbia so that he could gain more control. He suppressed Albanian cultural institutions in Kosovo and denied Albanians any form of a political assembly. In the years to come, Albanians suffered increasing discrimination and the number of beatings and killings done by the Serbian police and militia rose (Taras and Ganguly, 2002, p. 243-244).

During the 1990's, a militant group was formed on the behalf of Albanians, the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), that according to Belgrade, spread "terrorism" (Fromkin, 1999, p. 158). Not accepted by the Albanian leadership, the group staged attacks and bombings against Serb policemen, local officials, Serb civilians, and "domestic traitors", (Albanians who were seen socializing with the Serbs). In March of 1998, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution

1160 condemning the use of force by the Serbian police against the civilians in Kosovo (Taras and Ganguly, 2002, p. 243-244). As tensions worsened with the KLA, U.S. leaders declared a “humanitarian crisis” and demanded that Belgrade pull out its Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) troops from Kosovo (Parenti, 2000, p. 104).

According to Rummens and Seat (2003), when an agreement between Serbs and Albanians could not be reached in 1991, NATO, in order to prevent and protect Albanians from ethnic cleansing, decided to launch an air strike against Serbia.

Thus, once more, even in the aftermath of the breakup of Yugoslavia, families and youth were traumatized while many more joined the diaspora of those who had fled Yugoslavia during the civil war, and were once again faced with questions of belonging. Karlovic (2004) calls these youths “multiple victims” because they have not experienced the tragedies of war once, but twice.

Refugees and Displacement

Due to war many people are forced to flee their homes. According to the United Nations (1951 UN Convention) a refugee is defined as:

any person, who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his/her nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself/ herself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his/her former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it (Ehnholt and Yule, 2006, p. 1197).

It is estimated by Kilbride et al. (2000) that there are 19.2 million refugees and displaced people worldwide, almost half of whom are children. In 1999, there were approximately 390,000 refugees from Yugoslavia, 340,000 from Croatia, and 300,000 from Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bookman, 2002, p. 15). From 1994 to 2000, approximately 15% of Canadian immigrants

consisted of refugees from the Balkans. Immigrants from the Balkans, approximately 144,000 of the 220,000 immigrants or nearly two-thirds (65.3%) of the total, are very highly concentrated in Ontario (Belanger, 2006).

Robila (2010) mentions that it is particularly hard for children from war-torn countries to make the initial adjustment to a new society because many of them are plagued by psychological and emotional problems such as depressive behaviour and high anxiety, and specifically Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD – see below). Refugee youth often feel like they ‘fit in’ nowhere and are mistreated everywhere they go, thus they encounter additional settlement problems, compared to voluntary immigrants. In certain instances, refugee youth may even get rejected when applying for a job because of the neighbourhood that they live in. It is not uncommon for refugee families to rely on public housing arrangements since they usually lack the funds to reside elsewhere. Living in a neighbourhood that has a bad name will make individuals less reputable and employable. Refugees may face racial and systemic discrimination, which in turn can have seriously negative implications on the sense of self-worth of refugee youth. Hence, numerous newcomer youth do not like being labelled as refugees (Robila, 2010).

The hardships that refugees face may be even more difficult than those faced by immigrants (Popatia-Gordon and Michelle, 1994, Vancouver English Centre, 2011). In the instances of immigrant or refugee youth, their parents make the decision to leave home, thus making the transition to a new environment even more difficult than if they were to make the decision to leave themselves. Not only do they have to face the challenges of trying to attain success in a new school setting, but they are also expected to realign their past experiences and values to those of the Canadian multicultural system. This proves to be especially daunting

when these adolescents are at a particular stage of identity development, where all of these challenges seem to create further obstacles to stable living conditions (Popatia-Gordon and Michelle, 1994).

POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD)

Even though young refugees have a tendency to be resilient, after their traumatic experiences, many face health difficulties such as grief, anxiety, depression, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). PTSD is a well-documented affliction with a number of known treatments (Ehnholt and Yule, 2006).

Refugees may encounter additional stress factors in their new country pertaining to their low levels of financial support, restrictions on possible employment opportunities, and lengthy delays in processing asylum applications, further contributing to their feelings of fear and uncertainty. It is estimated that up to forty percent of young refugees may have or develop psychiatric disorders such as PTSD (Ehnholt and Yule, 2006). According to Boyden and Mann (2005) “PTSD was first identified as a syndrome in American veterans of the Vietnam War and has subsequently been identified by the World Health Organization as the most severe psychiatric disorder and primary stress resulting from a catastrophe” (pp. 13). PTSD can be defined as:

Exposure to an extremely stressful or catastrophic event or situation followed by three symptom clusters. These include repeated reliving of the trauma, e.g., through intrusive images or dreams of the event or monotonous re-enactment of the traumatic events through play in young children; hyperarousal, e.g., increased vigilance or disturbed sleep; as well as persistent avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma and numbing of general responsiveness (Ehnholt and Yule, 2006, p. 1198).

PTSD seems to be prevalent across cultures, with symptoms being found in children and youth who have been exposed to war and organized violence in numerous countries such as Lebanon,

Kuwait, Palestine, Afghanistan, Bosnia, and Cambodia (Ehnholt and Yule, 2006). It also seems to be associated the most with earlier war trauma and the strain of resettlement while depression, while still a symptom of PTSD, is linked to other stressors such as difficulty in learning a new language (Ehnholt and Yule, 2006).

Those who have developed PTSD often report isolation and social stigmatization (Nietlisbach and Maercker, 2009). This can include higher levels of depression and anxiety. There are numerous effects that remain even after the traumatic experiences of war have passed. First, where people have experienced violence such as witnessing dismemberment or dead bodies, this trauma may be transferred into fear of death in daily life, i.e. and increased state of vulnerability. “The particular fear that people in authority will kill or hurt a person may be experienced as overwhelming anxiety concerning dealings with, for instance, the Immigration and Naturalization Service” (Jenkins, 1996, p. 175-176). Second, there is the notion of immobilization, almost like paralysis, where the refugees that have experienced trauma in their previous encounters are most likely to neither fight nor flee when once again they are faced with threat of physical assault (Jenkins, 1996). Finally, collective trauma, where state terror is continual and extensive, so much so that this is seen as a mechanism of social control, is a technique used to oppress large masses through long-term political violence (Jenkins, 1996).

In 1977, the Intercultural Psychiatric Program was established at the Oregon Health and Sciences University. Through this program, many studies have been conducted, the most recent being a report on 131 traumatized refugee children evaluated and usually treated from 2001 to the end of 2004. Many of these children were highly traumatized and showed signs of PTSD. Accordingly, through this study, approximately fifty percent of Cambodian refugee adolescents and ninety-four percent of Bosnian children have experienced PTSD (Kinzie et al., 2006).

According to this study, many refugee and immigrant parents are very hesitant in bringing their children to a mental health clinic. The stereotypical assumption by these immigrant parents is that if they bring their children to a clinic for treatment, they or their children will be labelled as "crazy". Thus, these children are frequently referred to a clinic by social services or school officials as a result of aggression, disruptive behaviour or attempts of suicide. Therefore, it can be assumed that many of these youths suffer privately, never being referred to help unless it is seen as a last resort (Kinzie et al., 2006).

As has been mentioned before, war and displacement can hinder the psychosocial development of children and their achievements in later life. This has been evident in the outcome of the war in Croatia during the 1990s described earlier (Ajdukovic 1998).

In this conflict, hundreds of thousands of children were exposed to war activities such as shelling and bombing, while also experiencing their repercussions, often involving the loss of family members, living with distressed adults, prolonged displacement, and traumatisation (Ajdukovic 1998). Each one of these experiences can prove to be a vital factor in the development and formation of identity amongst youth. For example, the loss of home can be extremely detrimental in the early stages of development because it leaves one feeling without a sense of belonging. Yet, in Croatia, not only were the many of these children driven from their homes, but they lost a sense of home and had no other place to go to, diminishing and destroying their sense of identity (Ajdukovic, 1998).

In a study of displaced children in Croatia, it was shown that displacement has an extremely negative impact on the refugee children. Within six months of displacement, most children began to show symptoms of eating disorders (overly decreased or increased appetite in 31.8% of children), sleep disturbances (16.4%), nightmares (22.7%) and increased sweating

(6.4%). Furthermore, there were patterns of behavioural delinquency such as: defiance (12.4%), aggression and hyperactivity (29.1%) and withdrawal (9.1%). Lastly, emotional manifestations of the consequences of war were reported through: separation fear (25.5%), despondency (22.7%), general fearfulness (19.1%) and weeping (16.4%) (Ajdukovic, 1998, p. 190).

A study done in Bosnia found that children suffered from similar symptoms. Majority of them had faced close contact with war through separation from family and bereavement. As mentioned earlier, approximately ninety-four percent experienced PTSD, while 90.6% reported being sad, and 95.5% reported feelings of anxiety (Goldstein et al., 1997, p. 873). These feelings of sadness and anxiety seriously affected the children's ability to engage in normal, age-appropriate activities. More than half of the children showed extreme pessimism regarding their future by reporting that they believed they would never be happy, and 37.6% felt that life was not worth living (Goldstein et al., 1997, p. 874-876). Those that exhibited greater symptoms typically had witnessed the torture or death of a family member (Goldstein et al., 1997).

Most noted is the fact that PTSD can influence developmental processes in the areas of cognitive functioning, which includes initiative, trust, personality style, self-esteem, impulse control, outlook, and interpersonal relationships. Reminders of traumatic events can hamper the children's use of symbolic expression, while their irritability and diminished tone of aggression can impede peer relationships (Dinicola, 1996).

Sometimes, children and adolescents who experience traumatic events are referred to as "changelings." This term refers to a "transitory identity that is assumed by children in response to the crises of uprootedness and loss of assigned or expected identity" (Dinicola, 1996, p. 401).

This definition can have both positive and negative meanings, positive in the sense that children can easily adapt to a new culture, in a sense becoming bicultural, while others, those that have experienced severe PTSD may see the change as a negative outcome (Dinicola, 1996).

According to Rummens and Seat (2003), the literature indicates that children who have experienced the violence and dangers of war are at high risk of experiencing “prolonged psychological disturbances, compromised academic performance and various mental health problems.” These children show evidence of PTSD. Other symptoms of various psychological disorders amongst these youth include psychosomatic reactions, regressive behaviour, adjustment and psychosocial problems, over-dependence, grief, fear, sleep disturbance, pessimistic expectations regarding survival, and poor school performance (Rummens and Seat, 2003). Moreover, if these issues are left unaddressed, Rummens and Seat (2003) state that the effects of accumulated stress in these youth leads to a lower degree of ability to adapt to new life experiences and greater fear of future expectations. In their research, Rummens and Seat (2003) point to some significant findings, such as the fact that even after the Kosovo conflict, approximately two to two-and-a-half years later, newcomer Serbian youth were still suffering long-term psychological effects. The natural processes of adolescence, such as the formation of a unique identity and learning to be independent is complicated and even blocked by war-related trauma, resulting in high incidence of PTSD among older youth. The fact that older youth surveyed seemed to perceive themselves less positively than the younger youth put them at greater risk of anxiety, chronic stress, problematic behaviour, depression, and substance abuse (Rummens and Seat, 2003). Youth who experienced war related trauma in Former Yugoslavia as well as ethnic discrimination during the Kosovo conflict had a higher potential for PTSD. Lastly, due to the fact that Canada is an active member of NATO and the fact that these youth

witnessed the killing of innocent people during the NATO bombardment of Serbia evoked a sense of betrayal and even resentment towards Canada, once again questioning the process of acculturation and reconstruction of personal identity (Rummens and Seat, 2003).

Karlovic (2004), through conducting focus groups with youth from Former Yugoslavia who have relocated to Halifax, addressed issues of culture retention, pre-immigration experiences, newcomer experiences, and supports and services. In terms of the youths' cultural affiliation, a close association with their home regions and communities was noted. The Yugoslavian youth took tremendous pride in knowing more than one language and being different from the majority of the Canadian population, a way to be unique. They also valued their cultural roots and wanted to retain some friends from the same cultural background. The family unit and community members were highly respected, while once again, language was seen as an important part of the cultural identity, while learning a new language, such as English, was hard to adjust to. Before coming to Canada, most Yugoslavian youth immigrated or came as refugee because of the civil war. However, the youth thought of the experience as a positive challenge, something that would build stronger personal characteristics. From a negative perspective, the youth would often get questioned by others about the war, not to help, but rather to taunt and make fun of the youths' misfortunes. Once in Canada, the youth quickly realized that there were many cultural differences both along traditions and customs, as well as simple things such as having an ethnic name. Most noted that making friends was extremely important to feeling accepted and well integrated. At times, some of the challenges included being ridiculed for having an accent to having to live between two cultures, leading two separate sets of lives. Lastly, even though a lot of the youth were not familiar with community based programs to help newcomers, most agreed that those types of services would be a key support

system for newcomers. However, a common suggestion seemed to be that youth should have a choice if they would like to attend ESL classes or learn English while attending regular classes. Most noted that while Canadian friends helped with learning English, newcomer friends were better at understanding the challenges that accompany immigrants.

RESEARCH GAPS

The most apparent gap when it comes to addressing the topic of formation of identity for immigrant youth from Former Yugoslavia is the fact that there is either very little research, or the group in itself has been clumped in with other Eastern European immigrant youth groups. This approach makes it harder to distinguish between the unique factors that can be applied to each group individually, for example what components (language, culture, peers, family, religion) they see as most important in negotiating their identity within the Canadian context.

Subsequently, even though there are numerous discussions on proponents of identity, such as family, peers, language, etc, and identification of relevant terminology, such as ethnicity, race, culture, acculturation, etc, there is no single research project that connects all of these components and applies them to the youth from Former Yugoslavia. For example, Karlovic (2004) discusses what the experiences of Yugoslavian youth in Canada has been like, but she does not directly link these experiences to post effects of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and a possible model of why one would determine to retain their culture, dismiss it, or create a hybrid identity.

In addition, very little has been written on the theoretical perspective of resiliency and how it can provide protection to victims of civil war. More empirical research would greatly benefit this subject area.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research has been conducted through inductive reasoning and the use of qualitative data to address the research questions. The purpose of qualitative work is to generate ideas or themes rather than provide definitive conclusions. The advantages of conducting a qualitative study are that it constructs social reality; cultural meaning; focuses on interactive processes and events; authenticity (giving a fair and honest account) is a key concern; theory and data are fused; there are only a few cases/subjects; there is a use of thematic analysis; and all the while the researcher is involved and is allowed to become a participant researcher (Neuman, 2006, pp. 13). All of these components are conducive to the area that I want to explore because it involves deep analysis and interpretation of life experiences of immigrant and refugee youth.

Sample

One-on-one interviews were conducted with six (6) participants that arrived in Canada between the ages of ten to twenty-five. All of the participants, at the time of the interview, were eighteen years or older in order to avoid the necessity of consent from parents or legal guardians. An attempt was made to diversify the sample by gender and ethnicity. However, in the end, while the gender portion of the research was successful and I was able to recruit three males and three females, I was not able to diversify the ethnic groups. The two major groups that were included in the study were Serbian and Bosnian (Muslim). Most of the participants self identified to be immigrants. One participant self identified as being a refugee. While the ages of the participants ranged from twenty-five to forty-three years of age, the average age was thirty-four years. Their ages upon arrival to Canada ranged from fourteen to twenty-six, the average age upon arrival was twenty years. Four out of six of the participants were from Bosnia and

Herzegovina while the others came from Croatia and Serbia. The following table shows the demographic profile of the participants.

Table 1. Demographic Information

Code Name	Current Age	Age Upon Arrival	Age at the time of Civil War	Year of Arrival	Arrival Status	Sex	Country of Migration	Level of Education
Female #1	43	26	25	1994	Immigrant	F	Yugoslavia	College Diploma
Female #2	36	19	16	1994	Immigrant	F	Yugoslavia – Serbia	University B.A.
Female #3	25	17	7	2003	Immigrant	F	Bosnia	High School
Male #1	30	14	11	1994	Immigrant	M	Yugoslavia – Sarajevo (Bosnia)	University M.A.
Male #2	33	17	14-17(self identified)	1994	Immigrant	M	Yugoslavia	University B.A.
Male #3	39	25	20	1997	Refugee	M	Bosnia	High School

While the sample was somewhat ethnically diverse, participants were not asked about their ethnicity on the demographics fact sheet, but rather the question was included as part of the central questions to be asked during the one-on-one interviews. The geographic boundaries were limited to London, Ontario, for two reasons: (1) in an attempt to evaluate the flight of immigrants and refugees in second-tier Canadian cities, and (2) for the sake of convenience because this is the author's home town, and this familiarity created an easier research process, given the time constraints of the study.

Recruitment of participants was done using two methods. First, flyers were posted at a local community center. If people were interested, they had the chance to directly contact the principal investigator. Secondly, snowball sampling was used as well (Neuman, 2006). This

meant that once someone expressed an interest in participating in the study, they were asked if they would know or could recommend some of their friends to participate as well. At that point, I took the contact information of the possible participants and contacted them directly. Each interview lasted approximately one hour and was digitally recorded. The participants were told that they could stop participating in the study at any point in time and ask for the recorder to be turned off if they were uncomfortable.

These sampling techniques introduced a limitation by excluding possible participants. Since the flyers were only posted on in one community centre and the majority of participants were recruited through word of mouth through people that they knew, someone that met the criteria but did not involve themselves with the same group of people as the participants, could have been excluded from the study.

Data Collection

At the beginning of each interview, a demographic form (see Appendix A) was used to verify the criteria for participation in the research. The criteria included being born in one of the regions of Former Yugoslavia and residing in the former country at the time of the war, while being between the ages of 10-25. This form was also useful in determining the overall demographic profile of this study's sample.

Qualitative data was gathered through six one-on-one interviews which produces a rich and substantive discussion, allowing for an in depth analysis of the topic that is being studied. All interviews followed the same questions and prompts (see Appendix B). The main areas for questions were definitions and labels of identity, why culture and ethnic identity may be different

from one another, adjustment to Canadian society, experiences of war, and how war can have an impact on one's construction and reformation of identity.

Procedure

All six one-on-one interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Interview transcripts were coded to link the gathered data to the key concepts but also to one another. The material was kept confidential and any record of a respondent's participation was coded by the use of codes (e.g. Female #1, etc). In addition to the researcher, the only other person who had access to the data was the MRP supervisor.

Coding was conducted on three levels. First-level coding consisted of creating general themes and broad topics directly associated with responses that were received through the individual interviews. For example, the responses were categorized under six different themes (definition and composition of identity, fitting into Canadian society, the representation of self, experience of war, influence of war on identity, and advise for future generations). As Neuman (2006) mentions, this is known as open coding, "a first coding of qualitative data in which a researcher examines the data to condense them into preliminary analytic categories or codes" (p. 461).

Following open coding was a second-level of coding known as axial coding, where the researcher recognizes and organizes codes, linking them to key analytical categories (Neuman, 2006). In this instance, codes were key words that were used by the participants in explaining their personal experiences. For example, using language or family to explain identity or using and ethnic group as a self-label. A comparison across transcripts was made to pinpoint the

recurring experiences articulated by the participants. Second-level coded items became a sub-category to the first-level codes, creating a more specific category under a general theme.

Third-level coding or selective coding was done last in order to select and create data that will support the conceptual coding categories that were developed (Neuman, 2006). For example, repetition of certain phrases among all participants were grouped together to show that being surrounded by civil war may not be a detrimental factor later on in life. At this point, since there is a high saturation of categories and there is no further development of categorization, the process of coding ends. Lastly, these resulting interpretations then served as the source for the final comments made in the discussion section of this paper.

Limitations of the Study

Firstly, it should be pointed out that qualitative research is usually not definitive but is used to generate ideas and develop themes. The most obvious limitation of this study is connected to the recruitment of participants. Ideally, it would have been beneficial to have participants of numerous ethnic backgrounds involved in order to create a balanced account of what happened during the war on all sides. Due to location restrictions as well limitations posed by the use of snowball sampling, such diversity could not be obtained. In addition, if the study had involved participants from mixed ethnic families, more discussion could have been produced around the topic of negotiating identity when dealing with three or more ethnicities.

Non-probability sampling in itself is limiting. Snowball sampling in particular can be limited if the network of social acquaintances end or people are not interested in the research topic. In this particular study it was very hard to recruit participants because the topic of civil war has negative connotations (Neuman, 2006).

As a previous refugee youth, I am personally invested in this study because, like the lives of so many others, my life too has been shaped by civil war and thus left me in search of an appropriate identity, perhaps even more so due to the fact that I was raised in a multiethnic marriage. Coming from such a diverse background at a young age made me even more susceptible to uncertainty of identity later on in life. Nevertheless, while my personal experiences and education have most likely shaped the design of this study, the outcomes have forced me to re-evaluate some of my personal beliefs, which is exactly what the process of qualitative inquiry requires. My ethnic background and status most likely shaped the participants' construction of both myself and this study. They may have evaluated me based on my ethnicity. In addition, the participants could have also seen me in a position of power since I am a graduate student conducting a research project.

In order to control for possible biases, I was careful not to divulge too much information about my own experiences (Neuman, 2006). At the beginning of each interview, I shared with the participants my time of arrival in Canada, my ethnic origins, and tried to demonstrate a sense of understanding when it comes to conditions of a civil war. I found that participants were willing to share more information and be more open if I initiated the conversation and asked fluid questions in a curious manner as opposed to a more formal interrogation style.

However, once the participants were recruited, face-to-face interviews were fairly easily conducted. Each participant was very willing to discuss their understanding of identity and experience in the civil war to great lengths. One notable disadvantage of conducting these interviews was the personal cost to the interviewer for travelling and compensating the participants for their time. Another disadvantage was the possibility of interviewer bias. The

appearance, tone of voice, and question wording of the interviewer may affect the respondent (Neuman, 2006). To try to limit or even eliminate the possibility of this kind of bias, I employed the technique of asking the questions in the same sequence and general tone. However, interviewer bias can also be based on race, ethnicity, and gender. To try and compensate for these unavoidable factors, I employed transparency and clearly revealed a certain amount of personal information to each participant so that they would both feel comfortable in answering the questions as well as to create a less alienating or intimidating atmosphere. These techniques were adopted in order to seek out any probable biases that may be significant in the outcome of this study.

FINDINGS

General results indicate that there are multiple paths and/or factors that influence the construction of one's identity. Regardless of whether the identity has cultural, ethnic or both undertones, through numerous one-on-one interviews, it has been shown that individual experiences vary based on personal understanding of trauma and identity, personal attitudes towards experiencing various difficulties such as displacement and adjustment within a new cultural setting, and variation in personal tactics toward achieving positive end goals. Even though most participants noted that experiencing the tragedies of war helped them become more resilient individuals, depending on various other factors such as definition of belonging and depth of trauma, this may not be the case for all immigrant and refugee youth.

Definition and Composition of Identity

Most participants agreed that identity can be a very broad and elusive concept to define. It can mean many things to many people. For some participants, it meant staying who you were before immigrating yet learning to adjust and fit in within your new surroundings.

You talk to your peers and of course you are just there is identity as well so you are just put in some situation where you need to adjust, you of course can be the same person you were back home, you can be probably that close to hundred percent in your home, but not really when you go out and like whatever you do either talk or go to a party or go to work you need to adjust (Female #1).

For others, it meant having the ability to explore other cultures while still having strong connections to their ancestors and origins.

My own personal identity would probably best be described as very strong, very flexible, able to live in many different environments, desire to live in many more different environments, but still strong their powerful connection with my roots and my origins, my identity would be the one that feeds on movement and change, information on many other cultures, so if I could say that I am adaptable that would be pretty accurate, also that I strongly desire to explore and discover other cultures, that I would crave creativity and intellectual and artistic stimulation in any environment that I am forced to choose to live in and also been identity over very communicative person that finds it essential to express herself and live in the environment that is aesthetically pleasing and socially challenging in positive ways and intellectually and creatively stimulating (Female #2).

I would describe my identity as a Bosnian Canadian who lives in Canada as a part of my identity I would also consider language to be an important element because involvement, heritage and it helps me to remember who I am from (Male #3).

Some saw their identity moulded by their experiences in life, especially when coming to Canada. This shaped them into the individuals that they are today, both changing and shifting their outlooks based on their circumstances.

Umm, I would describe myself as a person that moved to Canada and here came with my family and went through hard time, jobs, I didn't have any friends. First year was really

hard so we didn't have a lot of friend to help us. When we, because we lived in Winnipeg and than a year after we moved to London here and umm finally after that I started learning English and got some friends. I found some kind in...and we keep together and finally finished some high school and learned English and better now (Female #3).

Some participants saw their identity as an outcome of influences such as family.

What does it mean to me, it means my family that's how identify myself through them. They are the ones that helped shape me into who I am today (Male #2).

Lastly, participants also defined their identity based on gender, while shifting their attention to cultural or ethnic influences.

Sex plays into it, then nationality, and then food preferences or any kind of taste that you have for certain things (Male #1).

Thus, as has been mentioned before, it is safe to state that the meaning of identity is very fluid, depending on an individual's perspective and view on various predicaments that they may find themselves in or even influences and guides such as family, peers, language, religion, culture and ethnicity.

For some, language meant that they still had a connection with their heritage and that was vital in sustaining the essence of who they are, while others expressed a great influence from their families because they contributed to their strengths and goals. However, for most participants, family and language were the key elements or components of their identity because they believed that everything else, such as culture or ethnicity, developed from family and language. Participants believed that they wouldn't be the type of individuals they are today if it wasn't for their families shaping and moulding them, while language has always helped them to remember a part of who they are.

My family for sure, most important and the biggest one, peers of course they have it, but yeah, for sure not that much as the other ones. I am always trying to really kind of say my identity what I was before, I don't want to lose it, and I hope I will never lose because

I really want to stay that way, how can I explain it. I want to stay for whole my life like who am I, who I was for the part of it and I am really trying to just take the positive from other cultures from my peers, like what's the best for me (Female #1).

Language has the biggest impact on how I see myself as an individual because language or call it mother tongue is your connection to the world, so yes my mother tongue being Serbian would condition me as a human being later on as I would grow, so the ethnic identity that I couldn't that I do have is greatly influenced by the language and then afterwards by the definition of what that ethnicity is (Female #2).

Language the most and then all these other things follow from it so family, ethnicity, and religion even also and religion hasn't been the deciding factor for me but for others. Family is important because first they give birth to you,..without them, and then they shape your character and your first contacts are with your family members and those are the ones that shape your character. Well your born inside, part of an ethnic group, and through your family you learn most about, than the street and school teach you the rest of it and as living there you become part of the group and culture us a broad term but I suppose it's the nice part of you (Male #1).

The most important elements are culture and language. Culture is one thing that I remember what we celebrate and what we practice in our culture. Language is also huge part of my life because I practice two languages; one at home and one at work and my language helps me to remember who am I (Male #3).

Fitting into Canadian Society

Participants that were able to adapt well into the Canadian society usually had a positive outlook to begin with. They either wanted to achieve certain goals such as getting a better education or finding a good job or had a general curiosity about Canada.

I think it was positive because I was, there were big challenges of course when I came with my husband and we didn't know that much English which is number one if you want to get work to get better education and to do better in life (Female #1).

I was able to fit in well because I am curious and I really didn't want to waste any time. We moved here in 94, spring, and by September I was able to learn enough of the university system and educational system to enrol and be accepted into university. And that was probably the best thing that I have ever done for myself because if I believed than If I stay and wait for another Sept than I will probably, not lose my mind, I would be at a loss because, not only with time, but you know the language, I would not be forced to learn it as quickly or work on it as quickly as university made me (Female #2).

Those that found it most difficult to adjust were the ones that could not identify well with the Canadian culture.

I think I was liked, and it takes for you to fit in but at the same time I didn't really participate much and always kind of stuck on my own ethnic group and I never really had any significant relationships with Canadians themselves. So I fit in, but hardest part was going to school, going to the doctor, going to work or whatever, I don't see myself being Canadian culturally (Male #1).

Those that had great difficulties learning English also indicated adjustment problems.

It wasn't easy because everything is different that I was used to do like for example I was fluent in my language and suddenly when I wasn't able to speak second language properly (Male #3).

One respondent expressed a sense of a personal vendetta against Canada.

That was tough, that was very tough. Honestly I didn't want to do anything with anybody who wasn't Serbian when I got here. My problem with Canada was it became part of NATO, as such it was part of all the bombings it was a part of all the pressures from the western nations and it was also part of all the decision making of what was going to happen to my country which I didn't believe I still don't believe they had any right to do. (Male #2)

There were both positive and negative impressions from participants on how well they were received into the Canadian society. While some noticed that Canadians did their best to help them get used to Canada, others recognized issues of stereotypes, severe prejudice and even racism.

People tried. My command of English than was a little bit lesser than today but was still very good so that I can understand what people were asking me but because it was 94 and the media has influence the London society to understand us from Former Yugoslavia as some kind of savages, especially with Serbian part of it was even having worse reputation, I found it was very difficult. Firstly there were most Canadians that I have met have been suspicious towards immigrants, they believe they will take over their jobs, especially if you are educated immigrant, oh my goodness, there was even worse (Female #2).

There are some people that make a point of not being you know not being prejudiced towards immigrants and being not judgmental and then there is the ones that look down on you because you speak with an accent and won't have anything to do with you, never did bother me much but I think all in all its been a good experience in the sense that most people have been tolerant and accepting (Male #1).

I was called a filthy immigrant when I walked into the high school for the first time....The high school that I attended to, at this point in time is extremely racially diverse, very cultural and very ethnically diverse at this point in time because some of my cousins go there now. But when I stepped in, I was maybe one of six people out of like 1500 who were not, you know, Anglo-Saxon background (Male #2).

I was received well from them and they are fair enough people. It was positive because they were helping people like me as much as possible. (Male #3)

In the sense of long term, most participants noted that they were able to overcome their experiences in the war and adjust and integrate into the Canadian society. The factor that contributed the most to being able to successfully integrate was being positive about the future and working hard to accomplish long term goals such as providing for your family and being able to take vacations. Those that admitted to not integrating didn't really want to integrate in the first place because they were satisfied as being seen as an outsider, as long as they were left alone to do as they pleased.

I think yes, for sure you always can do better, but I think we are really well adjusted and I really proud Serbian-Canadian...We are hard working really how would say, do I say eager to succeed, we were young and like wanted to do something with our lives (Female #1).

So the reasons why I adjusted that well is because I dealt with the trauma, I lived in other places, I did find the love of my life which really makes you softer and more tolerant and he did teach me a lot more about subtleties of Canadian society so I learned how to communicate with them far better than a lot of people who do not have any Canadian friends and I still know them and because I was lucky enough and learned how to, from my professional development, how to ask what I want and how to communicate with those professionals so I can further myself (Female #2).

I don't think I am the best Canadian, I don't think I am interested in Canadian politics and Canadians, I think the way these things are defined are rather, I don't know what,

benign or trivial or whatever, so I think I am you know, I am good neighbour, I pet the dog in the elevator when I see it and I try to be nice to people so I think I have integrated nicely and trusted, I think Canada sort of lets you be if you want to be and that's what I want so that sounds I did not integrate, but yeah I do function I guess I do customer service job so I deal with people all the time and I can do it so I suppose I did integrate (Male #1).

The Representation of "Self"

Once asked to put an ethnic label on themselves, most participants agreed that they could no longer call themselves Yugoslavian because Yugoslavia no longer existed. Rather, they opted to combine their original ethnic background (Serbian or Bosnian) with the Canadian culture because they believed that that was the most accurate representation of their current selves. Some would be satisfied to call themselves simply Canadian, as an easier way to explain who they are to others, but because of their noticeable accents they are not accepted as Canadian to the general public, they are not seen as part of the "in-crowd." Others, or rather a very small minority, tried to avoid the subject all together because they didn't like the context of the conversation.

Yes, if I can say Serbian-Canadian. Twenty-six years I spent there, I was born there, so I hope I will never forget it. And since we are here we got citizenship and I do appreciate and like this country that really gave us opportunities to live and have a normal life like we didn't have last, for our last few years in back home (Female #1).

Well if you ask my husband he would say that I am Canadian but if you ask me I would say that I am Serbian firstly and then Canadian because in spite of all the difficulties Canada has been good to me and living here for 16 years I think I was one of the luckier ones that, yeah I had to fight for everything that I have achieved but with having said that, Canada is still fairly good society to exist when you come from outside or as a foreigner. I come from the perspective, or I look through the, or my perspective on that question is that your identity is most closely connected to your ethnicity (Female #2).

I say Yugoslavian when people ask just because I wouldn't want to go into it but then more and more people know that Yugoslavia is a manic term and they ask questions so I'll say Serbian but they ask where I am from and I say Yugoslavia so it's not really true,

in a sense it is, sometimes I will say Mongolia just to, you know, have fun or Europe but most of the time they are just asking to say something so I try to escape conversations just because it tends to be a boring conversation (Male #1).

I would say half Canadian half Bosnian because I have a Canadian citizenship and I have a Bosnian citizenship....To some people I can say I am Bosnian, like that's fine, but I am here long now that I can say I am Canadian too so I can say half-half. Like I feel, like in my heart I feel that I am Bosnian but I have to be Canadian too....I consider myself as a Canadian but with my accent people will say no you're not Canadian. Many times at work I said I am Canadian, I live in Canada, but they said you have an accent you are not Canadian (Female #3).

I am after so many years here, fifteen, sixteen years, ahh I still consider myself primary first and foremost I am Serbian and I will always be that...For me I am what I was born into, I am what my religion is or you know, I am because of my family so that's why I consider myself to be Serbian (Male #2).

I would say Bosnian-Canadian because now I am Canadian but inside me I feel more Bosnian. I was raised as a Bosnian and feel like I can also shape myself better with the Bosnian culture (Male #3).

Experience of War

When asked to describe their experiences in the war, many participants admitted that it was quite a struggle and had a very hard time adjusting to the chaotic environment. Some had lost family members, had been in danger themselves, or participated in the actions of a military group. However, all of these negative experiences were quickly dismissed, sometimes even in a more cynical tone, because the participants did not wish to dwell on the topic, rather they wanted to focus on the fact that they were able to make it and create a better life for themselves.

We were in our hometown at that time, and looked very bad that we can kind of be captured so we escaped from hometown and went to the north of the country where we had our relative and stayed there for some time and then after one year we applied to Canada in got transferred. Really we don't have that many bad experience as many people there because we escaped on time but yeah it was bad and probably would be bad for us if we stayed. Because if you were an ethnic minority in some place that could really be bad (Female #1).

So some of the effects, because it was very difficult to live in Croatia at that time for someone who is Serbian, we moved as a family into Belgrade where most of our relatives live in the hope that we would be able to just stay there for several months and then all that insanity in Croatia will stop, be solved somehow, we'll be able to go back continue normal living. But it didn't happen in that way, war started not only getting worse in Croatia but also Bosnia and Herzegovina. We stayed in Serbia until 1994, the terrible economic crisis was happening at the time, so my mother decided that we have to look for a place where we can have basic existential things taken care of (Female #2).

My experience during the war was wonderful and it's not something people generally say but I think I am not the only one that had it. The trouble with the war is that people have to die and a lot of people do but generally I think that the spirits of the people is very high, sense of humour is probably stronger in the war than it ever is so it's good and I find in some cases that war can be better than peace because there is peace...So war, I was twelve, thirteen, when it broke out so I was hitting puberty, I was becoming interested in girls so we didn't get to go to school, we get to play a lot of soccer and that's always nice. I had good fortune of not having any of my closer family members die or be wounded. I did lose a lot of family on my mother's side but I took it as sort of children do, just accept it, didn't ask any questions, didn't wonder about it or anything. So it was on the whole a good experience. I did get shot at a few times but they missed luckily and that was the only thing that mattered (Male#1).

I was young too like seven years old or eight and I was grade one when war started. I didn't have, I can't remember a lot but I remember a little bit, it was hard. Also, my mom lost her brother, I still have that memory, it was really hard but its life. (Female #3)

So we were not on like front line or anything like that, we were in a major city that wasn't under quotation marks, wasn't part of the conflict. We started off in Zagreb, the war actually never hit Zagreb but in the sense of front lines coming in, than we moved to Belgrade same thing. However the war was all around except nobody was shooting, those are the capitals of two countries. If those have front lines than somebody really lost in that conflict (Male #2).

Not pleasant experience because I had to go to the war and I had to fight and I spend about 3-4 years in the war. It wasn't smart thing to do by politicians because they wanted power and control over the people (Male #3).

When asked about what they thought of the civil war in Former Yugoslavia, all of the participants thought that the causes were remnants of the Second World War, but even so, they stated that issues like that should have never caused the number of casualties that came from the

war and the outcome was certainly not justifiable in any sense.

It's probably consequence of the Second World War as well so that really Former Yugoslavia is really explosive territory that's also our character, we are really explosive as well so that can't really help me to get easier to some things and learn how to get easier on the same things. It's just Balkan is a little bit different from other parts of the world; it's just easy to explode (Female #1).

I found that civil war was just a continuation of a lot of unresolved issues from the Second World War. If at that time we had as a society enough time and if somebody forced us to deal with our demons, I think our society would have been sixty years later, far healthier, and far more tolerant (Female #2).

I think that it was crap, all of it. I think that power vacuum was left and there were three people that wanted to take, three guys that wanted to take power and needed the other two to let go so it became, you know, inevitable at that point in time however it was completely unnecessary completely insane, so stupid, absolutely at the start of it and for the whole duration of it (Male #2).

Lastly, when asked about the conditions during the war, all of the participants stated that since there were no positive prospects for them to stay, no job opportunities or any means of providing for themselves and their families, they decided to leave the Balkans in search of better living conditions. Some said that in addition to the poor circumstances, they were also in fear of being ethnically cleansed, either by the opposite side or in some cases by their own ethnic groups, and were not willing to gamble with their lives.

Because the places around we heard and we saw military which was not the same ethnic groups as I was, as I mentioned before we were ethnic minority and that was danger so that's why we escaped....And when we moved to Serbia economics, Serbia was not in the war, but economic situation having all of the republics in the war, economics situation was just getting worse and worse so you could not find easy, not just easy, you could not find at all a job that can suffice your needs (Female #1).

My parents just didn't see any future any time soon there and they figured they might have a better chance at it elsewhere so they got up one day asked me and my brother what we thought about it and we were children so we really didn't think about it and so we said whatever and so we went (Male #1).

The reason why I left my country because I was opposed to the war and it was also because I was part of the collusion movement where a smaller group of Muslim Bosnians wanted to separate from the main government in charge and create our own region, a country within a country. After we lost this battle we became refugees and started to leave the country to find a better life outside of Bosnia (Male #3).

When asked, each participant stated that they didn't believe that the war had any long lasting effects on them, they believed that they were able to recover psychologically and none were injured physically. However, almost every participant noted that the war had a negative emotional effect on them. In other words, participants felt that the war made them emotionally distraught at one point or another and in some cases, left an imprint of mistrust and suspicion towards people in general.

It mostly has, yes I believe so, but it would be mostly emotional. Psychological I don't think it left terrible mark that I couldn't recover from and be a wholesome healthy individual because I was young, for some older people, the generation of my parents, the war had terrible effects, but I guess because we were young, flexible, I guess we did understand what was going on but maybe not fully. You know when you're young you will accept the world in a different way (Female #2).

I do feel that sort of that my youth was in a sense stolen from me because I didn't get a chance to go through all the steps normally you know elementary school, high school, etc at the end of the elementary school I had to come here and then well I was sad and you're in a foreign speaking country so you don't know all the people you just know a handful of them everybody else is a stranger so in that sense I did miss out on a lot but I don't know, I never went through it so I have nothing to compare it to (Male #1).

Its physical and emotional too, like as I said before, we didn't came in here just because of the war but because my parents like they told them a different way of life, that we're going to live, like you can earn a lot of money and then go back home and then have better life but that opposite. And then like we are not just here because of the war, we could stay because my parents, they had good jobs, my dad had a business so he had to leave everything to came here (Female #3).

Made you less trustful, trusting, made you more cautious, made you look for hidden meanings, look for at least I do, whenever I talk to somebody, I was a child back then and now I am an adult so there is that difference of course as well, but what I mean is I don't think I would have been as mistrusting as with people if there was no war vs. what I am

right now, I just I was always looking for what you mean by what you say (Male #2).

When asked about their families that stayed behind or the impacts of war on their families, most participants explained that they often felt feelings of sadness and helplessness because they couldn't do anything to change their situations. They often tried to focus on adjusting to Canada to get their minds off of what happened in the past and the conditions back home. In a minority of cases, anger was directed at the other side, i.e. other ethnic groups in the Balkans that were seen as responsible for the conflict.

All my family stayed there so I really miss them because we were young and not really ready to, we thought we are ready, but we were not, start from scratch, everything was new, not that much money, any made things really hard and you really need to be really strong and have your focus, have a goal, what you can and what you want to do with your life. But of course we were worrying for our parents, our brothers and sisters because we are really family oriented, so missing them a lot especially in those days when it wasn't easy and when you cannot really to go and see them when you needed, but you know, you have your goals (Female #1).

Psychologically it had the biggest impact on my mother because she was the breadwinner of the family and she understood very well what was going on, through all the subtleties, so she had to become greater fighter than she would have been otherwise. Far more resilient, far more persistent to make sure that we have everything we need and she, I guess, developed certain strength, mental and emotional strength that she never thought she would have before because she wanted to shield us from everything that was going, there and here even though she didn't speak any English when she arrived...My brother, he had the pink perspective on how life in Canada will be, but very quickly, with starting with school, started integrating with other immigrants and locals, he realized that it's not going to be so pink and that it might be more difficult than he wanted so he felt a great nostalgia and a great drive to go back. So as far as my family, individually as I said, as a group we grew so close together to be able to survive, I think that's fairly rare even for Serbian mentality of a great family, living in community and such and such and also it made us nomads, so whatever belongings we have they are mostly emotional memories and such and such and if we lived in Canada or if we lived England or anywhere else it would be the same, we would try to stick together as close as we can and we would accept the host country as a house country and we would try to do as best as we can (Female #2).

It was difficult on my mom I suppose because she lost a lot of family, cousins, etc but she coped as people do and when they got here they have to start life new and they did, they looked for work, looked to saving money, etc...It made me feel alright, I mean I didn't think about it much, generally Canada is fairly tame, I find the streets aren't nearly as hard as they are back home so the whole thing was pretty harmless (Male #1).

Not too many people like from my extended family died or were wounded. Our father died during the war but he is the only one I guess...It makes you feel angry of course at the other side, the whole world. It seemed that way and there was the whole world that was against us and at the time that's who my anger went towards (Male #2).

I felt very sad and angry because we were inferior to the other side (Male #3).

Influence of War on Identity

Participants indicated that because of the war, they wanted to preserve their cultural identity or in most cases even felt like the identity suddenly had greater meaning because there were people that were looking to extinguish it. Instead of giving up on their culture and trying to assimilate or immerse themselves inside new cultures, the participants felt that they had to rebel against being oppressed and savour their heritage.

Maybe, I would say maybe I am a little bit more Serbian than I was before because I still want to show who the Serbian people is and just want to show who we are to all world because we are really not present really well, it's not, Serbians are not presented all with really true like it was so many lies about and that way I was maybe little bit angry sometimes but not really that I would do something bad or somebody but as I said little bit more Serbian which mean that I was trying to keep more religious, how do I say, religiously being more Serbian, being orthodox, like really show people around me who we are actually (Female #1).

Being Serbian I am patriotic but I am not a nationalist. I find that nationalism is a tool that some crooked individuals use in order to get their way and they hurt others and I was also a victim of nationalism from the other side so no I don't equate ethnicity and nationalism, I equate ethnicity with patriotic belief that you could be the best, that you were born into, that you cultivate, that sort of identity and that you accept a portion of it, that you don't throw it away because if you throw away your ethnicity that you've thrown away a great part of your identity and you can never be, like some people say oh well she wants to be more of a German than the German himself. I don't find, I find that there is

attitude like that and that the individuals who have that attitude and behave that way are a bit lost because there is no reason to run away who you were born into, you can either make it worse or better for yourself and others and how they see you (Female #2).

I think I became, I don't know maybe less Serbian because all of a sudden it meant something whereas before I wouldn't have thought about it a much and as was being there drenched in Serbian culture I would have looked for other things, for novelty, whereas here Serbian things became more precious and then I looked more to those (Male #1).

I think my cultural identity is the same as before because nobody can ever take away my cultural identity which will always be a part of who am I (Male #3).

The war did have an impact on the participants in terms of being able to adjust and integrate in a new cultural setting. However, in opposition to the common belief of war causing greater barriers in integration, it had the opposite effect for the participants. It made them more willing to accept change. They wanted to change their previous environments for the better and because of that common goal they were willing to accept any kind of challenges. In some cases, the new environment did make the participants a little hesitant towards their new surroundings, but after a certain period of time, this hesitancy disappeared.

I didn't find really hard to adjust because of all the reasons for war there, really because everybody here just like one street there are ten nations in just one street and everyone gets along so easy and well and this just maybe a perfect place to come after what happened there to learn a little bit more how your suppose to live (Female #1).

Canadian society will always be curious about me but they will never be able to understand the past and they will definitely allow me to integrate because hey everybody is an immigrant here. So it's the nature of the host society that really either heightens my awareness when I want to integrate or not. The civil war basically made me more aware that maybe I am foreigner as opposed to before where if I lived somewhere else I would say hey I am here (Female #2).

I think it made me more adjustable, I think right now that I could pretty well visit anywhere in the world and do well or get killed very fast but I would still take responsibility (Male #1).

I think it was easy to adjust because I wanted to change my environment and try something for better (Male #3).

Advice

Finally, as a method of providing future immigrant or refugee youth with possible coping tactics upon arrival, participants were asked what kind of advice they would give to newly arrived youth who have experienced similar loss and tragedies as themselves. Most participants responded by stating that if you have a positive goal it is most likely that this drive will help you with integration. Others stated that in order to move forward you needed to forget the painful past, not necessarily forget who you are or your heritage but only your negative experiences.

I would just tell them to have a goal. Goal, what they want to do with their lives, where they want to be after ten, twenty years, where they see themselves and to reach that of course you go step by step, but they need to have a goal (Female #1).

Be patient, know who you are, don't forget where you came from. Appreciate it, cultivate it, honour it, best of what you are bringing. Be persistent. If somebody says no, don't let that be the last word on the subject (Female #2).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The interviews provided valuable insight into the construction of individual identity and the impacts of civil war and trauma on identity. In some cases, patterns that formed confirmed and supported earlier research on this topic, while other points helped in the creation of new conclusions about the topic, as will be discussed below. Most importantly, the interviews aided in providing a direct link between PTSD and formation of identity while clearly suggesting that there is no one path or formula in assuring that any individual will be able to recover from trauma and lead a rich and fulfilling life. Some participants described dealing with trauma and experiencing some symptoms of PTSD, while others completely dismissed the notion. Thus, it

quickly became clear that since every person is different, there is no one single approach to solving the problem of PTSD.

Not unexpectedly, participants disagreed on the definition of identity. For some it meant having and maintaining a connection with ancestral roots (ethnic link) while others thought that it was also important to have the ability to change and fit in within your present society, that is to have an ever-changing cultural identity. Some spoke of family and culture, how family usually influences who you are raised to be and the kind of customs that you adapt. However, there was no one single influence, such as family, religion, peers, language, culture, or ethnicity that was seen as more important than the others. In fact, answers varied across the board. Therefore, just like the literature suggests not only are identities fluid, but any given individual can have multiple identities. Most often they include components such as linguistics, gender, religion, race, and culture (Racicot, 2001).

Additionally, literature distinguishes between the definitions of ethnic and cultural identity, saying that ethnic identity

is allegiance to a group – large or small, socially dominant or subordinate- with which one has ancestral links. There is no necessity for a continuation, over generations, of the same socialization or cultural patterns, but some sense of a group boundary must persist. The can be sustained by shared objective characteristics to a sense of “groupness,” or by some combination of both. Symbols or subjective attachments must relate, at however distant a remove, to an observable past (Papatia and Michelle, 1994, p. 37).

Cultural identity on the other hand, is a “complex of collectively experienced values and standards that allow for a group community to imagine itself or to be imagined by others” (Davoliute, 2005, p. 116). However, when the participants were asked to distinguish between ethnic and cultural identity, many thought that the two were the same or rather interchangeable. Yet, what most participants failed to mention is that ethnicity in itself is a much more negative notion in the Balkans than culture. For example, since most commonly ethnicity is associated

with nationality, and nationality was associated with propaganda and genocide during the war, ethnicity or ethnic nationalism is conveyed rather negatively, much more so than culture, but since the topic was not discussed in great length, it is hard to judge what the participants thought of it. A few thought that culture can change based on the influences of your current cultural environment. Thus, shifting from a mono-cultural perspective to a more inclusive one, most participants noted that they could no longer simply call themselves Yugoslavian because Yugoslavia no longer existed. Rather, they opted to combine their original ethnic background (Serbian or Bosnian) with the Canadian culture because being Canadian has now become a part of their cultural identity.

Surprisingly, out of the total of six participants, only one self-identified as being a refugee, the rest claimed to be immigrants. However, since no set definition of the two terms was provided to the participants beforehand, perhaps the two words were used interchangeably. According to Robila (2010), another possible reason as to why the participants did not identify themselves as refugees is because refugee youth often feel like they 'fit in' nowhere and are mistreated everywhere they go, thus encountering additional settlement problems, compared to voluntary immigrants. Refugees may face racial and systemic discrimination, which is why numerous newcomer youth do not like being labelled as refugees. Lastly, since the interviews focused on PTSD and youth who have experienced extreme trauma in the war (refugees), and most of the participants didn't want to be viewed as victims but rather as survivors, it could be possible that they unintentionally and even subconsciously decided to classify themselves as immigrants to avoid being labelled as helpless (Ehnholt and Yule, 2006).

Participants continuously noted that family and language were some of the key elements or components of their identity. They expressed the belief that family and language, as key

socialisers at an early stage of childhood, helped them develop key cultural and ethnic parts of themselves. Similarly, most of the previous research shows that “among the most important factors in keeping one’s cultural background is knowing and using the language” (Robila, 2010, p. 97). Others have agreed by arguing that family represents the most significant source of knowledge in terms of being able to understand and practice ethnic customs and traditions (Mah, 2005). Other elements such as education and religion have also been noted to have positive impacts of the development of self identity but were not mentioned as important factors by any of the participants.

As Kilbride et al. (2000) note, the age of arrival in Canada plays an important part in how easily immigrant youth can adapt into Canadian society. When youth arrive in Canada at an earlier age, they have more opportunities to learn about the Canadian system. However, those who arrive in Canada during their adolescence may feel more isolated due to the fact that they already created well established relationships back home. However, when applying this perspective to this group of participants, there were some discrepancies. For the most part participants were able to adapt well into the Canadian society regardless of their age as long as they had a positive outlook on the circumstances that they faced. Most wanted to achieve certain goals such as getting a better education or finding a good job or had a general curiosity about Canada. Those that found it hard to adjust were the ones that could not identify well with the Canadian culture, had great difficulties learning English, or had a personal grudge against Canada.

In the long term, most participants noted that they were able to overcome their experiences in the war and adjust and integrate into the Canadian society. The factors that contributed the most to being able to successfully integrate were positive prospects of finding a

job and providing for one's family. Contrary to the existing literature that mentions that it is particularly hard for children from war-torn countries to make the initial adjustment to a new society because many of them are plagued by psychological and emotional problems such as depressive behaviour and high anxiety (Robila, 2010), none of the participants cited adjustment problems that could not be overcome with time. In fact, most participants dismissed past experiences and due to their resilient nature, or because they did not experience war in the same way some others may have, only focussed on positive goals that they were proud of and were looking forward to accomplishing. In addition, it is highly unlikely that participants were trying to suppress these past experiences because most made references to the most difficult times that they had during the civil war.

Many participants felt that the war made them emotionally distraught at one point or another and in some cases, left an imprint of mistrust and suspicion towards people in general. However, most participants were able to adapt and as Jandt (2007, p. 309) explains, they were able to acculturate, the process where "an immigrant's learning and adopting the norms and values of the new host culture." The author mentions that this is a two dimensional process of maintaining one's own cultural identity while maintaining relationships within the new culture. Perhaps one of the main instruments that aided the participants in the adaptation is the idea of resilience, "when people face traumatic events, some may, in their search for meaning, overcome these tragedies and experience a sense of transformation or unexpected growth or self-actualization" (Green, 2009, pp.317). According to Boyden and Mann (2005), traditionally, the idea of resilience refers to the ability to "bounce back" from any adverse conditions and resume the previous course of lifestyle. The authors also argue that the extent to which children are successful in maneuvering through difficult situations and adversity reflects to how well their

culture has prepared them for such circumstances. Thus, since the participants were brought up in a society that was filled with political instability and uncertainty, most learned about the chaotic history of the Balkans and were taught to make the best of any kind of situation.

Participants indicated that because of the war, they wanted to preserve their ethnic identity or in most cases even felt like the identity suddenly had greater meaning since they were being forced to change. Instead of giving up on their ethnicity and culture, the participants developed an almost “hyper-ethnicity” in order to protect their heritage. However, this is not to say that they decided to have a complete disregard for other cultures or even that they refused to accept in altering a part of their cultural identity, but rather that they felt a new sense of awareness of their cultural roots.

The war also had an impact on the participants in terms of being able to adjust and integrate into new cultural settings. However, in opposition to the common belief that war causes greater barriers to integration or greater chances of experiencing PTSD, stating that youth who experienced war related trauma in Former Yugoslavia as well as ethnic discrimination during the Kosovo conflict had a higher potential for PTSD (Rummnes and Seat, 2003), the experience had the opposite effect on the participants. It made them more willing to accept change. They wanted to change their previous environments for the better and because of that common goal they were willing to accept any kind of challenges.

Ultimately in conclusion, the advice from the participants would add great depth to a possible medical model in helping and counselling newly arrived refugee youth. Rather than applying one method or one approach to all subjects that could be experiencing PTSD, we should learn from those that have overcome these barriers and learn to treat the problem on an

individualistic basis. Rather than assuming that everyone who has experienced severe trauma, such as through civil war, is incapable of adapting to a new culture or unable to move past these debilitating experiences, we should maintain a more positive approach. Perhaps a mentoring program, one where those who have experienced civil war and proved to be rather resilient can share their experiences with those that were not so lucky is the appropriate response. Since there is no one path to identity construction in a new cultural setting and everyone comes from various circumstances, maybe the best therapeutic and rehabilitative models are those that revolve around the idea that each individual creates the best outcome conducive to their own personal conditions.

APPENDIX A

Demographic Information Form

Please fill in the following information as it pertains to your circumstances. These signifiers will allow for a more complete analysis of the interview questions.

1. Current age: _____.
2. Age upon arriving to Canada: _____.
3. Age at the time of the civil war in Former Yugoslavia: _____.
4. Sex: Male Female
5. Year of arrival: _____.
6. Arrival Status: Immigrant Refugee
7. Country of Migration: Former Yugoslavia
Other (please specify) _____.
8. Last Education Level Obtained:
Elementary High School College Diploma
University B.A. University M.A. University PhD
Other (please specify) _____.

APPENDIX B

Questions and Prompts for MRP Interviews

INTRODUCTION

In this interview, we will be discussing issues of identity as they relate to an individual being able to adapt to a new cultural environment even after experiencing trauma of a civil war. The questions are meant to explore these past experiences in order to learn about the integration of immigrant/refugee youth. In addition, factors such as family, peers, language, school environment and so on will be investigated to their impact on identity and integration.

TOPIC: Construction of Identity

1. How would you describe your own identity?

Prompts: - To what extent does it involve influences from your language, religion, culture, ethnicity, family, peers?

- In your view, is there a difference between cultural and ethnic identity? (This question is here because, in former Yugoslavia, the term culture generally means traditions and customs while the term ethnicity is associated with religion and segregation of people along ethnic lines which has a stigma attached to it.)

2. What do you think are the most important elements or components of your identity?

Prompt: Why?/Explain.

3. What was your experience like in terms of fitting into the Canadian society?

Prompts: Why do you think you were able to fit in? Why not?

4. How do you think you were received into the Canadian society?

Prompt: Why do you think it was negative or positive?

5. Would you associate yourself with being Canadian, Yugoslavian, Serbian, Croatian, Slovenian, Macedonian, Bosnian, Montenegrin, or a combination of two or more?

Prompt: Why?

6. Do you feel that you have adjusted and integrated well within the Canadian society?

Prompt: Why or why not?

TOPIC: Traumatic Experiences – Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

1. What was your experience like during the civil war?
Prompt: - What do you think of the civil war?
 - What were some of the conditions that led you to leave the country?

2. Did the civil war have an impact on your health?
Prompt: - Physical, emotional, psychological?
 - If so, to what extent?
 - How did the civil war impact your family members?
 - How did this environment make you feel? (Here, participants will be prompted to share feelings of loss or isolation so that the transition to the following question of cultural identity is easier to establish).

3. Referring back to your answer in the previous section, do you think the civil war had an impact on your cultural identity?

4. Do you think the war had an impact on your ability to adjust and integrate within a receiving country?

5. Looking back on your experience, what is the one piece of advice you would give to newly arrived youth that have faced experiences like you?

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