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A search for a new identity: examining the journey of former refugee youths living in Australia

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A search for a new identity

Examining the journey of former refugee
youths living in Australia

A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the
requirements for the award of the degree

Doctor of Philosophy

from

University of Wollongong

by

Jonnell Uptin

Dip Teach, Dip C Min, Grad Dip TESOL, M. Ed

School of Education, Faculty of Social Science

2013

Thesis Certification

I, Jonnell Uptin declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Faculty of Social Sciences – School of Education, University of Wollongong is wholly my own work unless referenced or acknowledged. The document has been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

Jonnell Uptin

September 2013

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I learnt to read later than most, before that my mum read everything to me then as I learnt to read and write and sing mum was with me. Dad took us travelling to every museum in Australia. Mum said I don't care if they say you're dumb, you're mine and I love ya. That unconditional love, that seeing past what others see, that salt of the earth gutsy woman – thanks mum. To Dean and Cheryl – maybe now I'll get a bit of respect. Ha.

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Dedication

To the three women in my life who hold my heart with such tenderness

My mum Helen,

My soul mate Jen Milligan

and

My daughter Duang.

Publications Statement.

This thesis includes chapters that have been written as the following journal articles:

Chapter Four:

Jonnell Uptin, Jan Wright & Valerie Harwood (2014): Finding education: Stories of how young former refugees constituted strategic identities in order to access school, Race Ethnicity and Education, DOI: 10.1080/13613324.2014.885428

Chapter Five:

Uptin, J. Wright, J. and Harwood, V .2013, 'It felt like I was a black dot on white paper': Examining young former refugees' experience of entering Australian high schools. *Australian Educational Researcher* (2013) 40:125–137.DOI 10.1007/s13384-012-0082-8

Chapter Six:

Uptin, J. Wright, J. and Harwood, V .2013, 'Doing it alone': Examining the intergenerational relationships of former refugee young people from African countries in resettlement.

Chapter Seven:

Uptin, J. 2013, 'Belonging to a Memory: Examining how young Ethnic Burmese former refugees make sense of resettlement'. Submitted to *Diaspora, Indigenous, and Minority Education*.

As the primary supervisor, I Associate Professor Valerie Harwood, declare that the greater part of the work in each article listed above is attributed to the candidate Jonnell Uptin. In each of the above manuscripts Jonnell contributed to the study design and collected the data. The first draft of each was written by the candidate and then Jonnell was responsible for responding to the editing suggestions of her co- authors. Professor Jan Wright and Associate Professor Valerie Harwood were responsible for assisting in study design, interpreting data and editing manuscripts. Jonnell has been solely responsible for submitting each manuscript for publication to the relevant journals, and has been in charge of responding to the reviewer's comments, with assistance from her co-authors. Please note that Article Four has one author, Jonnell Uptin.

Jonnell Uptin, PhD Candidate

Principal Supervisor A/Professor Valerie Harwood.

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Glossary of Terms

UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
DIAC	Department of Immigration and Citizenship
RCA	Refugee Council of Australia
INEE	International Network for Education in Emergencies
DET	Department of Education and Training New South Wales
AHRC	Australian Human Rights Commission

ABSTRACT

Resettlement of refugees has long been considered as a durable solution by the international community and the United Nations. Australia's resettlement programme has had a history of officially accepting refugees from some of the poorest and most war torn parts of the world. There is, however surprisingly little research that narrates how refugees themselves are experiencing resettlement and even less for refugee youth (Gifford 2007; Chatty, 2007; Cassity & Gow, 2005). This is particularly significant as 59% of new entrants arriving in the five years between July 2005 and June 2010 aged under 25 years on arrival, and 31% aged between 12 and 25 (Refugee Council of Australia, 2011). It is important to Australian society to begin to understand these young peoples' journey and examine the ways in which they negotiate the multifaceted path to form a new identity in Australia. This study addresses this gap by investigating how young former refugees make social and cultural connections in the process of their resettlement in Australia.

The study draws upon the individual narratives collected in focus groups and individual interviews of twelve young former refugees from Karenni and Chin State Burma, Burma, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leon, South Sudan, Togo, Benin and Burundi. They are aged between 16 and 20 years of age.

The central concern of this study is to examine the ways the young people negotiate their cultural identity, creating and recreating new and evolving narratives that incorporate their past, present and future. I approach this by asking two questions: *How do former refugee youths living in Australia negotiate their cultural identity? What pathways do young former refugees take to construct a new sense of identity?* In investigating the answers I am primarily guided by the work of Stuart Hall. On one level his conceptualisation of how identities are conceived through discourse highlights the multiple ways in which the discursive labelling of 'the refugee' impacts upon the young people in their childhood and as they resettle into a Western democratic country. On another level Hall provides insight into how identities and in particular, cultural identities can be reconstructed within the diaspora. The study also turns to a number of poststructural theories including postcolonial theory, feminist theory and

theories that guide inclusive education from a sociological perspective. These assist in describing the ways in which the fluidity and multiplicity of identity construction and reconstruction can be viewed. They also contribute to understanding the positioning of ‘the refugee’ in various social contexts.

The findings are written in journal article format. Each of the four articles take up a particular theme garnered from the data. The first is entitled ‘Finding Education’ (Chapter Four) examining the ways the young people told of how they negotiated attending school. It points out that the current discourses do not include the intricate complexities of the refugee experience and therefore leaves out the extraordinary narratives the young refugee’s persistence in finding an education for themselves. The second entitled ‘A Black Dot on White Paper’, (Chapter Five) examines the experiences of entering Australian high schools. Schools are often the first points of contact for former refugee young people and play a significant role in establishing meaningful connections to Australian society. It argues that it is how the school positions the refugee students within mainstream school culture that opens up or restricts opportunities for inclusion.

Chapter Six, entitled ‘Doing it Alone’, looks at the participants from African countries and examines their experiences of change within the family in resettlement. Their narratives address the stresses and excitements of embracing their new home and how resettlement impacts upon the power relationships within the family structure. Chapter Seven is called ‘Belonging to a Memory’ and takes a deeper look at how the ethnic Burmese participants’ negotiate belonging to the diaspora. I suggest that the stories of a peaceful homeland told by parents and elders create for the young people a strong cultural identity and argue that in the safety of Australia these young people have found ways to modernise their identity to assist in advocating for freedom for Burma.

The discussion in Chapter Eight attempts to bring together and synthesise the findings from the four previous chapters. It identifies some of the themes that have surfaced through the identity negotiations of the young people. I then highlight the ways the young people have been positioned in society due to their refugee identity and make connections to how this positioning affects access to a better life. Finally, I then foreground three arguments; ‘The refugee and the

former refugee is understood as a homogenized identity'; 'A misunderstanding of young former refugees tends to serve to limit the possibilities of schooling'; and 'The negative homogenizing of 'the refugee' ignores the hope and excitement for life that the young refugees bring to their new experiences in Australia'.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

'History is always written by the victors? Maybe'.

The Burmese Boarder Consortium 2010.

Introduction to the Research Problem

Australia has had a long held tradition of accepting refugees under its Humanitarian Entrant Programme. More than 700,000 Australians have come to Australia as refugees by 2011 (Hugo 2011). In the last decade there has been an increase in the proportion of young people that have been welcomed by Australia as refugees from a range of different countries. These young people differ from earlier cohorts as they have lived longer periods of time in displacement and consequently have been subject to unstable living conditions (CMYI 2006; RCA 2009). While there is a substantial amount of literature upon investigating the traumas of displacement, there has been relatively little emphasis placed on the social and cultural constructions of the subject of emplacement of refugees in resettlement countries and the ways in which new connections are established (Rodgers 2002; Turtin 2004; Sampson & Gifford 2010). This focus on displacement has left a gap in our understanding of 'emplacement' (Turtin 2004, p. 24), particularly in relation to refugee resettlement (Sampson & Gifford 2010). This study addresses this gap by investigating how young former refugees make social and cultural connections in the process of their resettlement in Australia. The young people in this study have spent their childhood as a refugee in camps and/or displaced in host countries and then each came to Australia under the offshore Humanitarian Program as teenagers. Their lives have been profoundly influenced not only by these experiences but also by the ways that they have been positioned by others as 'refugees' and then in resettlement as 'former refugees'. As documented in the latest UNHCR policy paper on resettlement by Piper et al. (2012) it has been the topic of asylum seekers that has dominated the discourse between governments leaving discussions of resettlement issues for refugees unaddressed. On those rare occasions where refugee resettlement is addressed it is to highlight demands from governments for integration.

Even though empirical studies shows that resettlement in Australia has had great long-term economic and social benefits (Hugo 2011), the complex issues surrounding resettlement of refugees have been largely ignored (Piper et al. 2012). There is, however, an acknowledgement by the Department of

Immigration and Citizenship that resettlement issues are complex and that establishing connections to new countries takes time. DIAC (2011) recognizes that this group of people are the most vulnerable of new entrants to Australia,

Humanitarian Entrants generally have the highest settlement needs due to their pre-arrival experiences, which may include insecure living conditions and inadequate access to essentials such as clean water, food, shelter and healthcare. Among the current humanitarian intake, most entrants have lived in these unstable conditions for protracted periods of time, and many have experienced physical violence directed against themselves and/or family (p.3).

Yet little research has been undertaken to find out how these entrants manage and overcome the many obstacles they face.

Research examining refugee youth in resettlement has largely been dominated by the examination of trauma experiences and their psychological adaption to their new country. This research investigates how refugees resettle into the United States and discusses resettlement in regards to acculturation rather than integration (Rutter 2006) and therefore differs to examining refugees in the Australian setting. In Australia, Gifford and her colleagues from Refugee Studies at the Swinburne Institute for Social Research (2009; 2010; 2011; 2012) as well as researchers from the Refugee Council of Australia (2009) have examined how resettlement has impacted on the wellbeing of young people in resettlement. There is a gap in the literature, however, examining how young former refugees construct and reconstruct new identities for themselves and new ways to belong in their resettlement country.

Aim of the Study

This study aims to investigate the experiences of twelve young former refugees' resettlement in Australia. It seeks to understand how these young people negotiate multiple ways of belonging in their resettlement country, while at the same time continuing with connections to their past. In particular, it interrogates the ways in which the young people negotiate their cultural identity, creating and recreating new and evolving identities that incorporate their past, present and future and re-conceive a new belonging. In order to deliver a more sophisticated

knowledge of the young peoples' lives, I examine both pre and post settlement experiences of home life, school life and community connection.

The refugee in Australia has become a highly politicised subject in public political discourse and is often viewed with suspicion (Keddie 2011b; Hattam & Every 2010). There are a plethora of misconceptions as to who refugees are and where they are from. In this research there is a deliberate attempt by the researcher to reconstruct a discourse that humanises former refugee young people in the context of resettlement in Australian society. This research aims to construct other perspectives, adding to other qualitative research on the topic.

The findings of this research are in four sections and presented in journal article format. There were two major themes taken from the data, the first was a concern for a good education and the second was the changes in intergenerational relationships within family and connections with the diaspora in resettlement. Therefore, broadly speaking, articles one and two discuss schooling while articles three and four discuss family and cultural identity.

The first two articles examine the young people's experiences of school in two distinct settings, before resettlement (as a refugee) and post resettlement (in Australia). The first article therefore concentrated on the young people's experiences of education as a refugee child. This article is entitled, 'Finding Education: Stories of how Young Former Refugees Constituted Strategic Identities in Order to Access School'. The second article focused on the stories the young people told of entering Australian high schools. It is called, 'It felt like I was a black dot on white paper': Examining young former refugees' experience of entering Australian high schools'. Both articles have been accepted for publication. The first has been accepted in *Race, Ethnicity and Education* and is awaiting publication, the second has been published in *Australian Educational Researcher* (2013) 40:125–137.

In Articles three and four the young people narrate stories of negotiating connections to family and belonging to their ethnic group. What became evident was these negotiations were different between the young African participants and the ethnic Burmese participants. There was of course individual differences

in perceptions, however, in discussing issues, for example, gender expectations and cultural identity there were clear distinctions between the participants from African countries and the young ethnic Burmese participants. Thus the third article takes a look at the changes in family relationships from the African former refugees' perspective in 'Doing it alone': Examining the intergenerational relationships of former refugee young people from African countries in resettlement'. The fourth and final article examines family connection and belonging to the diaspora from the young ethnic Burmese participants' perspective entitled, 'Belonging to a Memory: Examining how young Ethnic Burmese former refugees make sense of resettlement'. This has been submitted to 'Asian Ethnicity'.

Table I Overview of Papers I-IV

	Paper I/Chapter 4	Paper II/Chapter 5	Paper III/Chapter 6	Paper IV/Chapter 7
Title	Finding Education: Stories of how Young Former Refugees Constituted Strategic Identities in Order to Access School.	‘It felt like I was a black dot on white paper’: Examining young former refugees’ experience of entering Australian high schools.	‘Doing it alone’: Examining the intergenerational relationships of former refugee young people from African countries in resettlement.	Belonging to a Memory: Examining how young Ethnic Burmese former refugees make sense of resettlement.
Aim	The narratives of Jacqueline, Sing Me and Jai are explored. They tell of how they negotiated ways to find an education as refugee children before coming to Australia.	To explore the narratives of the participants as they entered high school in Australia and examine the ways they negotiated friendships and demonstrating their learner identities.	To explore the changes in the intergenerational relationships of the African participants’ families from the perspective of the young people.	To explore the ways the young ethnic Burmese participants negotiate cultural identity in Australia to a homeland they have not experienced but learn about through the discursive memories of parents and elders.
Setting	Schooling as refugees, before Australia	In Australian high schools	Family and society	Family and society
Participants	Focus on three participants Jacqueline, Sing Me and Jai	All of the participants	All African participants: Peta, Ali, Rick, Joshua, Jacqueline, Gabriella, Hannah and Matinda.	The four ethnic Burmese Participants. Sing Me, Jai, Bu Song and Phi Lo
Data Collection	Interviews	Interviews and focus groups	Interviews and focus groups	Interviews, focus group and observations
Journal Article	Accepted for publication 6/62013 Race Ethnicity and Education.	Published in Australian Educational Researcher. 2013. 40: 125-137	Not as yet submitted	Submitted to Asian Ethnicities.

Theories that guide this research

To examine the lives of these young people I draw upon a number of sociological perspectives. I draw from the work of Stuart Hall and also include a range of poststructural perspectives to guide the theoretical framework. Taking up Hall's conceptualisation of how cultural identity is conceived through discourse assists in understanding how identities are constructed within the context of society. The poststructural theoretical lenses assist in investigating the fluidity of identities and how these are socially constructed. Specifically, the theories I draw from are postcolonial theory, feminist theory as well as incorporating the sociological ideas that guide inclusive education in Australia and critique deficit discourses. Adding to this I found taking up the writings of the Polish sociologist, Zygmunt Bauman gave particular depth of insight into the positioning of 'the refugee' in global society.

While Hall is seen as a 'cultural theorist' and does not necessarily identify as a poststructuralist (Proctor 2004), he does draw from Michel Foucault's (1926–84) concepts of discourse. Foucault was interested in systems of representation (discourse) that include 'a whole cluster of narratives, statements and/or images on a particular subject that acquire authority and become dominant at a particular historical moment' (Proctor 2004, p. 60). These discourses, as Hall (1996a) sees it, reproduce ideological meanings that are in accordance with the dominant culture and its values, including class, race and gender (Denzin 1992). Hall (1996a) suggests that the real world acquires meaning through discourse. 'Precisely because identities are constructed within, not outside, discourse, we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies' (p. 4). Hall is therefore interested in how 'specific modalities of power' (1996a p.4) work through discourse to empower and enable some while delegitimising and excluding others (Proctor 2004). This conceptualisation of discourse and how it is used by nation states, policy makers, educators, researchers and in everyday life is of central concern to this thesis.

In his writings and lectures on identity, Hall (1996) suggests that identities are fluid in their construction and reconstruction but are 'placed, positioned, in a

culture, a language, a history' (lecture). The globalised subject is an individual with multiple shifting identities and often contradictory components that can be defined by others (Hall 1992). According to Proctor (2004), Hall's primary aim in conceptualising cultural identity is not strictly for theoretical purposes, it is to explain certain historical shifts in society, particularly in the culture of the Caribbean and black British diaspora (Proctor 2004). For forced migrants that are part of the 'post-colonial diasporas' (Davis 2000, p.8), who find themselves placed as an ethnic minority in resettlement, reclaiming a lost cultural identity can be an important pursuit. Of interest here, in the light of this thesis, is how Hall examines cultural identity as a social construction in relation to how the diaspora views culture. Hall identifies two ways the diaspora can view cultural identity. There is the pursuit of a diaspora to reclaim a shared cultural code 'which provide us as 'one people', with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning' (Hall 1993 p. 222). However, Hall (1993) questions this view and suggests cultural identity includes the past and the future and is more about 'becoming' than of 'being'. Hall (1993) states,

Far from being eternally fixed— they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power. Far from being grounded in a mere 'recovery' of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which, when found will secure ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past. (p 225)

This approach to viewing how cultural identities are discursively constructed allows for a process that is ever shifting to accommodate change (Hall 2000).

There lies within this discussion on cultural identity an important premise that underpins the theoretical framework in this thesis. Again I turn to Hall and include Fanon (1977), who takes up a post-colonial position that brings deeper understanding to how the discourses around certain identities have been framed. Hall and Fanon (1977) argue that historically it was European colonial powers that asserted who could speak and how it was spoken. In other words they decided who gets to be heard and who is silenced (Hall 1996). This authority also ensured that mainly the stories by Europeans were told, even stories about

others and therefore there were many stories that were never told. Hall (1994) writes 'Where Africa was a case of the unspoken, Europe was a case of that which is endlessly Speaking - and endlessly speaking us'. Where *us* equates to European interests. The superior attitude of European enlightenment validated the imperial powers' claims on what was 'right' and what was outside right as 'different' and therefore perceived as 'different' (Fanon 1977). The dominant discourse of colonial powers placed 'the native' outside discourses of power and physically alienated large populations – through forced migration, slavery or indenture (Ashcroft et al. 2007). This resulted in invasion of the land, the resources and the culture (Ashcroft et al. 2007). 'It also meant that relation between the coloniser and the colonized were locked in a rigid hierarchy of difference deeply resistant to fair and equitable exchanges, whether economic, cultural or social (Ashcroft et al. 2007 p. 46). As Fanon (1977) argues in the following quote, the modern world-view of colonized people is formed by the discourse of the colonial settler.

In fact, the settler is right when he speaks of knowing 'them' well. For it is the settler who has brought the 'native' into existence and who perpetuates his existence (p. 231).

Here Fanon (1977) emphasizes the 'dominant systems' control over the 'other' suggesting a binary construction of 'different', that positions those who are not similar as outsider. In this sense the concept of 'difference' is conceived as being 'unlike or dissimilar' and positions the 'different' subjects in deficit, inferior and backward ways placed 'at the bottom end within a system of domination and hierarchy' (Ang & St Louis 2005, p.292). Fanon (1977) suggests that this way of positioning the 'different' is still alive today. It would be arrogant of me to say that this thesis gives a voice to peoples oppressed by colonisation but it hopes to contribute to opening up new conversations and possibilities for new discourses. Thus postcolonial theory opens up ways in which 'the refugee' and 'the former refugee' are conceived as 'different' in society by unsettling the colonial discourse of 'difference' as a binary form (Hall 2000). Discourses of difference have been reconceptualised by poststructural theory whereby philosophers such as Derrida

strategically question ‘difference’ as a binary form and conceive *difference* as other-than (Ang & St Louis 2005).

With the unsettling of the construction of ‘difference’ as a dichotomy comes multiple ways to view those positioned as ‘different’. In the context of this thesis identities are theorised as ‘multiple and being in a process of construction that is, subject to the ongoing (de)constructive work of difference’ (Ang & St Louis 2005, p. 293). Indeed, throughout this study ‘difference’ can be viewed in a multiplicity of ways even in some cases as unique and desirable. The thesis also takes up the theories that guide the sociological understandings of inclusive education in Australia, these theories are built upon democratic values and justice. It critiques the use of deficit discourses surrounding ‘difference’ particularly in relation to attitudes toward skin colour (blackness) and having an accent. It asks whether schools are sites that challenge inequities and nurture social justice principles (Keddie 2011a; Hattam and Every 2010; Matthews 2008). It takes up Youdell’s theory suggesting that difference in skin colour and accent can be ‘constituted as challenging white hegemony in the discourse of the school institution and excluded from the possibility of being a good student, or of being a student at all’ (Youdell 2006, p.37).

Drawing on a range of poststructural theories to understand the young peoples’ lived experiences assists me in recognising the complexity and unique challenges they encounter in regards to belonging simultaneously within multiple settings. Through poststructural lenses, identities are seen as the relationship between the individual and the social; a relationship that is constantly shifting and is multifaceted (Bakhtin 1984). It is within these intersections that this thesis concentrates its investigation, as this is where identity construction and reconstruction work is done. This is summed up by Pavlenko & Blackledge (2003), in the following quote,

Poststructuralist inquiry highlights the fact that identities are constructed at the interstices of multiple axes, such as age, race, class, gender, generation, sexual orientation, geopolitical locale, institutional affiliation, and social status, whereby each aspect of identity redefines and modifies all others. Since individuals often shift and adjust ways in which they

identify and position themselves in distinct context, identities are best understood when approached in their entirety, rather than through consideration of a single aspect or subject position (p.16).

In examining the lived experiences of each of the participants in this study it is important to consider the entirety of their identity negotiations rather than to compartmentalise such negotiations. It is at the intersections of the multiple axes of 'age, race, class, gender, generation, sexual orientation, geopolitical locale, institutional affiliation, and social status' (Pavlenko & Balackledge 2003), where these negotiations become most significant as the subject begins to understand the ways in which they are positioned in society.

For the young former refugees moving into resettlement, whose lives I explore and write about, change is eminent, and as quickly as I write, their lives move on (Hajdukowski-Ahmed et al. 2008). As a former refugee woman at the US Refugee Women's Convention requests: 'Consider us not as we are now but as we were. Consider us as we can become our potential as individuals enabling others' (cited in Hajdukowski-Ahmed et al. 2008, p. 4). Thus, in attempting to investigate how former refugee youths in Australia negotiate their cultural identity, it must be understood that they include and accommodate the complexity of the past, the present and their dreams for their future.

The thesis examines how the young former refugee participants are positioned within society and the role power plays in this positioning. Feminist theoretical insights combined with postcolonial theories are interwoven through the analysis to bring deeper understanding of how power plays out in the lives of the young people.

In childhood, the young people whose stories are presented here were designated the legal status of 'refugee'. This status had multiple implications upon the quality of life they experienced as refugee children. Each host state determined the positioning and social power or lack of social power for 'the refugee', for example, to have the liberty to obtain a work visa or to attend school or to leave camp. These were all decisions that were made for refugees

by the host states. All of these conditions and many more determined their position in society and therefore their access to a better life. This is critical to the influences on the young people's relationship to the world as a child and their identity constructions. As Norton (2000 p.8) points out, 'Who I am' is aligned with the question of 'What am I allowed and not allowed to do?' Thus identity constructions for the young people, who have lived their childhood with refugee status, must also be examined in the light of access to fundamental resources such as food, clean water and schooling.

I argue in this thesis that a deeper insight into what it means to be a refugee youth coming into Australia is needed in order to understand the complexities and challenges in the resettlement process. In order for this understanding to be facilitated the way in which each participant conceives of their past must also be considered in this investigation as it gives insight into the present. It also allows for an investigation of the relationships that are developed and changed through resettlement. The relationships include those with self, family, friends, ethnic group, authorities, teachers and country. I therefore ask: How do these relationships evolve and change? Is status and therefore power altered? Does a sense of belonging continue, change, become complex and multiple?

Defining Terms

The term 'former refugee' is not widely used in the literature. Another term that is used by researchers is 'young people from refugee backgrounds.' I chose not to use this term 'young people from refugee backgrounds' because it has problems similar to the designation in education parlance of students who speak another language at home: 'language backgrounds other than English' (LBOTE). This term describes children who speak another language at home, yet it makes no distinction between the immigrant experience and having a parent who has immigrated. The child may have lived their childhood in Australia. This term (LBOTE) is entirely appropriate for the field of teaching English as a Second Language as it is a linguistic classification. My concern is that using the term 'young person from refugee background' can be understood in the same way as LBOTE students and therefore the refugee student might be considered only as having a parent who was a refugee. In order to be specific I chose the term

'former refugee' to acknowledge the participant as having lived as a refugee (whatever that experience may have been) before coming to Australia.

This thesis discusses the narrations of the young peoples' lives in their entirety so far. The young people talk of their lives largely within two timeframes, life before Australia and life in Australia. The terminologies employed in the thesis to describe the two timeframes are 'pre-settlement' and 'resettlement'. As each of the participants were designated with refugee status when pre-settlement than the young people talk of 'when I was a refugee', they do this to signify the time before coming to Australia. Therefore the researcher also makes this distinction and describes pre-settlement period as a refugee and the resettlement period as a 'former refugee'. Another timeframe reference becomes apparent when the young people refer to their life as a child. As all of the participants came to Australia in their teen years they viewed their childhood as being the period when they were a refugee. In other words - childhood equates to pre-settlement, equates to refugee, and youth equates to resettlement, equates to former refugee equates to citizen of Australia.

Research Design

The research incorporates an overarching qualitative approach. That is to say I draw from the stories of the individual participants in order capture a larger narrative to assist in understanding more about this social phenomenon. I judged that a narrative enquiry would enable a rich and meaningful understanding of the young former refugee's identity constructions and reconstructions as they resettle in Australia using individual interviews and focus groups to gather the data. This ensured the study had multiple perspectives from which to draw information, and ensured that each individual in the study was able to present themselves through different settings as they chose. The former refugee youths identify ethnically as coming from Karenni State Burma, Chin State Burma, Burma the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leon, South Sudan, Togo, Benin and Burundi. However the youths have spent their childhoods in the host countries of Thailand, Malaysia, Kenya, Zambia, Benin, South Africa and Ghana.

It is here that I must say that I count it as a great privilege to be present when these young people opened their hearts, told their history and their hopes and dreams. I tread gently and with deep respect. To ensure this respect I listened to the needs and wishes of each participant and I worked the way they wanted to work in the ways they felt comfortable. For example, the research process did not proceed as I first planned; I had planned to conduct focus groups then interviews and then member checking however because of the needs of the participants the interviews came first, then focus groups. This will be explored at greater length in the Methodology Chapter.

Thirteen participants were recruited for data collection. Twelve participants engaged in individual interviews that lasted one hour to one and a half hours long. Nine participants were involved in the two focus groups. One focus group included five girls from African countries and in the other four ethnic Burmese participants (two boys and two girls). All of the youth interviewed were between the ages of 16 to 20 years old. One Sudanese youth worker aged 23 was also interviewed to give another perspective on the young people however the data from this interview has not been included in the findings because I felt that the young people's narratives gave a clear picture.

Largely there are two landscapes where the participants talked about belonging and not belonging, connecting and disconnecting. These were at school where relationships with friends were a priority and within the family where relationships with parents were discussed at length.

Research Questions

The following two guiding questions were explored in this study:

- i. How do former refugee youths living in Australia negotiate their cultural identity?
- ii. What pathways do young former refugees take to construct a new sense of identity?

Question one acknowledges that each participant came to Australia with their own unique background and ontologically and epistemologically formed perceptions of who they are and how they fit into their world. In other words I

acknowledge that before entering Australia the young people had an understanding of their own cultural identity. This question pursues the ideas that cultural identity is ever changing and that one determinant of change is movement, in this case resettlement (Gibney 2006). Therefore the question also acknowledges the agency of the young person to negotiate new ways of understanding themselves, their culture and their surroundings within the confines of that new place. Because each of these individuals are undergoing resettlement, for all of them it is their first permanent country, their first documented citizenship and their first experience of building a permanent home. This brings with it a multiplicity of choices of how to connect to their new country and keep ties with the old. I therefore draw from Hall's (1990, p 225) concept that a cultural identity,

is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. --- It belongs to the future as well as the past. Identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past.

The second question addresses the participants' movement into their new society. It asks the question 'how' did this happen and therefore examine how this worked out in a practical sense and details when, where and why these changes took place. It observes how society positioned the young refugees and whether they perceived Australia as a welcoming and empowering place to belong. It allows the researcher to make observations about how they saw themselves within the social constructs of school, family and wider society. Again I refer to Hall (2000, p. 17) to describe the ways in which identities can be constructed,

Precisely because identities are constructed within, not outside, discourse, we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies. Moreover they emerge within the play of specific modalities of power, and thus are more the product of marking of difference and exclusion, then they are the sign of an identical, naturally constituted unity – an 'identity' in its traditional

meaning (that is, an all-inclusive sameness, seamless, without internal differentiation).

Above all, and directly contrary to the form in which they are constantly invoked, identities are constructed through, not outside, difference.

Both questions prompt an enquiry into the newcomer in society. They not only seek to examine the participants' stories of their lives but they also seek to examine how society positions the participants through the discourses within society.

Rationale

This research brings refugee youth in the resettlement process to the foreground. It seeks to contribute to the field of study which is 'forced migration', recognising that the term 'forced migration' has been socially constructed only within the last fifteen years to describe the complex migration phenomena at this particular time in which we live (Chimni 2011). The qualitative nature of the research attempts to provide in-depth analysis of the resettlement process for young people exploring their relationships with society, family friends and themselves. There are still relatively few studies exploring an in-depth look at young people's lives through the resettlement process. Furthermore there is a need not only for the dominant discourses that demand integration to be heard but also for the voices of the refugees themselves to be heard. With Piper et al. (2012, p.3), I argue that,

Resettlement is an issue that deserves to be taken seriously by those charged with shaping its policy and those delivering it on the ground.

The better it is understood, the more effectively it can be used.

This study therefore brings a deeper understanding of how the resettlement process affects cultural identity shifts and the pathways that young people take to connect with and belong to, where they have been resettled.

Traditionally forced migration research has been dominated by economists and geographers who have explained forced migration through the push pull factor (Castles and Miller 2003). However, as Castles (2003) points out, the frequent

failures of policies based on these attributes alone has highlighted the need to understand the social dynamics of the forced migratory process. This has led to a new emphasis in research on the role of social networks, the family and the community in shaping new forced migratory behaviour. The task therefore for a contemporary sociology of forced migration is to analyse the new characteristics of forced migration in the epoch of globalisation (Castles and Miller 2003).

While this thesis concerns itself primarily with resettlement it also includes the narratives of the young people and their experiences of life as a refugee. The field of Forced Migration Studies can be extended to conceptualise the forced migration trajectory to include Refugees, Internally Displaced People, Economic migrants, Stateless People, Asylum seekers, trafficked people, persons of concern to the UNHCR, Resettled and Repatriated refugees. This broader framework reflects a less homogenous representation of 'refugees', and therefore it enables a response to the complexities of migration that are characteristic of contemporary society. It also assists in critiquing the discourses surrounding forced migrants and their relations to power within society (Zetter 2007). Today, forced migration is both a result and a cause of social transformation in the global South (Castles and Miller 2003).

Internationally, 'very little of the literature about refugees and forced migrants concerns itself with older children and young people in spite of the fact that, among many refugee communities, the under-25 category sometimes represents more than 50 per cent of the total population' (Chatty 2007, p267). The Refugee Council of Australia (2009) reports that 74% of new entrants over the past five years are less than 30 years old upon arrival. Pinson and Arnot (2007) have described the lack of refugee education research as a 'wasteland', rendering the lives and educational experiences of refugee youth before resettlement 'invisible' (Pinson & Arnot 2007, p. 400). Therefore, this project seeks to contribute to existing international literature that documents the experiences of children and young people who have been in situations of prolonged conflict, forced migration and resettlement. This type of research has been increasing since The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) was signed by 191 countries. This act has propelled an effort to place the protection of all children within an

international human rights framework (Ramirez and Matthews 2008). In Article 22, the Convention makes special reference to refugee children, their right to live with their families, appropriate protection, and humanitarian assistance. In this research the devastation and the violation of these rights became evident as the young people's narratives unfolded, therefore it is of utmost importance that these aspects of their stories are highlighted and discussed.

Within the current Australian political landscape a number of conflicting discourses have evolved. A major change in the political discourse toward refugees can be traced back to John Howard's Liberal Party election campaign launch speech on 28 October 2001. This speech took place at the time when Australia was refusing the Norwegian freighter Tampa permission to deposit rescued asylum seekers on Australian soil. This act was seen to be breaking Australia's legal obligation to the Refugee Convention and as breaking the international law on 'non-refoulement' (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2011). The tough language used by Howard was aimed particularly at asylum seekers arriving on boats in Australian waters (Immigration Museum 2010). The perception of 'the refugee' as a 'stranger in our midst' (Bauman 2004) has subsequently gained momentum.

At the same time in Australia another discourse has been perpetuated by the government. This discourse surrounds the refugees who enter under the resettlement program. Here the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (2007) reframes the governmental discourse, positioning the refugee as victim, vulnerable and in need of Australia's assistance (DIAC 2011).

The two discourses that run simultaneously in Australia distort facts and confuse the Australian public thereby adding to the increasing suspicion of 'the refugee,' and polarising attitudes within Australian society (Keddie 2011b; Hattam & Every 2010). The topic of refugees and immigration has always been a deeply politicised subject throughout all nation states, because it raises important questions about the changing nature of boundaries, both socially and geographically, of 'national self' and how the other is constituted, and ethical and political practice (Nyers 2003). As Bauman (1998 p.9) claims, 'mobility has become the most powerful and most coveted stratifying factor in the modern world'.

While this thesis is not driven by a political dogma it has been written with passion to bring to light issues of social justice and expose discrimination both in systems and in everyday life. By asking the young people to speak, to listen to their stories and writing of their experiences I must state my bias toward desiring to make a space for their stories to be heard. In doing this I have acted as a friend in the hope that others too would also not see strangers but friends.

An Autobiographical Note

'If you've come here to help me, you are wasting your time; But if you've come here because your liberation is bound up with mine then let us work together'
(Lilla Watson and the "Aboriginal activists group, Queensland, 1970s).

In wanting to investigate the lived experiences of young former refugee youth and to understand how identities move and take on a multiplicity of constructs a number of intentional methodological choices were made that shape the ways the investigation took place. The thesis takes up an advocacy perspective (Creswell 2007) making explicit claims in regards to how these young people are labelled and marginalised in their past and now in Australian society. Therefore, a critical question regarding how this researcher, who is not a refugee, might have any right to 'speak for' or more accurately, make a space for the voices of young former refugees to be heard, must be addressed.

I bring to this research the knowledge I have acquired in life through my personal experiences and it is here that I try to make connections to my past experiences in order to make sense of the ways in which I have approached this research project (Andrews 2008). Riessman (2008) suggests that by using personal narratives to raise issues concerning epistemological and methodological choices the author provides insights into the relationship they have with the study and perception of the participants' narratives. In order to explain my previous connections and personal motivations in understanding the identity constructions of refugees in resettlement, I will employ three autobiographical narratives, through vignettes, thus using a similar method as the participants in this study. These vignettes trace an evolution of thought and experience that has led to being involved in researching former refugees.

Vignette 1: Researcher's Background

'Someone could ask, what's a white, middleclass, woman doing researching African and Asian refugees?'

This was the first question from my new supervisor. I sat stunned, not really hearing the rest of the supervision, I was back remembering the very first time I had been asked a similar question, but it went slightly different.

"What's a dirty blackfella doing standing on our springboard?"

I (all of nine years old) yelled, "I'm not! I'm not a blackfella!"

More boys joined the boy on the springboard standing over me they yelled in my face,

'Abo's are not allowed. Get off.'

I jumped off the springboard, dived into the pool and swam to the shallow end. I reached my friends and nervously told them what had happened. They looked at each other and back to me saying, 'Well ya dunno know Jonnell, you could be, you're adopted and look at ya, ya black.'

In a small town news of me being called a 'black fella' travelled fast. More racial labels followed me around the playground the following week. Kids decided not to play with me and I found myself alone. Soon parents joined the enquiry. It went like this; 'Well she can play sport, and sing and she can't read, she must be an abo.'

My mother heard it and reacted in a fury I had not seen before. She mumbled that she was determined to end this 'myth.'

At one of the afternoon mothers' sessions at the front gate of my primary school my mother laid the question of my identity to rest. She spoke loud and clear for all (including me) to hear.

'We don't know who Jonnell's mother was, but what if she was a prostitute? How would Jonnell cope with that?' All mothers gasped and nodded. Mum continued, 'So shut up about where Jonnell came from, she's here now and she's mine and that's that.'

My origin was never mentioned again.

Vignette 2: Thailand.

In 1998 I went to Thailand to help out a friend for a while, she asked me 'come and hold babies' in a new orphanage she was managing. When I got there I found that it was a home for babies with Aids. At that time Thai society had very definitely rejected these babies and they were being severely neglected and dying in government orphanages. There was a need for volunteers to come and comfort and give dignity to these babies in their slow death. So I went and held those tiny little human beings, fed them, changed them and kissed them and tried desperately to comfort them beginning when they died. As time went on many of the children began their living and I stayed in Northern Thailand for seven and a half years. I found a job teaching Music and Drama in an International School where the parents of the students were aid workers from all over the world. My skills in Music and ESL teaching opened up many opportunities. I went with many NGOs to hillside villages and refugee camps on the Thai/Burmese border teaching English and learning the songs of the Karen and Karenni. I helped out in a rehabilitation centre for young women from Burma who were victims of human trafficking and labour exploitation. We played the guitar and the young women taught me to cook spicy curry out of what I thought were weeds on the side of the road. I shared a home with an American who went into Burma to give medical and dental assistance to the internally displaced in Burma. Our home in Chiang Mai became a place for those who did not have the right identification cards while they received medical treatment from an independent missionary hospital that would assist refugees.

Over that time I drove in four wheel drives to take land mine victims to hospital, made music with some very cool refugee musicians, sat with HIV children in hospital, celebrated fiercely when each HIV orphan reached another year, delivered shoes to kids in hill tribe villages who had never worn shoes and directed musicals and concerts for students in the International School. I could never sleep when it rained in Thailand because I could only think about all the displaced Burmese hiding in the jungle and their children getting sick. My most enjoyable times was sitting around, sharing food and listening and telling stories both real and made up with refugees, orphans, NGOs, international students and Thais. I cannot do justice to my time in Thailand in this short passage so I have followed a strategy used in many reports on refugees. It is a personal note of some lessons learned.

- *Babies know when they are loved and they will use all their strength to live a little bit longer just to get a little bit more love.*
- *Trust, if it is broken in a child, is the hardest thing to repair.*
- *Music is a powerful soother of terrible wounds to the heart.*
- *Discrimination is a way to hate and keep people trapped in poverty.*
- *I had never imagined the ways people could hate until I heard the stories from the refugees and saw the destruction the haters delivered.*
- *People will act like rats when they get treated like rats.*
- *Some parents will walk for months through jungle and over treacherous mountains to save their sick child's life and others will sell them for a motorbike.*

I had intended to leave Thailand to pursue a Master's Degree in Education and then become a principal. But something happened to change my perspective.

Just before leaving Thailand I met Rosie, (pseudonym) an 18 year old Karen girl living at the rehabilitation centre. Rosie and her brothers had just received word from the UNHCR that she too was going to Australia in the Humanitarian Resettlement program. This was good news to everyone but Rosie. I had been asked to teach her some English and talk about Australia. As I got to know Rosie I began to piece together her life and understand her fear of leaving for Australia.

Rosie had been trying desperately to get back into the refugee camp because that was the place she had last seen her parents. They had dropped Rosie and her two brothers at the camp and went back to Burma to get more of their family but had never returned. As a child in the camp Rosie had refused to go to school but instead sat by the entrance of the camp in the hope that her parents would see her straight away upon their return. At the age of 13 (I was told by the director of the centre) she was sold by her cousin to a man who needed a maid. At 13 Rosie found herself in an illegal brothel in Northern Thailand. After many years Rosie was rescued and placed in a rehabilitation centre for young women in Chiang Mai. Yet Rosie's heart was still at the border.

Two weeks before I boarded my flight to Australia Rosie and her brothers were sent to Melbourne.

As I resettled into Australian life I suffered terribly with reverse culture shock. Each time something would jar me I would wonder how refugees like Rosie make these transitions. While studying for my Masters I took a research subject and in this I interviewed a Sierra Leonean woman asking; what are the obstacles to live again? This research project opened my eyes to another way of understanding the world and became fascinated by it. I then returned to teaching in Australian schools but my heart had been stolen, I did not fit into 'white middleclass'. I then found employment first as a youth resettlement worker and then teaching in an Intensive English Centre where my two worlds met and where I felt of some use.

However the thirst continued, I wanted to know more and I was becoming deeply frustrated by the misinformation and lack of compassion developing in parts of Australian society. I was invited by a lecturer at Wollongong University to teach in TESOL and became a part of a team. We had numerous conversations regarding the study of migration and refugees and I'm sure it was to shut me up but one day my colleagues insisted I should write. I scoffed. They suggested a PhD. They then went on to explain that it was not about being brilliant, it was about persistence. I still don't know if that was an insult but I did take up the challenge.

In coming to the research from a sociological perspective I had always been concerned that ESL education was only about language and that understanding the nuances of culture was left to the student to struggle through largely on their own. But what I observed was the person who could negotiate the different cultural nuances even if their language skills weren't perfect, were happier in his/her new life. This fascinated me and I wanted to understand this more.

Vignette 3: Back 'home'

In 2007 I was employed as a youth Resettlement Worker for Illawarra Multicultural Services in Wollongong New South Wales. I had asked the young former refugees to join different programs but it was always the same thing. The boys could come but the girls were not allowed. I persisted in asking until one day I was summoned to the interview room at my office to be interviewed by two older Sudanese women. I had no

idea at the time but these women were the matriarchs of the Dinkhas and were investigating this youth worker who persisted in asking for the girls to be involved in the programs being provided for the youth. They controlled the meeting, asking me questions about myself and about the people I loved. I asked them questions about their family. At no point did we discuss the youth program. I was thankful for my experience from Thailand as the way this dialogue unfolded was familiar to me. It reminded me of sitting on the mats with Burmese refugees who were not interested in the things I do but in who I am. After our conversation the women left without a word about their daughters.

Then came a father from Sierra Leone background who asked me more questions about myself. At the end of this interview I was told that I was being entrusted with their girls (the girls from the African diaspora) and they could join the programs. The father told me that the parents couldn't fully understand the program nor why their girls needed these things but as I was Australian I might know what they need in this country and I could give it to them. This father assured me that he represented the parents and that they would trust me, not because of my position or of what I said but how I talked to them. Apparently it was my soft eyes and kind face and they knew their children would be happy with me. I was deeply impacted by that trust; it came with so much responsibility. It connected me to these families. They gave me a role in their family's life to be a bridge to their new world and I took that responsibility very seriously.

Structuring and Presenting the Thesis.

This thesis has been written in the journal article style format approved by the University of Wollongong therefore it does not strictly follow the structure of a traditional thesis. It still has each component but it is organised differently to embed the articles into the thesis. I will now explain how the thesis is set up. The thesis is set up in three broad sections.

Section One has the *Introduction*, the *Background* and the *Methodology* (Chapters 1, 2 and 3).

Section Two contains the *Findings* and these are presented in four journal articles (Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7).

Section Three closes with the *Discussion* and *Conclusion* (Chapters 8 and 9).

As each of the journal articles have their own methodology, review of the literature and the specific theoretical approaches used, the traditional organisation would mean that I would be repeating myself in each section. In order to not repeat myself and invoke boredom Section One does not include a lengthy review of the literature.

Chapter Two gives a background to the study. It describes the global phenomenon of forced migration and explores the changes that have taken place in recent years. It then examines how the world has dealt with these changes and attempts to trace the dominant discourses that frame the refugee as 'other'. After this closer attention is paid to what empirical evidence that exists to examine access and availability to education refugee children and young people have primarily in camps but also in displacement. Finally the concept of resettlement is discussed and the research of youth in resettlement is highlighted.

Chapter Three sets out the research design and the process employed in the study. The chapter begins with discussing the nature of narrative enquiry and the particularities of this method to this research. The setting and the participants are then described. After this the strategies I used for recruitment are detailed. Data was collected through focus groups and interviews and here I discuss the significance of storytelling for the participant. This is followed by a description of my approach to analysing the data in relation of the theory of the study. Ethics considerations and the limits of the research are next and I finish chapter three with a discussion of disjuncture between Western conceptions of youth and the youth in this study.

The Findings are presented in Chapters Four, Five, Six and Seven and are written for peer-reviewed academic journals. Each research article has its own abstract, background, theoretical and methodological approaches, results and discussion sections.

Following this is the discussion brings coherence to the findings. This chapter synthesises what was found by examining the answers to the research questions. Firstly it summarises and compares what each article found concerning the young

peoples' identity negotiations. Secondly I establish some understandings of the negotiations that took place. I then highlight the ways the young people have been positioned in society due to their refugee identity and make connections to how this positioning affects access to a better life. I then foreground three arguments garnered from the evidence produced in the research. Finally the Conclusion discusses the implications of the study and suggests possibilities for further research.

In the Discussion (Chapter 9) these counter narratives are taken up as there is room to present a more complex and less linear line of argument. For example, in Chapter Five the article discusses entrance to Australian schools and the barriers that were encountered however I did not have room to discuss the narratives of excitement and hope about entering school until the Discussion Chapter. Future plans are to convert these into articles.

Likewise, in order for a strong argument to be developed in the articles I had to use snippets from a lot of participants thus leaving out long narratives from one individual. Again, these longer narratives are visited in the Discussion to complement the articles.

CHAPTER TWO

| BACKGROUND

Describing the Context

In this section I begin with an overview of the features of forced migration examining first how this and the way in which wars are fought have changed in recent years. I then attempt to explain the reactions to these changes by examining the change in the global discourse surrounding refugees. Using Bauman's philosophical ideas of the stranger brings further understanding to how forced migrants are positioned within the discourse. Next I move to examine how refugee children and young people experience education. The literature on refugee children provides a glimpse of what some of the participants in this research might have experienced and therefore becomes part of the backdrop to what is introduced later in the thesis. Likewise, the background literature and examination of key factors pertaining to resettlement is then examined. The literature on former refugee youth is discussed giving an overview of the field.

A new world for forced migrants

Our world now has an estimated 43.7 million forced migrants and 15.2 million are refugees (UNHCR 2013); this number is continually growing. The burden of housing refugees is unequally shared amongst receiving nations around the world. Four fifths of the world's refugees are being hosted by developing countries. In 2010 these were the countries that received the highest number of refugees; Pakistan, (2 million). Syria (1.5 million); Iran (963,000); Germany (578,000); Jordan (500,000); Tanzania (435,000); China (300,000); United Kingdom (299,000); Chad (294,000) and the United States (281,000) (Gutierrez 2010). How quickly the numbers change is demonstrated by the nation of Syria, noted above as a receiving country and now in 2013 producing its own refugees. The Refugee Council of Australia reported on their web page in the beginning July 2013,

The number of registered Syrian refugees in the Middle East stands at 1,631,981 – 521,040 in Lebanon, 474,669 in Jordan, 376,640 in Turkey, 158,669 in Iraq and 79,267 in Egypt. In addition, there are hundreds of thousands of refugees still to be registered, including 500,000 in Lebanon. As a country with a population of just 4.3 million, Lebanon alone is hosting more than one million Syrian refugees. The director of UNHCR's Middle East and North Africa Bureau, Yacoub El Hillo, told the gathering of non-government representatives that the cross-cutting

Middle Eastern tradition of aiding the weak was central to the support being offered to Syrian refugees.

Accounting for forced migrants is complex, one particular complexity is the top receiving countries are not signatories to the Refugee Convention and therefore have signed no international obligation to account or care for refugees that are displaced within their borders, yet they still house refugees. Another is the numbers that are provided by the host countries tend to be inflated and the numbers provided by the country of origin where people are escaping tend to be smaller (Harrell-Bond et al. 1992). Adding to this the UNHCR's mandate does not empower the organization to count refugees on its own (Harrell-Bond et al. 1992).

Encampment constitutes the main method for refugee assistance in the developing world, and qualifies as the most conspicuous element of refugee assistance with the notable exception of Latin America (Zeus 2011). Refugees who live in camps live in makeshift houses or tents on the borders of host countries where they have no or little means to change their own circumstances and receive aide. Eighty per cent of camp residents are women and children (UNHCR 2013). An estimated two/ thirds of refugees leave the camps and venture into neighbouring cities to find work as illegal immigrants or immigrants with restricted visa status.

Of great concern to refugee relief agencies is the growing number of protracted situations in the world where little has changed in unstable states and civilians stay under the concern of International Refugee Relief agencies for decades. The UNHCR (2009, p.7) defines 'protracted situations' as 'one in which 25,000 or more refugees of the same nationality have been in exile for five years or more in a given asylum country' with no prospect of a solution. In 2008 the UNHCR (cited in Zeus 2011) estimated 10 million people were trapped in protracted refugee situations. The longest is Palestine closely followed by the Thai/Burmese border camps.

The easiest and possibly the most reliable way to quantify data concerning refugee populations globally is through camps and the UNHCR are the main contributors to camp assistance. According to USA for UNHCR (2013) the

number of people under the concern of the UNHCR is around 34 million. The definition of refugee is a legal one;

“Under the UNHCR’s mandate, A refugee is any person who “owing to 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 nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it (UNHCR 2012 p.18) ”.

The nature of new wars.

The refugee phenomenon is not new, however, what is new is the sheer number of refugees in our world today. In 1975 there were 2.4 million refugees and by 2013 there are 43.7 million (UNHCR 2013). This dramatic increase of numbers has impacted the world politically, economically, environmentally and socially (Castles and Miller 2003). There are a number of explanations, for example, Castles and Miller (2003) point out how a notable change in how wars have been conducted since the Cold War. ‘Local wars became proxy wars escalating in East-West conflict between the superpowers and their satellite modern warfare’ (p.5). These ‘new wars’ (Kaldour 2001) are simultaneously regional and transnational wars. The regional conflicts are over national identity, ethnic division and competition for political and economic power. These conflicts have become transnational involving civilians fleeing borders, foreign volunteers, mercenaries, international journalists, United Nations aid agencies, Non-Government Organisations and peace keeping forces. Additionally, the way wars are fought has changed. No longer do large armies fight each other but irregular forces attack civilians. Their aim is for political control over populations which is why there is such an increase in forced migrants (Kaldor 2001). ‘Ninety per cent of those killed are civilians. Both government forces and insurgents use exemplary violence including torture and sexual assault as means of control’ (Castles 2003, p.5).

Positioning 'the refugee' in global discourse

Just as the way wars are waged has changed, so too has the discourses surrounding 'the refugee' changed. This shift in how 'the refugee' is perceived and positioned within global society impacts upon both refugees themselves, upon relief agencies and upon the nation states investment in controlling forced migration flows (Castles and Miller 2009). It is these issues that will be highlighted in the following section.

Discourse constituting 'the refugee' have been contested and subjected to great scrutiny in the last thirty years since the Cold War (Castles and Miller 2009). The paradigm shift became apparent when 'international refugee policy and law began to be laid inter alia through the creation of the 'myth of difference' (Chimni 1998 p 351).) This difference was that no longer is the refugee 'white, male and anti-communist,' that could be declared as a heroic figure that possesses 'ideological and political value' to Western interests (Chimni 1998 p.356). The refugees from the Cold War era fitted easily within Western countries that needed unskilled and semi-skilled workers for nation building (Gibney 2006). Their asylum claims boosted the ideological discourse that Western liberal democracy was superior to Soviet Russia.

However after the Cold War the ways in which 'the refugee' is perceived has changed. Now 'the refugee' is largely coming from the 'global south' and is shrouded in discourses of difference (Chimni 1998). These differences are never clearly articulated by nation states in the 'global north' however Chimni (1998) accurately describes the mistrust toward the refugee coming from the global south as 'being shrouded in a myth of difference.' Thus 'the refugee' is treated with suspicion in the protectionist political discourses of nation states on migration issues (Boswell 2003).

The shift in the discourse has also brought about a shift in power over the positioning of refugees. Zetter (2007) states, that previously humanitarian agencies operating in the 'global south' were entrusted with ascertaining refugee status. Now government bureaucracies in the 'global north' are transforming the discourse surrounding the labelling of refugees. As Nyer (2003) suggests, 'Western governments have chosen to frame the discourse 'through the prism of security' (p.1069). According to Bauman (2004), this has been exacerbated by the

events of 11th September 2001 which gave rise to a particular sinister discourse on forced migration by blending asylum seekers to terrorists, despite the fact that no refugees or asylum seekers engaged in the terrorist acts of 9/11 (Castle and Miller 2003). Thereby undermining the traditional view of protecting civilians from fear of persecution and war. This has created new meanings for 'the refugee'. Thus refugees are no longer seen as an asset to a nation but are the 'Achilles heel of liberal democratic states' (Turton, 2003 p.1).

As a consequence of framing the refugee through a discourse of suspicion, 'the refugee' and those seeking asylum are now viewed as subject to the agenda of the 'global north'. The treatment of refugees is not necessarily about aiding in their protection, rather in the 'global north', it is about containing them away from the 'global north'. For example, Australia has been a global forerunner in deterring forced migrants from entering mainstream Australian society by first building detention centres and then finding tiny islands in the Pacific Ocean to contain those seeking asylum. The discourses that have been used to support these punitive measures have assisted in changing attitudes toward forced migrants (Chimni 2010) for example, the term 'asylum seeker' has become mainstream and institutionalised in immigration status (Zetter 2007, p181) along with other terms such as 'genuine refugee', 'queue-jumper', 'illegal migrant', 'economic refugee', 'climate change refugee' and 'boat people'. This new terminology colours society's attitudes to 'the refugee'. As Zetter (2007, p181) writes,

The concept of labelling reveals and contests the subjectivity and arbitrariness by which labels are made, and the way in which every day bureaucratic processes transform identities. By showing how labels ascribe simplified meanings and artificially discriminate between people whose needs for protection are paramount, we can explain why alienation, reluctance to conform to the label, and often dysfunctional behaviour, emerge.

Here Zetter (2007) establishes a clear foundation as to why the labelling of refugees needs to be contested. Put another way, if the only people who are allowed to speak of and for 'the refugee' are those whose interests are for the security of the 'global North' than Bauman's representation of the refugee as the 'outsider incarnate' is likely to become more apparent.

Theorizing the discourse of ‘the stranger’

In trying to understand how society perceives the refugee as an outsider, I turn to Bauman’s philosophical ideas of how ‘the stranger’ is constituted within society and I relate this specifically to the Australian context.

There are, as Bauman (1991, 2004) and Mansson (2008) put it, different types of strangers and one of the problems globalisation has produced is that the ‘distant stranger’ is now not so distant. The stranger has the means to come closer in diverse ways, this new closeness of the strangers requires a response. The stranger, as Bauman (1991) suggests, is indeed ‘the someone who refuses to remain confined to “far away” places’ (p. 294). The stranger comes into the life world of ‘us’ and settles here (Bauman 1991). Therefore ‘it becomes relevant whether he is a friend or foe’ (Bauman 1991, p. 294).

Mansson (2008) describes the stranger, in a multiplicity of forms. He suggests s/he can be the tourist, the migrant, the cosmopolitan, the guest worker, the refugee or the asylum seeker. All are similar in coming from other lands and obtaining entry to their new country, yet the difference is in how each is perceived in being more of a stranger than the other. The tourist comes and goes. The cosmopolitan stands as venturing around the globe and electing a place of their own choice then moving on to another place. The migrant settles as the newcomer amongst those already established and as Bauman (2004) describes becomes ‘the stranger in our midst’ (p.67). The difference between the migrant and the refugee is that ‘while the migrant is looking for home, the refugee is fleeing from home’ (Mansson 2008, p.8).

How society views the newcomer can depend upon what Bauman (2004) describes as the ‘usefulness of a person’. Migrants and guest workers come with occupations, ‘work readiness’ and an ability to operate in the consumer society. Refugees, on the other hand, are largely perceived as coming with nothing to contribute to the global consumer economy. This positioning of the refugee as ‘surplus to requirements’ is being played out in the Australian political arena at the moment. One such example is the response to the release of the report on Settlement of New Arrivals in 2011. The Liberal Shadow Minister for Immigration, Morrison, for example, stated that the Australian public needed to fear refugee resettlement as it was ‘a toxic social cocktail of welfare dependency,

entitlement, enclaves and intergenerational social problems, all manipulated by people smugglers' (RCA 2011). This demonstrates just how fierce the battle to demonise 'the refugee' has become in Australia. It also shows how the deliberate confusion between refugees and asylum seekers is played out in Australian discourse. By using the words 'people smugglers' in his response to the report, the Shadow Minister deliberately 'muddies the waters' as to whom the report is referencing, implying that all refugees come to Australia as 'boat people'. In response the Refugee Council of Australia took a humanitarian viewpoint: 'While the Refugee and Humanitarian Program is focused on saving lives in peril rather than increasing Australia's skill base, it does bring to Australia a group of people who are younger than the national average and ready to make long-term commitments to their new society' (RCA 2011). Therefore the confusion over whether the stranger, (that is 'the refugee') is friend or foe has become a polarising issue within Australian society (Keddie 2011b).

Bauman (2004 p.67) continues to pursue an understanding of the refugee as stranger by highlighting how their presence can be unsettling:

In addition to representing the great unknown which all 'strangers in our midst' embody, these particular outsiders, the refugees, bring home distant noises of war and the stench of gutted homes and scorched villages that cannot but remind the settled how easily the cocoon of their safe and familiar (safe because familiar) routine may be pierced and crushed and how deceptive the security of their settlement must be.

Indeed, the refugee and particularly the asylum seekers who come in their 'leaky boats' bring a reminder of the fragility of life and the settled may well question whether they too are capable of surviving or enduring such atrocities that the refugee has fled.

The fear of this stranger coming in boats is quite a new phenomenon for Australia. From 1975 until 1990 Australia accepted 137,000 Vietnamese escaping the Vietnam War, mostly by boats (Brown 2006). It was John Howards (2001) claim that turned the discourses saying, 'We will decide who enters Australia and the circumstances in which they come.' His turning back the Tampa and orchestrating the 'children overboard' myth promoted a discourse of suspicion of asylum seekers in Australia and portrayed them as invaders. These discourses

and actions ignored Australia's international obligations to protecting human rights and concentrated solely on its own short term self-interests (Goodwin-Gill 2003). This rhetoric continues to dominate Australian politics, for example, as I write, the current opposition leader Tony Abbott's first speech after the election dates were referred to the threat of these 'strangers' asking, 'Who do you trust to secure our borders', (Abbott, 30th January, 2013), aligning asylum seekers to terrorists. The current Prime Minister (2013), Kevin Rudd, has trumped this 'race to the bottom' by announcing that any asylum seekers who arrive by boat will have no chance of settling in Australia and will be detained and resettled on Manus Island, Papua New Guinea (ABC News 2013). Through this successful creation of a 'deviant other' (Bauman 2004, p. 56) the asylum seeker has reached the end of the continuum and is conceived as the 'ultimate stranger' (Bauman 2004).

With the advent of nation states from the 'global north' processing asylum claims themselves it becomes too easy for governments (like Australia) to establish an ambiguous and unknown criteria for who receives refugee status. As a result of these practices, individuals can be subject to the political agenda of the country where they are seeking asylum, 'an individual who would be counted as a refugee in one part of the world might not qualify for that status in another' (Crisp 2000 p.4). Furthermore, Gibney (2006), states following the agreement for non-refoulement in Article 33 of the Refugee Convention there has become only an obligation toward those with refugee status. Thus Gibney (2006, p. 143) suggests, 'Western states now acknowledge the rights of refugees but simultaneously criminalise the search for asylum.' Gibney (2006) suggests, there has become a status in the name 'refugee' in modernity for it invokes some protection and acknowledges rights under international law whereas the asylum seeker can be positioned as a 'mere pretender to the title refugee' (p.140).

Broadening the discussion to how asylum seekers are positioned in the Australian political rhetoric has been a great temptation for me in writing this thesis. I have attempted to contain the subject within the context of understanding what 'the refugee' now embodies within Australian society. The change in the discourse and the deliberate confusion between 'refugee' and 'asylum seeker' has led to a climate of suspicion over who is welcome and who is

stranger, who is friend and who is foe (Bauman 2004). The last word in this section must go to Bauman (1991 p.59) as he describes the dilemma the settled face when the stranger settles in their life-world,

He made his way into the life-world uninvited, thereby casting me on the receiving side of his initiative, making me into the object of action of which he is the subject: all this, as we remember, is a notorious mark of the enemy. Yet, unlike other, 'straightforward' enemies, he is not kept at a secure distance, nor on the other side of the battleline. Worse still, he claims a right to be an object of responsibility- the well-known attribute of the friend. If we press upon him the friend/enemy opposition, he would come out simultaneously under-and over-determined. And thus, by proxy, he would expose the failing of the opposition itself. He is a constant threat to the world's order.

Here Bauman vividly describes the dilemma the settled face in calling the migrant and/or forced migrant 'friend'. Interestingly this has become intensely questioned in this Pacific island of Australia where we have viewed ourselves as 'far away from the troubles of the rest of the world'.

The forgotten world of educating refugee children and young people.

'Refugee children are forgotten children. They deserve an education just as children in Canada, the United States or Europe do'.

(Suad Mohammed, a 23-year-old Somali school principal at Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya, 2012)

In this section I give a background to how life is for some refugee children. This section is not comprehensive overview of life for refugee children and young people but confines itself to the topics that are raised in the later part of the study. Initially I draw upon data from the UNHCR to examine access and quality of schooling. This is largely quantitative. I could have chosen other statistics, for example, nutrition or mortality rates in refugee camps, however my study concentrates on the topics of family life, school life and belonging. In order to provide a relevant background to family life and school life for refugee children

and young people I turn to examining some of the qualitative participatory research in the field. Both the qualitative and the quantitative data combined give a clear and disturbing picture of what life is like for many refugee children.

Fifty per cent of the world's refugees are under the age of twenty five (Chatty 2007, p.267). The resettled former refugees in this study have lived much of their lives in places of danger and insecurity, often devoid of opportunities for engaging in the important and normal activities and tasks of childhood and youth (Sampson & Gifford 2009). Gaining an understanding of the backgrounds of the young people in this study, I argue, is vital to understanding their present. By examining the living conditions of the refugee child through the data provided by the UNHCR and turning to research in the field there can come an understanding of the challenges the young people may face in resettlement. It can assist in ascertaining what things are new to them, what resources or opportunities they have missed out on and also the knowledge they have gained.

There are five main issues that are identified by the UNHCR (2005 p.2) that affect refugee children globally, they are:

- Separation from families and caregivers;
- Sexual exploitation, abuse and violence;
- Military recruitment;
- Access to education; and
- Specific concerns of adolescents

In certain regions there may be additional issues of importance which require special attention, such as birth registration, detention of children (as currently seen in Australia), trafficking or child labour (UNHCR 2005). For instance, The Burmese Boarder Consortium (2010) report that in the camps on the Thai/Burmese border malnutrition is a grave concern especially for infants, nursing mothers, new arrivals and those with special needs.

While the UNHCR's main objective is to provide safe places for forced migrants, another objective is to provide education for children. The global education budget in 2010 represented 4% of the total comprehensive UNHCR budget (UNHCR, 2010g p. 14) The issue of educating children has become more urgent

in recent years resulting in education being placed as a global priority for the UNHCR for 2012 and 2013 (Dryden-Peterson 2011a). This is due to two driving factors: the increasing number of protracted refugee situations around the world has grown; and the increasing numbers of children who are receiving no education or education of a very poor standard (Dryden-Peterson 2011a: UNHCR 2010). The promise of the UNHCR Global Strategic Priority for 2012-16 includes improving the protection and wellbeing of persons of concern through ‘Promoting human potential through education, training, livelihoods support and income generation’ (UNHCR 2012, p7). Since the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) efforts to place the protection of all children within an international human rights framework have gained momentum. In Article 22, the Convention makes special reference to refugee children, their right to live with their families, appropriate protection, and humanitarian assistance. By placing education as a means of protection for refugees, education has thus become an ‘enabling right’ (Dryden-Peterson 2011a). The INEE (2010, p. 7) state that education provides ‘skills that people need to reach their full potential and to exercise their other rights, such as the right to life and health’. The United Nations Study on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children (1996) and the Revised Guidelines for Education Assistance to Refugees (1995), all stipulate the importance of educating children in camps and in emergency situations. The UNHCR has been given a mandate to undertake three major educational objectives for refugee children:

- Increase access;
- Improve quality; and
- Enhance protection (UNHCR 2011).

However, as the 2012-2016 Educational Strategies executive summary report,

At present, many refugees do not have access to quality education that provides physical protection and personal capacity development. This is particularly true for marginalised groups, including children and young people with physical and cognitive disabilities; over aged learners who have missed out on years of schooling; and children associated with armed forces. Refugees can also be marginalised on the basis of gender,

ethnicity, language, and poverty. Girls continue to be left out of mainstream education (UNHCR 2012).

Education in camps

While current statistics are extremely difficult to find (Dryden-Peterson 2011a). The statistics that can be found only include those who are in camps and where the UNHCR has access to the camp. In other words the host countries that are not signatories are largely not in partnership with the UNHCR. Therefore these nation states are under no obligation to report, or for that matter, make available access to schools for refugee children. This being said, some nations, for example Thailand, allow for Non-Government Organisations to assist refugees and these organisations draw upon the UNHCR for expertise and assistance (TBBC 2010). What is known about resources for the schooling of refugees shows the situation for children under the concern of the UNHCR (2010 p.1) is abysmal. For example,

- More than 24% of all 6-11 year olds of concern to UNHCR do not attend primary education;
- More than 79% of all 12-17 year olds of concern to UNHCR do not attend secondary education;
- More than 93% of all youth aged 15-24 are not enrolled in any form of training;
- The global primary education enrolment rate for children of concern to UNHCR with specific needs is 21%;
- Children with specific needs accounts for 14% of all refugee children reported out of school, even though they only represent 4% of all school aged children;
- In 21 countries where UNHCR works, all asylum seekers and refugees do not have access to (compulsory and) free primary education;
- In more than half of all UNHCR camps, the student teacher ratio exceeds the defined standard of 40:1;
- In 1 of 4 UNHCR camps has less than 60% of the teaching staff with any formal training or qualification;
- 25% of the teaching staff is female.

In the above statistics the extent of UNHCR operations and the input to services given to education are demonstrated. These statistics give a bleak picture in regards to access and resources. The barriers to access schooling have a pronounced affect upon the child's future capacity to escape poverty (Dryden-Peterson 2011a). Dryden-Peterson (2011b) reports that parents in camps have sold their food rations to pay for their child's school fees. They also partition the World Food Programme to give extra food coupons to teachers in the hope that they will stay and offer education to their children. Such is the desperation for schooling amongst many refugee families.

Another barrier is that there is little evidence of quality of education administered. Quality education within these schools is indicated by class size ratios which is 40:1 and the number of trained teachers. Further investigation by Dryden-Peterson (2011a) indicates that to be counted as trained or qualified teacher the minimum requirement is 10 days of training. Dryden-Peterson (2011b) point out the UNHCR's lack of educational expertise to resources schooling in camps can be linked to gathering relevant data,

There are limited human and financial resources available for refugee education for refugee education within UNHCR. Within the entire organisation there are only two education officer positions (p. 13)

Of the operational procedures questioned in the report commissioned by the UNHCR, one in particular stands out: the way in which the UNHCR assesses educational quality in schools. Schools are assessed through service delivery, for example, the number of students enrolled. This is evident in the UNHCR 2010 reports on African operations,

The region that reports the overall poorest performance at the moment is the Eastern Horn of Africa (EHA). They have one of the lowest primary education enrolments at 61% with a significant difference between the genders in favour of male enrolment (GPI 0.82). ... Camp operations in Eritrea are a welcome exception, reporting 100% enrolment in secondary education (p.4).

These indicators point to input, however, output is not measured (Dryden-Peterson 2011a). For example, student outcomes are not provided and therefore the quality of educational cannot be assessed. In the 2012-2016 Educational

Strategies document there is going to be a mentoring of the percentage of students achieving grade competency (UNHCR 2012).

Moving toward gender parity in education

In 2005, Hathaway reported on the lack of initiatives and resources to keep children in education and the discursive beliefs within some cultures that keep young girls from attending school,

the situation for refugee girls is worse still, as additional barriers such as family responsibilities and traditional values may lead to lower attendance for girls --- despite some extraordinary success - notably among Afghan refugees in Pakistan – girls still make up 39 per cent of refugee children attending UNHCR assisted primary schools, and only about 29 per cent of the secondary population (Hathaway 2005, p.585).

An increased emphasis on gender parity by the UNHCR in its commitment to the Millennium Development Goals, entitled “Education for All Framework”, has seen some changes in some regions in the number of girls attending school. In some regions, for example gender parity at the primary aged level is now almost achieved for the whole of sub-Saharan Africa. However sending girls to school can be a safety issue, the UNHCR has now strategized to make schools safer by building better infrastructure is and around schools and also ensuring that schools have ‘safe access to separate latrines for boys and girls’ (UNHCR 2012, p 15).

At present, many refugees do not have access to quality education that provides physical protection and personal capacity development. This is particularly true for marginalised groups, including children and young people with physical and cognitive disabilities; over aged learners who have missed out on years of schooling; and children associated with armed forces. Refugees can also be marginalised on the basis of gender, ethnicity, language, and poverty. Girls continue to be left out of mainstream education.

Refugee children not in camps

For urban refugees the UNHCR has actively advocated the integration of refugee children into local schools where they receive the same education standards as the citizens of the host country. This however, can be a field fraught with

discrimination against refugee children as competition for scarce resources within most host countries is aggravated by the presence of refugee communities (UNHCR 2011). The data on urban refugees is extremely hard to gather as developing countries tend to overestimate refugee student enrolments in order to receive more aid (Dryden-Peterson 2011a). The Dryden-Peterson (2011a p.26) report supplies the following statistics:

Access to education is generally more difficult in urban areas. Globally, the primary school GER [Gross Enrolment Ratios] in camp settings is 78%, whereas it is 70% in urban areas. At the secondary level, the GER in camps is 37% and in urban areas it is 31%.

Therefore refugee education for urban refugee children is a quantifiable unknown.

Access to Higher Education for refugees

The figures on access to higher education for refugees are considerably more abysmal as seen above. Zeus's (2011) research into higher education for refugees on the Thai/Burmese border gives an overview of higher education for refugees around the world:

Despite negligible attention to Higher Education in Protracted Refugee Situations, there is little doubt, at least in normative terms, that Higher Education is a right and 'shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit' as set out by Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN 1948: Art.26 (1)). And yet, states often only partly follow frameworks and agreements, arguing that the 'implementation is not "rationally possible", given geopolitical realities' (Malkki 2002, p. 354). Despite evidence that Higher Education suffers a more rapid decline in emergency situations but is crucial in restoring stability and a highly qualified workforce post-conflict, only minimal support to Post-secondary education is offered (p. 259).

The neglect of higher education for young people, particularly in protracted refugee situations, impedes young refugees' freedom to provide for themselves and their community in the future, assist in their own protection and repatriation and 'develop to their full potential' (Zeus 2011 p. 259). Agencies such as Wyndall Trust, World University Service of Canada, Australian Catholic University

outreaches to refugees on the Thai/Burma border and projects like Borderless Higher Refugee Education work in partnership with the UNHCR, other refugee agencies and governments to fill this much needed gap. While it is recognised that higher education for young people provides the community with their own capacity to provide durable solutions for the future and therefore assist in protection, there is however, a gross lack of funding and political motivation (Dryden-Peterson 2011b).

The stories of refugee children and young people from qualitative research

The qualitative research concerning children and young people in refugee situations is a small but growing field (Chatty 2007). As Pinson and Arnot (2007, p. 499) point out 'sociological research into asylum-seeking and refugee children in general, and into their education in particular, is still relatively underdeveloped'. What research exists is mainly from psychological and psychiatric perspectives that tend to pathologize refugee youth (Chatty 2010). However there are some significant comprehensive participatory studies that explore the social context, personal experiences, relationships, values, and culture of refugee children. One such comprehensive study originated from the Refugee Studies Centre, Oxford. This six year, multi-disciplinary anthropological and participatory research programme examined the impact of forced migration on young people in the Middle East and North Africa: Palestinian refugee youth in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, the West Bank and Gaza; Sahrawi youth in Algeria, and Afghan youth in Iran. Chatty (2007) suggests the similar themes that arose between these studies were the young people's 'multiple and conflicting identities, cross cutting allegiances and broadly similar strategies for coping with lives lived in contested spaces and transgressed places (p.266).'The studies have given a holistic overview of the life experiences of such young people.

Additionally a number of points from this empirical research can be highlighted pertaining to this study. The research also looked at young refugees' schooling experiences and intergenerational relationships within families. Chatty & Crivello (2005) examined how young Afghan refugees experienced schooling in Iran. They reported that due to changes in Iranian policies Afghan refugee children no longer had access to Iranian schools and this was particularly disappointing for Afghan girls as 'unlike Afghanistan under the Taliban, Iran's education system

includes women and was one of the major factors in Afghans decision to flee to Iran' (Chatty & Crivello 2005, p. 20). In order to access school, families reported taking grave risks such as borrowing identity cards from those who had legal rights to access Iranian schools. Others families had formed informal, self-directed, self-funded schools for their children. The inability to obtain an education and the emergence of makeshift schools in Iran, the researchers suggest, has contributed to an upsurge in Afghan identity and solidarity amongst the young people. Furthermore the young Afghans spoke of their resentment of being discriminated against and marginalised. As an Afghan girl reported, 'The government does not want us here. We, the Afghans are blamed for everything that goes wrong here, from serial killing to high unemployment, to spread of diseases' (Chatty & Crivello 2005, p. 24).

Another group of researchers from the Refugee Study Centre, Oxford, Crivello et al. (2005) also found a strong sense of nationalism amongst the Sahrawi children in camps in Algeria yet this manifested in different ways. The research was undertaken when the Sahrawi children of Western Sahara had been taken to Spain on an annual student exchange holiday to stay for two months with a Spanish host family. Crivello et al. (2005) reported, 'Nearly all of them expressed a strong desire to return to the camps after the hosting programme ended, and although most of them planned to work as adults, they intended to do so in the camps' (p72). They conclude that belonging to family and the camp community in exile was extremely important to the young people. Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2013) revisited and re-examined the data to propose, for example, how the young refugees inherited and negotiated memories of their home-land and home-camps. Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2013) states, 'the refugee camps themselves emerge as contested arenas in which Sahrawi youth and the older generations vie for spaces to be politically active and to mobilise and ensure the survival of diverse memories' (p.15). It can be understood then that the young people in these studies, even though they were displaced, were still active in negotiating ways to belong within their own ethnic group.

The studies from the RSC that examined intergenerational relationships include Chatty and Hundt's (2001) research of Palestinian children and young people. They reported that the children 'revealed a strong community-centric focus to

their worries rather than the anticipated ego-centric focus' (p. 6), this strong allegiance to community despite living in displacement.

Other studies highlight issues of intergenerational relationships. Hinton (2000), for example, found that the Bhutanese refugee youths were supporting their parents settling in Nepal. 'Far from being passive recipients of support, (children) were active in promoting social cohesion' (p.206). Hinton (2000), reports that it was the ability of the young people to negotiate multiple spaces and to connect socially both in and outside the camp assisted families in experiencing a better life. This shift in leadership conflicted with the older generation's role within the family who struggled to provide for family and thus reliance upon the younger generation became crucial to survival.

Similar changes in power relationships in the family were reported by Hampshire et al. (2008) among Liberian youths in Buduburam settlement camp in Ghana. This study reports that the changing inter-generational relations were linked to the economic impotence of the older refugees. The young people acquired IT skills, enabling them to maintain ties with friends and families abroad (and even creating new Internet-based relationships) while the older generation became alienated and struggled with such technology. There were strong allegiances amongst the youth and most constructed an Afro-American identity in dress and in listening to 'hip hop' music. Hampshire (2008, p.30) observed the young people were willing to take riskier jobs and were willing to work in the jobs that Ghanaians were not willing to work. One Liberian youth in Hampshire's (2008) study stated 'Now the 16 year old girls are supporting their parents, and the parents don't ask them where they get the money, because they need it. It was different before the war' (p. 30). This change in 'who brings in the money' Hampshire (2008) suggests, unfortunately renders the elders powerless.

The qualitative research on young refugees also highlights the hardships they suffered. Lowicki and Pillsbury (2004) report on young refugees whose parents were killed or missing and their protectors, providers and decision makers were snatched away from them. This circumstance left many young refugees needing to protect themselves from a very young age. 'Some find criminal gangs and military cadres but the majority are highly constructive and show enormous resilience' (Lowicki and Pillsbury, 2004 p.75). Lowicki and Pillsbury (2004) also

report on the initiative and determination of young refugees in their attempts to rebuild their own lives. For example, in Northern Uganda young people helped each other by forming cooperatives and assisting each other in tilling one another's land. In Sierra Leone former young rebel fighters have their own bicycle transport business providing much needed community service. In Kosovo a group attempted to build tolerance among ethnic communities (Lowicki and Pillsbury 2004). None of these studies so far cited referred to education primarily because for the young people they refer to it didn't exist.

Definition of resettlement

Resettlement is seen by the UNHCRa (2012) as a 'durable solution' that allows the refugee to 'rebuild their lives in dignity and peace' (p. 37). It is perceived as an alternative to going home. (UHNCRb 2012). The UNHCR propose three durable solutions for refugees: voluntary repatriation; local integration; or resettlement to a third country. Resettlement is seen as a solution for those situations where it is impossible for a person to go back home (UNHCRb 2012). 'The resettlement country provides the refugee with legal and physical protection, including access to civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights similar to those enjoyed by nationals. It should allow for refugees to become naturalized citizens' (UNHCRa 2012 p. 38).

Each year, less than one per cent of the world's refugees are offered resettlement in one of 22 countries participating in UNHCR's resettlement programme (UNHCRa 2012). These countries include: United States, Canada, Australia, Norway, Sweden, New Zealand, Denmark, Finland, United Kingdom and Germany. In 2008, out of 10.5 million refugees, the UNHCR referred 121,000 refugees were resettled (UNHCR 2010). However this number has decreased in recent years: in 2009 there were 84,600 departures, in 2010, there were 73,000 departures; and in 2011 departures dropped further, by 16 per cent to 61,600 (UNHCRc 2012). The declining numbers in resettlement are occurring alongside the increasing numbers of refugees. Countries such as Australia that are signatories to the Refugee Convention and the 1969 Protocol have elected to respond and assist in managing this crisis by accepting an official quota of 13,000 Humanitarian Entrants designated with official refugee status by UNHCR agencies (Brown 2006). This quota has recently become politicised by the two

major parties in Australia with the Labour Party promising to increase the quota to 20,000 (DIAC 2012) and the Liberal Party promising to cut it, but have as yet given no numbers.

Australia's resettlement program

In offering this small number of places to refugees for resettlement, Australia claims 'a proud international reputation for its humanitarian response to refugees. Australia also boasts of having the best settlement service provision in the world' (Pittaway & Muli, 2009 p.19). Included in this quota are asylum seekers and those who enter under a Special Humanitarian Entrant Visa (in 2008 it was 4,620 people). Refugees on Special Humanitarian Entrant Visas are individuals sponsored by an Australian citizen or Australian organizations. The citizens pay for all travel costs and are responsible for the new entrants' livelihood for the following five years (Refugee Council of Australia 2009; Phillips 2010). These refugees are not designated with a category 200 refugee visa, and not designated with Humanitarian Visa 202 visa category yet they are still described by DIAC as, 'people outside their home country who are subject to substantial discrimination amounting to gross violation of human rights in their home country' (DIAC 2011 p.). Onshore asylum seekers arriving by boat and plane have multiplied seven times in their intake over the past six years. As a consequence the intake from the offshore program has decreased considerably.

The table below show the spread in different visas granted under the Humanitarian Program:

Table 2 Protection visas and onshore humanitarian visas

Humanitarian Program grants by category 2006–07 to 2011–12						
Category	2006–07	2007–08	2008–09	2009–10	2010–11	2011–12
<i>Refugee</i>	6003	6004	6499	6003	5998	6004
<i>Special Humanitarian (offshore)</i>	5183	4795	4511	3233	2973	714
<i>Onshore (asylum seekers)</i>	1793	2131	2492	4534	4828	7041
<i>Temporary Humanitarian Concern</i>	38	84	5	-	-	-
Total	13 017	13 014	13 507	13 770	13 799	13759
<i>Note: Includes protection visas and onshore humanitarian visa grants (including that are irregular maritime arrivals IMAs) countable under the Humanitarian Program (DIAC 2012).</i>						

Refugees are the first of their culture

A change in refugee resettlement source countries by the end of the 1990s saw populations from countries that were new to Australia. For example, from 2005 to 2010 more than 32,900 people from African countries were granted visas under Australia's Humanitarian Program when before the year 2000 there were only 19 Togolese living in Australia. Australia's Sudanese community has grown by over 20,000 since 1996, a population explosion of over 287% (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006 cited in Harris 2011 p.732). The Department of Immigration and Citizenship call these populations 'emerging communities'. 'During 2003-04, 70.6% of refugees originated from Africa. In 2006-07 the top ten countries of birth for humanitarian entrants were Sudan, Iraq, Burma, Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Thailand, Burundi and Iran' (DIAC 2007, p.12). In 2008 larger numbers of Burmese and Congolese arrived. It follows from these statistics many of the refugees were among the first of their culture and language to live in Australia. The Department of Immigration and Citizenship recognizes that this group of people are the most vulnerable of new entrants to Australia (DIAC 2011), yet little research has been undertaken to find out how these entrants manage and overcome the many obstacles they face (Spinks 2009; Pittaway & Muli, 2009).

For these 'emerging communities', there have been no established infrastructure or support networks guiding them in how to build a new home in Australia. There has been a serious lack of interpreters, lack of literature in their own language and a lack of established community networks that have enabled access to various elements of Australian culture and society. Language issues, economic difficulties, housing barriers, health problems, employment and cultural differences have quickly become barriers in accessing assistance in resettlement (Spinks 2009). While multicultural organisations around Australia can assist in programs to engage newly arrived refugees, often the established ethnic communities have their own priorities in building their ethnic communities within Australia (Phillips 2010) and therefore the 'emerging communities' must find other ways to build community networks. This has been the case particularly in regional areas where charity organisations have been active in assisting refugee groups. As Suarez-Orozco and Qin-Hilliard (2004) suggest, at the heart of the formation of the cultural identity amongst the diaspora is the tension between

the dominant culture and minority newcomers. Yet what is not as recognised is the tension between the 'old new comers' and the 'new newcomers' that exists in multicultural Australia (Phillips 2010).

Another view to resettlement is proposed by Sampson and Gifford, (2009,) they suggest that many refugees view resettlement as 'the continuation of their forced displacement, culminating in their forced re-placement in a third country' (p.116). Indeed this perception gives a clear distinction between refugee resettlement and migration. Having no choice over where you will go or even what family members will come with you (McMichael et al. 2011) places tremendous weight on the process of connection to the new country and to the new society in which refugees find themselves. As Hajdukowski-Ahmed (2008) states, 'For uprooted people, every new situation and location deeply (re)shapes their identities, their sense of self, their agency and their wellbeing' (Hajdukowski-Ahmed 2008, p. 28). This study aims to investigate how this reshaping impacts upon the identities of the young people who participated in this study.

Resettlement for young people

Studies reveal that refugee young people arriving in Australia face different challenges to adults who arrive in Australia, they have different needs and also different aspirations for their future (Olliff 2007 Cassity & Gow 2005; 2006). Therefore there is a need to examine issues pertaining to refugee young people aside from adults and children. Refugee young people face all the uncertainties and complexities of any youth and added to this is the change experienced when moving from displacement to resettlement into a western democratic society (Zeus 2011). The literature articulated what some of these changes are, for example, leaving family behind; discovering family members that, like you, survived; sending remittance to family; learning a new language (or dialect of English); going to formal education; 'catching up' academically; navigating Australian systems, for example, health, housing, employment, education, driving and law; connecting with the diaspora; connecting with Australians; experiencing elements of safety; realising opportunities to build a stable life; hope for a brighter future (Correa-Velez et al. 2010; Gifford et al. 2009; Sampson and Gifford, 2009; Gifford 2007; Ramireza & Matthews 2008; Olliff 2007 McDonald-Wilmsen, and Gifford, 2009; Miller 2005). The many changes that young former

refugees face are according to individual histories and circumstances. Yet what was reported as being a change that brought significant stress to many young former refugees was when conflict in family relationships arose. The Refugee Council of Australia's (2009) research shows many young people spoke of being frustrated by parents' high expectations upon them to succeed in education wanting them to become doctors and engineers. The RCA reported that the young people spoke of their parents having little understanding of all that was required to achieve such high qualifications and they were afraid of disappointing their parents (RCOA 2009; Cassity and Gow 2005; 2006). Expectations upon youth were not confined to academic achievement, Olliff (2007), suggests that due to former refugee youth acquiring English quicker than their parents the youth often lead the family through the process of settlement,

They are often required to attend visits to agencies such as Centrelink or the doctor to interpret for their family members. In the process, young people may neglect their own immediate needs, including the everyday challenges of being an adolescent, such as peer pressure, identity issues and sexuality (p. 6).

While young people may lead their families in assisting in settlement, the Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues (2005 and 2006) found that understanding and navigating Australian systems, including housing, education and gaining employment were confusing and these were major hindrances to their involvement in community. Olliff (2007) argue that a communal approach to settlement needs to be established with all organizations, schools and individuals involved.

Examining resettlement for young former refugees in school settings in recent years reveal a system that is grappling to assist refugee students' needs. Many of the recent student arrivals have had little formal schooling prior to attending school in Australia and come from diverse language and cultural backgrounds (Dooley 2012). The educational research concentrates on discussing the obstacles that teachers face in trying to meet the needs of refugee students with gaps in schooling (Cassity and Gow 2005;2006; Miller et al. 2005; Ferfolja and Vickers 2010). From this discussion within the field of education some specific research projects have been undertaken in order to identify appropriate

knowledge and ways to reduce teacher stress. The Refugee Action Support (RAS), an initiative of the University of Western Sydney (UWS), has investigated effective pedagogies for use with refugee children. The piloted programs include pre-service teachers tutoring refugee students in Western Sydney, an area that accommodated approximately 80% of all humanitarian refugees in New South Wales from 2002- 2006 (McCarthy and Vickers 2012 p. 153). The research by Naidoo (2011), Ferfolja (2008) and Ferfolja and Vickers 2010 aims to assist in developing strategic pedagogies to assist teachers.

Importantly, there is growing research that critiques the lack of appropriate and up to date resources and the absence of specific Commonwealth policies to equip schools to assist refugee students in transitions to school (Ramirez and Matthews 2008; Matthews 2008; Christie and Sidhu 2006; Sidhu and Taylor 2007; McCarthy and Vickers 2012) and to prepare teachers Dooley (2012). The studies by Keddie (2011a & b, 2012), Dooley (2012) and Hattam and Every (2010) make valuable contributions examining schools that actively include and engage refugee students into the mainstream. Dooley (2012) proposes teaching new pedagogic techniques that position refugee students within a competence framework over a deficit framework. This will ensure that former refugee students are viewed as having cultural knowledge even if it is be it different knowledge to other students in the classroom.

In the reviewed literature above the research has primarily examined the challenges that young former refugees face, particularly in educational settings. It is the hope of this study to add to this field but also to extend these ideas by examining the negotiations and pathways the young former refugees take to establish belonging and success in resettlement.

Perhaps one of the most comprehensive studies in Australia of former refugee young people is 'The Good Starts Project' (2007), led by Professor Gifford, Director of Refugee Health Research Centre at La Trobe University. The aim of this research was 'to tell the overall story of the settlement experiences of these young people during their first three to four years in Australia' (Gifford et al. 2009 p. 15). The study examined 120 refugee young people living in Melbourne, over a five year period. The young people in the study were born in Sudan, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Liberia, Uganda, Burundi, Iran, Iraq, Burma,

Croatia and Bosnia. Its main findings focused on the challenges the young people faced in resettlement, reporting that the participants showed 'high levels of optimism, self-esteem and happiness and these attributes do not diminish over the course of the study' (p. 16). Connections through school had been a major contributor to their sense of belonging. In particular the youth reported English Language Schools in their first year of resettlement gave them 'opportunities to become involved in sports and other school activities and felt that they were partly responsible for making their school a good place to be'(p.15). The ELS school also assisted the young people in helping them cope with settlement problems. However, when the students moved to mainstream high schools in their second year in Australia, the study reported the students felt less accepted by their teachers and that teachers were less likely to notice their achievements. Boys reported incidents of bullying and both boys and girls reported being less satisfied with their academic achievements. 'By the end of their second year in Australia, 42% of refugee youth reported that they had experienced discrimination because of their ethnicity, religion or colour' (Gifford 2007 p.16). An alarming '13% reported experiencing discrimination from police since arriving in Australia and 21% of the young people reported experiencing discrimination in public places, especially on trains and in shops. Gifford (2007) pointed out that close to a quarter of refugee youth accepted discrimination as 'a fact of life' (p.17).

From this longitudinal study a number of articles have been written examining the diverse ways in which the study has contributed to the field (Gifford et al. 2009; McDonald-Wilmsen and Gifford 2009; Attwell et al. 2009; Correa-Velez et al. 2010; McDonald-Wilmsen et al. 2011). I highlight two articles that discuss the findings of the research outside of the school context. These articles also examine issues that are not addressed in this thesis and demonstrate the diverse issues investigated in the Good Starts Project. Sampson and Gifford (2009) examined the potential role of connections to place for health and well-being of the former refugee young people. They found that there were four landscapes; 'places of opportunity, places of restoration, places of sociability and places of safety' (p.128) that helped the young people to build settlement in their new homeland. Another article from this study, authored by McMichael and Gifford (2009), highlight the disadvantage that young former refugees have in regards to

gaining information on sexual health. McMichael and Gifford (2009) point out that the many challenges of resettlement upon young people can mean that they can too easily miss out on mainstream educational programs targeting sexual health for young people.

Internationally, perhaps the most significant contribution to research of refugee children moving into a Western democratic society is Rutter's research entitled *Refugee Children in the United Kingdom*. 'The text, in effect, represents the first major research based text on the education of refugee children in the United Kingdom' (Pinson & Arnot p.402). Rutter's (2006) empirical research gives an overview of the arrival of asylum-seeking and refugee children in UK history. She then documents three case studies of Congolese, Somali and Southern Sudanese communities describing their navigations of education in the United Kingdom. A crucial argument that Rutter makes is that the dominant narratives surrounding refugees in education is of a trauma discourse. Rutter (2006) refutes this stating there is no supporting evidence in the notion that refugee children have worse mental health problems than their peers.

The research examining resettlement for young former refugees in Australia has identified some major points; it identifies the barriers that are faced by young people in resettlement; it advocates for social and structural change within education and wider society; and it gives an understanding the overall wellbeing of young former refugees in the resettlement process. In this study I attempt to build upon these understandings by examining what the experiences of former refugee youth narrate. A particular difference this study offers to the field is examining experiences of pre settlement as well as resettlement. The young people in resettlement talk of remembering pre settlement and for all of the participants this includes their childhoods as refugees. As the young people narrate looking back their identity constructions are articulated so that an overview of their lives so far can be examined. The recommendation from existing studies in Australia is that more research must include the voices of the young people themselves and a more holistic look at former refugee youths' within society needs to be addressed (Olliff 2007 Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues 2006 and 2007 Coventry et al. 2002). Suarez-Orozco and Qin-Hilliard

(2004) stress that studying identity matters because it is the way humans make sense of the world and their experiences in it.

CHAPTER 3

| METHODOLOGY

The refugee experience is inherently one of change and resilience, of finding new solutions for life; and refugee research should be equally responsive and courageous.

(Gifford et al. 2007)

Methodology

Qualitative inquiry is concerned with understanding the world of human experience. The researchers in qualitative studies aim to understand another person's world and can be seen as a translator of another's culture (Glesne 1999). According to Gesne, (1999,), 'qualitative researchers are interpreters who draw on their own experiences, knowledge, theoretical dispositions, and collected data to present their understanding of the other's world' (p. 157). In positioning myself as an 'interpreter' in this research I step away from being an authority that presents 'facts' and 'truth' about the lives of former refugees and thus remove myself of any claims of having the ultimate or final word on the subject (Gesne 1999). In this study, the research interactions are multiple and negotiated within the power relationships that exist at the time (Atencio 2006). It is therefore understood that as time moves on so too will the ways in which the young people in this study construct and reconstruct their own identities and their own ways of narrating their story.

Using Narratives

Narrative methodology has a multiplicity of forms, analytical practices and ways to present theoretical understandings (Cresswell 2007). The richness and complexity of this approach allows for the narrative method to be used across disciplines (Andrews et al. 2008). In this study 'narrative' is the term assigned to the focus on the stories told by each participant. As with Brough et al. (2012), 'The narratives of refugees, like any narrative, are a particular interpretation of the past created within a specific moment of the present. This is not a question of accuracy or truthfulness, but one of meaning and context'. (p.8). In this study I investigate the ways in which the experiences of life are narrated by the young people, how meaning is made from this and how the next steps are assessed and evaluated (Eastmond 2007). The narratives include how relationships change and are renegotiated through these changes in order to accommodate the future. As Bauman (2001 p. 13) suggests, 'Articulation of life stories is the activity through which meaning and purpose are inserted into life'. They are also ways in which we can communicate layers of meanings and understandings to others.

What became evident is that the young people invested in narrations of identity that included a reconstruction of how they saw their past, present and their own

imaginings of their futures. Throughout the focus groups and interviews the young people explained who they were (and are) by storytelling, by recounting the past and the present into ways that gave meaning to their lives and understanding of what they had experienced (Ricoeur 1988). This narration of who I am and who I have become allows the individuals their own production of themselves and others that is dynamic, fluid and self-reflective. The narrative approach gave opportunity for the young people to talk of their own lives in the ways they understood and perceived their lives. These narratives in a sense join the dots in a fractured life or as Hall (1990) puts it, 'offer a way to impose an imaginary coherence on the experience of dispersal and fragmentation, which is the history of all enforced diasporas (p. 224)'. Therefore it is in the interpretation of each event in these young peoples' lives and treating 'oneself as another' (Yuval-Davis 2010, p.266), that give us insight into identity construction. In this way the complexity of life events and relationships were explored through the young people's narratives as well as the contradictions of meaning that can occur (Andrews et al. 2008).

The Setting for the research

The present study has emerged from a need to understand the ways former refugee youth living in Australia construct and reconstruct a new identity. It is set in the regional area of the Illawarra with a population of around 276,000. The Illawarra has traditionally been a resettlement area for refugees by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship as it is an area where many migrants settled because of the coal and iron industries in the area. While the larger migrant populations are Macedonian, Italian and Chinese respectively (Illawarra Forum Inc. 2012), there is a comprehensive support structure for refugee resettlement including:

- Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Services (IHSS). This service provides intense assistance for newly arrived refugees between the period of arrival to six months, the refugees are assigned a case manager who orients the new comers to Australian services and accommodation.
- The Special Grants Programme Service is for assistance for up to five years into resettlement. This service delivers community capacity building programs.
- The Australian Migrant Education Programme provides education for adults.

- An Intensive English Centre provides education within a school setting for high school aged new arrivals.
- Non-Government Agencies that are actively involved in assisting resettlement including Strategic Community Assistance to Refugee Families (SCARF), the Red Cross, the Smith Family and Southern Eastern Sydney Illawarra Area Health Services (SESIAHS).

This amount of assistance for refugees is unique for a regional area of New South Wales, for instance, there are no other Intensive English Centres outside Sydney except for the Illawarra.

Refugees under the resettlement program are picked up from the airport and brought straight to a house or a caravan park in the Illawarra (according to availability) where they are eligible to stay for one month. Each family is assigned a caseworker from IHSS to assist in accessing Centrelink, opening bank accounts and other organisational tasks. The adults enrol in the allocated 510 hours of English at TAFE or AMES and the children are enrolled in the Intensive English Centre.

The Participants

The participants in this study were all resettled in the Illawarra under the UNHCR Resettlement Program having received refugee status prior to arrival. All of the participants came to Australia with a visa entry 200 or 202 the particularities of these visas have been discussed in Chapter One.

Initially I intended to recruit participants from a diversity of ethnic backgrounds so that one particular cultural background was not over represented. This ensured that the central issue was one of researching the former refugee rather than studying a particular ethnicity. As seen in Chapter One, refugees from the Middle East make up a large number of refugees coming to Australia, however, very few families from the Middle East have resettled in the Illawarra. Consequently none of the participants come from this region. Instead the participants come from the Asian and African countries that comprise most of the former refugee families in the Illawarra.

The participants were recruited in partnership with a multicultural youth worker to ensure they were participating voluntarily. I approached them first to discuss the project, then talked to the parents of any participants who had any queries.

When each potential participant expressed an interest I talked them through the consent forms. All of the participants (except Rick) were over eighteen so they signed the consent forms with their parent's full knowledge of their involvement. Rick's mother signed his consent form. Twelve participants and one Sudanese youth worker were recruited. A Burmese community worker was also recruited but declined to be interviewed saying his English was not adequate.

As explained in Chapter One, the participants' ethnicity included Chin, Karenni, Burmese, Congolese, Sudanese (Dhinka), Sierra Leonean, Togolese, and Burundian. However, the young people spent most of their lives in the host countries of Thailand, Malaysia, Kenya, Zambia, Benin, South Africa and Ghana. All the participants had been in Australia for more than 18 months and less than five years. The youth worker had been in Australia seven years. At the time of data collection six of the participants had Australian citizenship; the others had not yet received citizenship as the waiting period has recently been extended to persons having to be in Australia for more than five years. Throughout the research pseudonyms are used for each participant.

At the time of data collection Phi Lo and Joseph were attending TAFE, Gabriella was starting university, Jacqueline was in a bridging course to enter university, Peta was 'taking a gap year' and the rest were in years 10, 11 and 12 of high school.

Cultural perceptions of age.

The participants' ages ranged from 16 – 22 years old. The ages of the participants in this thesis may not be 'accurate' because age was not a culturally important factor for some of the participants. Some explained that accuracy in age only became a significant factor when they arrived in Australia. Many times in the interviews the young people made estimations of how old they were when events took place. When Joseph's father's second wife applied for resettlement with the UNHCR Joseph told of the UNHCR officer looking at all the children and then designating an age for them on the forms to come to Australia. This experience happens often and the birthday is usually given by the UNHCR as 'the first of the first' (1.1). I am aware that any inconsistency in how old a person within a story can (in a Western mindset) make the whole story seem prefabricated. Yet in my role as a researcher I did not press for this accuracy as I

thought it would interrupt the flow of conversation and could have been interpreted by the interviewee as intimidating or not believing their story.

Strategies in Recruiting

As has already been explained the researcher was known to the former refugee young people in her capacity as a youth worker and then as an ESL teacher at the IEC. However this factor did not make recruitment easier. Recruitment took a long time and a lot of negotiation. I did not wait until I had recruited everybody before I began data collection because I would have lost the momentum, so the moment parents and participant understood and signed up, I interviewed that participant.

Recruitment was initially difficult because there was very little understanding of the nature of research and how this might be appropriate to their lives. After receiving four very direct 'no's. I changed my recruitment strategy to informing the potential participants first about the concept of research.

I began this strategy with Gabriella who had just received entrance to university. After my long speech about the value of research and how it can benefit society, she then asked 'So you just want me to talk about myself. Is that right?' I said 'Yes'. She replied with a confident, 'Oh I can do that!' and she promptly messaged the girls who used to play in the netball team saying, 'She just wants you to talk about yourself.' This snowballing effect engaged six girls from African countries.

Learning from this experience, I then asked six young Burmese people if they would be willing to 'talk about their lives in a research project'. All six said they were interested and phone numbers were exchanged, however, when I rang the young people to follow up, only four answered my call and made time for the interview. I rang the other two potential participants twice and when they did not return my call I took this as their way of saying 'no' and did not pursue their participation.

Recruiting boys from African countries was a much more difficult process. As a youth worker I had worked alongside many young men, particularly with the Sudanese boys I had managed in a basketball team in the local competition. They had expressed an interest but had moved to other states to find work when

recruitment was underway and were very hard to track down. Joseph was the only young man that had continued to live in the region. I chose these boys because I had developed relationships that in my estimation had a measure of trust in them. I did not have as close a relationship with other African boys in the region, I was seen more as an authority figure in organising events (as a youth worker) and as a teacher. When I asked the younger boys to take part in the research, I received replies of ‘There is nothing wrong with me’; ‘I have nothing to say’; ‘I hate interviews’.

I turned to David the Sudanese youth worker for advice in recruiting the boys and he answered me with a question. ‘Did you use the word ‘interview,’ I said ‘yes.’ He then explained that there is a lot of terror attached to ‘interviews’. (He used the word ‘terror’). David informed me that refugees undergo multiple interviews and that these interviews determined important status criteria for them. Refugee status is decided through an interview process and also eligibility to be considered for a resettlement country is determined through interviews. There are also many medical examinations and more questions. He informed me that each family member is interviewed individually and they go through tremendous pressure to get every detail of their life and escape to be consistent story with every member of the family. David told me that he had seen many families in the camp practicing their stories night after night to make sure the youngest members remembered everything and got it right. He emphasised the importance of getting the story right in the interview because ‘if you get it wrong, you could be the one that keeps your family stuck in the camp.’

Reflecting upon David’s inside knowledge brought understanding as to why recruitment had taken so long and also why there had been immediate shut down with some of the potential participants. The other significant factor in this recruitment process was how pivotal Gabriella’s understanding of the research was in order for it to proceed. She saw that I was not interviewing to interrogate ‘truthfulness’ but I was asking her to tell the same experience for a different purpose. She understood that I (as a researcher) wanted to hear her stories and also her own interpretations of meaning that had been gleaned from her lived experiences (Eastmond 2007). Gabriella saw the difference between the two audiences’ intentions: the Researcher who interrogates and the Researcher who

seeks to understand. Consequently, Gabriella translated these intentions to the young women she knew and they were able to then discern the difference. Whether this was done consciously I do not know but I do know that gaining Gabriella's trust meant that I obtained the trust of the others as well. I again felt a responsibility toward my participants in the research project. David ended our conversation with advice, 'Ask them to help you'. I then turned the questioning around and asked Joseph and Rick to help me in my studies they both said 'yes'. I asked more boys but they declined.

Data Collection

In the original plan, focus groups were to be the first step in data collection, however, some of the participants expressed a discomfort in sharing their stories with others. They said that they didn't mind me hearing about their life but were very self-conscious of how others would react. I consequently began with individual interviews. After the girls from African countries had been interviewed they expressed an interest in getting together and being included in a focus group. Jacqueline did not want to be involved but Ali who was not interviewed came to the focus group and asked to be included. She was eighteen and so consent forms were signed and she participated in the focus group. I did not conduct an interview with Ali because I was concerned the gender balance was already much skewed. Also Ali was Congolese and as I already had a Congolese boy and girl participant involved in the study I did not want to biased the data toward one nationality.

The Interview

Initially I envisaged that I would complete the interviews over a two month period, however, because of the circumstances in the lives of the participants the process continued over a period of six months.

The conversations with the participants were recorded except for Sing Me who did not want to be recorded. Sing Me's interview was recorded through writing. As a consequence there were silences in the conversation allowing me to write. This slowed the pace of the interview considerably but this worked to a favourable conclusion. Firstly, the slower pace allowed for Sing Me to articulate in English clearly and secondly, as the interview progressed I remembered my conversations with the Karen and the Karenni people in Thailand. I observed we

were replicating the way in which conversations are carried out with the Karennii. One speaks then there is a pause while the other contemplates what is said and then responds.

Allowing space for storytelling.

The interviews were semi-structured for the purpose of being able to ask open ended questions. This gave the participants an opportunity to tell me as much or as little of their lives as they wanted. I had prepared questions but did not take these to the 'interview' as I did not want my questioning to control the interview. Also the sight of paper can look official and I was concerned that the interviewee would be intimidated by this. I chose to memories the questions and to use the questions as a way to check if I had covered all the areas I felt I need to cover. The questions I prepared were as follows:

- What is the most important thing in your life now?
- Think back ten years ago, what was the most important thing in your life then?
- What is your concept of who you are as a refugee?
- How did it feel to be a refugee before coming to Australia?
- How did you keep your inner confidence throughout these experiences?
- Is it different here in Australia? Do you see yourself as a refugee?
- Tell me about when your family found they were coming to Australia. What was that like?
- How did others react to you coming to Australia?
- When you first came to Australia, what was it like?
- What does home look like for you?
- Tell me about your friends here.
- What do you think of Australian kids?
- What is it like for your family now?

- What do you dream of for your future?

Another important element to the questioning was I used statements of affirmation and this in turn encourage more stories, for example:

- ❖ Family is important to you
- ❖ You really value your education
- ❖ That must have been very tough
- ❖ You've got a lot of hope in your heart
- ❖ That took amazing courage

I worked intuitively in the interview being guided by the response of the participants in posing the next question. This technique also gave an unrushed and relaxed atmosphere to the interview. At times it felt like a dance, I would lead and then, a young person would begin with a phrase, for example, 'You have to understand', or, 'Before I can tell you that', and then they would tell a story. The story gave a background and an understanding as to how and why they had reached this point in their lives, and then they would smoothly transition into answering the question. The questions in the interview with Gabriella were formed differently to the others this was because she had just returned from her first trip back to Democratic Republic of Congo. This experience of returning home after a war and as an adult had deeply impacted Gabriella. She was eager to tell me of her trip and her realisations and reflections, she had thought a lot about where she belonged, how she belonged, where was home and what cultural perspectives she found challenging and what she embraced.

The participants also told stories at unexpected times and some of the stories ended quite abruptly. Riessman (2008) suggests that this type of storytelling emerges when there has been major disruptions in the storyteller's life. I also noticed, if the story was particularly sad the storyteller would finish with a joke and lighten the atmosphere.

Each interview lasted one hour to one hour and twenty minutes. However one interview (Rick) lasted only twenty minutes. I closed this interview down early due to Rick being quite agitated over an incident at school. Rick had had to play soccer with girls and he was very angry about this. He expressed anger over Australia's insistence that women were equal to men. I tried to move the

conversation to other topics but he was stuck. I made the decision to close the interview to avoid any confrontation.

Upon recruitment I gave the participants an example of the questions I would ask them in the interview. This gave time to think and it also took away any element of surprise. I planned to begin the interviews with these questions but sometimes this did not eventuate, for example Gabriella had just gone back to Democratic Republic of Congo and she wanted to talk about that subject first. Other interviews began with the two questions I had given them:

- What is the most important thing in your life now?
- Think back ten years ago, what was the most important thing in your life then?

The two questions gave the participants the scope of the research, in that it was looking at the present and the past. It also conveyed the idea that the emphasis was on their own impressions of life and not upon facts or detailing events therefore identity construction and reconstruction were highlighted.

Asking questions of childhood acknowledged and valued the young people's childhood. It allowed the participant to talk about his/her childhood and the importance that this might have for them. The open questions also gave an opportunity for the participants to say as much or as little as they wanted. Boyden and de Berry (2004) suggest that researchers have often failed to take meaningful account of a child's experience of war and displacement. While, not intending to investigate war stories as such, sensitive topics did arise in the stories. The young people told of their lives before resettlement focusing on what was important to them.

Hyden (2008 p. 125) suggests, 'what is a sensitive topic and what is not is due mainly to relational circumstances, that is, the relationship between the teller and the listener'. From a position of trust that came from knowing the participants previously in the capacity of youth worker, coach and teacher there came with most of the participants a disclosure and discussion around some very sensitive topics, for example, narrating meeting mum after many years of separation. In realising the privilege of trust that had been given to me, I chose not to include in

the research the very personal narrations as I felt it was not my place to report these stories but it was enough to be a listener of the stories.

Another particularity of the young people's narratives was that they were looking back over their past and telling of their childhood as a refugee. In looking back over one's life and narrating it to another we can reconstruct the way of life and our experiences 'in the light of an end' (Brockmeier 2000 cited in Andrews 2008 p.95). For these young people resettlement can be seen to be an end to refugee status. The participants thus looked back with the advantage of seeing the changes that have taken place in their lives. By discussing what was important to the young people as a refugee child gives insight into how they saw themselves and how they perceived their relationships with the world. As the young people looked back they reinterpreted their past through the eyes of the present. Thus through the reflexive telling of stories the young people can construct their identity and also their possibilities for their future, providing a narrative component of the comprehension of self (Yuval-Davis 2010, p.266). This reinterpretation through retelling of our lives is a process of holding on to what becomes valuable and adds meaning to our lives and thus becomes crucial in who we see ourselves to be and who we desire to become (Andrews 2008).

Some of the stories acted as illustrations of the young people's feelings, for example, when I asked Matinda about studying in High school she answered,

English, ahhh, it flies away like a bird, they speak so fast, b b b b b, I try to catch but it goes, flies high away. If only I could catch it and put it in a cage I would sit it in my room and it would sing to me all night and in my dreams. in the morning when I go to school, I open my mouth and out, out would come English (sighs).

This poetic storytelling gave such a clear picture of Matinda's desires to communicate, connect and learn. Yet, in working with these narratives what became a tension was to present the stories in the findings, in journal article format. The restrictions of word counts and my need to sound like an academic made it considerably difficult to demonstrate the flamboyant ways the young people told their stories. So Matinda's narrative was reframed in more direct language, for example, some participants expressed a concern over learning English. Also, because journal articles are framed by an argument, the counter

narratives that the young people explored in their story telling could not be fully explored until the Discussion Chapter in this thesis.

For many of the participants it was the first time that they had told their story and after the interview they expressed gratefulness for this opportunity. Many said ‘thank you for listening,’ and made comments like; ‘It was good to get that outside my head’. Sing Me gave me a bag she had woven saying ‘thank you for listening to my story’. Perhaps one of the most telling comments for me was from Jacqueline who, when we had finished the interview, said, ‘I have only now realised that all the horrible, horrible things that happened is over. Cause you don’t tell people a story when you are still in it, do you? You tell it when it’s over. Now I know it’s over’. I was deeply humbled by her sharing this moment; it seemed for Jacqueline having someone to listen helped with her healing process (Riessman 2008).

In the discussion (Chapter 8) these counter narratives are taken up as there is room to present a more complex and less linear line of argument. For example, in Chapter Five the article discusses entrance to Australian schools and the barriers that were encountered however I did not have room to discuss the narratives of excitement and hope about entering school until the Discussion Chapter. Future plans are to convert these into articles.

Likewise, in order for a strong argument to be developed in the articles I had to use snippets from a lot of participants thus leaving out long narratives from one individual. Again, these longer narratives are visited in the Discussion to complement the articles.

The Focus groups

Upon recruitment, the African young people expressed a reluctance to be involved in a focus group, however, after the interviews the young womens’ attitudes changed and they requested to be a part of a group. They asked for an all-female group so that they could discuss gender related issues. In the light of this I set about to establish a focus group with the ethnic Burmese young people and included the young men, they were keen to come together in a focus group. Thus the groups were,

- The African girls' focus group lasted two hours and was held in a meeting room at the University of Wollongong.
- The Burmese Focus group lasted one hour in length and ended abruptly for reasons I will disclose later.

The separation of the two groups in this configuration was advantageous because the Burmese participants were quiet and tentative individuals with a gentle way of expressing themselves. On the other hand, the girls in the African focus group were extraverted, outwardly confident and expressed their opinions in dramatic ways.

The African Girls' Focus Group

The focus group took place on a Friday afternoon in a comfortable and airy meeting room in the University. There was a lot of excitement in the focus group because the girls had not seen each other for many months. Some of the girls were now driving cars and so we met in the car park where they were keen to show me how they could now drive. Parking proved difficult for some and so there were changes in drivers in order to park. Consequently it was with high spirits that we began the focus group. Snacks and drinks were provided and the girls sat around table and gathered their own individual stash of food on their plate in front of them. When I sat at the table there was no food left in the centre of the table, I said, 'Hey, what about me', pointing to the centre of the table. They all laughed at me and Matinda said, 'Where I came from, you would starve Jonnell'. We all laughed and each of the girls gave me something from their stash.

I had made a list of topics that had been consistently brought up in each of the girl's interviews I thought needed further investigation. Having the list was a strategy to keep the girls on task. I delegated Ali to read the list aloud and then to pick one to begin the conversation. Ali had not been interviewed and had asked to be a part of the focus group. I gave her this responsibility to ensure that she felt a part of the research. The list included;

- Being a refugee
- Women's issues
- Being black
- Being a woman
- Being a young woman in Australia

- Being or becoming 'Australian'
- Home
- Family
- Your role in the family
- Friends and fitting in
- School
- Belonging to a community

Ali suggested we talk about 'being black'. The topic of 'being black' had been talked about by all of the African participants in direct and indirect ways. For example two of the participants talked about acting like a 'white girl' and another talked about being treated like 'a black' but in all cases the conversation had moved on in the interviews. I therefore wanted to clarify how they were construing their own identities around 'being black'. I used just these two words 'being black' leaving this open ended and open to be interpreted how the young women wanted.

The conversation in the focus group was evenly shared amongst all of the participants. Matinda spoke the least but she was still very much engaged with the conversation. The girls did everything loudly; they spoke loudly, they laughed loudly. At times the girls were yelling with anger over certain issues (never at each other), then someone would say something funny and they would burst into laughter. At one point the girls got up and danced with delight, at another time one of the girls would dramatize their story with actions. They high fived each other and slapped each other on the backside when they agreed with each other; they connected with each other in physical ways.

The focus group had its own momentum. The girls understood that it was 'about them' and they maximised this time. In commenting on my own positioning in this focus group, I can only describe it like surfing a huge wave. As I interjected at certain points it was more like steering the conversation rather than adding to it. I was certainly not in control of the focus group but there was no point where it felt out of control.

The Burmese Focus Group

My persona in this focus group was entirely different to how I behaved in the African girls group. I consciously spoke in a gentle, soft voice and waited longer

periods for the participants to respond and I used more gestures. This was because the participants had been in Australia for less amount of time and English was still a struggle but also I was aware that gentleness and patience were attributes valued by the cultures of these young people and acting accordingly hopefully enhanced a relaxed atmosphere and freer conversation. The four participants in this focus group were Sing Me, Bu Song, Jai and Pai Lo. We sat comfortably around a table and the snacks I had bought sat in the middle of the table but were hardly touched.

I had brought a list of topics that had been talked about in each of the interviews and as a group. The list included;

- Connecting with Australia
- Home – where do you feel you belong?
- Your role in the family
- Family
- School
- The future

The group could not decide between connecting with Australia and discussing home. What became evident was that all saw 'home' as outside Australia and interpreted 'home' as their connections with 'homeland'. I suggested we could discuss these together. After an hour into the focus group Sing Me received a phone call from her mother. Sing Me was visibly upset and spoke frantically in Karenni to Bu Song. Then there was a lot of talk in Burmese as the boys entered the conversation and finally Jai explained to me. Sing Me's mother had received a phone call from the landlord who told her the house was being sold and they had to get out. All thought that this meant immediately. I contested this and closed the focus group down and at Sing Me's request, went with her to talk to the family. I then rang the landlord for clarification; they had five weeks to get out of the house. However getting this to be understood was a difficult process as fear had gripped this family and packing had already begun. I spent the rest of the day going to the real estate office and then looking for new houses with Sing Me and her mother.

Resuming the focus group seemed to me to be highly insensitive. The participants then invited me to functions where they were participating in cultural

celebrations. I consequently attended Karenni National Day celebrations and Refugee Day celebrations. In these occasions I had impromptu discussions with the participants. These have not been cited but they were opportunities for member checking.

Member Checking

All of the participants were invited to read (or talk about) their interviews and focus groups transcripts. They were invited to add or clarify or remove anything that they wanted from the transcripts. However, none of the participants took up this offer. I then began inviting the participants to attend presentations on parts of the thesis. Three of the participants took up this offer on three different occasions. They all confirmed in positive ways that my presentations were consistent with their experience. I asked them for feedback on how I could improve upon the information I was presenting but all three were satisfied. Jacqueline had commented that she had learnt a lot from listening to the stories of others. Gabriella was worried that I might 'get into trouble' for being too critical of governments. Hannah thought that I could improve by getting a better hairdresser. After this comment I stopped pressing for feedback.

I again talked to David, the Sudanese youth worker, asking if there was any way he thought I could improve on member checking. He laughed and said something like, 'Jonnel, they're kids, they've moved on, they've done their bit they've moved on'. I then thought that maybe I had better do the same.

Maintaining Confidentiality

After the African girl's focus group some of the girls said that they wanted their names to be present in the research. They suggested that they had told me the story of their life and they had earned the right to have their own name beside their story. They were also concerned that their stories would not be believed if they did not have their names attached to them.

I agreed with the girls – they had gone through the pain - they should have all the recognition, but I had other ethical concerns regarding confidentiality. I sat with the girls and talked through the concerns, explaining in relation to maintaining confidentiality especially in relation to their past experiences in childhood. I therefore suggested an alternative way of viewing confidentiality and promoted

that their confidentiality was a 'right'. I suggested that in their stories they had not only discussed their own lives but also they had disclosed some of the hard things their families had to do in displacement and asked them to think about if this would compromise them or their families in any way? I talked about how they had discussed the more difficult relationships in their lives such as with fathers and friends at school and they needed to think about how this would affect those relationships. I pointed out that by being anonymous some of the hard things about resettlement and displacement could be discussed as issues and not personal problems and this could in turn (hopefully) help future resettlement practices. I encouraged the girls to see that the research was about informing others, even those who have the power to change things, of the good, the bad and the ugly. The girls listened and we agreed to think about it and if they wanted to have their names on their stories to tell me and I would change this. The girls did not ask again to have their own names used.

Taking this stance of promoting anonymity created the dilemma of imposing my own values upon the girls however I justified this by believing I was taking into account their emotional wellbeing and safety. I transcribed all of the interviews and in doing so altered any identifying information in the data. In addition the storage of recordings and transcripts will be kept in a locked compartment at the University of Wollongong.

Data analysis

In keeping with the tenets of narrative research I began by analysing the interviews for key themes (Cresswell 2007). These themes emerged through the stories told by the participants as I began to see some common threads through their stories. Yet what transpired was there seemed to be a number of ways to analyse the data. I began with what I call 'hearing emotionally' and Glesne (1999,) calls 'subjective lenses',

Part of being attuned to your subjective lenses is being attuned to your emotions. Your emotions help you to identify when your subjectivity is being engaged. Instead of trying to suppress your feelings, you use them to inquire into your perspectives and interpretations and to shape new questions through re-examining your assumptions. ... The goal is to explore such feelings to learn what they are telling you about who you

are in relationship to why you are learning and to what you may be keeping yourself from learning (p. 105).

While listening to the interviews I experienced such strong emotions in hearing the stories of loss, pain, hope and humour. My first response often after each interview was to drive home crying. My next response was one of anger with myself, I had lived so much of my life 'helping the disadvantaged', but I began to question some of my own motives. Was I really listening or was it more about me positioning myself as 'helper'? For example, I was particularly aggravated by both Sing Me and Bu Song's accounts of how scared they were in the camps. Why hadn't I picked up the fear that Sing Me and Bu Song described in the camp when I had visited the camp? When I went to the camp I saw the Thai army at the gate of the refugee camp. Why was I so blind? It was a long time before those questions would unravel into wisdom and I will take up this thought later to explain.

In order to use my emotional responses to benefit the research I first compiled the data into categories of emotional response calling it the 'Desires and concerns of the young people'. These themes began from these points:

- In wanting connection with Australian friends;
- In desiring to be seen as a person, not just a refugee, having value and an ability to contribute to society;
- In desiring to make the most of their educational opportunities;
- In longing be reunited with mothers or fathers and other family members;
- In needing autonomy and space to examine traditional family ways and new Australian ways;
- In being confused over so many new things;
- In longing to go back and help those left behind;
- In longing to belong;
- In seeing so much horror at such a young age;
- In displaying a hope and enjoyment in their new adventures in Australia.

Reflecting upon these themes I could see that if I was still a youth worker or a teacher I would find ways to create programs to assist in these needs. But now I was learning to be a researcher and as Hart and Tyler (2006) point out, 'the challenge to researchers in the field of refugee studies is to come from a perspective of research, rather than advocacy, for this allows the voices of the participants to be heard'. Thus I began to consider other ways to look at the data.

I then took a step back and looked at two broad themes around the concept of 'place' as a way to categorise the data. These were as mentioned earlier in Chapter One:

- Before Australia
- In Australia

These two 'places' enabled me to examine how identity moves and changes according to where we are. However these categories were far too broad. My next step in finding themes for the data lay in Batkin's (1984) idea that identity construction is relational. Who are the people most discussed by the participants? They were friends, family, themselves and their diaspora. I then observed that the *who* in the young people's lives were connected to the *where* in their lives also.

The most talked about place for all of the participants was school (both in Australia and before Australia) and then it was the family (both in Australia and before Australia). The 'family' to many of participants (especially the Burmese participants) included the diasporic community. Thus three main themes evolved:

- School before Australia;
- School in Australia;
- Family at home and in other countries;

A further complication in analysing the themes was how these topics were discussed. When discussing school both pre and post settlement there were quite similar themes amongst the participants. However, when discussing family the data showed that the ways the Burmese participants discussed family and

ethnicity was very different to the ways the participants from African countries discussed family and ethnicity.

Consequently these themes needed to be divided into two categories:

- Changing roles in families from African countries;
- Belonging in the ethnic Burmese diaspora;
 - The four themes now consisted of:
- Education before Australia;
- Education in Australia;
- Changing roles in families from African countries;
- Belonging in the Burmese diaspora;

The four themes became the basis to write about the findings and these themes could be written in the form of journal articles:

- i. Finding Education: Stories of how Young Former Refugees Constituted Strategic Identities in Order to Access School;
- ii. 'It felt like I was a black dot on white paper': Examining young former refugees' experience of entering Australian high schools;
- iii. 'Doing it alone': Examining the intergenerational relationships of former refugee young people from African countries in resettlement; and
- iv. Belonging to a Memory: Examining how young former refugee Burmese youth describe their cultural identity.

In all of this I found an underlying theme throughout the stories of the young people was the power of a dominant discourse to make them see themselves as 'Other' (Hall 1990). It is here that Hall's theories of cultural identity construction assisted my analysis. Hall (1990) asserts that 'the colonial experience' set about to create 'a dominant regime of representation' (p.225) where 'white' and 'Western' are 'a critical exercise of cultural power and normalisation' (Hall 1990, p. 225). The data showed that largely the stories of finding education, in chapter four, and finding a learner identity within a school, in chapter five, were

descriptions of negotiating ‘Otherness’ and ‘difference’. However, it was *what* was constituted as ‘different’ that changed for the young participants. In chapter four, before entering Australia the young people reported experiencing being treated as ‘different’ because they were ‘refugees’. But in chapter five, entering Australian schools, the former refugees reported experiencing being treated as ‘different’ due to having black skin and having an accent. Both are indeed articulations of ‘Otherness’ and the young people were positioned outside mainstream society but for very different reasons. Therefore they needed to be theorised separately. In chapter four from the perspective of ‘refugee Other’. In chapter four ‘difference’ is theorised critiquing the deficit discourses that can exclude students from entering the culture and the learning spaces in Australian schools.

In terms of analysing the data for chapter four the landmark essays in refugee studies of Zetter (2007) and Chimney (1984) were employed. These assisted in examining how the dominant discourse labels refugees outside a humanitarian discourse to being shrouded in a ‘myth of difference’ from the rest of the world (Chimni 1998, 351). Additionally, the stories the young people told of their harsh treatment and blatant discrimination as refugees needed to be theorised with the same intensity and rawness and for this I found the writings of the Polish sociologist, Bauman. He describes much of the disdain for the refugee in a ‘modern’ global consumer society is due to the refugees’ inability to consume. Bauman (2004) suggests that the refugee sits at the bottom of this society as ‘the redundant human’ and is positioned as ‘the waste of the world’ (76). It is when we understand that it is from this position that the participants talk of resisting these labels through finding education that we can fully appreciate the narratives told in chapter four.

In chapter five the analysis of the data was framed by theories of inclusive education, particularly those of Hattam and Every 2010, Keddie 2011a & b and Youdell 2006. The stories the former refugee student’s told were of the ways they tried to position themselves inside the learning culture of the school. However, as the evidence shows only some schools could allow a learner identity to include students with accents and black skin.

The stories of home and belonging to a diaspora spoke of reconciling and negotiating Otherness through how these groups conceptualise their cultural identity. Again Hall's understanding of how a cultural identity is conceived allowed for a thorough analysis of the data. The two different ways of thinking about cultural identity expressed by Hall (1990) are seen in the data. The African participants conceptualised a fluid cultural identity that could be negotiated through the present circumstances. They saw it as 'not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture --- but, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation' (p.127).

The ethnic Burmese participants, on the other hand, told of a cultural identity that was similar to Hall's (1990) first position. They saw their ethnicity as 'a sort of collective 'one true self' (p 229). This was evident in the stories the young ethnic Burmese told of how they had established new ways to communicate their ethnic difference and this was to ensure and establish a unique ethnic identity for political freedom.

Ethical Considerations

This research received approval from the University of Wollongong's Human Research Ethics Committee. Initially the research design incorporated a more participatory approach implementing art and music activities which gave greater autonomy to the participants in the research. However, this was rejected by the Ethics Committee on the grounds that the chief researcher had no qualifications in counselling or psychology. So more traditional qualitative approach was adopted including individual interviews and focus groups.

Due to the potential vulnerabilities of the participants, a number of steps were taken to ensure the research was conducted sensitively in all stages of the research. A contingency plan was clearly laid out if any of the participants became distressed in the interviews or the focus groups. These included a number of steps:

- In order to ensure cultural sensitivity in all areas of the research the researcher incorporated a local Multicultural Community agency youth worker to assist in recruitment. The youth worker ensured participation was voluntary by following up on each future participant and ensuring that each participant understood

the research process and that they had signed consent of their own volition. This ensured that the future participants did not have any feelings of obligation to the researcher due to a previous relationship. The youth worker also signed a confidentiality agreement.

- Upon the advice of University of Wollongong Ethics Committee a mobile phone number of a youth counsellor was given to each participant before the interview and focus groups. A mobile phone was placed in view for the participants to contact the counsellor if they needed to do so throughout data collection. The number was on speed dial. The youth counsellor was on call and was aware when the interviews and focus groups were being held.
- The researcher undertook an instruction lesson with the youth counsellor who assisted on the mobile phone. We designed a contingency plan to assist any participants at risk of experiencing trauma. This was not required by ethics but was suggested by the counsellor.
- The participants were given the option to use an interpreter as the researcher does not speak the participants' first language. This would assist the participants were not frustrated by their inability to communicate effectively.
- All responses collected from the research (interviews, and focus groups) were kept securely stored with access only by researcher and supervisors. All identifying features were removed to protect the identity of all participants.

Results

Participation by each participant was deemed voluntary by the youth worker. Throughout data collection no one asked for timeout or used the coded wave which expressed discomfort asking for a time-out and no one made a call to the youth counsellor. Also all of the participants elected not to use an interpreter. Only one participant chose not to have the interview recorded but agreed for the Researcher to write the answers as it progressed.

Limitations

The findings of this study should be viewed in the light of the following limitations. The participants were 12 former refugee youth from the a region of New South Wales, the Illawarra. As such the results cannot be considered as a general commentary on all refugee youth who resettle across Australia or in other western countries. Also the data was taken at a specific time in the young people's lives and the thoughts and the ideas of the young people are expected to evolve and change as they grow older and their circumstances change.

It also must be acknowledged that there are far more females from African countries than males who participated in this study. This was due to a number of issues. Firstly the researcher is female, secondly the young men who were known by the researcher when she managed a basketball team had just left school and the region in search for employment and were therefore unavailable for recruitment. As a consequence the findings on gender issues with the African-Australian participants are weighted heavily toward a female perspective.

The thesis limits itself to participants that were resettled in Australia under the Offshore Humanitarian Entrant Programme. That is to say that they had been designated with refugee status before arriving in Australia and came under the Humanitarian Entrant visas 200 or 202.

The choice to recruit only offshore Humanitarian entrants was a logistic one. The regional area where recruitment took place had very few asylum seekers or refugees from the onshore Humanitarian Program, only refugees from the offshore Humanitarian Program were settling in the area. Another consideration was my personal experience as a youth resettlement worker and as an ESL teacher in Australia and working with refugees on the Thai/Burmese border. All of these individuals had lived with the status of 'refugee.' My interest in the topic was centred on living with the identity status of 'refugee' and then this status changed by moving to Australia and being identified in new ways in Australia. To add asylum seeker or undocumented persons seeking refugee status and then citizenship would add other dimensions to the research and became too broad for the study.

Discovering how the theoretical framework informed the practice

In revisiting the question I had posed for myself in the start of this section; ‘Why hadn’t I picked up the fear that Sing Me and Bu Song experienced in the camp when I was there?’ led me not to finding a simple answer to the question but in finding a theory to examine this question, and others, in depth. I found that poststructural theory gave me the lens to examine both this particular question and also the research questions.

Poststructuralism explains how multiple ‘truths’ can be constituted in relation to the same circumstance. Sing me and Bu Song ‘truth’ about the camp was that it was a fearful place, mine was not. The difference in these truths was our relationship to power. I had experienced the refugee camp as a white Australian citizen and Sing Me and Bu Song had experienced the refugee camp as refugees. When I walked past the army with guns, they smiled at me, (I remember this specifically because I made a joke to my friends, ‘only in Thailand do you get smiling soldiers’). I felt no fear because I was in a position of power as an ‘Aide worker’. But there are other ‘truths’ about the refugee camp. The refugee camp was a fearful place for those who had no power, the refugees. Was it fearful for all refugees? I don’t know, but for the two teenage Karenni girls I interviewed the refugee camp was a fearful place. Therefore in employing a post structural theory I could see the multiple perspectives of the same place.

Furthermore, no one in the camp when I was there talked of fear, because the perpetrators of fear were there and would be there long after we left. Sing Me and Bu Song and possibly other refugees in the camp had no way to escape that fear their positioning brought with it tremendous vulnerabilities. Interestingly, it was only when the girls’ position shifted from being ‘refugee’ after resettling in Australia that the fear could be discussed and the girls were free to recollect upon their own realities.

The disjuncture between ‘Western youth’ and the youth in this study

Throughout recruitment and data collection I was aware that there was a disjuncture between the Western social construction of ‘youth’ and the lives of the young former refugee participants in this study. In this section I will trace

some of these disjunctures and discuss the decisions I made as a researcher to accommodate the needs of each participant.

Some of the participants were already living independently of their parents and making ‘adult’ decisions and had ‘adult’ responsibilities in many ways. For example, Matinda was living away from her mother and living with her boyfriend at his family home as well as sending remittance to Togo to assist her own grandmother. She was already very much functioning in adult ways. Yet at the same time, Matinda went to school and therefore encountering experiences of youth.

In recruiting Matinda I was aware from being her youth worker that she needed extra care to carry out being a participant. When I interviewed Matinda I picked her up in my car and drove her to the university. She had not eaten because she had done many chores that day and so we went to Subway where she ordered a foot long sandwich, a coke and a biscuit. I insisted on paying and she accepted laughing saying she was glad I paid as she had no money. I drove Matinda home and on the way we stopped at the local shopping centre to get some groceries for her boyfriend’s mother. She was very grateful for this as she would have walked to get the groceries. I was not upset when Matinda produced money because I knew Matinda had no money to spend on herself but had kept the money given to her for the groceries.

Joseph was in a similar situation to Matinda. He was the sole financial provider for his family still in Kenya and was attending TAFE at the time of the study. Joseph also expressed an interest in food so the interview was conducted over lunch at a Lebanese restaurant where they served big meals.

On the other hand, some participants still functioned within their family as a child even though they were over eighteen. For example, while recruiting I made sure that I had an informal discussion with the participants’ fathers that I knew and explained the process, even when the participants were over 18. This was a gesture of respect for the father’s position and followed the cultural expectations.

One instance did not progress so smoothly and I had to quickly ‘think on my feet’. I will describe this in full:

I had not met Jacqueline's parents and on the morning of the interview she rang to say she could not participate because her father did not know me, she was crying saying that she really wanted to participate and she asked me to help. Jacqueline was over 18 and could give consent so I was tempted to point this out to her, instead I chose to ask if I could come anyway just for a coffee and meet her mum. Jacqueline's mum and Aunty greeted me warmly and over coffee they talked of their lives. Meanwhile Jacqueline used her own initiative and rang her old case worker (who knew me) and asked her to let her dad know that 'I was alright.' This eventuated and I received a phone call at the house from Jacqueline's father giving his permission for Jacqueline to be a part of the research. He explained his fear of reporters, saying they gave refugees a bad name and he wanted to protect his daughter.

Jacqueline's father could be seen as being overprotective but (given the current circumstances in Australia) he was also protecting his daughter from potential harm. It is interesting to note that Jacqueline's father was aware of the negative discourse surrounding refugees and saw himself as protecting his family from it. Jacqueline also would not rebel but she also did not fully conform. She found a way to negotiate through these barriers.

The above examples give a picture of the complexities of these young people's lives and expecting them to 'act their age' could shut down the many ways they navigate their lives.

Therefore, the idea that 'youth' is a transition period between childhood to adulthood was inadequate in the way these participants experienced life. Moving beyond this conceptualisation of 'youth as transition to adulthood' then, I take up Wyn and Woodman's (2006) ideas to investigate the youth in this study. They suggest that each generation or cohort of young people contend with very different social conditions from previous cohorts of young people. Therefore, in examining this generation of young people 'it is necessary to develop an understanding of how each generation is located within its social, political and economic milieu' (p. 497). Only by focusing on and recognising the particular social conditions experienced by that age group and how they are different to the previous generations can there be a greater understanding of how 'young people themselves interpret, practice, contest and give meaning to their lives and

in so doing, create their generation in distinctive, differentiated and complex ways' (Wyn and Woodman 2006, p. 511).

Now I turn to the findings in this study. In the following chapter I turn to examining the young people's identity negotiations in terms of finding education as refugee children in Chapter Five. I then examine the pathways and multiple negotiations the young people took to try to belong to their Australian High schools in Chapter Six. Relationship with parents is the central point of Chapter Seven where negotiating the changes in that transpire during settlement is examined. I then move to examining how cultural identity is reconstructed through memories of homeland in Chapter Eight.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDING EDUCATION

Uptin, J. Wright, J. and Harwood, V (2014)

**Finding Education: Stories of how Young Former
Refugees Constituted Strategic Identities in Order
to Access School**

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Abstract

Educators in resettlement countries are grappling with ways to adequately engage and meet the needs of newly arrived refugee students. In this article we argue that to fully meet the needs of refugee students a deeper understanding of their educational experience as 'a refugee' prior to resettlement is vital. In particular we foreground the stories of three young former refugees and explore the ways in which they actively constructed new identities in order to access school in their host countries, prior to resettlement. This article discusses how the negative discursive positioning of 'the refugee' in the world today has limited the resources and access to education for young refugees. It concludes by arguing that as these students move into education in Australia there is a danger to quickly relabel young former refugees with deficit terms rather than opening up a discourse to include the intricate complexities of each refugee experience.

Introduction

Schools in western democratic countries struggle to deal with the complex needs of many newly arrived refugee students. There is a growing number of research projects examining the resettlement process and educational support programs for refugee youths in resettlement countries (Olliff & Couch 2005; Cassidy & Gow 2005; Hewson 2006; Cranich 2010; Gifford et al. 2009; Ferfolja & Vickers 2010; Naidoo 2011), however the research examining how young refugees experience education as refugees is minimal. Pinson and Arnot (2007) have described the lack of refugee education research as a ‘wasteland’, rendering the lives and educational experiences of refugee youth before resettlement ‘invisible’ (Pinson & Arnot 2007, 400). This article seeks to contribute to this much needed area by using the narratives of former refugee youths now living in Australia to examine the educational experiences of these participants before resettlement. The current research on young refugee students entering the Australian education system paints a bleak picture. It points to a lack of engagement in and with schools and numerous barriers to learning (Matthews 2008; Sidhu & Taylor 2009). Yet, at the same time, in the same research there is an acknowledgement that refugee students value education highly and have a strong desire to learn (Olliff, 2007; Gifford et al. 2009; Refugee Council of Australia 2009; Keddie 2011a). Australian schools, on the other hand, are increasingly being driven by neo liberal discourses focused on outcomes rather than input, standardised testing (Ferfolja & Vickers 2010) and the disclosure of their ranked results on ‘My Schools’ websites. This means that the resources and time for struggling students is being put under severe pressure.

In this article we argue that to fully meet the needs of refugee students a deeper understanding of their educational experience as a refugee prior to resettlement is vital; it is how refugee students are understood by the whole school community that is integral to how refugee students’ needs are met (Hattam & Every 2010). Schools play a significant role in creating respectful, welcoming environments where holistic approaches to inclusion can be fostered and developed (Keddie 2012; Matthews 2008). Therefore youth educators need to understand former refugee students in the light of their individual complex histories. Not in a way that can re-traumatise the students but by hearing their

stories of hope and resilience. Such strategies will assist youth educators in understanding the leaps refugee students need to take in order to adjust socially and academically to a western democratic system.

Just as it has been acknowledged that the resettlement experience is different for adults and young people, (Olliff & Couch 2005; Cassity & Gow 2005) so too is the refugee experience. In addition young refugees' lives are often construed as belonging to a homogenous group without investigating the diversity of perspectives, not only in ethnicity or in locality but from an intergenerational perspective. There is a very small volume of sociological research into young refugees (acknowledging Lowicki and Pillsbury 2004; Hampshire et al. 2008; Chatty et al. 2010;) and even smaller is the particularity of their educational experiences (Crivello et al. 2005; Zeus 2011). As almost half of the world's refugees are children (United Nations High Commission for Refugees 2010) there is a need for further investigation into how young refugees experience life. While quantitative data give us statistics on information about refugees (UNHCR 2010) the gap lies in hearing from the young people themselves.

Life for young people in western societies is portrayed as complex and dynamic, however refugee youth are generally construed in simplified terms such as 'victim,' 'traumatised' or affected by 'disrupted schooling' (Miller et al. 2005; Sidhu, & Taylor 2007; Matthews 2008; Keddie 2011a). This dominant social discourse oversimplifies the histories of refugee youth, limiting understandings of what they do and don't know and what they can and can't do. This article will argue that by using these dominant social meanings, educators and researchers are running the risk of reducing their own capacity to explore other ways of understanding former refugee youths and miss out on more productive ways of conceptualising the refugee experience. The stories of the young refugees in this article expose the ways that each participant exhibits a sense of agency in finding ways to negotiate their adverse circumstances to find an education for themselves. For refugee youths 'finding education' takes on a completely different meaning to what 'finding education' means in the global north. In the global north 'finding education' consists of shopping for a particular school that gives quality education for the individual child. However, for refugees, 'finding education' means exactly what it is, it is looking for a place that has a teacher, a

room to sit and a place that will accept their attendance. This article examines the ways in which each participant in the study constructed new identities in order to access school in their host countries, prior to resettlement in Australia.

The Framing Discourses of ‘the Refugee’

‘Refugee’ has become a highly politicised and popularised term with different meanings over time and for different groups of people. While Australia is a signatory to the Refugee Convention and the 1969 Protocol and responds to the refugee crisis by accepting an official quota of 13,000 Humanitarian Entrants a year it has, in recent years, refused entry and detained asylum seekers coming by boat. The political discourse surrounding ‘boat people’ is toxic and has resulted in the Australian Government creating their own closed detention camps on Manus Island and Nauru and forcibly detaining 127 unaccompanied minors in Port Phillip Tasmania (Milne and Hanson-Young 2013).

The young people in the study, like the young people in Kumsa’s (2006) study in Canada, strongly reject being called ‘refugee,’ particularly in relation to its use to describe their current identity and status in Australia. The rejection of the term refugee can be explained in part by the young people wanting to construct new identities in Australia which did not constitute themselves as the ‘Other’ and in part as a rejection of a term which as Zetter (2007) and others (Chimni 1998; Harrell-Bond 2002) have pointed out has come to be associated with pejorative meanings, meanings which are both politicised and popularised.

In the past, Zetter demonstrates how the labelling of refugees came from a humanitarian discourse but now ‘the discourse is preoccupied by notions of identity and belonging embedded in debates about citizenship and the ‘other’ in an era of global migration’ (2007:190). Where historically ‘the refugee’ was viewed as the idealistic heroic defector in the Cold War, now the discourse surrounding ‘the refugee’ has shifted and is shrouded in a ‘myth of difference’ (Chimni 1998, 351). This contrast in view, as Chimney (1998) attests, has transpired at a time when ‘the refugee’ is no longer likely to come from European countries but from the global south and is regarded with deep suspicion by the global north.

Bauman theorises these changes as a contemporary expression of the ways 'modern nations', as a consequence of Colonisation and Imperialism, dumped their 'human waste' (such as convicts, redundant workers, religious extremists) in countries like Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the Americas, far away from the sight of Europe and England. Today, one type of 'redundant humans' in a competitive global consumer society (which Bauman insists is the whole world), is 'the refugee' who comes across borders with nothing, no consumer capital and is seen as having nothing to offer their new country and are thus framed by their lack of consumer worth. Bauman writes refugees are:

Stripped of every single element of their identity except one: that of statelessness, placelessness, functionless refugees. Inside the fences of the camp, they are pulped into a faceless mass, having been denied access to the elementary amenities from which identities are drawn. (2004, 76)

While Bauman perceptively describes the positioning of 'the refugee' as the lowest commodity in the consumer world today, he pessimistically leaves them without acknowledgement of their own agency. On the one hand, his description explains much about the experiences of the young people in this study in their host countries. They were regarded with hostility and as worthless, treated in ways that were intended to demean. At the same time, they constructed identities for themselves that gave meaning to their existence. Their narratives challenge the notion that the refugee's life is an empty space and that even when treated as 'waste' the individual can and does defy this positioning. This article takes up the stance that these young former refugees have actively participated in the process of self-formation and have actively negotiated their circumstances (both as a refugee and a former refugee) to improve their quality of life in order to access a better life for themselves and their families. Conversely we would argue exerting agency can produce narratives that constitute identities that go beyond that of victim. Following Yuval-Davis we conceive of identities as narratives, that is, 'stories that people tell themselves and others about who they are, and who they are not, as well as who and how they would like to/should be' (2010, 266). This construction of reflective identity, treating 'oneself as another', provides the 'narrative component of the comprehension of self' (Yuval-Davis 2010, 266).

In this article we consider how three of the young people in the study constituted narratives of identity in response to the prompt to find education. We specifically focus on how the young people in the study talk about ‘finding education’ in their host countries. We demonstrate how these young people’s identities as constituted through their talk to a researcher were also constructed through particular practices and power relations; how these were constituted in relation to feelings of belonging to families, ethnicities and in opposition to those who would oppress them. In doing so we discuss how identities are constructed and reconstructed. We recognise that identities are socially constructed, ever moving and ever changing, their cultivation requiring ongoing interactions with others. Through such interactions, the self comes into being, conceiving and labelling itself (Giddens 2002).

The reflexive nature of identity construction is also central to how the young people retell their stories. Now they are in Australia and they are looking back on their lives as refugees. As Eastmond, (2007, 250) points out, stories like these ‘should be seen as creative constructions or interpretations of the past, generated in specific contexts of the present’. Now the participants can articulate what they did not have in their past whereas when they were living these experiences they did not know what they didn’t have. These narratives differ greatly from the stories of refugees in camps because, according to Eastmond (2007, 251), they are still living in uncertainty and ‘the outcome is far from given.’ With this newly acquired knowledge the young people speak with a raw emotional response about their past as they begin to untangle how their past affects their present and future. This is particularly so in reflecting upon their education.

Methodology

The research drawn on in this article comes from a qualitative study that investigated how former refugee youths find their way in Australian society; it explores how these young people negotiate their identity, creating new narratives for themselves that accommodate the complexity of the past, the present and the future. In the early planning stages of this wider study a participatory research approach was first considered, however ethics approval constrained the data collection to semi- structured individual interviews and

focus groups with a counsellor contactable by mobile phone throughout the data collection. Recruitment was undertaken in partnership with a multicultural community services organisation, with informed consent gained from participants in written and verbal forms. All participants were known by the first author as she had coached sporting teams and led music events with former refugee youth in the capacity of Youth Settlement Services Worker. A lapse of one year had transpired between coaching and recruitment.

Participants

Twelve former refugee youth (seven females and five males, aged between sixteen and twenty five) participated in the study. All of the participants came to Australia as refugees under the Offshore Humanitarian Entrant Resettlement Program. This Program invites refugees who have been chosen in partnership with the UNHCR to resettle in Australia. The young people described themselves as originating from Karenni and the Chin States of Burma, from Burma, Burundi, Southern Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo and Sierra Leone, and Togo however the participants spent most of their lives in the host countries of Thailand, Malaysia, Kenya, Zambia, Benin, South Africa and Ghana. Some of the participants have come to Australia with their family and others with adults from their tribe. All the participants have lost or left behind family members. As with Rassool (2009) the intention was to treat the participants as 'knowers' of their experiences who, by participating could become more aware of their own agency and personal strengths.

Thematic Analysis

A thematic content analysis was undertaken to gather the information from the data and collaborate into distinct themes. The findings gave a rich insight into the concerns these young people have; in wanting to connect with Australian peers; in desiring to be seen as a person having value with much to contribute to society; in desiring to make the most of the educational opportunities; in longing be reunited with mothers or fathers (for three participants); in needing autonomy to examine traditional family ways and new Australian ways; and in displaying a hope and enjoyment in their new adventures in Australia.

Finding education as a refugee

Examining the statistics on refugee education for children and young people is fraught with complications. There are a number of reasons for this. Firstly the burden of housing refugees is unequally shared around the world. Developing countries host four fifths of the worlds forced migrants (Gutierrez, 2010) and there is an absence of reporting in these countries on where or if refugees find education. Secondly, many of the receiving countries are not signatories to the Refugee Convention therefore the UNHCR is restricted in the ways it can provide refugee assistance. Furthermore, the main method for refugee assistance around the world is encampment. Yet only one-third of refugees stay in camps, the rest live in the urban areas of host countries as ‘illegal immigrants’ or on restricted visas.

Thus the following statistics only show only the percentage of children under the auspice of the UNHCR that are *not* attending school. They reveal a dismal picture;

- ‘More than 24% of 6-11 year olds
- More than 79% of 12-17 year olds
- More than 93% of youth aged 15-24 year olds (UNHCR 2010)

While these statistics show how hard finding education is for those refugees under the concern of the UNHCR it raises questions for how hard it is for those refugees who are not under the protection of the UNHCR. Overwhelmingly it demonstrates that to find an education as a refugee is an enormous task.

Paradoxically, education policies state access to education is a fundamental human right for children and is expressed in Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). In Article 22, the Convention makes special reference to rights and freedoms for refugee children. The Revised Guidelines for Education Assistance to Refugees (1995) stipulate the importance of educating children in camps and in emergency situations. Yet, sadly the situation on the ground does not reflect these policies. Christie and Sidhu (2002) write that the assumption that the statements of rights will translate to on the ground practice and provide education to refugees and the poor is far from reality; rather they are understood as symbolic. It is not only financial constraints that hold back

education for refugees, writes Hathaway (2005), but as host countries fear more flows of refugees into their nation state, denying education reduces the pull factor. A Zeus (2011) state that the predicament of refugee education is that it exists in limbo and in general is considered destabilising to the host nation. Indeed, as developing countries carry the majority of the burden for refugees it is not surprising that while refugees place high priority on education the host nations cannot.

Finding Education: Strategic Identities

For most of the young people interviewed in this study the topic of their schooling before coming to Australia was spoken of only briefly, dismissed as useless or described as a very negative experience. Following Yuval-Davis, and cognisant that these descriptions are reflective of the findings from the studies cited above; these narratives also demonstrate the complex identity work required to finding education.

Hannah was asked if she went to school in the camp in Ghana, she replied,

Ha ha School - Oh what a joke! It was just a place where people who didn't know anything teach us. Some of us even knew more English than they did. It was more like somewhere to go and spend time. That's what I would call it.

Joseph was asked about school in Kakuma refugee camp,

Ooohhh, school, I hated school in the camp. I had to walk, walk forever to go. That's why I want a car. I know - I've made it when I get that car.

Joseph's narrative of his education before Australia is constructed more in relation to his perceptions of himself and others as it is now in Australia (as a young man who is about to buy his first car) rather than how he remembers his life in Kakuma.

For some of the young people however, schooling was an important space for exerting agency, for constituting themselves as 'students' and 'learners', despite the circumstances of their lives in refugee camps. These recounts of schooling, exhibit a level of self-reflexivity about how they responded to their circumstances and in describing their struggles they described the ways they

negotiated shifts in their own identity to create ways to endure and find a better life.

Two of the participants in this article, Sing Me and Jai come from the Thai/Burmese border yet their experiences of refugee education are vastly different. Jacqueline's story sits between Sing Me and Jai's story and sheds light on a how a young Togolese girl experienced school in the host country of Benin. The following narratives are used to describe the elaborate and diverse pathways that the young people have taken to access some form of schooling before coming to Australia and to reveal their active agency to improve their chance for an education.

Sing Me.

We begin with Sing Me's story of her education in a Karenni camp on the Thai Burmese border. She was 19 years old when the interview took place and in year 10 at high school. She had lived in Australia for eighteen months. Sing Me did not want her interview recorded as she felt her English was not strong enough, instead the first author wrote it out, this meant that there were pauses in the conversation during the writing. What was remarkable about this is that it took the author out of the western style of conversing and we went back to the Karenni style of conversing. The first author spent seven and a half years in Northern Thailand but had forgotten the manner of conversation for most ethnic Burmese, the beauty of pausing to consider what the person had just said. With pen and paper in hand there was need for pausing after Sing Me's comments, she reciprocated.

Entry to Thai schools (the host county) is illegal for refugees without citizenship cards and impossible to access as the camps are in the high mountainous region next to the border where very few Thais live. The camps are seen by local Thais as 'the buffer zone' between the two nations. The camps are viewed as 'transitory' places and yet some have been in existence since 1984.

Sing Me describes how the camp was for her:

I [was] in refugee camp [for] 17 years. This [was] all I knew, I never live anywhere else. I [was] born in my homeland Karenni state and we left, I was one. When my mother came first they don't have a house they live

under a tree then they find bamboo and they make a house built out of the tree.

We feel sometime we don't have hope. They give me rice.

I don't see anything just the camp. I don't know what is on the outside I can't go and just look. I sit in the camp and I think and I think, what is it like outside? What people do? But I don't see, I don't know.

Enduring the banal monotony of the refugee camp was a lesson in persistence of the deepest kind. Sing Me's life experience was limited to the camp grounds and the activity within those grounds consisted of waiting for the food delivered once a month to the camp. Along the Thai Burmese border the Thai army patrolled the camps, not to keep people out but to keep the refugees in.

I notice Sing Me's hands are trembling as she whispers:

In the camp we can't go out. We have to stay in jail, the Thai army, they have guns, they hold you in their hand. They hold you (she clasps her fist tight and shakes it)

Her family are listening to Sing Me as she describes the camp, they are silent but nodding. Later they tell me that they have never discussed the fear that they felt for all those years living in the camp. Sing Me expresses a sense of relief in telling this part of her story. I am astonished, mostly refugees report the horrors of war, but here, in these few sentences Sing Me uncovers the fear of living 'in jail,' terrified of the host country's army and their guns. Life in the camp for Sing Me is far more than insular and immobile, it is volatile and insecure and fraught with unforeseen dangers. The humanitarian idea of the refugee camp as a place of protection for refugees is challenged in these circumstances, here the camp is used by the host country as a place of containment, a place to ensure that 'the refugee' stays away from the host society. The Burmese Border Consortium (2004) reports that corruption is a major concern to the agencies that sponsor the camps, that the refugees are considered 'easy pickings' for the people smugglers in an ever ravenous illegal sex trade operating throughout the golden triangle.

When asked her what were her first memories of the camp, the response was

Sing Me; When I was four I went to school- not like school here,
like a place. We don't study, we sing and everybody
plays.

She was then asked how she feels about her schooling.

Sing Me: I'm lucky not be in Burma. I'm alive. I'm happy to come
to the camp. By the way, I don't happy I don't have high
education in camp. You just busy your life. You have
nothing much to do. They have high school, year 10.
School is learning Karennii and Burmese and Karennii
dancing. Teacher is person in camp, teacher just says
then we say after teacher. No books. Nobody teaches
English but we still try. Some old students teach, they
can't talk (English), they can read, not speak. Sometime
white people come to camp from JRS (Jesuit Refugee
Service).

School, for Sing Me was a place to go when there is nothing much else to do, there are no books, paper or pens, it's a place to occupy the children, to fill in the countless, endless hours and days of waiting in the camp. It is a place to go away from family to be with other young people. With no access to education supplies and few trained teachers The Burmese Border Consortium make their own type of schools.

What is significant is that in these narratives we are given access to Sing Me's accounts of not giving up and her desire to find education. Sing Me says she is not happy with this standard of education but she does not give up, she persists with this makeshift education and the little bits in life that she is given. Left behind by the modernised world, Sing Me and the students like her refuse to give up hope for an education and a future, they continue attending 'school.' She talks about the school's weaknesses, 'Nobody speaks English,' yet this fact does not change her, nor her classmates commitment to finding English. 'We still try,' says Sing Me expressing the tenacity of the students and her connection to the school camp community. She is involved in helping resolve the problems within her community and if all she can do is try, then she will.

In the school Sing Me is taught the uniqueness of her cultural identity. The elders tell stories of her homeland and the past and she hears of the ways her people have been driven from their land and ethnically cleansed. On Fridays the traditional Karenni dress is worn by all as an external identification of belonging to a persecuted ethnic minority (The Burmese Border Consortium 2010). This ‘mythico – history’ (Malkki 1995) is not uncommon in persecuted ethnic groups. For example, Maliki’s ethnographic research observed how the Hutus in the refugee camp recaptured a collective identity away from their homeland;

Far from losing their collective identity – and far from living in an absence of culture or history – the Hutu refugees in the camp located their identities within their very displacement exacting meaning and power from interstitial social location they inhabited (1995 p.16)

Sing Me has found a place to belong in the ‘collective identity’ of a persecuted minority; she understands that it is because of her ethnic origin that she is in a refugee camp and participates willingly helping her people to survive by accessing as much education as she can.

Sing Me explains that the reason her family decided to apply to resettle in Australia was because she and her younger siblings could get an education and go back and help the Karenni’s fight for freedom.

Sing Me	Some people say ‘When you go (to Australia), You forget your country. You don’t have to leave.’ But I think if I go, I improve myself and help my country. In the camp, no education but maybe my life one day, I will have education, one day.
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The obligation upon Karennis to stay in the camp and be counted as displaced from their homeland is strong. Leaving can be seen as a betrayal of cultural identity and a weakening of the Karenni’s fight to go back to their homeland in Burma but for Sing Me leaving was about finding an education in her new country that would give her skills and qualifications to assist her people. Her primary motivation for resettlement was to bring back her knowledge and skills to further equip the Karenni cause. This strategy of ‘Karenni survival’ chosen by Sing Me is taken up by many ethnic minorities stuck in refugee camps. For example, the work of Chatty et al. (2010) details how Sahrawi refugees organise

a transnational scheme of child care and education for their children to participate in education in countries around the world willing to host them. The students are 'imbued with a sense of importance of education, which they perceive as a major weapon in their nation's fight for economic and political freedom' (Chatty et al. 2010, 37). Sing Me and her family, like others, are negotiating their identities as belonging to the Karenni diaspora in resettlement countries, (Yuval-Davis 2010) fighting through obtaining a western education to fully equip a 'forgotten' nation's fight for freedom.

Jacqueline

Jacqueline is Togolese and speaks four languages; at the time of the interview she was studying in a College bridging course after high school in the hope to attain entrance to university. She has been in Australia for four years. The interview was conducted in the local library, a very comfortable place for Jacqueline as she visits regularly and the volunteers help her with her studies. The interview with Jacqueline was an emotional one. A counsellor was contactable by mobile phone at all times throughout each interview and the Researcher was prepared to discontinue at any time but Jacqueline wanted to tell her story. After the interview she expressed a relief in being able to tell her story, she spoke of her realisation that the 'bad parts of her life were over' and that's why she was free to talk because in talking you realise that 'those days are gone.' Many of the participants expressed a sense of relief in telling their story for the first time, they thanked me. I felt overwhelmingly humbled that I was the one to hear.

Jacqueline travelled every day from the refugee camp to school in her host country, Benin. In the following quote she describes the hostility and blatant discrimination she endured to get an education.

Jacqueline	Oh it was horrible 'cause these people they will insult you, they will spit on you, they will laugh at you, they will mock you, like it's your fault to be a refugee. It's like you choose that pathway yourself. And some days it was very horrible cause no matter how hard you try to study and no matter how hard you try to know the stuff they will teach you, you will fail your class and sometimes you have to repeat your class three or four times and every year you are losing those years.
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In the host country school Jacqueline is objectified as ‘the refugee’, even to the point where Jacqueline (the person) is not seen. The teacher and the class do not acknowledge her efforts in studying; they only view her as an intruder. Jacqueline is positioned through blame and shame and placed as the ‘outsider incarnate’ (Bauman 2004). Yet Jacqueline returns to this class day after day and year after year to actively pursue an education even with the full knowledge of how she will be treated.

Jacqueline continues:

You can’t even stand up and fight because you get in trouble, not just with the school but the authority in your camp and with your parents.

Tragically, Jacqueline has learnt to keep silent and to not report her abuse as there is no avenue for advocacy. She sees herself alone in her struggles. Outwardly Jacqueline monitored her behaviour and presented as a ‘good’ refugee (Harrell-Bond 2002; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2011) accepting the abuse, not fighting back or causing any problems for the camp authorities and not complaining about her situation. She didn’t even complain to her parents as she was aware that they were also powerless. Every day Jacqueline played the ‘role she is expected to play to gain the approval of the helpers and to be successful in obtaining aid’ (Harrell-Bond 2002 p. 57). According to Yuval-Davis identities do not need to be verbal but can ‘also be constructed as specific practices’ (2010, 267) this can be seen here in Jacqueline’s case, she is forced into silence, a position of powerlessness; it is an excruciatingly lonely place for such a young girl but her ‘practice’ of attending school displays her knowledge and insistence of her right to attend school.

Jacqueline describes how she feels about the abuse:

Jacqueline So it’s kind of misery and sadness and poverty and anger
and lots of loss of power all locked up in your heart.
You’re guilty, so you sit there and it’s like, they just glue
you to your seat, you can’t do anything about it.’

Here Jacqueline describes the pain of being an outsider rejected because of her status as a refugee. The guilt that is falsely placed upon her for being a refugee is a debilitating and paralysing position.

Jacqueline: They will laugh at you, they will say ‘Oh these people, these rebel people who went up against their government and now they are in our country, eating our food and taking our place in our country, how did they come to be in our school? And I’m sitting there thinking, ‘It’s not my fault, I can’t do anything about it.’ And they spit and say, ‘I don’t care.’ (Pause) You are there, going to school and you think, ‘I’m alive that’s it’. (silence)

The taunts of her schoolmates and teachers strip Jacqueline of her right to exist, not just her right to be educated. Her comment ‘I’m alive and that’s it’ demonstrates the depth of despair and humiliation she suffered in the camp. Jacqueline is aware that the arguments of the host society are irrational and unfounded but it is the host society with the power, they get to decide what is ‘true’, what is ‘rational’. In this world of abhorrence for her own life, Jacqueline’s resistance to being Othered is exhibited by turning up to school every day. Just by this simple act she refuses to accept their positioning of her as ‘human waste’ (Bauman 2004) and silently demands an education. In this sense this narrative reveals the complexity of this young woman’s experiences and the important narratives of identity that have been constituted that support her engagement with education.

Jai.

Jai has been in Australia for two years; he is 16 years old and is now in year 10 at high school. His greatest joy is singing and playing guitar in his Burmese church band. Jai is Burmese, he escaped Burma with his mother and brother after they found the poverty and the treatment of his mother by the Myanmar military junta too much to bear. He said that in Burma the family could not pay the soldiers so he could not attend school. They walked into Thailand across the bridge at Mae Sot where they found a room to live and his mother found some work in a factory. Jai reported that his mother had to work twelve hour shifts, six days a week. She made Jai (being around 8 years old at the time) and his brother hide themselves away from authorities and promise not to walk into the big streets but to stay in their lane. The boys found a small group of other Burmese children who came to their room each day and together they began a

make shift school for three years. The teacher was an older girl who taught them Burmese history and geography. One day his luck changed dramatically.

Jai One day these people come and they are sharing about God and sharing, 'He is good,' and then we said, 'Okay we believe.' Then they say 'Okay you can come and study in big school. They have Biiiiiig school for free, for kids like me, people who don't have father, then the learning is free. So we go and we join the church and we sleep in the church and this good, this free.

Researcher Did your mother go there?

Jai No, my mother stay home and work. I go Christian school. I very happy, they are learning all subjects and soooo many children and we have year 1 and year 2 and we sleep and we have food to eat. On Sunday my mum comes and my mum brings some food and some clothes and we finish church we can talk, talk.

Jai's family's conversion to Christianity provided him with food, shelter and most importantly to Jai, a free formal education. His change in faith opened up opportunities to belong to a larger network of displaced people that were being cared for by Christians organisations in Western countries (TBBC 2010). Jai talked about his mother being relieved that he was in a safer place.

Researcher When you were in school at refugee school. What did you think was important?

Jai I think me (being) in school, it help my mum, its important because my dad is not here so now she has other Christians helping. I help my mum too and I work just a bit and sometime I get money.

Jai's family is not alone in successfully transforming a religious identity to maximise benefits for the present and the future (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2011). By becoming Christians his mother could work without worrying for her boys' safety. Now the daily care for Jai's life and education was upon the church, which has many more resources. Jai's change in faith is a strategic identity shift; it takes

him away from his past, his Buddhist faith, and his homeland where he lived in poverty under a tyrannous military junta. It also takes him away from his present circumstance where he is considered an ‘illegal immigrant’ under Thai law with no access to school and a candidate for Thailand’s underclass for labour exploitation (TBBC 2010). It moves him toward a future in a freedom movement that is not only spiritual but has nationalistic aspirations.

In this region Christian organisations provide a power base for powerless refugees and provide partnerships with the Christians in the minority ethnic tribes of Burma. The Christian groups on the Thai Burma border actively conceptualise a new Burma, free from tyranny, ethnic cleansing and poverty; this vision provides thousands of ethnic Burmese with hope of return and a reason for living (The Burmese Border Consortium 2010). They view ‘the refugee’ not through a consumer societal lens of ‘waste’ but through a Christian discourse that gives the Christian ethnic groups the high status of being persecuted for Christ’s sake. Horstman, (2011) reports that the Karen Christians are well supported and well-resourced largely by Baptist Christians from western churches who actively proselyte, educate and care for refugees of all ethnicities. Horstman (2011) states ‘Christian missionaries transformed the Karen from ‘primitive’ to self-consciously ‘modern’ subjects.’ It is these churches that in 1984 stepped in and set up the refugee camps along the Thai Burmese borders that are still being maintained today.

Discussion

Each of the young people who are refugees interviewed for this article suffered discrimination and marginalisation having limited access to resources or advocacy, and little or no access to power or privilege. The young refugees spoke of the many things they were not allowed to do, and the many things they never received as children. This, according to Norton (2000) influences their relationship to the world and possibilities for their future. She writes,

Thus the question ‘who am I’ cannot be understood apart from the question, ‘What am I allowed to do?’ And the question ‘What am I not allowed to do?’ cannot be understood apart from material conditions that structure opportunities for the realisation of desire’ (2000, 8).

These young refugees have missed out on many opportunities however, even in this lack they still have found a capacity within themselves to acquire a better life, it is their way of saying ‘this is who I am.’ Although this finding could be problematic in terms of romanticising adversity, this is not the point. What is crucial to take account of, we argue, are the many narratives at work in these young people’s lives, which behoves services such as education to move beyond a sense of treating refugee as akin to victimhood or powerlessness. As young refugees continue in Australian education the hope would be that they see and are afforded new opportunities and they can be given the opportunity to ask ‘what am I allowed to do?’ and then afforded the resources to accomplish it.

Throughout this article the narratives of former refugee youths speak of their refugee experience particularly pertaining to education. It has discussed how the negative discursive positioning of ‘the refugee’ in the world today has limited the resources and access to education for young refugees. This article also explains the different ways that the young refugees in this article actively negotiated their own particular circumstances toward obtaining education.

Bauman’s (2004) notion of ‘the refugee’ as ‘human waste’ fails, we suggest, to fully explaining experiences of these young people. While it can be said that it is the case that they are at times treated as tantamount to ‘human waste’, this is not the whole story. And it is precisely this point that we wish to emphasise. Their lives are complex and their narratives tell of their responses to situations and how their identities are constituted in crises (Yuval-Davis 2010). To say they could find education during crises is not to flag their resilience or the opportunity that hardship offers; rather it is to claim the value of the minutiae of identity constitution. There is, we suggest, value in recognising what this might offer to disrupting the homogeneity of the notion of the refugee, especially in relation to access and participation in education.

The three participants discussed in this article were active in resisting the labels that their refugee status framed them, exhibiting behaviours that did not confine them to being ‘victim,’ ‘helpless,’ ‘dependent,’ ‘problem’ ‘abnormal’ and ‘waste.’ By persisting in attending school every day they displayed active learner identities, moving away from ‘pure victimisation’ (Zeus 2011) to mobilise the small amount of agency afforded them. As this article has illustrated, each of the

young refugees' featured in this article have exhibited enormous determination and mature decision making in order to find and persist with obtaining an education.

We take up Harrell-Bond's (2002) challenge that if we view the survivors of such adversity who have often displayed unimaginable courage and dignity in the most devastating situations simply as 'victims' then we have destroyed their well-deserved dignity. We also add that if resettlement countries position refugees in this way alone then we have silenced a unique people with resources and resilience that can only benefit wherever they choose to call home.

As these students move into education in Australia there is a danger to quickly relabel young former refugees with deficit terms. This article argues that by describing former refugee students as problematic and in ways that positions them as 'victim' and 'traumatised with disrupted schooling,' diminishes the complexity and diversity of each individual refugee experience. It suggests opening up the discourse to include ways that foreground these intricate complexities giving room for students to voice their own experiences thus being seen as individuals having agency and unique characteristics and understandings of the world that can enrich the culture of a school. Hattam and Every state;

The experience that refugee students have in schools is very much determined by the way that refugees are thought about, and represented in the public culture and how these representations are taken up or contested in schools. (2010, 409)

When schools take a more reflexive approach and include a student perspective to examining the equity challenges facing new student populations, as Keddie (2011) asserts, then there are opportunities to listen and learn from them. Therefore the role of the Australian school cannot be underestimated in how young former refugees' future narratives of oppression or empowerment will play out.

This article agrees with the recommendation of Earnest et.al (2010, 105) that the challenge for the academic community is the 'paucity of research on the learning styles and academic needs of African and Middle Eastern students from refugee backgrounds'. We would also add Burmese and the Burmese ethnic minorities.

Without further investigations into the lives and educational experience of former refugee students we will be in danger of inaccurately judging and

Conclusion

This article focused on the young people's experiences of education before entering Australia. It deliberately focused on pre-settlement so that a deeper and more comprehensive analysis of the narratives of the young people's lives can be made. The question of how the young people in this study experienced entering high schools in Australia has been written in a further publication by Uptin, Wright, and Harwood (2013). This project points to how one of the more significant and confronting times for the young people in this study was entering Australian high schools. For many of the young people in the study it was the first time they had to face being identified as embodying difference, and embodying it in a way that was not acceptable to their peers. This made it very hard for the participants to join in with cross cultural friendship groups and to develop any sense of belonging within the school culture. They talked of being stared at, of girls grabbing each other as they walked by as if afraid, of being laughed at, being ignored, being taunted and being racially abused. The young people talked about their difference being identified largely in two ways: the colour of their skin (blackness) and having an accent (129). 'On the occasions that schools nurtured opportunities, these were largely restricted to stereotyped positions such as sport, music or rap. While not critiquing these as positive experiences, it is of concern that the young people were unable to explore a more diverse route to participation in schooling' (Uptin et al. 2012, 135).

The article advocates for educational institutions and researchers to look past the simplistic ways in which refugees are construed in Western discourses. It also shows the disparity of educational opportunities between refugees and Australian students and therefore highlights what great lengths many refugee students must go through to 'fit in' socially and 'catch up' academically to Australian standards. We suggest, therefore, that rather than expecting the former refugee students to do all the work in adapting to the mainstream, high schools also can assist by actively moving toward inclusion (Keddie 2011). In saying this we are not advocating delving into past individual traumas of the young people. Rather we suggest that youth educators can become familiar with

the students' backgrounds through research via the internet about the camps and countries the students are likely to have experienced. For example, Kakuma refugee camp has information, videos and photos to show the way of life in the camp. We also suggest opening up and making room for narratives of hope, resilience and providing a platform for the students to share their own knowledge of the world. For example, by appreciating the multiple languages the student speaks, the soccer team they support and the music videos they listen to in their first language. There are countless ways to acknowledge and respectfully value the refugee students.

It is also worth considering how this research raises questions about applications to other cohorts, especially primary children, and early years. While this study cannot be transferred directly to younger students, what this study does highlight is the critical attention needed for how we understand refugee identity. It is this consideration that is transferable across all cohorts. Therefore more research pertaining to younger refugee children could well prove to be beneficial.

CHAPTER 5

‘A BLACK DOT ON WHITE PAPER’

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Uptin, J. Wright, J. and Harwood, V (2013)

**‘It felt like I was a black dot on white paper’:
Examining young former refugees’ experience of
entering Australian high schools.**

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Abstract

Schools are often the first point of contact for young refugees resettling in Australia and play a significant role in establishing meaningful connections to Australian society and a sense of belonging in Australia (Olliff 2007 Gifford et al. 2009; Sidhu & Taylor 2007). However, too little is known of how refugee youth encounter school in their new country. This article draws upon individual narratives of young former refugee's experiences of high schools. It explores the stories told by the young people of being identified as different and of negotiating ways of belonging in schools both academically and socially. It argues that it is how the school positions the newly arrived refugee students within mainstream school culture that opens up or restricts opportunities for inclusion in all aspects of school (in culture and pedagogy).

Introduction.

Resettlement of refugees in Australia has had a change in profile over the last decade resulting in most new arrivals being among the first of their nationality and/or language to settle in Australia (DIAC 2011). The main resettlement focus has been refugees from the three key regions of Africa, Asia and the Middle East (DIAC 2011). These new communities face specific challenges such as finding interpreters, translation of literature, establishing community networks and understanding and interacting with all facets of Australian society. Research shows that it is often the youths in these families who interact with Australian society more rapidly than adults (Refugee Council of Australia 2009; Olliff 2007). This is due to attendance at school and thus taking on roles and responsibilities beyond their years to lead the family in the resettlement process. With this in mind, what would be pertinent to understand in assisting resettlement for the whole family is how refugee youths encounter schools. However, too little is known of how refugee youth encounter school in their new country.

Schools are often the first points of contact for former refugee young people and play a significant role in establishing meaningful connections to Australian society and a sense of belonging in Australia (Olliff 2007 Gifford et al. 2009; Sidhu & Taylor 2007). Yet research from The Foundation for Young Australians (Mansouri et al. 2009) shows the overwhelming majority of racist experiences take place at school. The FYA report states that the main recipients of racism are students with migrant and refugee backgrounds; and that racist experiences are exacerbated by structural and institutionalised practices, teachers’ passivity in dealing with racialised incidents and the exclusionary practices of schools upon students from migrant and refugee backgrounds and indigenous students. The report concludes that ‘The final variable which significantly predicts the experience of racism was the type of school young people attended’ (Mansouri et al. p.5). From this perspective it can be argued that schools not only have the power to position who is included in schooling (in culture and pedagogy) but also have the power to determine whether there is room and appreciation for diversity (Keddie 2011a; Hattam & Every 2012).

The rise in public political rhetoric throughout Australia has brought about a dehumanisation of some of the most vulnerable people in our society. The

distortion and confusion surrounding the discourse on refugees have added an increasing suspicion of ‘the refugee,’ (Hattam & Every 2010) and polarised attitudes (Keddie 2011b) within Australian society. This has consequently positioned the newly arrived refugee as a politicized subject. Given that schools have a significant role in Australian society in shaping who young Australians become (Wyn 2007), it is vital that we understand the impact of such a politicised discourse upon our young people and how these ‘racialised discourses’ (Matthews 2008 p.37) play out within schools. Despite the importance of schools in its role to nurture young former refugees our knowledge of how this is taking place is minimal.

This article looks at schools as social spaces and the ways the young people in this study are positioned amongst their peers in the mainstream school culture as fellow learners and as friends. By drawing on the individual narratives of young former refugees it provides insights into their lived experiences of school and how they negotiated ways to be and belong in Australian schools. It joins with other research (Hattam and Every 2010; Gifford et al. 2009; Hewson 2006; Cassity and Gow 2005) in examining former refugees’ experience of inclusion/exclusion within Australian schools.

School as Social Spaces

There is considerable evidence that schools are places that teach young people to ‘become somebody well’ (Wyn 2007 p. 37). Schools can play a significant role in creating respectful, welcoming environments where holistic approaches to inclusion can be fostered and developed and can provide a site for challenging inequities and nurturing social justice principles (Keddie 2011a; Matthews 2008). They can provide spaces for more reflection upon the values of democracy and justice and can be pivotal in actively interrupting the negative discourse surrounding refugees and more broadly immigration (Keddie 2011b; Hattam & Every 2010). Yet schools can also be spaces that restrict learning and social inclusion. They have the power to designate the identity markers that are most desirable and enable certain students to succeed in the institution and conversely these same social and cultural markers can very easily exclude difference (Youdell 2006).

In this article the concern is that in each school culture the ways in which the refugee is perceived and positioned can bring a multiplicity of ‘identity markers’ (Youdell 2006 p.34) which also constitute ideas of what the former refugee student is allowed to be and do. As Youdell (2006) points out ‘performatives that do not make sense in the discourses that frame schooling, or that are counter to prevailing institutional discourses, may fail or may act to constitute a subject outside the bounds of acceptability as a student’ (p.37). Therefore ‘the refugee’ can too easily stand outside these bounds of acceptability. As Keddie (2011b) argues, the current discourses surrounding ‘the refugee,’ are largely constituted in deficit ways. Where difference is identified it is often equated with marginality, deficit and lack, due to the (mis)recognition and misrepresentation of the one perceived as different, in this case, the refugee student (Keddie 2011b). This positioning places the refugee student in a strata of negative and deficit assumptions within schools such as being traumatised, a victim and at risk. As a consequence the young refugee is usually assigned automatically on entrance to lower classes (Christie & Sidhu 2002; Hewson 2006; Sidhu and Taylor 2007; Ferfolja 2009).

As Youdell (2011) states, the schooling of young citizens ‘is shaped and constrained by the politics of the moment’ (p.3). Included in the politics of schooling are competing pressures upon schools in a neo liberal context where there is a focus on outcomes and test results rather than input (Ferfolja & Vickers 2010). The added pressure of the disclosure of schools’ results being ranked on ‘My Schools’ websites can mean that the resources and time for addressing the diverse needs of students are being put under severe pressure. It becomes too easy for schools to see these needs as a drain upon a school’s much needed resources.

Not surprisingly then there is increasing evidence that former refugees are struggling with their new school environments (Cassidy & Gow 2005; Gifford et al. 2009; Miller 2004; Naidoo 2011.) Often the responsibility of making a new life for themselves within this competitive education system not only academically but also in forging social relationships is a difficult one. ‘The knowledge of how to “be a student”, and indeed look like one, entails many skills, behaviours, formative experiences and a great deal of knowledge’ (Miller et al. 2005, p. 23).

Acquiring this knowledge is often left to the individual student rather than being addressed as a whole school concern (Riggs & Due 2010).

This article adds to the knowledge of how young former refugees negotiate ways to belong. School was the place where the participants talked of wanting to belong, of trying to belong, each talked of the high value education had in their own family and culture, and this meant they placed a high price on succeeding socially and academically.

Methodology

The larger research from which this article is drawn, investigates how former refugee youths in Australia negotiate their cultural identity, creating new narratives for themselves that accommodate the complexity of the past, the present and the future. The findings reported in this article are drawn from a study of twelve former refugees aged between 16 and 20 and a Sudanese youth worker. The participants described themselves as originating from Karenni and Chin States of Burma, from Myanmar also Burundi, Southern Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone, and Togo however the participants spent most of their lives in the host countries of Thailand, Malaysia, Kenya, Zambia, Benin, South Africa and Ghana. Some of the participants came to Australia with their family and others with adults from their tribe. All the participants have lost or left behind family members.

Difficulties were first faced in recruitment due to the potential participants not understanding the concept of research. This was addressed through the use of a ‘snowballing’ approach facilitated by one of the young women translating the research into terms that made sense to her and then seemed to work with other participants. As she understood it the research meant that ‘She just wants you to talk about yourself,’ and once this was explained, engagement with participants proceeded. All the participants had experienced the pressures of being interviewed for refugee status and resettlement, as Jacqueline said ‘The future of our family depended on what I said in that interview; they (interviews) can make you sick.’ Therefore, the intention to respect the participants as ‘knowers’ of their experiences was most important (Rassool 2010). Informed consent was gained from each participant both in written and verbal forms and a trained counsellor was able to be accessed by mobile phone throughout data collection,

however, none of the participants asked for this assistance. Data collection began with one-on-one semi- structured individual interviews. After the interview the participants then expressed a keenness to engage in focus groups.

The experiences of school in Australia were a major focus of conversation for all the participants. All reported that education was very important to them and each was aware of the high stakes they had in making sure that school worked for them. What was surprising to the researchers was the great emphasis the participants placed upon the social aspects of school; finding friends was discussed at length. The academic side of school was mentioned by a few of the girls but not at all by the boys.

Findings

In telling the story of their lives, one of the more significant and confronting times for the young people in the study was entering high school. For many of the young people in the study it was the first time they had to face being identified as embodying difference, and embodying it in a way that was not acceptable to their peers. This made it very hard for the participants to participate in cross cultural friendship groups and to develop any sense of belonging within the school culture. They talked of being stared at, of girls grabbing each other as they walked by as if afraid, of being laughed at, being ignored, being taunted and being racially abused. The young people talked about their difference being identified largely in two ways: the colour of their skin (blackness) and having an accent. For Gabriella, for example, school was the point at which she first felt her ‘Otherness’ through the difference of her skin colour:

When I arrived here in Australia, in school you know, that’s when I felt like I didn’t belong here. --- It felt like I was a black dot on a white paper. (We laugh) They can’t miss you, you see everyone just staring, turning and looking. Gabriella

Gabriella’s way of describing her difference as ‘a black dot on a white paper’ shows just how much she was confronted by the reactions to her skin colour in her new home. As well as providing a graphic image of her sense of difference in a ‘white’ school, it also depicts the isolation and loneliness she suffered and that

many of the participants reported. This sense of difference and isolation also evoked in Abi’s statement about being singled out;

You know what I hate, you know when there’s something wrong with you and you know it that there is something wrong with you. For instance, I know I have an accent. Stop telling me! (Abi)

There is a hint of anger in Abi’s voice as she speaks of her impatience with being singled out as different because of her accent. She considers having an accent as ‘having something wrong with her’. As Miller (2004) puts it, there is a ‘politics of speaking which implicates the speaker and hearer in ways that are ideologically loaded, and which may be the basis of empowerment or discrimination’ (p. 291). The ways in which her accent is spoken about by the other students does not empower Abi, it positions her outside the mainstream, as different.

For the boys in the study, the discrimination was often more directly physical. They reported being verbally and racially abused by other boys their own age and some resolved it by fighting.

Joseph: Then all of a sudden he was like, ‘Oh why don’t you stay in your country.’ And then I thought about that and then he went too much and he’s like ‘Oh look at you, your f-- - black’ and my eyes just shut and I had a fight there.

Researcher: So did you have many fights over that?

Joseph; Na, (pause) nobody wanted to give me trouble again. They all wanted to be my friend.

Finding Friendships

Forming friendships with young people is often difficult but for the young former refugees in the study the terms set by the dominant group offered no way to negotiate friendships. Jai, for example, despairingly talked about how he thought he would never be able to make friends until he spoke English like a native speaker:

At (N) high sometime I think nobody will be my friend. They speak only to English people and have them as friends. Sometime we are lonely, we speak only to Burmese friend, we can’t speak English language like they

do, Yeh, sometime they have a joke and they laugh and laugh, when we say something and they stop. So we must get better Yeh, so we can get more friends. (Jai)

Jai blamed himself for being excluded from friendship groups, complying with the dominant attitude that those with accents do not ‘sound alike within the dominant discourse’ (Miller 2004, p. 310) and are seen as unworthy of friendship with members of the English speaking social group. Jai and his Burmese friends can be understood as not being afforded the ‘right to speak’ (Miller 2004). Due to this economy of speech, Jai accepts a ‘responsibility’ to speak more like ‘English people,’ – that is, without his accent, in the hope of earning friendships with those ‘English people.’

The sense of difference from other groups of students in their schools was palpable throughout the young people’s discussions of school life.

I just have one friend in High school, she was Helen, she was African (too) and that was the only person I can get along with and the same thing happened to me it happened to her, she can’t get between them, you try, you try to get in the group but it’s like you took their joy away. ‘Cause I remember one day there was this group of girls just sitting there and I was like ‘Hi’. There was nothing! I feel the atmosphere change just when I said Hi, it’s like I bring the wind of sadness and anger and revolt between them and they just say Hi and turn away. (Jacqueline)

Being forced into a position of isolation often meant that these young people faced the issues of resettlement alone.

I went into year 8, I didn’t really like it. I found that the Australian students didn’t want to make friends with kids from anywhere else and I was really lonely. I didn’t really like it. They sometimes would talk but it wasn’t good, I wanted friends to help with my troubles but I had to battle it out for myself. (Peta)

While it is impossible to gauge whether the girls were excluded from friendships due to racial difference it is not unreasonable to speculate that this was an issue as both girls were aware of their racial difference; Jacqueline only had one friend, another African and Peta states that it was the ‘Australian students’ with whom

she could not become friends. Certainly from the perspective of these former refugees it was an issue.

However Hannah’s experience of entering high school is a clear demonstration of just how confronting beginning at an Australian school can be. It also highlights how the racialised discourse throughout a school positions the former refugee as an outsider. The way in which Hannah is given a title, ‘the weird black girl’ demonstrates how Australia’s colonial past still permeates our knowledge and treatment of different skin colour and accent to ‘call forth partially remembered colonial histories of differentiation, disparagement, oppression and racialization’ (Matthews 2008, p.38).

Hannah: So I went along to the high school and I was the only black in the school. ---. But walking in, everyone just staring at you for so long and they just look at you. And I was just like, god what am I doing, I don’t have friends - -- I used to sit by myself and they would think I was weird, They called me the ‘weird black girl,’ the only weird black girl. No one would sit by me, even if all the desks were full – that was the weirdest thing ever- even if there was nowhere to sit people would go to another class and bring another desk in but nobody would sit by

Researcher: How --Ohhhh--- really!

Hannah: Yeh or if there was a spare desk by me, they would pick it up and move it. I’d just sit there, and stare at the board, no chance to make a friend.

Researcher: What did the teacher do?

Hannah: Nothing.

Researcher: Nothing?!

Hannah: It was a new experience for me ‘cause I never had, never gone through that, ‘cause I know myself to be a really friendly person and if someone tries to know me they would see that. But no one ever tried to know me.

Through the designation of the title ‘the weird black girl’ the pupils actively discriminated against Hannah. This discourse, taken up by the students in the school, makes her visible and audible differences (being her black skin, accent and her status as a refugee) a signifier of difference. Hannah was categorised and represented as the ‘Other’ in the school community. In the quote above Hannah repeats this descriptor and adds ‘the only weird black girl’ accentuating the alienation of this positioning. It is common practice for Australian teenagers to receive nicknames designated by their friends, but this name depersonalises Hannah, making her an object, not just of difference, but of abhorrence. This type of racism, that of being designated a name, is ‘different from that manifested by overt violence’ (Miller 2004, p.291). Yet it is extremely violent upon Hannah’s entitlement to belong within this school.

Inside the classroom Hannah’s experience of being alienated physically by her classmates seals the Othering process. By physically moving desks away from her so she must sit in isolation Hannah’s ability to constitute herself as friendly is thwarted, as she puts it, there is ‘no chance to make a friend.’ Hannah is stunned into silence and experiences her alienation linguistically and materially. Without a voice to narrate her identity she cannot establish a place within the school community, struggling to constitute herself as a student she is shut out from all interaction in the class. At the same time, the school shuts itself out from knowing Hannah, resisting all she has to offer and not understanding how her experiences of life could enrich their own learning.

Music and Sport

There are spaces and identities where it was possible to become included within the school culture, two of these were sport and music. Sport, for the African boys allowed for the acceptable racialised identity markers of ‘cool black basketball player’ and gave an accessibility to daily life in the school where they could present themselves as competent sportsmen (Atencio 2006). All of the boys mentioned playing soccer or basketball at lunchtime and if they showed talent it gave social capital and access to friendships across class and ethnicity. The power of inclusion into a school community was witnessed firsthand by the first author in her previous role as a settlement service worker. She took her Sudanese basketball team to a sports high school for tryouts, the coach was

ecstatic at such raw talent and when the boys joined the school, they soon represented the school. When hard times hit for some of the boys and they found themselves without a home the boys were invited to live with the families from the school. One of the boys interviewed was a part of that team. Joseph was asked what it was like at school.

Joseph: At lunch all the kids would line up to watch the ‘bro’s’ slam dunk. (Joseph was not part of doing tricks and this was left unsaid) Yeh huh, so I got to talk to the girls on the sideline. (We both laugh)

For the boys, relationships developed around a common interest in the sport, it was their difference as ‘the cool basketball player’ that gave them an identity that was admired by mainstream youth. This is very similar to the ways in which Youdell talks about the ways some black students are not seen as the ‘good student’ in the UK:

And the black student who is constituted street-cool in the discourse of the student milieu is simultaneously constituted as challenging white hegemony in the discourse of the school institution and excluded from the possibility of being a good student, or of being a student at all (Youdell 2006 p.37).

What is unclear in this research is if ‘cool basket players’ were able to take part in the academic spaces in the school, where they could participate in learning as well or if they were confined to sport and social spheres. However this is an issue that the boys never engaged in when interviewed.

By contrast, none of the girls in the study found that sport was a way to be included in their school friendships. Two of the girls were very good at sport in the refugee camps, however, this did not transfer into the Australian school setting. Consequently the girls in this study had to find other ways to be included in social groups.

Matinda: When I came to Australia it’s really cool. I go to school. It was really cool and I meet many people, I got many friends. My dream was to become a singer. At my school I have Music, I can sing, rap and play drum.

Matinda’s dreadlock hair and fluid body movement created an image that fitted with rustifari/rap musical style she could perform. This was one of the few instances where a young woman reported being able to use her identity as a young black woman to her advantage in the school setting. Indeed, one of her teachers paid for her to have singing lessons and she was encouraged to pursue music. While her story shows her success in rap, it, like the stories of the young men and sport, also reveals the limited scope for the young former refugees to develop non-racially stereotyped youth identities within the school setting.

Being a Good Student (or not)

The participants who discussed school as an academic space did so in a number of ways: describing the struggle to acquire a high level of academic English; and struggling with gaps in their general knowledge, as one girl put it ‘I did not know who Hitler was.’ But there were some who had studied in English speaking countries, they talked of the problem of being placed in the lowest class and described their fight to be seen as a competent learner. One such example is Gabriella who, before arriving in Australia had attended a private school in South Africa, she talks about being assigned in the lowest class as the only place available to her.

Gabriella I was getting suppressed, is that the right word? --- I had to be in the lowest class, lowest Maths class, lowest English class, that was the whole concept.

Schools are places that assign students to the location where they spend their days; it is the power of the school to assign what resources then become available to the students to learn (Christie & Sidhu 2002). Where schools assign refugee students can open spaces to be included in the learning culture of the school. However Gabriella found that in being constituted as a refugee the automatic assumptions about her ability led to her delegation to the bottom class. Some schools seem to draw on assumptions that define difference in negative terms, as Ang and St Louis (2005) state; ‘In this sense, difference tends culturally and socially to be associated with the inferior, the deviant, the backward, thus positioned at the bottom end within a system of domination and hierarchy’(p.292). In this way the former refugees were only allowed to be what

the school positions them to be, which, as Gabriella found out was at the bottom end of the school.

Refusing the Positioning

Here we continue with the stories of two participants, Gabriella and Hannah and examine the ways that they have taken action to refuse being positioned in ways that will adversely affect their education.

Gabriella

What is particularly incredible in this case is that Gabriella spoke up. She addressed the underlying inequalities within the school as a performative subject in a way that was recognisable to the school hierarchy. Gabriella first asked teachers, then year advisors and when she was not heard she knocked on the principal's office. At this point the principal had a conversation with Gabriella and Gabriella took the opportunity to explain her background in full and to advocate for herself situating herself away from the stereotype of ‘the refugee.’ The principal listened and Gabriella was given a chance to prove her ability in advanced classes.

The Researcher asked Gabriella where she had learnt her advocareal skills, she replied,

In South African schools, even the girls, they know their rights.

Gabriella's background gave her the tools to perform within the discourse of the school. She was polite but spoke her mind, performing the role of a ‘good student.’ Not only did this move transform her access to greater involvement with academic subjects, by moving upward Gabriella's friendships changed and so did her opportunity to access other interests such as becoming involved in rotary and youth parliament. Wyn (2007) suggests that educationalists often ignore the potential of social relationships in schools as a significant resource for young people's future. By shifting classes she increased her accessibility to move and connect with a more ‘academic’ Australian society. Gabriella reported that she stayed in advanced classes until year twelve.

Gabriella's story is certainly a ‘happy ending.’ However, it must be acknowledged that most former refugee students do not have the confidence or the cultural

knowledge to present themselves in such ways, regardless of their academic ability.

Hannah

Being deeply unhappy at her school Hannah actively pursued other opportunities for education and found a private school that had a reputation for welcoming students from diverse backgrounds. She obtained a scholarship to attend years 11 and 12.

Hannah: Oh I have way more friends here. --- ‘cause most people here accept you for who you are, they’re nice, they don’t judge you cause there are some of them that have travelled. --- It’s like til last year most people didn’t know anything about me until we got into drama for the HSC and the teacher was like, ‘I think it would be good if you guys did a personal story,’ and the kids were like ‘Hannah, you have a personal story, don’t you?’ I’m like, ‘Yeh, but do you guys really want to hear it?’ They never knew anything I had been through until then.

Hannah tells us why she was included at the end of her talking. She was given an opportunity in drama class to say who she is, to be seen and heard, to share some of her experiences and to present her ‘refugeeness’ in a way where she is in control of how she could present herself. The result of this gave her acceptance and friends and a sense of connecting and belonging to the school. Hannah’s social success was not confined to the drama room; she reported being a part of all aspects of school culture and being invited to the home of school friends. To tell her story was extremely brave of Hannah but she had previously assessed the players in this school as having an openness to other ethnicities because they had travelled, giving them a more inclusive world view.

Hannah and Gabriella took the matter of their education into their own hands and kept trying until they found a person or a school who practiced equity and would listen and give them space to learn in peace. They also enacted ways to be identified as ‘good students’ to force open opportunities for better education. This is similar to what Foubister and Badroodien’s (2012) found in South Africa, that African migrant students purposely learnt how to negotiate the culture of

learning sites in middle class schools to ‘keep themselves in the game’ (p. 136). While we recognise the resilience and resourcefulness of these particular students it in no way justifies the inaction of schools in ignoring these student’s needs for equity.

Conclusion

This article has examined how young former refugees encountered Australian high schools. It has found through the individual stories told by the young people that they had to face being identified as embodying difference, and that in many schools this was unacceptable. As with Mansouri (2009), this research demonstrates that it is the type of school that former refugee students attend that determines pathways to inclusion or exclusion within the school, both in culture and pedagogy. Riggs and Due (2010) suggest that because of the ongoing debates within Australia over treatment of refugees there is a vast range of views about the inclusion of refugees within Australian society and therefore an inhibition with Australian- born students to include refugee students in friendship groups.

The stories told by these young people show how schools are not seeing or are unconcerned by the discriminatory and racist behaviours toward them and this is a significant concern. The schools that view ‘the refugee’ as a hegemonic group overlook the individual’s needs and strengths of former refugee students and lose sight of their diverse backgrounds. This positioning, as seen in this research, keeps former refugee students in a deficit position and confined to lower classes. On the occasions that schools nurtured opportunities, these were largely restricted to stereotyped positions such as sport, music or rap. While not critiquing these as positive experiences, it is of concern that the young people were unable to explore a more diverse route to participation in schooling.

What becomes clear from these findings is that while Education Departments have extensive policies in regards to diversity and antidiscrimination, the ‘on the ground’ outworking of such policies are unfinished products. As this article has shown, such policies and practices have not shifted to adequately reflect and address the complexities present in refugee resettlement populations (Sidhu and Taylor 2007). Schools have the power to deconstruct the negative political

discourse and prevent marginalisation and inequality, as Hattam and Every (2010) state:

‘The experience that refugee students have in schools is very much determined by the way that refugees are thought about, and represented in the public culture and how these representations are taken up or contested in schools’.

In this article the stories of young former refugees have given us insight not only to the beginning events of their life in Australia but also how they felt about themselves and their new ‘homeland.’ These stories contribute to other research that brings to the forefront the human stories of refugee resettlement in order to create counter narratives. These counter narratives are extremely important in affecting positive and equitable change in schools and there is a need for much more.

CHAPTER SIX

DOING IT ALONE

Uptin, J. Wright, J. and Harwood, V

‘Doing it alone’: Examining the intergenerational relationships of former refugee young people from African countries in resettlement

Abstract

In this paper we examine how resettlement alters long established power relations within former refugee families. In exploring the narrations of the young people from African countries we tell of the stresses and excitements in embracing Australian society. The paper draws from interviews and focus groups from a broader qualitative study that investigated how former refugee youths in Australia negotiated their cultural identity, creating new narratives for themselves that accommodated the complexity of the past, the present and the future. In this paper the central concern is the question of how the young African –Australian participants navigate intergenerational relationships while establishing ways to belong within Australian society. It has been established that these young refugees take on added responsibilities in resettlement in addition, our findings suggest that due to parental expectations both socially and academically the young people felt that they were ‘doing it alone’. We argue that it is because the young people in this study were so dependent on their parents for survival, safety and guidance throughout their displacement that the changes in roles and relationships are so acute.

Introduction

The discussion surrounding young refugees in resettlement is largely framed by issues relating to the trauma of the past (Rutter 2006). While this is important, the significance of the resettlement process in itself can be underestimated in its impact upon young refugees (Atwell et al. 2009, McMichael et al. 2010). Rebuilding a new life and establishing ways to belong in their new ‘homeland’ can also be a complex and stressful process and is sometimes viewed as ‘part of the continuation of their forced displacement culminating in their forced replacement in a third country’ (Sampson and Gifford 2010, p.116). Resettling into a Western democratic society brings with it its own excitements and tensions; these are often experienced and dealt with within the family unit, bringing major stress upon the relationships within the family. Given the significance of this issue, there is, however, ‘limited research focusing on the role of families in the settlement of young people from refugee backgrounds’ (McMichael et al. 2010, p. 181). The purpose of this paper is to contribute to this area of understanding youth in the resettlement process and the changing relationships within the family.

Research has established that young refugees make the transition into resettlement and Australian society far quicker than older generations (Olliff 2007; Correa-Velez et al. 2010; McMichael et al. 2010). This is due to quicker language acquisition and having more opportunities in schools to engage with diverse aspects of Australian society (Olliff 2007; Gifford et al. 2007). Young refugees also have a greater knowledge of how to traverse education and health systems and can become cultural liaisons for their family and older members of their ethnic community (Olliff 2007). This responsibility for older and younger members of their community places young people in positions of leadership in their families thus altering long established power relations within the family network (Refugee Council of Australia 2009; Olliff 2007; Gifford et al. 2009; Correa-Velez et al. 2010).

In this paper the focus is on young former refugees from African countries who have been resettled in a large regional city in Australia. Regional cities have traditionally been areas of placement for refugees due to the established services that assist in refugee resettlement. The paper draws from interviews and focus groups from a broader study that examines how young former refugees

negotiated cultural identities and the pathways they took to construct new identities in Australia. Its central concern is the question of how the young people navigate relationships with parents and at the same time navigate belonging in Australian society. Young African-Australians' experiences and attitudes to resettlement in Australia are explored, especially how they negotiate parental expectations and perceptions of cultural difference alongside their own perceptions and needs to connect and succeed in Australian society. In particular, experiences of home, school and sexuality are identified, highlighting issues of gratefulness to parents, responsibility to family left behind, cultural identification, accessing education, independence and conduct in relationships. We argue that it is because the young people in this study were so dependent on their parents for survival, safety and guidance throughout their displacement that the changes in roles and tensions in relationships are so acute.

In light of broader refugee research that links successful resettlement with the well-being of families, our focus on young African-Australian's views is warranted. This is particularly so given the unique and often inequitable demands that these young people face in forging a future for themselves and their families. According to Correa-Velez et al., 'For young people with refugee backgrounds, establishing a sense of belonging to their family and community, and to their country of resettlement is essential for wellbeing' (2010, p. 1399). In this regard we recognise that young people's' experiences differ from adults. For example, the participants in this study all left their 'home country' at a very young age and have little or no memory of 'homeland'; all spent their childhood in one or more host countries; all experienced a childhood being positioned as 'a refugee' rather than a citizen and therefore experienced living according to what their refugee status allowed within that host country; all had disrupted schooling and/or schooling of minimal standard; and all came to Australia in their 'teen' years. As a consequence, they have had a life of disruption and displacement. As Hajdukowski-Ahmed (2008) suggests, 'For uprooted people, every new situation and location deeply (re)shapes their identities, their sense of self, their agency and their wellbeing' (p. 28). In this article we look at the different ways these young former refugees continue to navigate a multiplicity of identities while simultaneously negotiating the cultural identity their parents would want for them.

Background

A change in refugee resettlement source countries by the end of the 1990's saw refugees from African countries coming to Australia for the first time. However, Immigration services were unprepared to deal effectively with the unique challenges that refugees from the African countries face (AHRC 2010; Spinks 2009). A number of factors have contributed to this lack of preparedness including the relatively small size of African-Australian communities prior to the first humanitarian entrants (Reiner 2010). For example, between 2005-10, 32,900 refugee new arrivals from African countries were resettled (Reiner 2010). At the same time, there were no established community networks to assist African refugees in making connections with Australian society. Additionally, African-Australians constitute an enormous diversity of ethnic groups with approximately 2,000 different languages spoken in 53 countries (AHRC 2010, p. 48) and this diversity was underestimated in considering the unique needs of new arrivals (Spinks 2009). Another major barrier cited in the literature is the visible difference of African-Australians. For example, Mansouri et al. (2009) found that 70% of African-Australian students have experienced racism due to physical difference. All of these factors contribute to the stress of resettlement.

Congruent with the literature on immigrant families, refugee families struggle to maintain a sense of continuity in family life from pre-settlement to resettlement. As Reiner (2010) reports, one considerable cause of distress reported by African refugee parents was the disintegration of cohesion in the family and the loss of the cultural ways that helped families to resolve conflicts and support togetherness. Pittaway and Muli (2009) found that parents reported the differences in cultures as a significant challenge to maintaining a sense of community. Moving from collective tribal networks where the village raises the child to an individualistic culture where the nuclear family is central to child rearing was reported as a major source of stress. Reiner (2010) points out, 'In the African context, extended family and community networks become part of their identity as a people' (p.48). The parents in another study expressed a deep concern that the wisdom of parents and elders was being lost amid young people's eagerness to be a part of Australian culture (Pittaway and Muli 2009).

In understanding resettlement for African families a considerable amount of the literature concerns itself with fathers' loss of empowerment within the family network due to unemployment and underemployment (Reiner 2010). Mothers often obtain employment quicker and also receive family allowances in Australia, and gives women in the family greater financial freedom (AHRC 2010, Reiner 2010). These factors contribute to a change in the gender power relations in refugee communities from more patriarchal societies (Reiner 2010). Pittaway and Muli (2009) found that resettled participants from the Horn of Africa viewed legal obligations about child and women's rights in Australia as extremely confronting and threatening to the traditional hierarchical makeup of family relations. Reiner's (2010) study too reported that some African men viewed Australian society as allowing women to become 'licentious and immoral'. Reiner (2010) states, 'They expressed concern about the effects of being exposed to a culture that allows social mixing between men and women, that allows women to wear revealing clothes, to be independent and outspoken, to be employed and generally to participate in "men's activities"' (p. 33). For African young people attending school where young women are encouraged to become independent, to speak up, gain employment and engage in Australian society the differences in cultural expectations between home and family can be a huge pressure. This article examines the cultural distances some African young people have to negotiate in order to succeed in school and at home.

Despite the pressures, young African refugees place a great deal of importance on family (Sampson and Gifford 2009; Gifford et al. 2007). As the Refugee Council of Australia (2009) reports, youths' key concerns on family issues are: 'the disruption to family relationships due to refugee experience and settlement; Role-reversal as young people interpret and translate for parents; Pressure to support family members overseas; and intergenerational conflict' (p.18). However McMichael (2011) described deterioration in family attachment over the years of resettlement in Australia 'modes of discipline are challenged and conflict increases' (p.190).

Examining the resettlement phenomenon through a feminist theoretical understanding of power relations within the family gives us insight into how roles and relationships within families can be culturally constructed. Nationalism,

gender and sexuality are often mutually constructed within cultures (Giles and Hyndman 2004). In other words, assumptions about gender norms are deemed to be cultural identity markers and disrupting these norms can too easily be seen as stepping outside ones national identity (Giles and Hyndman 2004). The need for compliance by all members of the family to the inherited cultural norms stabilizes power relations. The migration process however disrupts these cultural norms (Hajdukowski-Ahmed 2008). This is particularly so when people move from patriarchal dominant societies such as is described in many African societies. The private /public sphere divide is challenged (Hajdukowski-Ahmed 2008) and young people become caught between what they can be and do publicly and what they cannot be and do at home. In this paper it was the young African women in particular who found navigating between these spaces particularly difficult; they were given the responsibilities for what men do traditionally but were not allowed the freedoms that the men enjoyed.

To address our understanding of how cultural identities are negotiated in resettlement we employ Stuart Hall's understanding of diasporic subjects. Hall, (1993) describes two views of how cultural identity can be conceived. The first is 'eternally fixed in some essentialist past' (p. 225). The second is fluid and is 'a matter of "becoming" as well as of "being"' (p. 225). In this way cultural identity belongs to the future as well as the past and is evolving as different social conditions present themselves (Hall 1993). In this study the first view is held by the parents and the second view is held by the young people. It is in these spaces where conflicts arise.

Viewing identity as fluid provides the opportunity to conceptualise how the young people have some agency in choosing how cultural identity is responded to and taken up. In this regard, the young people in this study can be understood as acting to mobilise their own identity construction, which in turn depends upon the circumstances in their lives.

Methodology

The larger study from which this paper stems is a qualitative study that investigated how former refugee youths in Australia negotiated their cultural identity, creating new narratives for themselves that accommodated the complexity of the past, the present and the future. All of the African participants

in the study came to Australia as refugees under the Offshore Humanitarian Entrant Resettlement Program. Their ethnicities were Congolese, Sudanese, Sierra Leonean, Togolese, and Burundian, however, the participants spent most of their lives in the host countries of Kenya, Guinea, Zambia, Benin, South Africa and Ghana. Eight young African people were recruited (six girls and two boys) ranging from sixteen to twenty, all had been in Australia for more than two years and less than five years.

This study has more females than males, which might be because the Researcher was female. When the female Researcher asked the young men to participate, they made comments like: 'There is nothing wrong with me'. 'I have nothing to say.' 'I hate interviews'. By contrast, after some initial difficulties a 'snowballing' technique was employed amongst the young women where one participant talked about the research to her friends by explaining, 'She just wants you to talk about yourself'. Recruitment was conducted in partnership with a multicultural community organisation, with written consent gained from participants. Sensitivity in asking consent for the girls' participation was observed, where necessary, with the first author consulting with one girl's father even though she was over eighteen.

Data collection began with semi-structured individual interviews at the request of the participants. After these interviews, the female participants then expressed a keenness to engage in a focus group but wanted it to be all female this lasted two hours. All of the participants were known to the first author in her role as a youth resettlement worker.

Throughout this research we describe the participants as coming from African countries, acknowledging the cultural and linguistic diversity between countries and even within countries. Support for this position comes from the participants themselves. When the researcher asked the participants in the focus group how they wanted to be described in any reporting on the project, they replied:

Peta: We are African women.

Hannah: We have formed our own country in Africa, which is called GAMCH (comprising of the first letters of their names - all laugh and agree).

Gabriella: The capital is J---- (researcher's name) (laughing, clapping, screaming and dancing)

This paper describes the young people's views and attitude at a specific point in their resettlement process (two to five years in Australia) and specific ages (eighteen to twenty years). We acknowledge that their identities will change and evolve as they continue to grow and live their lives in Australia.

Findings

In exploring narrations of the young African–Australian former refugees we attempt in these findings to address the concerns of these young people. With the shift in resettlement from being the 'rescued and cared-for child as a refugee', to the 'responsible, capable teenager in resettlement', these young people speak of grappling with how they care for their families, themselves and their futures in very practical ways. The intensity of the following discussions demonstrates just how much they desire connection with family and also with their new homeland.

Remembering childhood relationships

Throughout the study all of the young people began their interviews with stories of a significant adult that had kept them safe, had made sacrifices for them, and had in some way made a deep connection with them as a child. The young people spoke of that adult with gratitude as they described how they were given warmth and hope in the midst of war and displacement. This was a time different to resettlement not only in circumstances but in the strong family ties that kept them together. Hannah's interview, for example, began with memories of those family members and friends left behind and of her father who saved her life.

Hanna: I can just remember coming from school `and everyone, from the moment I entered my street, just saying 'hi' to everyone I met. It was so nice to have that. But after the war broke out it was just (pause) horrible. All those beautiful people got killed. They're gone! (pause) lost their lives. I (pause) never got to hear my grandmum talk 'cause she lost her voice. One night some men broke in and they held my dad and bashed my dad and he just lay there, his whole body shaking. Then I remember, my dad woke me up in the middle of the night and said jump on my back

and we walked in the night out of Freetown and got on a fishing boat to Guinea. I remember that cause I could feel my dad breathing soooo hard when I was on his back and I held on to him sooooo tight.

Hannah's memory of how suddenly her life was turned upside down by war had one small comfort, her father. His care in rescuing her as a four year old has made a deep and lasting impression.

Jacqueline also spoke about how important her family was to her. She tells of her father needing to leave his family because the military wanted to recruit him and his departure would keep his family safe. Jacqueline remembered having her photo taken with her father the night before he left so he could take it with him. She recalled sitting on his lap:

I (thought) maybe this is the last time I will be hearing from him. Where can I keep this voice? Where can I keep this warmth? Where can I keep this hug? Where can I keep this picture and instead of looking up I put my head down because I was full of thoughts even though I was just 4 years old. I can remember that like it happened just yesterday.

Jacqueline did not meet her father again until she went with her mother to the refugee camp in Benin. She describes meeting him,

I went into the camp and I saw my dad walking out of the camp and it feels like my world is built up again. And now (in Australia) when I struggle it's like, whatever! Who are you? I cannot be broken down. It's like, my life is built up cause now, no matter how the sadness can be, my mother and my father are here. Nothing can happen to me, I have their love, I have their protection, I have their hugs. We are together.

To have experienced such loss and then to have her father with her again was a pivotal point in Jacqueline's life. She is deeply grateful that her family is together. All of life's hardships are measured against that pain and so she sees that she can face all the new challenges in Australia.

Growing up fast in Australia

Three of the participants in the study had one or both parents living in other countries. As McDonald-Wilmsen and Gifford (2009) explain, 'An almost

universal consequence of the refugee experience is the destruction of the family unit' (p.2). Fleeing from war, family members are involuntarily separated and there is little chance of reunification. In this study all three participants had located their parents after resettlement but only one had been granted a visa to resettle here. The other two support their parents by sending their youth allowance.

One such case was Joseph. He was separated from his mother and father while fleeing Sudan and went to Kakuma Refugee Camp with his father's second wife. Believing his mother and father were dead he resettled in Australia. Since being in Australia Joseph has located his mother in Kenya and his father in Sudan. Being seen as the 'lucky refugee' who reached Australia has profoundly changed his position of power in their long-distance, transnational family (Stock 2011). Now Joseph must make adult decisions about how to provide for his mother and siblings who are living in abject poverty in Kenya. At the same time he wants to stay the child his mother remembered. As the researcher placed the voice recorder on the table Joseph said:

Joseph: Oh I hate my voice.

Researcher: Do you?

Joseph: Yes, It's too deep.

Researcher: Women love deep voices. Do you want a voice like a boy?

Joseph: Yeh, I sound too old when I talk to my mum.

Researcher: Do you?

Joseph: Yeh she reckons I'm growing too old, too fast and when I send pictures to her she says I look different.

Joseph's desire to stop time and go back to when he was a little boy with his mother show his acute feelings of loss and isolation here in Australia. He describes how this feels,

'My body is here (Australia) but my mind is still over in my country.'

Joseph has missed out on being a child to his mother and this affects both of them. He has had to grow up fast and provide for her. As Stock (2011) points out, former refugees like Joseph are stuck in a poverty cycle because sending remittances to keep his family alive cripples his own life here. Joseph talked of his father's wishes for him to continue with his education but is aware that his father has no idea how hard it is to support the family from his youth allowance. Joseph's life is not characterised by multiple belongings but by multiple dislocations. He is dislocated from being a son, being in his home country, and from his new country.

Matinda also sends remittance to her grandmother still living in Togo from her youth allowance. Matinda reported that she keeps enough money from her youth allowance to buy a phone card to call her grandmother once a month, demonstrating the strength of her attachment. Matinda sacrifices school excursions and social activities to provide for her 'grandmum'. When asked, where do you feel is home, she answered,

Ah I feel, I feel like ummm my country is my grandmum, yeh, that's the best place I feel so much belonging, with her.

Transnational relationships are so pivotal to the young people's sense of belonging yet taking up responsibility for other family members life leaves them feeling very much alone, detached from both countries and leading 'a liminal existence' (Atwell et al 2009, p. 686). It also lessens their chances to connect with their new country and limits their capacity to imagine and plan for a future (Atwell et al. 2009).

Discursive memories of 'homelands'

It is often in resettlement where it is safe and where new connections with the diaspora are made that the process of rekindling an imagined cultural- self can be discursively created (Pavlenko and Blackledge 2004). The participants spoke of being surprised by their parents renewed interest in their ethnic identity. Parents attempted to reinvigorate their own cultural heritage through mnemonic practices such as stories of homeland, instructions in cultural expectations and teachings. Yet what concerned these young people is that they could not remember 'homeland'. For the young participants their embodied memories were of camps, or the host country where they spent their childhood. They

could not connect with their parents' discursive memories of homeland. To the young people these were second hand memories, not embodied through experience.

Some of the young people took up certain elements of these discursive memories, especially the stories of fighting for political freedom. For Joseph, for example, being a part of a new South Sudan gave him hope for his future, which might include him returning to his father. Joseph says,

Tomorrow I go to Sydney to vote. Even I'm far away here (in Australia),
I vote so that South Sudan will be free, get away from those bastards,
they just want our oil you know.

Other young people resisted taking up their parents' ethnic identity viewing their cultural identity as fluid and 'a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being' (Hall 1993, p.225) contingent on their present and future circumstances. For example, Peta's parents are Burundian, but she was born in the Democratic Republic of Congo and lived her childhood in Zambia. Her embodied memories are of Zambia,

Peta I really miss Zambia. The people there, I loved it. I had so many friends there 'cause I grew up there and I became part of the culture there. When I came here (Australia) I had to identify myself as Burundian even though I've never been to Burundi, never. It's here in Australia that I have to call myself Burundian but I grew up in Zambia. I speak the language which is Nyanja, I speak it and I can't speak Kirundi. Yeh, everything about me was Zambian, everything. There are still things that are similar like respecting your parents, that's African. But Zambians are like, really chilled out compared to Burundians, they are very uptight; they are not fun at all. Zambians are soooo fun. Burundians are very conservative and the Zambians are not. That's hard for me. When I talk to my parents the Zambian way they used to get offended and I'd be like, I live in Zambia, this is me now. But here (in Australia) my parents say, 'You are Burundian,' but I can't be Burundian I'm in Australia!

Peta's resistance to being identified by her parents' ethnicity shows the fluid way that she constitutes her own ethnic identity, one that directly conflicts with how her parents view her. Peta was not interested in reclaiming an identity from the past; rather she strategically positions herself within Australian culture, to ensure she benefits from this culture (Malkki 1995). Her embodied memories are of Zambia where she was accepted as an insider. In Australia she has her own memories of being Zambian and the discursive memories of her parents are too much to carry and irrelevant to her present and her future. This pragmatic approach to performing an identity is indicative of the strong survival element often displayed by forced migrants (Malkki 1995). Peta spent no time on what was lost but strived toward a future that was available to her in the here and now.

Embracing Australia

The young people discussed an urgency to embrace Australia, to get involved and receive all it had to offer, especially in education. They talked of this being a generational difference; they wanted to move quickly while older members of the family were more cautious. As Gabriella explains,

Like compared to some of my family members they haven't made that switch. Me and my younger siblings made that switch very quickly. Like, as soon as I got here, I joined a youth project with youth program. Like for me I couldn't wait, it was like a race, I couldn't wait. So I made that switch quickly because in my thinking I thought that was a way of me being part of Australia and me reaching my dreams a lot more quicker, quickly. For my parents it's still a process.

The excitement and hope that was expressed by the participants in finally being able to make a home and mobilise their futures was exhibited in all participants. Many expressed the idea that waiting to begin to live is over and no time can be wasted (RCA 2009) and that living for the now is extremely important (Ramirez and Matthews 2008). Yet, like Gabriella some of the young people expressed a frustration over older family members being more reticent to embrace these new beginnings. Atwell et al. (2009) suggest, parents' inability to control their very difficult past compounds their ability 'to foresee how their children's lives may unfold now that they have seemingly reached the end of their journey' (2009

p.686). The tension between moving forward or holding back is highlighted particularly when young people transgress particular perceived cultural boundaries, as seen in the following section.

Keeping culture

Of major concern to the young African women were the gendered expectations upon them to maintain their cultural identity. Interestingly, however, the boys seemed to be able to manoeuvre the gendered expectations of parents,

Joseph: Me, when I look at the life here (in Australia), it's good. My dad has six wives, you know having a lot of ladies, so much fights, even the ladies fight against each other. The kids are all jealous of each other and my dad spends his days going to this one then that one and they all have problems. No, I'm gonna be an Aussie man, just have one lady and a big car! Much less hassle.

Joseph goes on to say that this expression of his manhood is entirely acceptable to his father living in Sudan, as it still shows that he is a man. It seems that how manhood is displayed can be negotiated within different settings, but I still must be displayed, thus Joseph will get 'one lady and a big car'.

Conversely, the young women in the study found very little negotiations in traditional cultural from their parents,

Ali: With African parents you cannot negotiate. They are right whatever happens, the end. (she bangs her fist on the table).

Matinda: About everything!

And later in the same focus group,

Peta: My dad will be sitting at the table and say "I am the king of this house," and everyone will say 'Yeh yeh'. I was like, 'You're not my king. You're my father'. I will stand up against my mum and sisters with that.

The young girls in the focus group discussed how traditional patriarchal authority was rigidity administered in their family and they were beginning to challenge this as how they perceived Australian families operated,

Hannah: Like white kids get to talk with their parents. They get to choose.

Ali: Yeh even friends.

And later,

Gabriella: To an extent I like the openness the honesty that people have here, that's why you have less AIDs and stuff.

Hannah: That's the thing, what I like also is the honesty. Being able to bring your boyfriend home and your parents can advise you. Or stuff like that, but you can't tell them stuff like that.

The young women admired the communication and collaborative decision making that they saw 'white kids' had and compared this openness with the way they were facing hardships alone. However, they also commented how they were unimpressed with Australian teenagers' lack of respect for parents.

Fighting with fathers over issues around sexuality

Unequivocally the most contentious issues for the young African women arose in relation to their parents' insistence on the girls maintaining no contact at all with boys. The girls began to question the motives behind this. They saw that their fathers were interested in how their daughters could make them reputable African man within the diaspora. If he was positioned well then the girls would enjoy an easier life. To disrupt the fathers reputation by being a 'bad African daughter' would damage all relationships within the family. The main indicator for being good was to be a virgin and any deviation from this was seen as 'becoming western'. This concurs with McMichael et al.'s (2010) findings in the Good Starts study that young former refugees 'increasingly felt that their parents and families did not trust them. They said that parents attempt to control their lives and appear suspicious of their everyday activities and friendships' (p. 185). McMichael

et al. (2010) explains that issues surrounding parental discipline in relationships with the opposite sex were ‘especially problematic for young women’ (p.188).

In the focus group interview, the girls discussed these expectations and suspicions. They saw their fathers’ behaviour as more about his needs than their own. This issue was passionately debated as they described the perceived, unfair expectations of behaviour codes between boys and girls.

Gabriella: Reputation!

All: Oh Yes! (all groan)

Hannah: That’s my dad and your dad when they get together.

Gabriella: Oh man, It is soooo scary. (Mimicking her Father’s voice) ‘These girls have to make our reputation good’.

Researcher: Okay, But what about your reputation as a woman? What does that mean?

Peta: No boys are around you.

Gabriella: That’s why I’m really scared of, to be in love because there will be a ring on my finger. Let me tell you, if I bring a man to my house then in three months and it will be my wedding (all laugh and agree)

Ali: No, no, no. The engagement will be next week and then the wedding the week after.

All: Yeh (groaning)

Gabriella: They (parents) are scared. That’s what we said, reputation.

Peta: Reputation! Don’t ruin your father’s reputation! (pointing her finger at all the girls in a man’s voice) If you get pregnant before marriage you are not African! (she mimics cutting her throat).

Researcher: What about your brothers? What are they allowed?

- All: Oh they can do a lot! Anything!
- Gabriella: But they still have a lot expected of them.
- Researcher So they still have to be virgins?
- All: No, not really. No. Are you kidding?
- Matinda: I hate this, their parents know they sleep around but they turn away.
- Hannah: I Know. Its soooooo annoying.
- Peta: The boy has been with everybody but then when he marries he expects a virgin.
- Hannah: Yeh, ha ha they're none left!
- Gabriella: I don't know about others but specifically Congolese, they are so narrow minded when it comes to men. It doesn't matter how many women the guy has slept with but if the woman is not a virgin.
- Ali: It's a big problem! (Lots of talk – high emotions and indignation)
- Matinda: That's the thing that I don't like about being African.

For these young women the imagined cultural identity marker of being attached to being a young African woman has been emphasised as important by their fathers and then continued to the men in the next generation. Being a virgin for the young women is held so highly within the cultural mores that if this is broken it can be constituted as being excluded from an African identity. As Peta says 'If you get pregnant before marriage you are not African'! As pointed out by Hajdukowski-Ahmed et al. (2008), the role of women in resettlement is that of 'guardians and transmitters of ethno cultural purity that suits patriarchal ideologies and purposes' (p.15). The girls see the hypocrisy of this 'cultural purity' because it is not expected of men or their brothers. By stipulating such codes of behaviour the girls are more easily controlled. This effectively restricts their movements in going out and who they have as friends due to the threat of

bringing shame upon their family or, even worse to these young girls, enforcing a quick marriage.

This expectation may be arguably occurring across cultures and in Australian families but in this dialogue the girls question how this behaviour can be connected to their own cultural belonging. This theme in the focus group was concluded with a comment from Matinda,

Matinda: Look on the internet, you see girls dancing sexy and they are in Africa!' (Hysterical laughter and dancing).

This comment mitigates their fathers' threats of emotional dislocation to an African cultural identity. Access to the internet provides new ways to negotiate their own identities.

Educational expectations

One area of agreement between parent and youth was the importance of education. The shared perception for parents and daughters from ethnic minority families is that education is pivotal to extending their daughters', and their own, social prestige (Ahmad 2001). While the young women in this study reported that their parents wanted them to do well, they talked of little support from parents. They reported feeling very much alone in their pursuit of education and disadvantaged by this. The following excerpt from the focus group illustrates how the girls felt:

Ali: Also you know stuff like parent-teacher interviews. They don't really care! They don't care if they attend them, it's just the high mark. You know they are with you but there not with you really.

Researcher: They are not alongside you, but do they demand?

Ali: Yeh, they expect YOU. They don't want to help you through it.

Hannah: They don't understand.

Gabriella: You just bring them the mark that's all they want.

- Ali: They are with you but they not alongside, they don't want to help you.
- Peta: My dad is like 'When I was at school I used to get 100 or 99. I say, 'Dad, you finished school at the end of year six! What are you talking about!' (all laugh and clap saying 'Oh so true' 'Yes')
- Hannah: It is soooo different here, they don't understand. My dad told me 'If you don't go to uni you're a failure'!
- Peta: Ah –Me, my dad says to me if you don't go to uni you are dead! (Yelling everyone angry. Lots of talk)
- Ali: You have to do good at school. All I get is depressed.

There is a sense of abandonment in the young women's conversation as they try to respond to high parental expectations and also meet the demands of the Australian standards of education. The collective lifestyle of their past seems distant as they take on the full responsibility for their education alone. The girls' comparisons of how demanding their fathers can be, demonstrates a generational and cultural gap in understanding the enormity of the task in adjusting to a new education system in Australia. This is consistent with other empirical studies by the RCA (2009) where young people reported parents being uncompromising and unwilling to engage in their child's 'Australian life'. On the other hand, the AHRC (2010) also suggests that refugee parents feel intimidated by the school environment and are afraid to enter schools. Whatever the reasons, the girls in the focus group exhibited high anxiety about school and were afraid of failing and letting their family down. They were also angry that they carried the responsibility to succeed without support.

The young women gave many examples of managing their own learning alone and away from their parents' supervision, for example, one girl changed her parents' subject choice forms from Physics and Chemistry to the subjects that she had scored highly in the previous year; another organised her own meeting with the principal to discuss moving into higher grades; another wrote to a private school and successfully applied for a scholarship to that school. The young women reported that excluding their parents from these processes was essential because

they gave the wrong advice demanding obedience. The young women resorted to not telling their parents so they could succeed in school and also keep a good relationship with parents. According to Atwell et al., (2009) as resettlement evolves, families begin to realise that opportunities for the future 'are embedded in the social and cultural environment of Australia and this looks very different to what parents experienced in their home country and had envisaged for their child's future' (p.677). Certainly in this study this realisation came to the young people before their parents and as a consequence they set about to transform their opportunities on their own. All the participants had joined youth groups and some played sport to actively build a social network to access and to connect with Australian friends. They expressed frustration over parents not understanding that it was in these spaces where they found ways and connections to invest in their futures.

Conclusion

In exploring the intergenerational relationships of African-Australian former refugees we have attempted to bring a clearer understanding of the complex issues faced by the young people as they find a home in Australian society. Their narratives address the stresses and excitements of embracing their new home. We have argued that the young people in this study have had different cultural connections to their parents due to displacement from childhood. They therefore hold different perceptions of their cultural identity and see little need to 'return' to practicing heritage culture as it is discursive rather than embodied.

It was at the intersections of family and wider Australian society where the young people talked of feeling isolated. It was in these spaces where they carried the weight of responsibility for family, as well as negotiating high parental expectations (both socially and academically) while navigating belonging to a new Australian society.

Negotiations of cultural identity were much harder for the African young women as they contended with their father's ideas of how to be a 'good African daughter'. These gendered expectations were viewed by the young women as a method to control them rather than benefit them and they were therefore being questioned as to whether they were true African identity markers. There is evidence in this paper that the young people have had to grow up very quickly in

resettlement with some supporting family members overseas. Others made important decisions pertaining to education and their futures alone as they could better navigate Australian society than their parents. The young people found that if they allowed parents into decision making then they would have to comply to their unrealistic and uninformed expectations. These intergenerational relationship gaps were for the young people a painful and frustrating experience yet they were seen as necessary to obtain a better future. The down side was it left them feeling very much alone. There is a need therefore to be more aware of the complexities involved in the settlement for young former refugees.

CHAPTER SEVEN

BELONGING TO A MEMORY

Uptin, J.

Belonging to a Memory: Examining how young ethnic Burmese former refugees make sense of resettlement.

Submitted to *Asian Ethnicity*

Abstract

The resettlement process for former refugees is experienced in different ways according to ethnicity, age and experiences encountered in displacement. In this article I examine the narratives of young ethnic Burmese and explore how they negotiate their cultural identity while connecting with Australian society. The data is taken from a larger qualitative study investigating how young former refugees negotiate multiple ways of belonging in their resettlement country, Australia, while at the same time continuing with connections to their past. What is highlighted in this article are the ways the young Burmese participants carry a love for a homeland they have not experienced but they learn about through the discursive memories of parents and elders. The young people talk of the challenge to learn and take what they see as 'good' from Australian culture in order to empower and assist in finding and working toward freedom for Burma. Of significance is the long held connection and identification to Christianity. This faith assists the young people in building meaning for exile and creating new modernised narratives amongst the diaspora.

Introduction

Between 2006 and 2010, refugees from Burma were the highest intake in Australia's offshore settlement programme (Refugee Council of Australia, 2011). As ethnic cleansing and displacement of minority people groups within Myanmar continues, the need for humanitarian resettlement around the world will continue to grow. There is a projected increase of resettlement of ethnic Burmese refugees in 2013 (DIAC 2012). The presence of Burmese refugees in Australia has been legitimised by the then Australia's Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, who deemed the refugees escaping Myanmar's military junta as 'genuine refugees' (The Age 2011). In spite of this endorsement, very little is known of how the ethnic Burmese refugees experience resettlement (Watkins et al 2012; Brough et al 2012 Hatoss & Huijser 2010). The transition from a childhood living in refugee camps and hostile host countries for protracted periods to resettling in a western democracy brings with it a mixture of tensions and excitement for these young people. There is, however, little research of young people and their relationships in families and how they make cultural ties within the diaspora in resettlement (McMichael et al. 2010) and even less on examining ethnic Burmese. This paper seeks to contribute to this gap by concentrating on the stories of four young ethnic Burmese refugees from Karenni, Chin and Burman backgrounds now living in Australia.

In particular, this paper examines the ways in which these young people negotiate their cultural identity while connecting with Australian society and making a new life for themselves. New narratives of belonging emerge as each participant navigates their own personal childhood histories that have been shaped by war, displacement, persecution, encampment, discrimination, poverty and aide dependency to now experiencing a new life in Australia. Of importance to the young Burmese participants in this study were the memories of homeland; a homeland that was not an embodied experience but rather a homeland that had been told to the young people in camps and throughout their displacement. What was interesting was how the young people their own belonging to the diaspora in Australian society. As Fiddian- Qasmiyeh (2012 p. 2) points out, 'the diverse ways in which children and youth 'inherit', contest, negotiate, transmit and mobilise specific memories have infrequently been examined in diaspora studies'. The collective discursive memories told by elders and parents bring a

collective identity for each ethnic group and foster a deep sense of belonging amongst the diaspora giving meaning to their lives in exile (Dudley 2007; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2013). Brough et al. (2012) add that the ethnic Burmese ‘draw strength and purpose from shared meanings produced from a shared oppression and a shared sense of responsibility to family, home and country (p.4).’ Elders in Burmese communities are often associated with the past and are ‘regarded as symbols of the homeland and represent a physical and immediate connection to the past and family history’ (FMO 2011).

This paper is one component of a larger qualitative study drawing from research investigating how former refugee youths living in Australia negotiate their cultural identity. Intergenerational relationships were discussed by all participants in the study however there were particular differences between the participants from African countries and Burmese ethnicities. Therefore the findings needed to be presented separately. Largely the Burmese participants talked more of a collective belonging to their family and ethnicity and focused on establishing and building relationships within the diaspora. The African–Australian participants spoke of ways they connected to Australian society and of taking the lead within their families, they reported that they felt like they were doing resettlement alone. This is reported in Chapter Six.

By using Stuart Hall’s ideas of how identity is constructed through discourse I argue that the discursive formations are being constantly reconstructed through the play of power and are more often ‘constructed through, not outside difference’ (2000, p. 17). What has been found is the young people’s negotiations of the ways the older people define their cultural identity and the ways they take up a modernised identity that allows them to not only belong to the diaspora but also contribute to its ongoing political identity. By conceiving their identity as a ‘production which is never complete, always in process and always constituted within not outside representation’ (Hall 2000 p.222) allows for the narrative of the diaspora to ‘be’ and to ‘become.’ In this way their cultural identity belongs to the future as well as the past and is evolving as different social conditions present themselves (Hall 1993). In this article I investigate the ways in which the young Burmese former refugees take up the discursive formation of their cultural identity from their parents’ stories of homeland and then move it into modernity

through music and presenting the ‘uniqueness’ of their cultural identity and their fight for freedom on the world wide web.

Background

‘For sixty years, the longest civil war has been waged here between the indigenous ethnic nationalities and the Burmese army, largely out of sight of the international media’ (TBBC 2010, p.1). The predominantly Burman military government has driven ethnic minority communities (an estimated 30-40% of the population) from their homeland states and over borders in order to escape fierce human rights abuses and death (Watkins et al. 2012). An estimated 3.5 million citizens have been displaced by the ethnic cleansing of the Myanmar Army junta (Refugees International 2010 cited in Watkins et al. 2012). Despite these known atrocities refugees are very much unwelcome in the host countries they escape to and none are signatories to the 1951 Refugee Convention, these being Thailand, Malaysia, India, China and Bangladesh.

In 2011, the UNHCR reported Malaysia had some 94,000 refugees and asylum seekers. 86,900 were from Myanmar and of these 35,000 were Chin (Indris 2012). In June 2012 Human Rights Watch reported the Kachin escaping to Yunnan, China are being kept in detention and some are being forced back to the conflict zone and denied entry. As Kenny and Lockwood–Kenny (2011) describe the refugee experience as ‘at best one dominated by a sense of disequilibrium, impotence, and frustration (p. 218). Additionally, what is unknown is how many are internally displaced and hiding in jungles or being forced into labour for the military. It is estimated that around 500,000 Internally Displaced Persons are in Eastern Burma (TBBC 2004).

Unique to this region are the small pockets of ethnic minorities that converted to Christianity one hundred years ago through the work of largely American Baptist missionaries. The Chin, the Karen and the Karenni along with parts of other ethnic minorities have largely lived their life in the mountains of Burma as Christians (TBBC 2004). Therefore when these ethnic groups were under attack by the military junta it was primarily Christian agencies that set up temporary basic camps for refugees on the Thai/Burmese border beginning in 1984. Currently, 145, 000 people live in the nine refugee camps, 43 000 (thirty per cent) are aged between 10-24 years (Benar et al 2010). Even though the Thai

government has given land for the camps to exist there has been very little added assistance. The protracted and difficult nature of the situation is highlighted by the attitudes of the host country's attitude to the refugee situation, as Demusz (1998) states,

There is no possibility of officially sanctioned local integration. Refugees are not permitted to grow rice or work and their situation is kept at a subsistence level, in the words of many Thai officials 'they will not get too comfortable and want to stay' (p.237).

While the situation for ethnic minorities and poor Burman is grim, what has become apparent is that in the camps and border towns each ethnic minority has created their own 'ethno-nationalist project' (Dudley 2007). The refugees have been successful in garnering support from foreigners (especially those of Christian faith) in legitimising their own unique cultural identities, have built resistance armies and have established leadership and roles within the camp communities. As Dudley's (2007) research of the Karenni shows, amongst the Karenni in Burma there is great diversity however 'Karenni refugees in Thailand are active in continually defining and redefining what it means to be Karenni, a process that involves highly self-conscious appropriations and rejections of elements of tradition, ideas of history and future aspirations' (p.79).

In general ethnic Burmese do not speak openly of their lives and their relationships, as Annabel Mubi (a Karenni advocate) states 'We are, I have learned, from a culture of silence.'(TBBC 2004, p.155). Therefore it is with this understanding that I tread softly and respectfully in discussing the lives of the participants. Participating in this research was an unfamiliar cultural experience for the young people but their desire to be understood by others compelled their participation.

In this article I use the name "Burma" as this recognizes the legitimacy of the ethnic minorities such as the Karen, Karenni, Mon, Rhakine, Shan, Chin and Kachin that historically lived in the land now called Myanmar.

Methodology.

An overarching narrative approach was adopted, drawing on in-depth interviews and focus groups in order to provide rich, meaning-centred understanding. The data used in this paper, foregrounds four participants from ethnic Burmese origin. All names used are pseudonyms.

The Participants

Sing Me (19) and Bu Song (18) are Karenni young women who lived in different refugee camps on the Thai/Burmese border. Sing Me entered camp as a one year old and left the camp when she came to Australia at 17. Bu Song had lived in some Thai border towns (not disclosing which ones) before going to the refugee camp with her parents. She reported that even though the camp was boring with not much to eat she felt safer there. She came to Australia at 16.

Phi Lo (19) is Chin. His father escaped to Malaysia first and then sent for the family to join him. Phi Lo, his mother and four brothers walked from Chin state to the Bay of Bangal then took a boat to Malaysia. Phi Lo worked for cash in hand as an electrician in Malaysia. He came to Australia when he was 16.

Jai (17) is Burman. When he was eight, he, his mother and older brother escaped across the border to Mae Sot, Thailand. He reported that they found the harassment of the military upon their single mother unbearable. After living for three years in makeshift houses Jai's family converted to Christianity giving the boys an opportunity to attend a Christian sponsored boarding school. He came to Australia at 15.

I met each of the participants in their first weeks of their arrival in Australia in the capacity of a Youth Resettlement Worker for Phi Lo and then later as an English as a Second Language Teacher at the Intensive English School for Jai, Sing Me and Bu Song. The four young people went on to their respective high schools and it was one year after this that recruitment began. These long term connections were factors in developing a trust with each participant. Another factor was that I had spent eight years in Northern Thailand as a teacher and volunteering with the NGOs that assisted refugees from Myanmar. I had been to Sing Me and Bu Song's refugee camps and Mae Sot. The four participants and the

researcher shared mutual friends on the Thai/Burmese border and a common knowledge of how life was for these young people before coming to Australia.

Ethical advice from University of Wollongong was adhered to, the assistance of a multicultural youth worker was employed in recruitment to ensure voluntary participation. Six participants were asked and four responded positively. They were offered interpreters however all declined.

Sing Me did not want her interview recorded, saying her English was not good enough and so notes were taken as the interview was conducted. Throughout the interview there were pauses between each speaker and time for deep consideration of what the other had said. As the interview progressed I remembered my conversations with the Karen and the Karenni in Thailand. I observed we were replicating the way in which conversations are carried out with the Karenni. One speaks then there is a pause while the other contemplates what is said and then responds. I took this style of conversing into the focus group allowing for gaps in the conversation and not filling the silence. All the other interviews were recorded and lasted one to one and half hours.

The Focus Group

The data collection was conducted in English at the request of the participants. Thirty minutes into the focus group Sing Me's mother was visibly upset by a phone call she had just received. There was a lot of frantic talk in Karenni until I was told that the land lord had rung to say the house was being sold and they had to get out. All thought that this meant immediately. I contested this and rang the landlord for clarification, they had five weeks. However getting this to be understood was a difficult process as fear had gripped this family and packing had already began. Eventually the family understood. The focus group was abandoned and I spent the rest of the day going to the real estate office and then looking for new houses with Sing Me and her mother. Asking to resume the focus group seemed to me to be highly insensitive and so data was collected through observation notes by attending Karenni National Day celebrations and Refugee Day celebrations.

Findings

Desiring connection to heritage culture was a central theme of discussion with the participants from Burma. This contrasted with the participants from African countries as they spoke more of longing to connect with Australian society. Wanting to be a 'good 'Karenni'/Chin/Burmese' becomes more intriguing considering these participants had left their country at a very young age and had few embodied memories of homeland. Yet as the narratives unfolded so too did further complexities in relationship with heritage culture, 'refugee culture' (a term Jai used) and Australian culture.

Each spoke of a strong connection between their Christian belief and their heritage/refugee culture. In Australia, the Baptist church enabled continuity to this practice by providing church services for their own ethnicity. This link between how Baptist missionaries had provided the ethnic Burmese with education and resources in displacement (Horstmann 2011; TBBC 2004; 2010) gave a sense of comfort and continuity to the young people. All reported of attending church all day, first in English, then Burmese, then in Karenni or Chin church. When the young people spoke of connecting with Australian society it was through charity groups who organised soccer teams for the boys and art shows to raise money for 'refugees in Australia' and the church.

Yet, the discussion around connecting with other Australian young people showed evidence of seeing themselves on the periphery. Whether this position had been forced upon them or whether it was their choice or a combination of the two was hard to determine. This was not perceived negatively by the participants but rather accepted as reality. Asking Sing Me if she had made Australian friends she replied:

Sing Me: I feel like I don't have friend. I miss my friends in camp. I not happy but [then] I meet Me Tu, very difficult to make friends here. I have no [Australian] friends.

Researcher: Why?

Sing Me: English. I don't know the people, like if I talk to the people I think they angry with me, I don't know them. I don't know what they think.

For Sing Me meeting new people and particularly Australians was extremely stressful. Her encamped childhood has shut her out from experiencing diversity in relationships and she finds it hard to read people. Jai however seems more adventurous in putting himself in positions that enable connection with mainstream teenagers:

Jai: I have maybe three English friends - Australian boys and girls.

Researcher: But mostly your Burmese friends stay together?

Jai: Yeah, the Burmese they stay together, sometimes I go there, and sometimes I go with my English friends but the language is hard so I might come back. It depends. It's easier sometimes to just listen.

Jai can negotiate between different groups of friends but his strategy is to stay silent when he is with his Australian friends thus avoiding potential exclusion. All of the young people spoke of feeling comfortable when they were with people from Burma and this extended to other former refugees.

Respect and care for parents embodies cultural identity

In making sense of difference the young people compared themselves to Australian youth in ways that demonstrated that they were thoughtful about which aspects of Australian society they wanted to take up. These differences were most prominent in the ways they related to parents and elders. Bu Song explains:

Ummm Australian people stand up and say, 'I can do this - I want to do this'. But, to stand up to your mother and say 'No' is something terrible, I don't like.

The young people attributed certain characteristics and values as signifiers of their ethnicity; one was respect and care for their elders. Respect and compliance to elders and authority are taught as important values to Burmese ethnic minorities (TBBC 2010). Thus being respectful and caring equated to 'being Karenni/Chin/Refugee'. The participants spoke of elders being contributors to their lives and it was wise to listen to them. For Jai being obedient is not as

easy and here he discusses his struggle to uphold his own self- imposed cultural values:

Jai: Yes, sometime I, me and my mum, when I don't do something right and she tells me this, I sometimes think, 'Well Australian people sometimes do that.' So then, when we finish talking I think about the difference.... And I think about how it is wrong to talk back to my mother.

Researcher: Yes, you respect your mother.

Jai: Yes.

Researcher: Because she gave you so much in life.

Jai: Yeah. So when I look at the Australian children, when they are like that I remind myself, I cannot do that. When I see Australian stuff I like a little bit and not other bit.

Here Jai is actively negotiating a pathway through all that he can be and what he wants to be. He clearly identifies disrespect for elders as being Australian, while he acknowledges that he can now have his own way, he desires to keep connected with his mother in the traditional way.

The young people took their cultural responsibility seriously for they saw it as investing in their future. Phi Lo talks of seeing disrespect at school:

Phi Lo: When the teacher explaining, some kids not listening, they missing it, they are talking backward [back] and you can't hear what the teacher is saying and so then they shout. (Holding his head) And then it starts again.

In trying to articulate the difference between Australian students and himself Jai gives a more philosophical view:

Jai: I see refugee --- aaahhh, I think Australian people (are) not having big problem, they have normal problem. It's good being a refugee because we know here is good.

We do not say to teacher ‘Oh this is not good’ like other kids because we know when we learn, it’s good.

Jai talks of seeing himself as having a ‘refugee identity’ attributing value to the Christian school for refugees he attended on the Thai Burmese border and the meaningful lessons of life he learnt.

Care for elders

Relationships with parents were viewed as a lifelong commitment.

Phi Lo: I am Chin. If I keep the culture, then I am Chin.

Researcher: So what do you mean? What would you keep that is Chin? What are the differences?

Phi Lo: For example – like – if you become Australian like when you become 20 -25 years old they go back out and go away from their mum and dad. ‘Cause I see in the culture when they (Australians) get married they live away mum and dad. Children they only telephone. They don’t look after mum and dad. I just see a little bit Australia but this is what I see.

Researcher: That’s true.

Phi Lo: And our culture – I have 5 brothers. Firstly my brother get married and he have to stay with mum and dad, if he doesn’t want to, I have to stay with mum and dad. I have to look after every day and I have to sleep with them. Sort of this is different I think.

Keeping heritage culture includes looking after parents had been constituted as being a ‘good Chin son’ for Phi Lo. This distinguishes the Chin from Australian young people and Phi Lo is determined to keep this honourable part of his culture.

Sing Me’s care for her parents extended to being responsible for her whole family, as she describes here;

Sing Me: Before I think, maybe I can go to study, be a nurse. But I feel like my eyes go crazy. I’m not a good student, I’m

very bad student. Sometimes I feel I want older sister, she can help me. Now I see my family need money. I must stop (school) and get a job. My mum and dad are not good at English so I can get a job. My little brother, he is only nine but already he is good at English. We think maybe it is for him to study. I am old so I can work, all of us work and he can go.

Sing Me's commitment to her family is demonstrated here in that she will give up on her dream of becoming a nurse so that the whole family can work toward putting her youngest brother in university. 'We think maybe it is for him' shows that this has been a whole family decision and Sing Me is ready to take up this responsibility.

Jai (who is Burman) has less of an idealistic view of his Burman culture attributes care to 'refugee culture':

In refugee culture we share. Sharing everything because we all refugee so sharing important. We (will) look after our mother for the rest of our lives. Not let my mother live alone like my Australian friend Helen. She is old and her children don't come. Even when I'm old, you know 40 or 50 I share everything with mum.

Jai still positions himself outside what he sees as Australian culture. He takes up what he has learnt from his refugee experiences and in cultural belonging there is an important place for the elderly.

Connection with parents seen as a survival strategy

Being contributors to their family's existence in exile at a young age enhanced a sense of responsibility to family in the young people. Difficulties were shared as Jai explains:

Jai: Um, before [in Thailand] the most important was to help my mother, because there is no father-

Researcher: Yes.

Jai: And then (when) I small, I work for money in Mae Sot, this help at home.

Researcher: Did you get any work? What kind of work did you get?

Jai: Um, not cleaning, we make path of roads. Maybe get 10 baht for day [33 cents Australian]. This help mum.

The young people talked of enjoying a good relationship with their parents while in exile and saw this strategy as a good way to survive all of the changes they were encountering in Australia. This became evident when I asked ‘What is the most important thing in your life?’

Phi Lo: Oh, the most important thing is mum and dad and having a future with them and the other is education.

Bu Song: For me, very important, my family. Ummmm they [are] ummmmm my heart. We not together in camp, now in Australia we together but still I don’t see dad.

In trying to understand why the young people were so invested in constructing a strong heritage culture I found the following stories common to all four young people.

Discursive memories that invoke a ‘unique’ cultural identity

Dislocation from homeland is a significant loss to refugees. The process of rekindling that lost cultural heritage by creating a common history is often taken up within the diaspora to varying degrees (Hall 2000). An imagined cultural-self can be discursively created in resettlement where it is safe and where new connections with the diaspora are made (Pavlenko and Blackledge 2004). The young ethnic Burmese in this study viewed their parents’ role as giving them a cultural past, one that they had not embodied but was an important part of their own collective identity. All the young refugees talked about being exposed to mnemonic practices through storytelling and teaching. Historical discursive knowledge was transferred orally across the generations in the camps and in displacement (TBBC 2010). The young people described the stories, the songs, the dance and activities as ways to overcoming the banal monotony of the refugee camp. These practices gave meaning to their exile from homeland and made the waiting process bearable (TBBC 2010).

The young people's childhood realities were of encampment, fear and persecution and therefore they saw great comfort in the stories of a past when their homeland was peaceful. Each had not experienced a peaceful homeland therefore they relied on the mnemonic practices of their parents to interpret their history. Remembering homeland through their parents' stories for each participant was seen as a way to connect and belong to their family and their ethnicity. Memory is thus embodied and discursive, full of selections of who we are, what we choose to remember and what we choose to forget (Tambouka 2010). In the following passages the young people tell selected memories their parents have told,

Bu Song: Karenni land soooooo beautiful. This is why Burma army want it, they grab it. You can eat fish in rivers and fish taste mmm very good, my mum say.

And in the focus group;

Phi Lo: Burma is goooooood. My village, in mountain in Chinland, we can live there. But now no, not because Chin, it's [because of the] army.

Jai: Yes same same. Before, my mum say, Burma have food, Burma people smiling.

Bu Song: I hate Burma army.

Jai: Now only hope is God (All nod) to get us back to home (Nodding).

Researcher: You all still have hope to go back to Burma?

All: Yeh (nodding).

The discursive memories of a free Burma are very real to the young people. They know who their enemy is and why they are in exile. Their hope to return is centred on the Christian message of God's deliverance.

Sing Me began her interview by telling stories of how her family became refugees. Even though Sing Me had just been born it was very much her story as well. Sing Me's mother and father sat listening intently with smiles throughout the

interview, and at certain points in Sing Me's story of escape they would interrupt and speak gently in Karenni and Sing Me would say, 'Oh yes, I remember now' and translate. From this I understood that she had heard this story many times and internalised its meaning for her life. Her retelling of her parent's story demonstrates how her parents spoke in a story telling manner, the events were embellished with descriptions of the beauty of the Karenni land,

They lived in a tranquil village on the side of a steep mountain where her family had lived for generations. They were subsistent farmers and their rice was a good quality (especially the first harvest). Then the military junta attacked repeatedly and burnt down their village. They (like many others documented by the TBBC) stayed close, hiding in the jungle, eating berries and insects and not being able to light a fire. After the military would leave they would go back and rebuild but again the military would attack. Sing Me's grandfather became a leader in the resistance and her father knew that if her family were caught they would be tortured so they had to flee. They walked for about one month. When they arrived at the refugee camp there was no room so her parents built a hut out of the bamboo trees from the jungle. Sing Me was a year old.

As I listened to the stories I became caught up in the spirit of the story, I can't understand Karenni but somehow I was transported to those mountains with them. I had been to Sing Me's refugee camp near Mae Hong Son (yet I never met her there). The camp is near the top of a mountain and from it you can see the mountains of Burma. In the evening before leaving I heard a group singing unaccompanied in three part harmony, they were all looking toward Burma, it is not more than a few kilometres away, as TBBC (2010) put it 'so near and yet so far: it is perhaps the most difficult contradiction of all' (p.5). The longing in the music, the love in the voices transfixed me and I found myself longing for what was in the distance too. I was told that they were singing a love song to their homeland asking the land to wait for their return.

So many young refugees from Burma have never trodden on the soil of their homeland. Yet the power of these discursive memories gives meaning to their suffering. As Brough et al. (2012) explains Narratives of 'carrying on through difficult times' are a discursive resource which can draw from a variety of social

meanings, including a sense of internal strength ('to train the mind'), a resolve to reunite families or a political commitment to change of government. This 'dynamic meaning making' that transcends time and displacement also holds these young people to perceiving their identity 'through difference' (Hall 2000). Throughout the nine refugee camps each ethnic group practiced and taught self-identification through their different identified markers (TBBC 2004).

Sing Me: School is learning Karenni and Burmese and Karenni dancing. Teacher is person in camp, teacher just say then we say after teacher. No books. Nobody teaches English but we still try. (pause) On Friday we need (to wear) our Karenni dress, I don't mind, but mum says, 'Yes, this is good,' or she get into trouble (if we don't wear this).

Researcher: With who?

Sing Me: (pause) Must be Karenni.

As all of the ethnic groups have survived ethnic cleansing with no more than their physical bodies, rekindling memories of who they were, are, and will become is important for survival. The urgency of this is simple to the Burmese Border Consortium, 'If these are lost than our enemies have won' (TBBC 2010). Horstmann (2011) points out that 'The Karenni (red Karen) identity is born in the refugee camps' (p.516) along with the other ethnicities. As Dudley (2007) describes, "Refugee camps provide theatres within which the complexity and lack of clarity in what it means to be 'Karenni' means are made explicit but are also, to an extent, resolved' (p.80). The camps have given rise to a unified identity that masks many internal divisions within each ethnicity and is dominated by Christian narratives of suffering (Horstmann 2011). These practices assist in bringing cohesive identity, it is how the older generation want to be viewed as an ethnic group by the younger members and by outsiders thus politicising their identity to ensure its survival even in exile (TBBC 2004).

Divided loyalties

Being informed by the UNHCR that they were able to resettle in Australia brought new tensions, particularly for the girls in the camp,

Bu Song: In the camp we hear we coming to Australia. Some people say, 'Don't go'. They say, 'You will forget'. But we say 'No no, we can get education and we can help'. Not sitting and sitting.

Researcher: Yes, It's good.

Bu Song: But now I forget. Now I am free, I can go anywhere, I can go out. Now I can see so many things. Now I study so much. Now we have money but we need the money here and they need the money in camp. So hard, I afraid I forget.

To leave the camps is to leave the centre of political action (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2012). The presence of the camps symbolise to the world that there is discrimination, oppression and ethnic cleansing in Myanmar. There is also a 'dynamic connection between refugee camps, home-land and memory' (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2012, p.3), to leave the Karenni camp is to leave the centre of the Karenni identity and to live on the periphery of that identity. Thus leaving can be an extremely difficult decision because it can be viewed by some as betraying the cause for freedom. Bu Song's intention for leaving was to be a better freedom fighter by obtaining education, however, as the pressures of resettlement became apparent she is conflicted. This conflict of conscience was also found in the Burmese refugees living in Queensland, Australia in Brough et al.'s (2012) research where they expressed relief at living in the safety of Australia and a sadness that they have left behind so many of their community still suffering. The hope for all to find freedom is a common understanding amongst ethnic Burmese refugees in Australia.

Modernization of a discursive ethnic identity

Despite these conflicts the young people find innovative ways to express their cultural identity, renewing their own cultural belonging to keep the discursive practices of their ethnicity alive. As Dudley (2007) states, 'Exile itself is also a key component in reformulations of identity' (p.79). The Chin and Karenni have their own youth groups and church services and they also attend a Burmese church service as well.

Sing Me and Bu Song talked of meeting other Karennis in around New South Wales every fortnight. The group has its own website and I was told I could 'like' it on Facebook. The site follows closely all news of Karenni state, it has links to Karenni rock and country music and photos of Karenni people posing in front of sights around the world. The boys are dressed in the latest hip hop gear and the girls wear a combination of Karenni shirts and tight jeans.

Phi Lo talks of his Chin church and meeting other Chins in Sydney. They too connect with the diaspora around the world through Facebook. He explains that Sunday is full of church, first is English church, then Burmese church and finally they meet with the Chin for church. Jai sings and plays guitar in a band in the Burmese service at the Baptist Hall. He writes songs and the band post them on You tube. Music plays a vital role in their culture making,

Sing Me: Yes, I do Karenni dancing. I am teacher I know how to dance Karenni. I teach all Karenni young people. They don't know how. I feel if I don't teach it then maybe they will forget [their] culture.

Researcher: You too? (to Bu Song)

Bu Song: (Laughing) Yeh yeh. I sing with my friend (says his name) he sing Karenni song ummm new one, with guitar and drum and we put on You tube.

Researcher: Oh wow, do you get many hits?

Bu Song: Ummmm we get America and New Zealand

Jai: and Canada

Bu Song: But all Karenni kids.

Researcher: Oh just like you Jai, you have a band with modern music.

Jai: Yeh, yeh but he Karenni. I don't speak [Karenni]. I do Burmese song.

Researcher: Do you put it on You Tube?

Jai: I try, I sing out and I cry for Burma and I sing and play in church.

While Sing Me is happy to present herself as a traditional Karenni woman, the others are proud of their contemporary celebration of their ethnicity. MacLachlan (2008) observed that the Chin in America mix traditional music with traditional instruments alongside contemporary music at celebrations. He states, 'modern Chin music makers use modern technology and sound to preserve their traditions' (p.168). Each ethnic Burmese in the diaspora have allowed for the discourse to evolve giving it a freshness that links the past to the present (MacLachlan, 2008). It has also given an important space for young people to contribute and belong.

Connecting these discourses there emerges a mixture of narratives of hope and suffering (Brough et al. 2012) that bridges the two worlds of pre and post settlement together. This was demonstrated when Bu Song received the terrible news (via Facebook) that her refugee camp had burnt down. Facebook was alive with accounts of the tragedy from the diaspora. Knowing that I had contacts with NGO's in the area I was asked to find out more information. I watched on Facebook as the young people rallied, gathering information and posting reports. They then organised a concert to fund raise with the help of a local charity to send money to rebuild the camp.

Discussion

The young men in this study spent a childhood experiencing and seeing acts of persecution and oppression in Myanmar and in escape. The young women spent a childhood in encampment and differed in their descriptions of discrimination and hardship. All of the young people, however, have not experienced the homeland that their parents and elders speak of. It has been these discursive memories of a homeland envisaged in peace, beauty and prosperity that have fostered a deep sense of belonging to a homeland that the young people have not yet experienced. It is their hope that they someday will return. Thus being an active member of their own diasporic group provides strength and support to hold the stories of the past accept of the present circumstances and fosters the desires for the future.

Now in Australia the young people still describe their own identities through, not outside difference (Hall 2000). Their many years of displacement have somehow assisted them in living on the periphery of mainstream Australian culture. It is in this space where the young people seem to use their outsider status to make objective assessments of what cultural aspects of Australia they want to take up. Their assessment is frank, they see benefits in being confident and using one's own initiative but ties to family and obligations to respect elders keep them looking to their own culture for identity constructions. These negotiations of identity reveal their own self-reflexivity (Hall 2000) in deciding upon taking up certain attitudes and behaviours that they deem as representing their ethnic cultural identity.

While holding to the strong ties to the freedom cause for Burma, the everyday issues of living in Australia press upon each of the families represented in this study. In the methodology I discussed how the focus group was interrupted by a phone call from Sing Me's mother who thought the family must leave their home immediately after a conversation with the landlord. When Sing Me and I arrived at the home the family were frantically packing, they were again getting ready to flee again. After phoning the landlord for clarification I began to explain to the family that they could stay for five more weeks. I watched their bodies melt into relief. I witnessed how very strange this new land's ways were for these former refugees. I was relieved I was there to explain their rights and assist in finding another place to live. It demonstrates how important support through resettlement can be, particularly for those who have lived under such suppression.

In Australia the word 'Burmese' is used in humanitarian documents published by the department of Immigration and throughout mainstream society to describe the Chin, Karen Karenni and other ethnic minorities coming from Myanmar. However this research shows that the young people strongly identify to their own ethnic group and describe themselves as Chin/Karenni/Burman. This is a concern that needs further investigation: for instance, have the ethnic Burmese had an opportunity to clarify how they would like to be addressed? Is it hard for a strong and proud ethnic group such as the Karenni and Chin to be

amalgamated into one identification label? Certainly describing the young people as Burmese signifies a political difference to Myanmar but is this enough?

Conclusion

What is significant here is the investment the young people make in keeping a collective cultural identity alive to a homeland that they ‘have not experienced’. The discursive memories of a peaceful and bountiful homeland have travelled with these young people from their childhoods in displacement to resettlement in Australia (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2013). Each of the young people have made strong links with their own ethnicity within the diaspora both locally, through church gatherings and worldwide on social media sites. These links are driven by a moral urgency not to forget the persecution of their people.

The young people spoke of being excluded and finding it hard to make Australian friends due to their perceived differences. However, this did not seem to be of great concern to these young people. In making sense of difference the young people compared themselves to Australian youth and were pragmatic in their reflections. They articulated that respect and care for elders was a signifier of their difference and they wanted to keep these attitudes as this gave them sense of belonging to their heritage culture. They also wanted to honour the lessons they had learnt as refugees, practicing community and gratefulness for all the opportunities that are now available.

Connecting to the Australian Baptist church allowed for the continuation of the young people’s faith practices. It was also a unifying factor between each of the young people’s ethnic identity. Each had experienced the Baptist church’s provision of resources and solidarity among refugees in a vision of freedom for Burma (Horstmann 2011). These connections to the church gave opportunities to reconstruct new and modern fluid discourses and to join with an international Christian network of working toward freedom for Burma. By using Facebook and You Tube to present a modern style of Karenni/Chin/ Burmese culture the young people connected with the diaspora worldwide. In the midst of this transformation the young people organise fund raisers and concerts so as to ‘not forget’ the horror that their people are still enduring in camps and under the military junta in Myanmar.

CHAPTER EIGHT

DISCUSSION

Sociology is itself a story – but the message of this particular story is that there are more ways of telling a story than are dreamt of in our daily story-telling; and that there are more ways of living than is suggested by each one of the stories we tell and believe in

(Bauman 2001, p.13).

Introduction

This research has explored the multiple identity negotiations and cultural fluidity of young former refugees that have settled into Australian society and answers the questions:

- How do former refugee youths living in Australia negotiate their cultural identity?
- What pathways do young former refugees take to construct a new sense of identity?

In order to attempt to answer the following research questions I will pull together the underlying understandings of the findings. Because Chapters Four, Five, Six and Seven are journal articles a comprehensive flow between the articles was difficult to maintain. I am therefore using the discussion to bring some coherence of thought to the findings and also to introduce some further understandings garnered from the research.

While I started out with separate questions for the thesis I found that they must be answered together as there were strong links between the two. I observed that one did not happen without the other. Negotiations were made and the action followed, if for some reason the pathway was blocked then more negotiations took place and another pathway was found. Therefore what follows is a discussion that amalgamates the answers to the two research questions.

To answer the questions succinctly the discussion will be divided into five sections. Section one will first turn to the findings and summarise what each article attempted to understand of the young people's negotiations of cultural identity and the pathways they took to construct a new sense of identity. Section Two will discuss some of the underlying themes that gave further insight into how identities were negotiated and to describe the diverse pathways undertaken by the young people in order to create a new sense of identity. Section Three makes explicit reference to the idea of how the refugee and the former refugee are placed in society and how these positionings affect accessing a better life.

In section four of this chapter I put forward three arguments that have come from the understandings that I have developed from the findings. My first argument is that 'the refugee' and 'former refugee' identity has been

homogenised into a 'victim' and 'traumatised' discourse. I contend that by positioning refugees with these characteristics alone creates discursive positionings that can quickly be turned and viewed as deficit in the 'modern' consumer society that Bauman reflects upon. From this point I advance my second argument that, in relation to education, former refugee students are commonly categorised as 'having gaps in schooling'. I assert that the term limits understanding the complexities of the refugee experience and in particular closes down other narratives that allow former refugee students to be seen as knowledge bearers. The third argument makes suggestions of the other ways to view the refugee and the former refugee, it highlights some of the counter narratives of the young people in this study and challenges deficit notions of the refugee.

The first outlines the participant's lives as understood by the researcher including when I met each participant in the form of a timeline. The second table gives an outline of my involvement with the young people in the capacity of youth worker and teacher and discloses the activities in which each was involved.

Section One.

A summary of the identity constructions described in Chapters Four and Five.

These articles highlight the educational experiences of the young people in this study. The first describes how the young people negotiated pathways to accessing an education in displacement as refugees. The second examines the ways in which the young people negotiated establishing themselves as students and finding belonging within Australian schools. Many of the participants articulated education was as important to them as family and their investment was high in obtaining this. What became apparent throughout both articles was that accessing education and to be treated as a learner proved to have many barriers therefore it is in these spaces where identity work became most evident.

Chapter Four, 'Finding Education'

In the first article three narratives were retold, one of Jai as an urban refugee, Sing Me an encamped refugee, and Jacqueline who lived in a camp but went to school in the host community. The attempts by the young people in this study to

find education can be measured in the light of the deprivation of educational opportunities that were highlighted in Chapter Two with only '37 per cent of camp based refugees having access to secondary school' (Dryden-Peterson 2011b, p.14). Each of these young people actively sought to access an education for themselves. The multiple negotiations in identity constructions are described by each participant.

While living on the Thai/Burmese border Jai's change in faith to Christianity from Buddhism activated an identity reconstruction. He was no longer hiding in the streets in makeshift schools but rather he entered a global Christian network that enabled access to school, free accommodation and food. His change in faith, which is still with him, shifted his place in the world, his views of the world and gave him meaning and reasons for his exile.

Pursuing an education looked very different for Sing Me. The elders in her camp devised makeshift schools using the people as their only resource to teach the young. Sing Me attended every day, learning about the Karenni identity, she spoke of other young people who gave up, but she kept going to school. As she got older she became a contributor to the school and taught Karenni dancing. Sing Me spoke of a commitment to build community within the camp and used the little she had to contribute.

Jacqueline experienced a schooling situation where the host country marginalized refugee children this resulted from 'a synthesis of political attitudes, competition over scarce resources, cultural conflicts and security concerns (Dryden-Peterson 2011a, p. 4). She endured persecution, discrimination and abuse and still continued to attend school. She held to her right to attend school and did not leave even when the host country's teachers failed her, she kept turning up.

By exploring each young person's reflections on accessing and experiencing school as child refugees, each narrative presents ways in which the young people demonstrated determination, hope, resilience, and love for family, fear and frustration in the circumstances they faced. The article describes how the young people used the resources that are available to them, displaying unimaginable courage and dignity (Harroll-Bond 2002) and resisted giving into being positioned as 'victim'.

Chapter Five, 'A Black Dot on White Paper'

When entering Australian high schools young people told of being positioned as different. These positionings had social and academic consequences that obstructed them in taking up and presenting themselves to be friendly and as learners. The young people spoke of resisting being placed in lower classes and without friends. Of significance here was how each of the students renegotiated their positionings to improve their chances at acquiring a better education. Some, like Gabriella, who was placed in the lowest class in year 7, attempted to change to higher class after coming first in English and Mathematics. After several failed attempts, Gabriella advocated for herself at the highest level with the school principal. Learning from her failed attempts to be promoted to a higher class Gabriella constructed another story of herself. She presented herself outside the refugee frame and told the principal of her seven years as an English speaking South African student.

Others, like Hannah, suffered discrimination and racist name calling by peers that successfully silenced her participation. Hannah talked of not being given an opportunity to show herself as friendly. Through her social networks with other former refugees she heard of a school that included former refugee student into the culture of the school. After she secured a place at this school, Hannah then used her drama class to tell her story of her life in a way that she could control what was said. Following this Hannah found herself with school friends and was also given opportunities to actively engage in the learning culture of the school.

Indeed, finding friends was seen by the participants as a marker of social acceptance in their new country. There were some spaces within the school where the participant's difference was seen as unique and cool, and gave them entry to specific social groups. Matinda soon changed her style to resemble a female Bob Marley and was soon included amongst the musicians of the school. Joseph too, along with his tall Sudanese bro's, flipped his cap backwards, dragged his basketball shorts way down low and moved in a very cool way onto the basketball court in the school yard finding a sense of belonging in the rich sporting culture of the school.

A summary of the identity constructions described in Chapter Six and Seven.

In Chapter Six and Seven I investigated how family relationships shifted and changed in resettlement. A significant difference between the African and Burmese participants became apparent as resettlement was conceived differently by the two groups. The African participants expressed a desire to make strong connections with Australian society and their stories were concerned with how this was evolving, and discussed the pathways they were negotiating toward this goal. The excitement to embrace new ways in a new country captured their imaginations about what they could achieve in the future. In Chapter Seven both Peta and Gabriella describe how they embraced Australia. Peta describes how upon arrival to Australia her parents wanted her to be identified by her parent's ethnicity. Peta resisted this as she saw little value in a Burundian identity in Australia. Gabriella also talked about joining youth groups and how she couldn't wait to be involved in Australian life, it was like a race. The young people's disappointment came with the sense that their parents were holding them back.

The Burmese young people did not talk about tension with parents but talked of how their parents fostered their role to carry on the cultural traditions of their specific people group. They talked of finding it hard to connect with Australian young people. Sing Me was worried that they were angry with her. Jai played soccer with his Australian friends but reflected that it was best to keep quiet. Their desires for connection centered largely on being a part of the Chin/Karenni/Burmese diaspora. By attending Chin/Karenni/Burmese church they had established friendship networks and social activities within their own people groups.

For each of the young people family was the most important part of their lives. In the two articles the young people discussed their gratefulness to parents who had rescued them and worked hard to build a home in displacement. Hannah told of her father carrying her on her back as they escaped war ravaged Sierra Leone. Sing Me spoke of her parents cutting down a tree and building a home for them to live in the camp. Materially the young people had very little but they talked of looking back on their time as a child with deep fondness recalling the acts of love and protection shown to them.

However the impact of resettlement had changed the roles within the family in very different ways. Taking responsibility for the family was a part of all of the young people's life but this was harder for the young African participants than the Burmese. The young African participants talked of dealing with high parental expectations to achieve at school yet there was little support from them in this process. In the African focus group the young women reported deep frustration over their efforts to try and navigate the Australian education system on their own with the demands from parents to achieve high marks. The young women talked of a competitive element between father and daughter whereby fathers would boast of their achievements in Africa. The girls spoke of engaging in this in order to get their father to understand that Australia was a very different and much harder education system. These negotiations within the family left the young women feeling isolated from family.

Cultural negotiations for the African girls in particular were set up by their father's demands for the girls to prove that they were 'good African daughters'. The girls saw these demands as being highly gendered and placed them in restrictive lifestyles. The girls spoke of being suspicious of these demands and they talked of mistrusting their father's motivation because it was more about their father's reputation among the diaspora than their own wellbeing. They resented the way their fathers used the threat of dislocation to culture if they did not obey. They were aware that if they obeyed all these demands it would hinder participation in Australian culture and thus affect their chances for success. In the focus group the girls talked of ways they had found around these obstacles. Peta advocated for relying on oneself and confronting parents. Matinda had already left her mother to live with her boyfriend. Gabriella, Hannah and Ali spoke of being secretive and trying to negotiate a peaceful way through. All of the girls spoke of the loneliness and isolation in making important decisions without their parents.

In contrast the young Burmese participants spoke of families negotiating a pathway together for their future. Sing Me told of how the whole family had decided that her younger brother would attend university and they would all work toward this goal. The young Burmese did not speak of unrealistic expectations from parents but of conversations on – what shall we all do. The

young people were eager to invest in activities undertaken through the diaspora where parents still were able to input and connect with their children explaining why tensions may not have been talked about. In saying this, the young people were given the freedom to not conform to stagnant representations of their cultural identity. What was evident was the acceptance of the young generation driving a modern conception of their Karenni/Chin and Burmese identity through technology, social media and music. Perhaps it was because they all desired the same outcome that of freedom for Burma.

Section Two.

Identity reconstructions through thematic analysis

In 'capturing' identity reconstructions I found that there was a number of important conceptualisations that needed further interrogation and synthesis. I will endeavour to do this by discussing the themes that arose in this section.

The young people's identities changed and evolved over time.

Hall's theoretical insights on how cultural identities 'undergo constant transformation' and 'are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power' (1990 p.225), is consistent with how the lives of the young people in this thesis evolved. Their lives were marked by movement socially, culturally and physically. What became apparent was that the young people were able to construct fluid identities that helped navigate the social milieu of their present situation.

To illustrate this I trace Jai's negotiations of identity reconstruction throughout his life. I have recounted his identity constructions before entering Australia in Chapter Five and parts of Jai's story are again discussed in Chapter Seven where he has moved to Australia. In Chapter Seven Jai negotiates his own identity construction by assessing how he will behave in society. He openly talks about taking up, what he sees, as the Australian way of being confident and using his initiative but he decides that his own culture has value in respecting his mother and listening to teachers. He is welcomed into Australian 'church culture' and contributes to his own sense of belonging by playing guitar and joining the church band. Also in Chapter Seven what can be seen is how Jai makes important

connections with the old and the new in his life as he incorporates what he has learnt to assist the diaspora in Australia in the form of writing modern church music in Burmese to aid the fight for freedom for Burma. In recent months Jai has assumed more leadership within the Burmese diaspora by helping to organise a fund raiser through a local charity for the refugee camp that was burnt down. He invited his Australian friends to a concert where he performed his own songs advocating for peace in Burma. In each of these identity reconstructions they show how Jai negotiated his circumstances in order to survive. These narrations of negotiations did not stop once in Australia but continued throughout settlement.

Identities were reconstructed at the point of suture

Identity construction and reconstruction work was seen to be done at the intersection between how the young people were positioned and how they experienced life. As Hall (2000) describes,

I use identity to refer to the meeting point, the point of suture, between, on the one hand, the discourses and practices which attempt to 'interpellate', speak to us or hail us into place as the social subjects of particular discourses, and on the other hand, the processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be 'spoken' (p.19).

For each of the young people there were many times in their lives where this 'point of suture' was experienced. Much of their narratives recaptured these points as places where each participant actively considered and reflected upon how they were positioned and how they were being 'interpellated' by discourses. For example, some of African participants talked of how being a black African in Australian society was constituted. They saw that their black skin automatically associated them with the assumption of being a refugee. Gabriella explains,

Once an African refugee, always a refugee. The reason is that label, that title, doesn't go away for people with black skin. 'Cause many people, if you look at that part of the world, even when you look at ads of refugees, they mostly have African faces. They kind of symbolise suffering and many people they come with that image and they don't get away from the word refugee. I have my friends from Serbia and all those

countries, for goodness sake, as soon as they've entered here they've landed in straight away. No one ever calls them refugee again. But people, even I'm five years in Australia, some people I know are here for 10 years and they still hear the word refugee. And they even accept it. That's the problem. ... It's a different story for us and people still call us refugee and we are here with Australian citizenship. I don't understand that concept.

Gabriella's explanation reveals how the discourses of African refugees have attempted to 'interpellate' her and how these discourses have been difficult to escape despite acquiring Australian citizenship. She is indignant and angered by this because her friends from Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia can quickly change the interpellation based on appearance. Their 'white skins' enabled them to take up other ways to constitute their presence in Australia and not to be interpellated as refugees.

Using Self-reflexivity to renegotiate identities

In talking about these negotiations of identity the young people exhibited a high degree of self-reflexivity. The impact of the 'other' articulating who they were said to be was consciously questioned by the young people. This process that Hall (2000) calls 'Self-reflexivity' is the point where a person stops and recognises the competing discourses and then negotiates their own pathway. This study has shown how the young participants employed a 'self-reflexivity' throughout their narratives in order to understand and navigate their way within the context of their new life in resettlement. Their own resistance and acceptance of others' positionings were not static. Many times the participants' narratives showed a maturity in how they reflected upon the 'other'. In Dryden-Peterson's (2010) research a young Somali man described his ability to self-reflect as 'double think'. To 'doublethink' was the ability to hear counter-stories, to develop sensitivity and understanding toward others. In Chapter Five where the stories of the young people discussed entering Australian high schools, the young people employed a type of 'doublethink' to understand how to be seen as friendly and traverse the structural discrimination at school. They asked themselves questions like 'how do others get out of this bottom class?', 'how can I make myself to be seen as friendly?'. In article three and four (Chapters Six and Seven), the participants asked of themselves, 'what parts of my cultural identity

are of benefit to me in my new homeland'? The answers to these questions came through self-reflexivity. For example, Joseph had thought about how he could display his masculinity legally within Australian culture by buying a big car rather than having six wives like his father (as is the custom for Dinka men).

The data revealed many of the participants had deeply thought about their decisions and compiled narratives of how the decisions would affect their future and also their relationships with others. The young people could articulate to different degrees why and how they negotiated their pathways to new identities. In this example, Gabriella describes negotiating living in a large Congolese family,

Even when I'm raised in a big family and in the family we have learnt to put others first in all we do. Cause they [parents] can't just satisfy your needs. So we've learnt to kind of – if two of your siblings and you present your request to your parents, they have to prioritise who needs something urgently so I've learnt to wait and put others first. If my need is not urgent, let someone else have it. I've learnt to share,... but on the other side when I have to – I don't joke with my education, I don't joke with my professional life that's why when I need to stand up, I stand up...I had pressures [from parents] to choose subjects [for the Higher school certificate] such as chemistry and physics. I said, 'wait a minute, I don't have that ability. My talent is in a different way'. So I took my subject selection sheet and my parents filled in whatever subjects they desired then I took it to school and changed everything. I knew dad's signature and I changed everything. It didn't matter 'cause I knew that if I took these decisions I was going to suffer the consequences.

Here Gabriella understood how some of her decisions disrupted the power relationships within her family but she was particularly strategic in choosing when to act. This again demonstrates a high level of self-reflexivity in understanding one's place in the family and the world and over which direction to proceed. In choosing subjects for the Higher School Certificate Gabriella was meant to be an obedient daughter but she assesses two things, the risk of being disobedient and the risk of failing subjects that she assesses she cannot do. Gabriella decides to go against her parents and chose the subjects she is good at justifying her actions because, as she puts it, 'in the long run we both get what we want – good marks'.

Identity constructions were pragmatic and contextual.

While the identity constructions and reconstructions of the young people were fluid and demonstrated high amounts of self-reflexivity, they were also pragmatic and contextual. In other words their identity constructions were based upon what they needed and what they had access to at that time. An example of this can be seen in Peta's discussion of her life before coming to Australia in Article Three, (Chapter Six), and being in Australia in Article Two (Chapter Five). Peta's parents are Burundian, but she was born in the Democratic Republic of Congo and lived her childhood in Zambia. In Zambia she adopted an easy going, fun loving identity that assisted her in her relationships within Zambian society and she talked of experiencing connection and a sense of belonging to Zambian culture. This fluidity of identity strategically ensured benefits for Peta in Zambia (Malkki 1995) as she reported that she excelled both socially and academically in Zambia. When she came to Australia Peta initially had similar hopes and intentions of connecting, however, as seen in Chapter Five, Peta was equated with being a refugee, a discourse that was hard to escape and she found finding friends very difficult: 'I found that the Australian students didn't want to make friends with kids from anywhere else and I was really lonely'. What has not as yet been disclosed is how Peta negotiated her next steps. Peta had joined a science club at school and they entered a local science competition but the teacher would not help the group with their project. While attending a Science Fair, Peta watched how another school presented their science project, she saw how the teacher supported them and the teamwork amongst the students. She talked with the students from this private school finding them to be friendly. Peta decided to try for a private education as that is what she had in Zambia. Here she tells of how she navigated her entry to the private school,

That's when I saw the ad and applied for the scholarship and my parents were really supportive. I ordered their past exams they had and I practiced, they were kind of weird 'cause I think they test your IQ or something and I thought I wouldn't make it. Then when I went to the exam there were like 500 students and the scholarships were like \$30,000 for year 11 and 12. The scholarship would cover me. I guessed a lot of the exam. They were only offering 10 and I just prayed. If I think positive I will have positive energy to myself. I know my English is bad

but I prayed. Then a few weeks later I got 25% scholarship. That's such a lot for me to pay, ridiculous, so I wrote them a letter and said I'm sorry I cannot accept your scholarship. I told them everything, I said 'I'm a refugee, I just came to this country. I can't afford this school but thanks anyway for considering me'. I didn't think I would get anything you know. They responded and I had an interview with my mum and dad. It was a long interview and we talked about everything. There was this lady who gives out the scholarships and she really, really liked us but she didn't look like a nice person. I didn't think she looked happy but she talked to my dad and a few weeks later they gave me 100% scholarship but you have to pay \$50 a week and that's really good.

Peta moved to a school where she could find friends and also take up a 'learner identity' with ease (Yuval-Davis 2010). In other stories too the young people were selective with whom and how they connected in order to negotiate their own futures. They were sensitive to any racialised discourses and found places to belong where they experienced cultural safety. Their identity constructions were indeed formed 'through, not outside difference' (Hall 2000, p.17). In other words their identities were constructed at the intersection of difference where they said 'this is not me' and they moved to a place where the 'other' allowed them to be and to say, 'this is who I am for this moment' (Procter 2004). Thus their negotiations were individual and contextual.

Other participants too told stories of choosing to move to schools that were in areas of low socio economic status because these schools had active music and sports programs and the young people could negotiate belonging around the interests and talents they displayed. As described in Chapter Five (Article Two), it depended upon how the school positioned the newly arrived refugee students within mainstream school culture whether they were included or restricted. Some of the young people in this study actively moved away from schools that they perceived as racist and moved to schools that were open and inclusive.

In many cases the young people were aware of the gravity of their decision making. In reflecting upon the question that many of the young people asked, for example, 'What do I want to become?' I witnessed that in making these decisions the welfare of the whole family was prioritised rather than an

individualised response. The responsibility of being able to make a better future for oneself did indeed involve and affect the whole family. In my conversations with Joseph he had discussed wanting to live with his mum in Kenya and talked of missing being with his family. Yet Joseph had decided not to leave Australia because he was aware that the money he made from his youth allowance helped his mother's survival in Kenya. He explained to me that if he moved to Kenya he could not earn as much and this decision, he thought, was selfish. He also spoke of leaving TAFE to find full time work and earn more money then he would have the possibility to visit his mum, but this decision, he said, would disappoint his father's aspirations for his life. Joseph explained to me that his father saw him as 'the lucky refugee' who could now have it all and give the family so much. Joseph talked of his father saying 'when you become an engineer'. Joseph sat shaking his head in despair repeating, 'they have no idea' as he could not explain to his father the difficulties and the amount of time it would take to become an engineer. Joseph was in the process of making some very important decisions. In this process he needed to traverse the many conflicting landscapes in his life. For example, his own needs to be close to mum, his responsibility to assist his mother's survival, his obligation to do what his father wished. He was not clear on the direction he should take but he was carefully taking time to weigh up the consequences of the decisions he was about to make. In this conversation what is also striking in Joseph's negotiations was his ability for self-reflexivity in such a young man. This might well have been developed as a result of living in precarious places on the periphery and being decidedly aware that his actions or inactions deeply affect the lives of the people he loves.

The young people found other identities.

What is particularly interesting is that the young people did not confine themselves to an ethnic construction of identity. They saw a multiplicity of layers as to how they could create new identities for themselves. For example, Matinda described herself as basketballer when she first arrived in Australia, but has moved to calling herself a rustifari/rap singer. This was due in large part to the pathways that were available to her. She reported that she did not find friends in basketball and it was too expensive for her, however, she found friends in her music class and the cost was minimal. Matinda changed her hair and dress to perform this identity successfully. Matinda also describes herself as an African

woman, again this can be due to access, she is estranged from her mother (who is Togolese) and lives with her Liberian boyfriend's family thus the African identity enables her to blend these ethnicities. However another layer to Matinda's cultural identity was proving to be a real dilemma. She explained this conflict in the focus group: up to this point in time she has been able to resist her boyfriend's demands for her to become a Muslim woman and his wife. In the focus group she discussed what it would be like to become his wife. In this excerpt the girls have just talked about African men wanting to be treated like kings,

Researcher: Matinda, You've got an African boyfriend. Does he want you to treat him like a king?

Matinda: Me? (All laugh) No, It's like he want me to be the BEST girlfriend. More than other girls.

Researcher: What does that mean, the best girlfriend?

Ali: Actually, she's the queen.

Matinda: It's the opposite. He treats me like a queen you know. Like example, he want to marry me, so me, I don't want to be a Muslim, like forever, cause I'm a singer and if I marry him I just be Muslim like this (puts hand down low). But no, I will have to be the most PERFECT Muslim wife.

Ali: Your dream is shattered.

Matinda: Yes most perfect Muslim on earth, that's what he wants. (All laugh)

Researcher: So when you marry him everything is going to change and you'd have to be the perfect Muslim wife?

Matinda: Yeh and my dreams, everything gone.

Here Matinda is faced with a choice of two irreconcilable pathways. If she chooses to live how her boyfriend wants she loses her dreams of independence

and being a singer. If she chooses to follow her dreams she loses her boyfriend and the home she now has.

Constructing ethnic identities

In negotiating pathways to creating ethnic identity reconstructions distinct contrasts could be made between the participants from African countries and the ethnic Burmese. In this study what became evident was the pathways to a unique Karenni/Chin and Burmese cultural identity had already been consolidated within the ethnic Burmese communities in displacement, in camps and in makeshift schools in Thailand and Malaysia. For the young people this displaced identity was successfully transferred to Australia, as seen in Chapter Seven and the young people reported being comfortable with this. Bu Song, Sing Me, Phi Io, and Jai attended Karenni, Chin and Burmese Christian youth groups and used their newly obtained IT skills to promote and connect to the diaspora and join in their ethnicity's fight for freedom. Even though the young people pursued a pathway toward connecting to the diaspora they did not view this as a linear pursuit but also negotiated and embraced their new home in Australia. In particular they found the church in Australia a place where they could belong.

On the other hand, the young people from African countries talked of the pressure to choose between cultures. The girls spoke of being warned against becoming too western and to take the higher road and be a 'good Congolese/Burundian/Sierra Leonean daughter'. Thus a binary conception of cultural identity was heralded for the young women. This was particularly so in discussions with how to behave in public. In the focus group the girls contested that the gendered 'cultural marker' (Hajdukowski-Ahmed 2008) of a true African girl was that she was a virgin. As Hannah declared, 'How does sleeping with a guy stop you from being African'? The girls reported that to share their parent's attitudes toward culture would be detrimental to their connection and success in Australia. They knew that their parents wanted them to succeed in education and in order to do this they saw that it was important to negotiate through the two cultural landscapes to achieve success.

In contrast, the young people from Burmese countries did not discuss gender issues. For the participants from African countries gender issues were raised and discussed in multiple ways and in relation to issues of equity, ability, freedom of

movement, trust, and perceived double standards between male and females. The article which comprises of Chapter Six takes up gender issues from the perceptions of the African females but there were other voices on this issue as well. Here I describe a conversation I had with Rick and his two Congolese friends as I was walking from his school to his home to conduct an interview with him. The conversation went something like this,

Boy 1: What's this about girls being able to play soccer!

Rick: Yeh, how can girls play soccer? They're girls. They can't play soccer.

Researcher: (I laughed) haven't you been watching the Commonwealth games?

Rick: No. No, but you don't get it - girls can't play. The teachers should know that. We have to put girls in our team. Our team will be weak. In my country it would never happen.

All boys: Yeh

Boy 2: I can't stand it, girls just want to be like us.

Rick: Yeh, Girls don't know their place.

Researcher: You mean like Julia Gillard?

All boys: Aaahhh, I can't stand this about Australia! Boys are smart! Boys know how to do everything better.

Researcher: Well think of all the rich countries in the world. What are the rich countries?

Rick: America, that's the richest country in the world.

Researcher: America, Australia, Norway – Think about it, they all treat women as equals and they are rich. Women in those countries can even be the leader that's one reason why they are rich.

Rick Oh no, no, no, this is wrong. It's just wrong. It's wrong I tell you. I am a man. Men are smart. I am a man, God says men are better. He says, 'the man is the head of the house'. It's true, God says, boys are better. (Field notes)

Rick's strong opinion of what the world must look like contrasts starkly with the values espoused (at least verbally) in Australia. Rick even calls upon God to prove his point and he has chosen (at this point in time) to refuse to negotiate any pathway toward accepting Australia's gender equality. The importance of this issue to Rick brings him into conflict with establishing connection within Australian society. In Mangai and Pease's (2009) research on African men in Australia found that the crossover of women entering what African men perceived of 'men's domains' impeded on African men's ideas of masculinity. This was particularly so with those who fused religion with traditional African cultures 'there appears to be a more explicit tendency for African men to assume a powerful position as the provider and protector of the women in the community' (Mangai and Pease 2009, p105) . However in Australia as women have access to work, education and are encouraged to play 'men's sport' these traditional positions are very much perceived by some, like Rick as under threat.

Section Three

The refugee's position in society affects the pathways that are available to them

In understanding the pathways the young people took to construct new identities what also must be examined is accessibility and availability. Here what is of concern is not only how the young people viewed themselves but also how 'others' viewed and positioned them within home, school and wider society. What was significant in examining the stories of the young people was that being labelled 'refugee' as children and then as 'former refugee' as young people has been crucial to how they have been positioned in society. This positioning has therefore determined, to some extent, their experience of life. The young people have lived their lives with labels, being described as refugee, former refugee, black African, Burmese, Asian, and Australian. Many of these descriptions were multiple for example, at a point in time they could be a refugee/Burmese/Chin/Australian/student.

Indeed, as found in this study, the positioning of 'the refugee' outside of citizenship gave to it a number of meanings according to where it was being used. At an early age the label of 'refugee' became an 'identity marker' throughout the young people's childhoods (Yuval-Davis 2010). Yet there were differences in how this identity marker was construed and it depended upon who was determining the discourse. For example, for Sing Me and Jacqueline, being a refugee resulted in encampment and limits to their education, yet for Gabriella and Peta, their fathers found work and they had access to education. However, what was evident was the power established over 'refugees' because they were not citizens.

Citizenship has become a powerful tool whereby those who do not have citizenship can easily be marginalised. As Rutter (2006) points out, 'Citizenship enshrines the relationship between the individual and the collective. It carries with it legal, political and social rights, as well as responsibilities' (p. 224) Even as I write this, another boat with human beings seeking asylum in Australia crashed off Christmas Island. The nameless people's dead bodies left in the ocean as the Australian government made the decision not sufficiently significant to retrieve them.

However descriptions and labels are not objective, they are interpreted and this interpretation is central to how identities are conceived. As Hall (1997, p. 9) asserts, 'Differences exist in the world. But what matters are the systems of thought and language we use to make sense of those differences'. In other words, being positioned with the status of refugee was not as important as how the discourse surrounding the refugee was framed. These positionings were integrally linked with power relations. The positionings gave power and the positionings took away power. For example, in some host countries, 'the refugee' was afforded the power to obtain work and support themselves and the children were able to attend the nation's schools. However in other countries 'the refugee' was encamped, working was illegal and no education was provided. Each nation state had its own 'system of thought and language' (Hall 1996) to position and place control over the refugee. The implications of this for resettled former refugee youth coming to Australia is that some former refugees come with very little of anything including education, but others come with a formal

educational experience and an experience of living in a society, such as Peta, Gabriella and Hannah. The differences were in the ways they were positioned and the power they were given to construct a meaningful life for themselves within the various host countries in which they resided.

Furthermore in coming to Australia what can greet the refugee are more discourses that disrupt or open up what they can and cannot do. One crucial element that became evident in each participant's experience was how the school reacted to accommodating former refugee students. In some schools the young people were seen as having a homogenised refugee identity and all were relegated to bottom classes. Other schools actively worked upon the young people's inclusion. This factor played out in very real ways for some participants as opportunities for social inclusion and a chance to prove academic ability was not afforded to them. In examining these complex understandings of how identity construction and reconstruction evolve I argue that by opening up the discourses surrounding forced migrants other ways of understanding the refugee and resettlement can be recognised.

As highlighted in Chapter One to this study, what has dominated the discourse amongst the global North nations and in Australia has been a constant re-citation of the need to protect our borders from irregular migration and asylum seekers (Piper et al. 2012). This recitation is, as Piper et al. argue, unreasonable and leaves behind the historical discussion of understanding resettlement. Therefore Hall's ideas are still relevant to the current discourses in the field of forced migration. Hall suggests in *'Cultural Identity and Diaspora'* (1990), 'Where Africa was a case of the unspoken, Europe was a case of that which is endlessly Speaking - and endlessly speaking us'. Hall describes here that through colonisation Europe shaped what was to be spoken and how it was to be spoken about. Africa or the 'other' was only discussed in reference to European interests. I suggest that what Hall talked about nearly twenty years ago can still be seen today in the context of resettlement in Australia. However it could be rewritten to be, 'Where refugees are a case of the unspoken, Australia is a case of that which is endlessly Speaking - and endlessly speaking us'. When refugee resettlement is addressed the dominant discourse focuses on integration into Australian society (Piper et al. 2012) leaving former refugees to be described by

deficit characteristics, for example 'victim' and 'traumatised'. These narratives described by some as 'compassionate discourse' labels former refugees with psychological problems that need fixing (Matthews 2008; Rutter 2006; Chatty et al. 2010). Thus the important discussions and research that expands these narratives of resettlement for refugee youth have been left underdeveloped (Piper et al. 2012; Matthews 2008; Rutter 2006).

Section Four.

My Arguments

Throughout this research project I came to understand the impact of deficit discourses surrounding the refugee and the former refugee upon refugees and wider society. I began to understand the power these discourses had in confining and limiting the young people. I also began to see how much of the discourse was left untold. My first argument therefore seeks to critique the current discourses that give homogenised labels to the refugee and former refugee. In the second argument I assert that there is an inadequate understanding in resettlement countries of the effects of a refugee childhood upon former refugee youth. Finally I argue that the narratives of hope, joy and humour must be heard as they are important characterisations of refugees and former refugees.

Argument One - The refugee and the former refugee is understood as a homogenized identity

Firstly there is clearly a problem with the ways in which refugee young people in pre and post settlement are defined in the discourse thus far. The refugee and the former refugee are seen and portrayed too often as a homogenous group, with simplistic and deficit labelling, such as 'victim' and 'traumatised' in both pre-settlement and in the resettlement context (Rutter 2006; Chatty and Hundt 2001; Matthews 2008). This over simplification does not allow room for narratives outside that of a 'refugee other' and 'forecloses fertile possibilities of holistically examining refugee experiences' (Kumsa, 2006 p.233). As Rutter (2006) found in her research in the United Kingdom, the creation of refugee children as a homogeneous group 'impede[s] in-depth analysis of the multiple factors that may limit children's progress. Such homogenisation also impedes focused interventions to promote the progress of different groups of refugee

children' (p. 39). Such homogenising discourse can be found across academic disciplines such as education, health, psychology, policy material, immigration policies and adviserial groups (Rutter 2006).

There is, however, a body of sociological literature that highlights the complexity ignoring differences in background, experience as a refugee, differences in country of origin, ethnicity, education, make up of family, gender or age (McPherson 2010; Sidhu & Taylor 2007; Keddie 2011b; Miller et al. 2005; Rutter 2006). The attempt to disrupt the discourse that characterises 'the refugee' as 'passive victim,' or 'victim' emerged with Harrell-Bond's (1986) landmark text in the field critiquing international protection in her book, 'Imposing Aid: Emergency Assistance to Refugees', based upon research she conducted in the middle of emergency relief for refugees. Malkki (1995) also refutes the characterisation of 'the refugee' as 'pure victim' by producing ethnographic evidence of the complex and multiple ways that both urban and encamped refugees experience life as a refugee in her seminal work, 'Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory and National Cosmology among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania'. What emerges from these critiques is that by emphasising the major discursive characteristics of 'the refugee' as 'victim', the refugee is therefore placed in a binding dependency relationship to their helpers, the 'aid regime' (Voutira and Harrell-Bond 1995). This relationship between the aid regime and the refugee is discussed at length by Voutira and Harrell-Bond (1995) but for the sake of this thesis only certain points will be taken up. One is that by positioning the refugee as 'victim' the refugee can be controlled, restrained and handled. Thus the relationship between the 'helper' and the 'victim' is power-laden. The refugee has been positioned as 'needy' and the aid regime as 'the helper.' Drawing from Zeus (2011) this simplistic characterisation is further explained,

The 'refugee experience' is thought of as being generalizable, and all too often the entire global refugee population is given blanket characteristics in what has become a 'refugee narrative'. This narrative allocates clear roles, not only to refugees as dependent, hungry, helpless and uprooted persons, but also to members of the regime which is to help refugees back to stability. Refugees have no action or agency of their own in this discourse and the International Refugee Relief's role is to feed, help, re-root, heal, and control (Harrell-Bond 1986; Hyndman 2000; Malkki

1995). This need for control is what leads to encampment. Imposing aid on refugees is justified by the view that refugees are 'pathologically ill' since they have been traumatized and displaced and are no longer rooted in normality, no longer part of the (natural) national order of things (Malkki 1995a) (p.267).

In attending to the 'need for control' Harroll-Bond, in an interview with Zetter suggests, encampment can ironically make many refugees into victims (Zetter 2011). Indeed, the grip of encampment was a very real part of suffering for some of the participants in this study. As children the participants who stayed in camps for long periods of time experienced the consequences of being in a camp, they felt trapped by being so dependant. Jacqueline (who spent fifteen years in a refugee camp in Benin) describes her experience of being encamped,

Jacqueline Ummm, 10 years ago, the most important thing to me would be, how to get out of a misery life. 'Cause it's like you're stuck there in a jail. You are put there and you don't have any way out. You're stuck there and you don't have any solution, you don't have any hope that one day I will be happy. You don't have any hope that one day I could have my own life in my hands, so you're just there. Even though you are kind of human, you smile, you talk, you eat, you walk, still in your heart, someone is stepping there on you and you can't even shout 'cause no matter how hard you shout, no one will hear you and no matter how hard you pray, no one will hear you. So you're there, and you are thinking, surely there is a life, there is a future, there is joy somewhere but you just wonder, where? Which country does that exist, who will bring you that, where will you find that? How can you do that? What will you do to change that? Even though you pray that – huh – I will be happy one day, one day I will have a future still it's gooder to have faith but it's gooder to have truth.

Jacqueline sees that it was her encampment that ate away at her hope to accomplish a better life. Jacqueline's narrative could be seen on the surface as a part of the 'victim' narrative. Yet by clearly immobilising her self-sufficiency she

became a 'victim' of encampment. She lived the role of 'dependent, hungry and helpless' refugee (Zeus 2011' p.267). She talked of being trapped, as if in jail and of spending much of her childhood wondering how to turn her 'victimhood' around. The aide regime (in her eyes) offered no path toward her being able to help herself or away from being a victim. She desired (looking back) to experience hope and joy and to have faith and happiness not the pathetic human condition of 'you are kind of human', that she experienced as an encamped refugee child.

Thus, the 'agency/victimization binary' that still exists today (Kumsa, 2006, p. 233) restricts the discourse of what refugees have done, can do, can become, can do for themselves and become for themselves. Why the narratives of independent refugees become muted and lost is difficult to understand. What has been found in this study demonstrates that the stories of resilience and refugees helping themselves are abundant. One example of this is Peta, who recalls her father's discussions with her and her sisters of their decisions to resist begging when they got out of a refugee camp and moved to Zambia,

Peta My parents they worked very hard. In the beginning they did the most embarrassing things, cleaning, selling on the street, which is like the lowest of the lowest. They built a business from that. My dad looks around for more opportunity. There were other refugees [who] used to come and beg from us and my parents used to tell them, look, we lived in a refugee camp and now we are in Zambia, we can build our lives. My dad was like, I won't do that [beg], we will work and we will hope but we will keep working and if God is willing we will get out of here. But for now we will work hard to stay fed and have a good shelter and a good life, even though we have been through a lot of like, shit.

These comments were made looking back upon her life they do show that some refugees actively resisted being positioned as 'victim' and were able to create pathways toward independent living in host countries.

Yet, in resettlement, what has been demonstrated by this study is the homogenised identity of 'victim' continued for the young former refugees; this construction of 'refugee-victim' is evident in their treatment by some charities

and welfare agencies and by the school some of the young people attended (Rutter 2006; Ramirez and Matthews 2008). For some of the participants in this study there was active resistance to the label 'refugee'. An example of this is the following quote from Gabriella. She explains how welfare and charity workers viewed her,

Gabriella In their minds, they still feel sorry, pity, they start thinking about wars. And in my mind I feel that word [refugee] diminishes me and my ability. For example; I was once applying for a job and they urged me to put the word 'refugee'. They say, 'once they see this word girl, you will get a job, it's easy for you'. I was just soooo angry. I have to use that word! I have to carry that word with me, for me to receive something. This is a job I'm applying for! They will base it on my ability. Not feel sorry for me! Oh it really got to me. For me I think it lowers people's ability, because a refugee is someone who needs help, someone who is displaced in the middle of nowhere. But here people have Australian citizenship. They have homes to sleep, food to eat. I don't know where the refugee word fits in, it's useless. But they still use it. That hurts me.

But some organisations do function with that word. They do function with that word and if they took that word out, they would have no purpose. And then I think that word has taught people not to become independent. It has maybe helped African people to get to here. I don't want to use that word again, as they enter here, Australia. Putting that word on them, like you are encouraging them to needing help and not want to going beyond their abilities. 'Cause I can give you an example, Sometimes you insult each other, and say 'you are stupid, you are stupid', and they will believe you. Words are very powerful. Have you seen that happen?

Gabriella's strong resistance to the 'refugee victim' label highlights how the labelling impacts upon her own identity construction and how she desired and acted to take control of how she is seen in her new world. Gabriella grappled with this idea of presenting herself as a 'victim' but resolved that it leads to an identity that cannot assist her in Australian society. While charity groups and

welfare organisations promote the victim identity in order to gain social and financial support, this 'engenders an exoticized and idealized narrative which constitutes a disempowering understanding of refugees' (Phillips 2010 p.5 cited Ahmed, 1999). Gabriella's insights on how she sees the 'victim' identity being constructed by others suggest that the consequence for her and other former refugees is dependency upon the organisation and lack of self-determination. She talks of observing how other former refugees respond to the discursive power of this positioning, saying it traps some people into seeing themselves as 'victim' and therefore she insists that they 'not want to go beyond their abilities'.

I must, at this point give clarity to my position, I am in no way saying that refugees are not victims of war, abuse, discrimination, suffering, displacement and terror. The young people did indeed talk of their pain and loss and they were and still are victims to some incredible hardships however I cannot leave them in this position. The findings presented throughout this research, show 'the refugee' a long way removed from the narrative of 'victim'. The stories told in this thesis open up ways in which the young people mobilised their own agency to make a better life for themselves and their family be it ever so small.

The refugee as 'traumatized'

In the following conversation, taken from my field notes, Sing Me and I discuss the misfortunes of one of the young Karenni girl who has just arrived in Australia. What is of interest here is that as the facts around her life are disclosed to me we both perceive this in very different ways. I see suffering and possible trauma but Sing Me's views contrast to this,

As I was leaving Sing Me's house she asked me if I was teaching the new Burmese kids that had just arrived at the Intensive English Centre. I said I was and that they were very shy. She said, yes most Burmese are very shy. I asked her about one girl, had she come with her family to Australia? She said that she had come with her mother and sister. I asked if she had a dad. (I was aware that some fathers chose to stay behind and help the freedom movement). Sing Me told me that her father had died in the camp. She said, 'He just felt sick one day and didn't wake up'. I did not speak, contemplating on how sad that was. I said, 'I'm sorry'.

She answered, 'Please don't be sad. She is not sad. It must be accepted. That is why we don't like telling Australian people about people who die. They get sad. Why do you get sad? It is a part of our life to die'.

I replied, 'Yes you are right'.

She asked me again, 'Why do Australian people get sad when they talk about dying?'

I answered, 'that's a very good question Sing Me. I think we are scared to die.'

She said, 'Karenni people and Burma people stay happy, it's okay to die, it is life too'.

I thanked her and drove off feeling more like a child who had learnt something very important about life.

The dialogue above shows how two people can view suffering very differently. My interpretation of the news of this young girl's father's death in the camp was sadness and concern for the girl. Sing Me's interpretation was of acceptance and a broader view that death is a part of life. For young refugees moving into western society ideas around suffering and death and trauma may be conceived in very different ways to western conceptions. As Hayward et al. (2008) suggests, 'The concepts of mental health and healing are also culturally and socially constructed, and need to be conceptualised broadly' (p.197). Clearly, Sing Me draws from her cultural interpretation of death and this is satisfying to her. Intriguingly she also states that the Burmese hide their suffering from Australians because of the ways they become interpreted. This shows a sharp perception of how refugees can be perceived and it also reveals the active work.

What can be identified in Western democratic discourses concerning the refugee is the homogenised characterisation of the 'traumatised refugee'. As Marlowe (2010, p.264) suggests, 'a very dangerous language has crept in with what some call "trauma discourse" exemplifying what Spivak critiques as the 'gaze from above'. Here Marlowe (2010) alerts us of the struggles that takes place when a minority group such as refugees are misrecognised. The appropriation of refugees as having Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder contributes to the growth of

what has been termed a 'trauma industry' (Chatty 2007; Marlowe 2010; Phillips 2010). This disproportionate focus (Phillips 2010) upon the characterisation of refugee as 'traumatised' shouts over other narratives of how refugees interpret their own suffering. Thus leaving out the very important ways refugees themselves have found to make meaning and gain insight in human suffering. Rutter (2006 p. 37) examines the way this discourse is emphasised in the United Kingdom, particularly when addressing the educational needs of children,

Research literature about the traumatic experience of refugee children has had a major impact on how they are viewed by their teachers. Many policy texts about these children assume an almost universal prior experience of a traumatic event. Among most educational, social welfare and healthcare professionals there is a general acceptance that PTSD is a condition to which refugees seem particularly vulnerable. Refugee advocacy groups are complicit in this process; such organisations have had to mobilize discourses of trauma in order to argue for asylum-seekers to be granted sanctuary. Additionally, the language of trauma has been invoked to argue for greater healthcare and welfare resources.

Rather than the exclusive focus on the trauma story of refugees, Marlowe (2010) suggests recognising the ordinary stories of refugee lives. These stories highlight 'understandings of one's history, spirituality, culture, background, folklore etc.' (p. 184). In this research a more complex and dynamic understanding of the young people's responses to traumatic events were narrated. As I listened to the stories of loss and pain, told by the participants, I also heard in their narratives the ways they looked for happiness or wisdom or restoration or ways of taking back a measure of control that they had lost in their young lives. It was in their individual responses to traumatic experiences that identity constructions surfaced. Often, when the young people spoke of traumas they also included ways that they and others worked to bring hope back into their lives. The narratives didn't end with sadness but described the ways the young people negotiated the traumas. Some participants spoke of ways they constructed fun in their family. Jacqueline told of how she made up jokes to tell her little brother so that he would laugh and forget the gnawing hunger in his belly. Phi Lo talked of having no food and then finally getting a job as an electrician in Malaysia to help feed his family, he told of remembering the look of relief and pride on his

mother's face, a memory he carries with him to encourage him when he finds life tough in Australia. Thus by characterising the refugee simply as 'traumatised', 'the extraordinary childhoods of refugee children and youth' (Christie & Sidhu 2002 p. 289) can be silenced.

Like Hayward et al. (2008), refugees can be described as 'normal people who are forced to deal with abnormal and traumatic situations (p.81)'. For the young people in my study these abnormal and traumatic situations were different for every individual participant. Some had escaped together with their families (Gabriella, Peta and Ali) before the war broke out in their region but they spoke of having to keep silent about their escape and not getting to say goodbye to their friends. Others had not seen war because they spent their childhoods in camps (Sing Me and Bu Song) yet these girls spoke of emptiness, boredom, hunger and the terror of the camp guards. Some of the participants remembered vividly the smells of smoke and death and the look of war and the ways some perished and they survived. Others had lost mothers, fathers, and found themselves alone in strange places. Some, after many years had found mothers, fathers, sisters and brothers and some found that family members were no longer alive. These complexities can so very easily be blanketed as categorising refugees as 'traumatised'. Yet the narratives of the young people in this study demonstrate that this is not the full story.

What becomes increasingly concerning regarding the hegemony of the trauma discourse inscribed to the refugee *prima facie* (Rutter 2006) is the stigma that comes attached with it. According to Brough et al. (2012), 'the narrowly focused trauma lens has helped underpin stereotypical understandings of culturally diverse people from refugee backgrounds into a singular pathologized, needy identity bereft of resilient and self-determining capacity' (p. 4). By limiting the discussions surrounding refugee students to psychologised traits such as 'traumatised' we do a number of things: as being in need of treatment, of needing to be 'fixed and we responsiblise them to get fixed (Brough et al. 2012).

In only attending to the dominance of 'traumatised' discourse the hard work that is evident in the young people's narratives in not allowing the negative traumatic experiences to define themselves can be lost. Being aware of how humans try to overcome adversity by understanding the fluidity of resilience mixed with trauma

can give a greater and more accurate picture of the refugee experience (Brough et al. 2012). The opportunities for a better life in Australia could be swallowed up by prescribed, stigmatising, deficit labels if only one homogenised discourse exists. In promoting health and wellbeing into the resettlement experience for refugees we must acknowledge the traumas of the past alongside the strengths and 'personal resources' refugee youth bring (Gifford et al. 2009, p.20)

My final argument in critiquing these homogenised discourses of 'victim' and 'traumatised' to characterise the refugee and former refugee is that these discourses depend upon the hearer of the discourses to respond with compassion. 'Compassion speak' suggests Harroll-Bond (1986, p.143) to ask of the hearer to pity and then to respond by helping the refugee. However, Bauman (2004) questions the power of compassion in a globally competitive consumer society arguing that the portrayal of a 'victim' or 'traumatised' individual can be associated with a constellation of negative conceptions. Instead of having compassion upon the refugee, the refugee might easily be construed through another lens, the lens of modernity, where a consumer society asks of its inhabitants to contribute and consume. The victim or traumatised are therefore seen as 'redundant human,' 'useless', 'unneeded', 'a financial burden', 'ultimate outsider' and as a consequence, share the same space as 'waste' (p.12). Indeed, Bauman's (2004) insight into how quickly the discourse of 'refugee victim' and 'traumatised refugee' can easily turn around is now taking place in the Australian context with the brutal treatment of asylum seekers.

Argument Two: A misunderstanding of young former refugees tends to serve to limit the possibilities of schooling

In relation to educators, former refugee students are commonly categorized as 'having gaps in their education'. This descriptor is largely inadequate. The term 'gaps in schooling' assumes a common deficit background of refugee students entering school in resettlement countries. It misses out on individual refugee students that experienced a host country where refugees were given the same access to school to as citizens. It does not adequately capture the diversity and complexity of the refugee student population. Nor does it assist in describing the quality of education that the young people encountered.

For each of the participants in this study there was a tremendous diversity in their educational experiences, and these individual experiences could not be adequately generalised as 'gaps in schooling' prior to resettlement. For example, Chapter Four describes the makeshift schools that some former refugees attended. Sing Me strictly had no gap in her schooling, she began when she was four until eighteen, however the school she attended did not have trained teachers or books. Gabriella had several years when she didn't attend school but her father was an engineer and gave her and her siblings lessons every day until she could attend a school in South Africa. Peta attended a private school in Zambia and Joseph had access to a well-respected refugee camp school in Kakuma but said that it was a long way to walk and because he did not have parents in the camp he was not made to attend.

On the other hand, some of the participants described missing out on the everyday things in life that prepare children as a citizen. This is not referring to cultural barriers where each country takes up different ways of living. What became evident was that for those young people who had spent more than ten years in a refugee camp, living life as a 'citizen' was a new and daunting experience. When camps become protracted containment areas that keep refugees from host societies, the young people miss out on a myriad of experiences that non-encamped people take for granted, it is more than a gap in school, it is a gap in life. For example, Bu Song spoke of never having used money, of her family never choosing what they would buy to eat. She recounted shopping in a supermarket for the first time and being surprised that you could take items off the shelf as if you already owned them. Phi Lo talked of his excitement of riding in a car for the first time, Matinda told of her sister discovering how to flush a toilet at the airport and showing the rest of the family what to do. Most spoke of learning how to swim, ride a bike, use a computer and a phone, and of writing in a book for the first time, going to the library and choosing a book. Jai spoke of sitting in class and being given a book to read, he said that he wanted to look smart so he opened it and pretended to read then the teacher came and turned the book the right way up. Jacqueline worried about what general knowledge she didn't know, 'like who Hitler was'. She also worried that she did not have a clue as to what she didn't know and this made it impossible for her to use her own initiative to catch up. The considerable range

of topics in their talk about 'catching up' clearly indicated that literacy and numeracy were only a part of the gap.

This 'lack of knowing' was not just concerned with encountering the new but was also about re- interpreting what they had previously understood. The Burmese participants spoke of their fear of people in ties (like principals) and in uniforms (like security guards) and being brave enough to speak to them or walk past them. The young people spoke of having the freedom to walk around the streets and say 'hello' to people passing by. Some spoke of the confinement of school, of having to wear a uniform, being made to attend every day, of needing to collect pieces of paper (certificates and qualifications), of being on time; of not being able to just drop in on friends, but ringing first and asking. Overall the participants saw the potential to be 'someone' other than 'a refugee', but talked about being overwhelmed by the multiple steps needed to move toward becoming 'someone'.

Finally some saw that they had abilities and knowledge but these were not viewed as valuable by the dominant culture in Australia. Most of the young people spoke more than two languages, some spoke four but most of their languages were not offered as a subject at school. Jacqueline, Gabriella and Matinda could read and write French but they could not find any avenues to explore the world through this language. Others had other skills and interests, for example, as we were walking, Matinda began to call out the names of the trees and plants along the street in French, and demonstrated how she could tell if they were healthy, especially the fruit trees.

Argument Three: The negative homogenizing of 'the refugee' ignores the hope and excitement for life that the young refugees bring to their new experiences in Australia.

Throughout the findings I have alluded to attitudes of hope. Now in these final pages I would like to highlight the ways in which the young people expressed hope, excitement for life and the sense of humour that percolated in the participants throughout this project. Much of the study has addressed the hard things for the young people in resettlement because it was at the intersections of trying to change these things where the young people negotiated identity constructions. However the study would be inaccurate and bereft of its vitality if

I did not include describing the spirit of the young people who participated in this study. Also it would be hypocritical of me to critique a homogenised identity of former refugees without examining wider narratives of refugees and former refugees.

The enthusiasm for life and hope that was exhibited by the young people made it a pleasure to be with these young people. The hope that the young people exhibited was not the naïve hope that Cassity and Gow (2005) reported in their research where the young former refugees who aimed to become doctors with minimal years of formal schooling. The young people in this project had lived long enough in Australia to understand how hard they needed to work in order to achieve their goals. In some cases they had adjusted their goals to more realistic expectations for their future. At the time of writing Gabriella had achieved entrance to university. Jacqueline had enrolled in a bridging college to assist her in university entrance; Phi Lo and Joseph had enrolled in TAFE; still others had made decisions to stay at school and even though they were older than their year they were working to achieve in their own educational pathways. Some had part time jobs and told of loving having the cash. Peta had taken a 'gap year' from university and was working as a nurse's aide in order to become more independent and earn money. As with Gifford et al. (2009) my research also found that the young people displayed: 'high levels of optimism, self-esteem and happiness and these attributes did not diminish over the course of the study' (p.15). Hope and delight in life was seen in diverse ways in the participants.

One way the young people showed their excitement over being in Australia was in their joy over the small things that they now have. The availability of food was a great source of joy to the participants and this was talked about at certain times throughout data collection. For example, after our interview I went to the supermarket with Matinda, she had just told me stories of how she had walked for fifteen days not eating, drinking or sleeping to escape the war in her home town and now she danced down the aisle and ran back to me, looked into my eyes saying, 'I can eat all of this'! In the focus group Hannah was eating chips in one hand and some nuts in the other and she sat taking a bite of each one respectively. Ali asked her why she was eating like this and Hannah stuck her nose in the air saying, 'Because I can'! The girls laughed, acknowledging Hannah's

enjoyment of her access to food. When interviewing Rick I asked him what he liked about Australia and his answer was one word, 'Foood'.

Many times the young people compared life for them now in Australia and their life as refugees. They were very aware of how much their standard of living had increased just by being in Australia and so the hardships were balanced and compared to life before Australia. One occasion stands out: Jai was getting into my car and it was raining, I commented how terrible the weather was, he laughed saying, 'it's okay'. I looked quizzically at his reaction. He told me how much he hated the rain in Thailand but in Australia, nothing terrible happened when it rained. He is not walking in mud, not fighting off leaches and there is no hole in the roof of his house and if he gets wet he has other clothes to change into.

The participants who came from refugee camps also talked of having money for the first time and being able to choose and to buy things. There was a wonder in their expressions at the variety of things that were available to them,

Bu Song When I first came I have one clothes (giggles) and at school I see a picture of boy in warm clothes in bed, and then I hear they pyjamas and I find out girls have pyjamas too. So I go and I buy and I so hot in bed (giggles). I love this, in Australia clothes for everything, shoes for hot, for cold, Oh I love clothes.

All of these things were reminders of just how much their lives had changed and they were enjoying the discovery of their new world. They did not take for granted having food or clothes or houses that don't leak. This comparison of past lives with their present lives featured throughout the interviews.

In particular the participants who came from refugee camps expressed experiencing an overwhelming sense of freedom,

Sing Me: Now I can go anywhere! – Here, go anywhere! Now I'm a person. I can do, I can go, I can do with myself. I can learn more from other people. Different people, not just Karenni people, all people. They look, they look different and they do things different and I can see this

and I can learn. In Australia very different culture, it looks different you know, the building so tall and cars, cars so fast and so many things I don't see in my life. I think, I will try and maybe it's okay.

The realisation that this new world might be okay brings with it the excitement of new things to learn and different ways to view life. All of this, even the physical difference of seeing tall buildings and fast cars brings with it great excitement and a hope for the unimagined possibilities the future may hold for Sing Me. To be free to move and to choose where to go is a welcome relief to Sing Me as she compares it with the restrictions she experienced in camp. Her ability to move, to see buildings and cars and the volitional power she now has are all reminders to her that she is free.

When asked in the interview, 'What is the most important thing in your life now', the responses resounded with the hope that they had for the future and a way forward for a better life. For example the young people spoke of looking ahead and beginning to make plans,

Jacqueline Now my plans have changed, my dreams have changed. So now I have more focus and I know where I'm going. I know where my future is. It is of course different. Now I have the chance to study and do what I want. I'm willing to give all my best to get there.

For these participants making plans for the future was something new. As Gifford et al. (2009) suggests, 'making a new home in Australia is the chance to flourish and to make secure futures for themselves and their families' (p. 18). Engaging in education was seen as a vital key to accessing a better future,

Phi Lo The most important thing is mum and dad and having a future with them and the other is education. Yeh, and doing education right, if I do things right then for all our lives we will be alright.

Phi Lo echoes Sing Me's sentiments that finally our lives will 'turn out alright'. This hope of seeing a future where there is safety and being given a chance to work at it was referred to by most of the participants. Interestingly Phi Lo's expectations of Australia were vastly different to what he experienced in

Australia. Phi Lo speaks of when he came to Australia his expectation was that he would be forced to work as this is what he did in Malaysia. He was surprised at the opportunities that were offered to him,

Phi Lo: When I came to Australia I thought we doing everything (for ourselves), you know working, get us to work somewhere. When we get here and see things and then sleep in the bed. This is where we will sleep! We don't have anything to do, just living (laughing). I can go to school! And then go to the beach and oh so beautiful, the sand too (so) shiny, it is all so beautiful.

The realisation that life could be comfortable and beautiful was a new experience. Both Phi Lo and Sing Me did not expect to be allowed to attend school and they talked of their surprise at receiving no governmental discrimination in being afforded services to them. Enjoying equal access to school, having a home to rent and being allowed to visit places like the beach were still a great adventure for them. The excitement of realising that there is freedom, security and aesthetic beauty in his new life was also found amongst the participants in Sampson and Gifford's (2009) study which reported that the young people were attracted to beautiful places and these gave them an experience of restoration and relaxation.

The need to have fun was an important element in all of the communication throughout the project. This characteristic is also discussed in Ramirrez and Matthews (2008) research where the young former refugees in their study needed to talk and move to be fully involved. This was also evident throughout this study. The young people laughed and enjoyed each other's company, they listened to each other's opinion and they willingly helped each other when things weren't understood by one of them. Significantly, the young people did not ask to be entertained, they made their own fun, they initiated their own humour. The African girls high fived each other, stood up and did a dance and hugged each other at different times throughout the focus group. At one point Matinda stood up in order to mimic the walk of young cool African boys, 'strutting their manhood' as the girls put it. It was a perfect representation and the others roared laughing and clapped at her dramatic representation. They also exhibited a quick witted sense of humour. For example, the girls had spent some time

talking about the problems with being black in the Australian context and I asked: Are there any good parts – good parts about being black?

All: Yeh sure

Researcher: What's good? What's good Peta?

Peta: Well honey, (She stands up, turns around) I have an arse
(wiggling as she speaks)!

All: (hysterical laughter, dancing and 'arse' slapping)

In the Burmese focus group, the young people also made their own fun by telling stories of the funny things they remembered when they first arrived. They laughed about how I had taught them to wear socks. They reminded me of when they came into the room after playing soccer and the boys took off their school shoes. Apparently I ran around the class opening all the windows and the door, holding my breath and gagging at the smell and insisting that they needed to wear socks. The boys laughed at my antics and at how they had not heard of wearing socks before coming to Australia.

Humour was also used in the interviews and had a therapeutic element to it that seemed to relieve the seriousness or hurtful experiences they encountered. For example, in the quote below, Matinda tells of when the war started in her country,

Matinda: So it like, very bad war, like killing people. There is smoke everywhere inside your house, even the innocent people die, little babies and children, they just don't care, everyone goes inside and we have to sleep under our bed for two or three days and stuff. I stay under the bed with my grand mum and she hold me and like when smoke come she put me close and I breathe, you know like, in her dress, like anyway that's why I don't like smoking. (She smiles) Anyone like give me cigarette, I say 'no thanks I had enough of smoke' (We laugh).

As seen here, Matinda's use of humour is a cue to move away from this memory. By introducing humour into this story Matinda pacifies her own emotions; she

brings herself into to the present by referring to being asked if she wants a cigarette. In a sense Matinda uses her own sense of humour to rescue herself. After this, I ask Matinda a question that took her far away from this memory.

Others used humour in self-deprecating manner to explore and share with others the learning experiences encountered when they first went to school,

Researcher: And then you came to school to the IEC[Intensive English Centre]. Tell me about that?

Jai: When I came before I am a little bit scared because I only talk Burmese, I only know a little bit English. I only know 'Hi' and 'I love you' (we laugh a lot). Imagine say to Mr Banks, (the principal) 'Hi, I love you' (we laugh).

Researcher: Not very helpful words.

Jai: (laughing) No no no.

This type of humour was light hearted and also enabled the participants to see how far they had come in such a short space of time.

The stories of childhood told by the young people were embellished with the ways the family tried to create a better life and of overcoming the odds. Some of the participants talked of a childhood in a host country where their parents had found work and they were given more opportunities. Gabriella, Peta and Hannah told of watching their parents actively negotiate the small opportunities improve their position within those host societies. They told of being determined to follow that kind of drive. Thus they could be characterised more accurately with words like 'innovative', 'initiator', 'negotiator,' 'multilingual,' 'multicultural,' and 'transnational,' 'cosmopolitan' or 'global citizen'. Others spoke of taking up opportunities in the refugee camp. Matinda played in a basketball team in the camp and entered a national competition in Ghana. By playing basketball in the camp and having some success at this Matinda found a confidence to join a basketball team in Australia. From that point she made other contacts with musicians where she found her own niche of friends. Describing a refugee in these terms opens up new ways of understanding how these young people negotiated belonging in different societies.

Finally, the young people in this study exhibited an enormous amount of energy to devote to finding ways to connect to their new society. This energy propelled them to be always looking and listening for new opportunities to join groups and/or contribute to the charity groups that helped them. This finding is consistent with Hugo's (2011) empirical study of Humanitarian Entrants and their contribution to Australian society that in the early years of resettlement humanitarian settlers become involved in building networks amongst their own diaspora and participating in ways to advocate for the rights of their ethnic group. Hugo (2012) found that after a numbers of years civic engagement became important to former refugees and this was viewed as a way to give back to society. The research goes on to name humanitarian settlers who have become mayors and a taken up many other civic roles.

Involvement in wider society was becoming important for some of the young people in my study; Gabriella was Vice Captain of her school and represented her region in youth parliament in Canberra, Matinda had won a song writing competition and performed at a youth conference in Canberra, Joseph was in a photography club, Jai had joined a church soccer team and the church band and Sing Me and Bu Song were helping with a local charity's homework club. As with Gifford et al. (2009), 'the overriding message from these findings is that refugee youth arrive in Australia with high levels of wellbeing and they are well placed to thrive'. If they are well placed to thrive upon entry to this country then fostering a welcoming and accepting environment to continue growing should be the ultimate aim of Australia's Resettlement Program and wider society.

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSION

Homeland

By Jennifer Atty

Above all, I do still have a homeland my friend.

It is far from me,

Extremely far away.

I left it against my will.

But even away,

It still shivers my skin.

I daily feel it is so close to my senses...

But though my sorrow runs deep,

My hope prevails.

(This is the last stanza. The full poem can be read in the appendix)

Conclusion

In undertaking this doctoral research I have aimed to understand the young former refugees in resettlement in Australia. The stories of their lives they so generously shared with me are an insight into a certain population at a certain time and cannot be the final word. The voices of Jai, Joseph, Rick, Hannah, Gabriella, Sing Me, Ali, Jacqueline, Bu Song, Peta, Phi Lo and Matinda articulated in this study are also not their final words. As they grow older and make other connections to local and global societies, their identities will of course evolve and change. There is never a final stopping point in this identity project; there are always other ways to interpret and more stories to tell (Andrews 2008). This thesis too is not the final word; rather it is the unfolding of particular understandings that contribute to the accumulation of an ongoing knowledge of the field. With that said my final remarks in this thesis draw together concluding thoughts about what can be understood and learnt in this particular space and time.

The young people spoke of their lives unfolding in largely two landscapes, at school and with family. School was addressed as a place, before and after resettlement and this was discussed in Chapters Four and Five. Relationship to family was discussed in Chapters Six and Seven. Family had broader definitions for the young people and sometimes included ethnic group, and these traversed borders and expanded the Western nuclear family constructs.

There were times when the young people talked about reconstructing their own connections to their family's heritage culture, these reconstructions were negotiated and/or resisted within family and relationships shifted and changed as a consequence. Heritage culture was not a simple construct for these young people, as a childhood spent in displacement meant little embodied memories of parents' homeland. Many of the young people had established connections with the host country they lived in as a child. Some spoke of identifying with a 'refugee culture'. Furthermore the young people actively engaged in youth cultural constructs such as basketballer and student enabling an identity away from family. New cultural identity constructs were also taken up, for example, African-Australian young woman was one way the young women from African countries now described themselves. This multiplicity of constructs all held their own

meanings for the young people within the context of Australian society and in our conversations time was spent reflecting upon negotiating and renegotiating these constructs.

Resettling in Australia for these young people held hopes for meaningful connection and a sense of belonging to their new home. Overwhelmingly they desired to be understood and to contribute to their society. Finding ways to belong is arguably a universal human condition - but for the young people in this study growing up as a refugee has made an indelible impact upon their identity. Each individually negotiated their own multiple pathways to understanding who they were and who they could be in their new society. The resettlement process is indeed fraught with many obstacles and misunderstandings but, as these young people narrate, it also awakens them to opportunities and hope for their future.

In this project I have located the discourses that homogenise refugee and former refugee identities. However what has not as yet been discussed are the implications of this homogenised identity of the refugee in 'modern' society. It is not surprising that the simplified discourse describing the refugee and former refugee as 'victim and traumatised' have been misconstrued by neoliberal discourses. These discourses reframe the refugee away from compassion to being viewed through an economic lens whereby the refugee is described as 'useless,' 'unneeded,' 'a financial burden,' 'ultimate outsider,' and even 'waste' (Bauman 2004). This characterisation of the refugee in the above terms suits the interests of the global North as there can be economic justification for what others may see as inhumane actions. The absences of narratives that highlight the complexities and deeper understandings of the refugee and the refugee experience in pre and post settlement have been filled by such negativity.

It is into this society that the refugee has been invited to resettle by the Australian government and to find 'home'. Throughout this thesis the tension between the individual and social or 'who I say I am' and 'who others say I am' has been examined. I have attempted to disrupt the current negativities and have presented other ways of knowing. The young people featured in this study have exhibited enormous determination, reflective decision making and an ability to navigate through the multiple cultural landscapes to secure a better future for themselves and their families. These pages also describe a small group of young

people who are eager to embrace life and approach life with vibrancy and a keen sense of humour. Their hopes and dreams for their futures are mixed with a grounded reality and a tenacious spirit. They were sometimes discouraged that schools and society could not see just how hard they were working to catch up and to become involved but they navigated around negativity and found places and ways to enhance their belonging.

I have followed the lead of Stuart Hall (2000; 1998; 1997; 1996) to understand how cultural identity changes and shifts according to the discourses produced within mainstream society. It is here that I have found a way to understand the individual in the social. It is here also where I was able to articulate the power of the other, the power of labels and the social constructs that work to confine some and free others.

Pointing toward the future it is important to watch the evolving discourses surrounding the refugee and forced migrants. If the dialogue continues to create a refugee 'other' in global society then the gap between citizen and non-citizen will increase. Perhaps as time goes by the dialogues will change and will include refugees who have come to Australia in recent times, particularly those who spent childhoods in protracted refugee situations and greater understanding will be gained. The hope of this thesis is to open up fresh dialogues and counter discourses relating to the resettlement process by including the narratives of those who lived through the process of resettlement.

There is a need, as Castles (2003) suggests, for a contemporary sociology of forced migration to analyse the new characteristics of forced migration in the epoch of globalisation. By including resettlement within this dialogue, as this thesis has, it will give the unique perspective of former refugees looking back and being able to clearly articulate their concerns, their hopes, what resources were vital and what was not helpful. As half of the world's refugees are under the age of twenty-five, young people also need to be included and make significant contributions. As Newman, (2004, p.15) writes,

The international community has thus far failed young people badly, and we are in urgent need of a new paradigm for protection. We must therefore problematize traditional notions of protection, according to which it is something done to young people. Recognizing the inadequacy

of this approach, we must ask ourselves how we can use the term differently.

In order for 'contemporary sociology of forced migration in the context of global social transformation', (Castles 2003, p. 15) to be truly affective, the voices of those who were refugees must be able to speak and others must be willing to listen to stories both about being a refugee and about the resettlement process.

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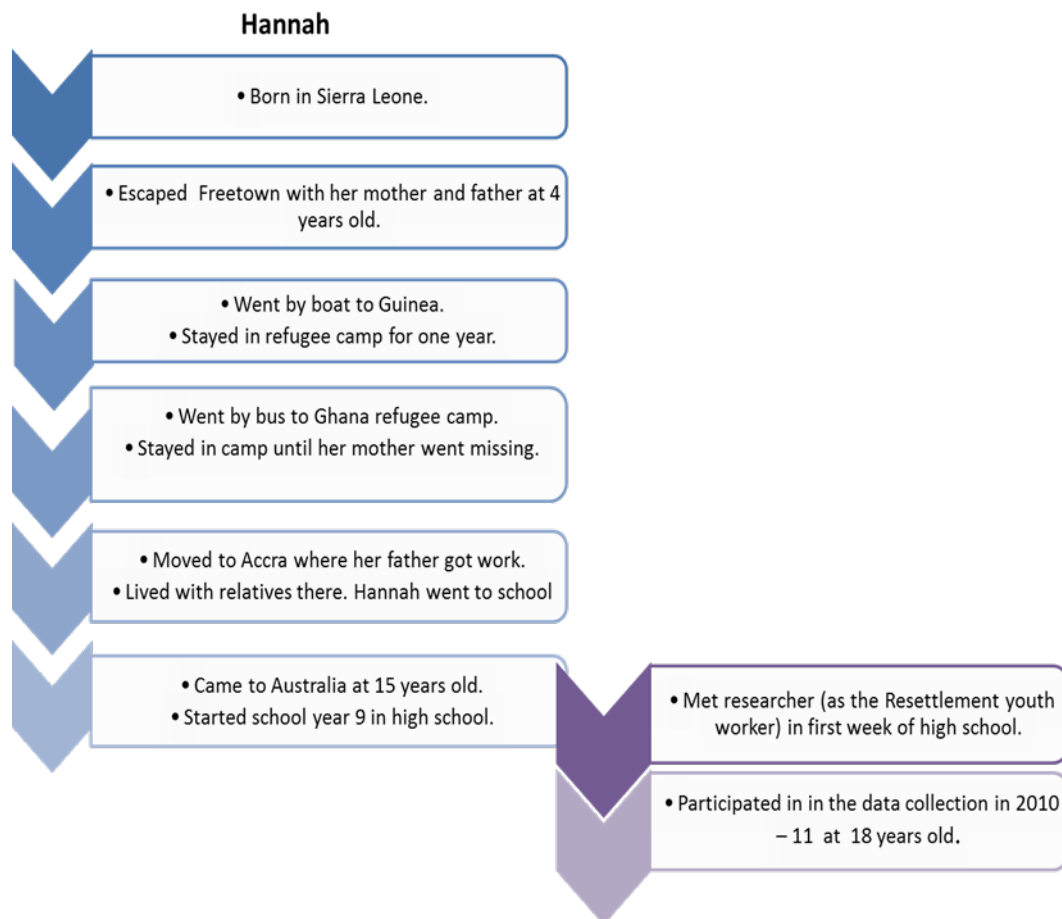
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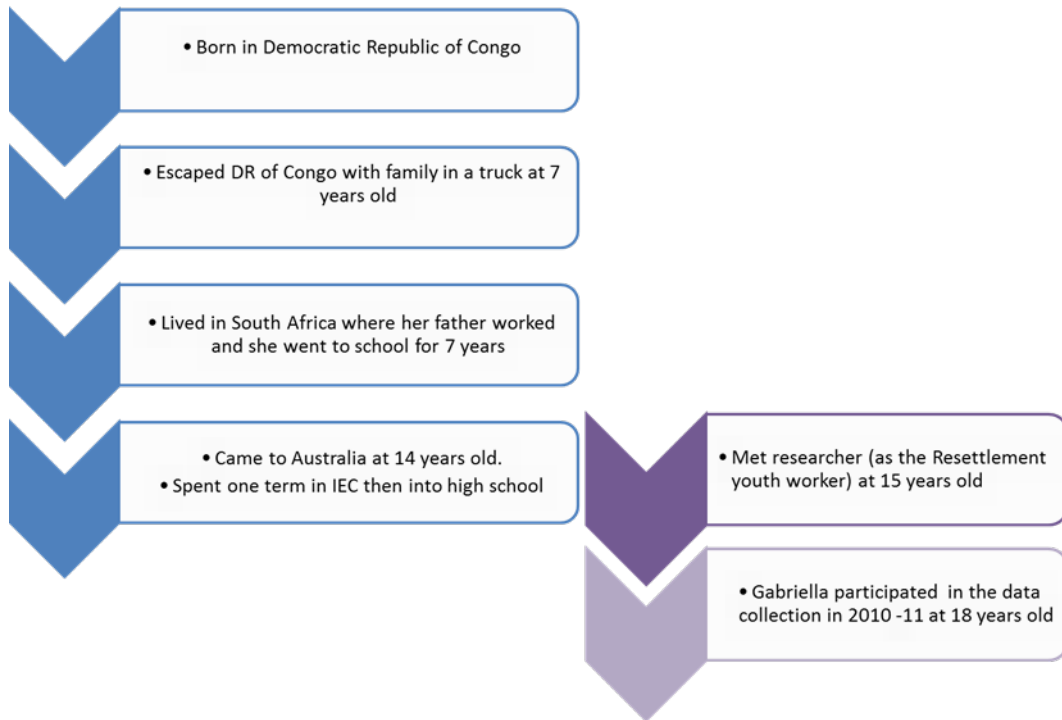
Appendix

The first outlines the participant's lives as understood by the researcher including when I met each participant in the form of a timeline. The second table gives an outline of my involvement with the young people in the capacity of youth worker and teacher and discloses the activities in which each was involved.

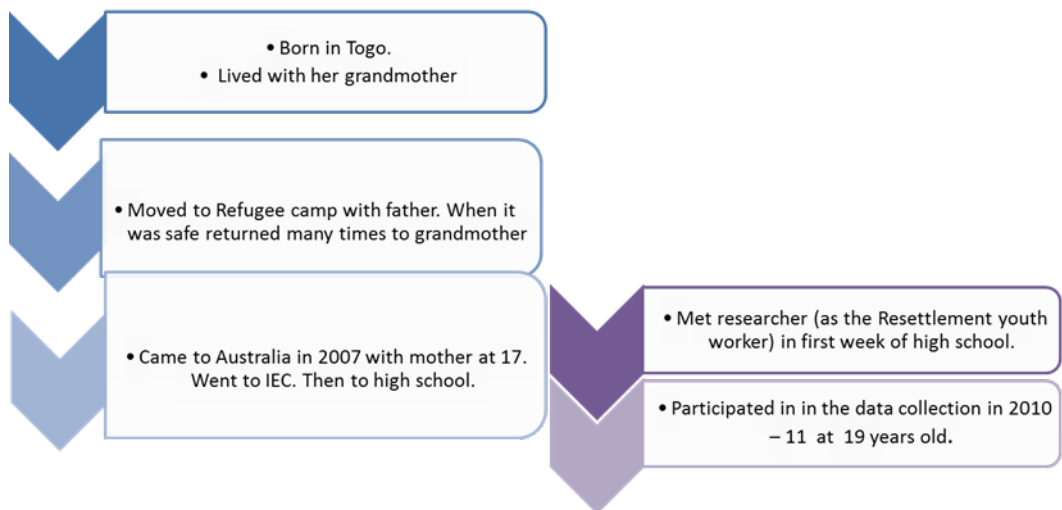
Timeline of participant's lives



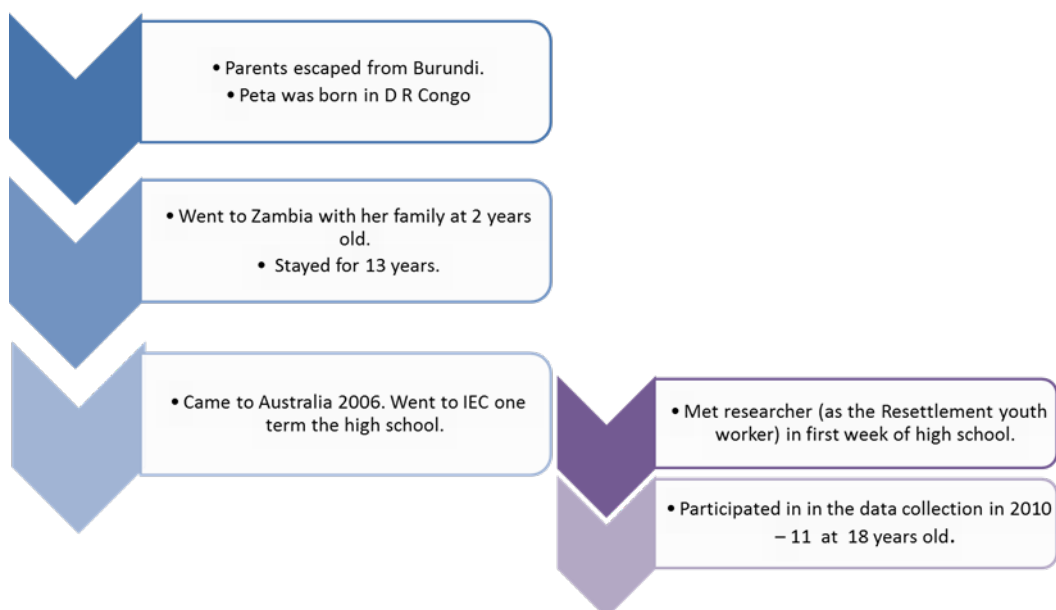
Gabriella



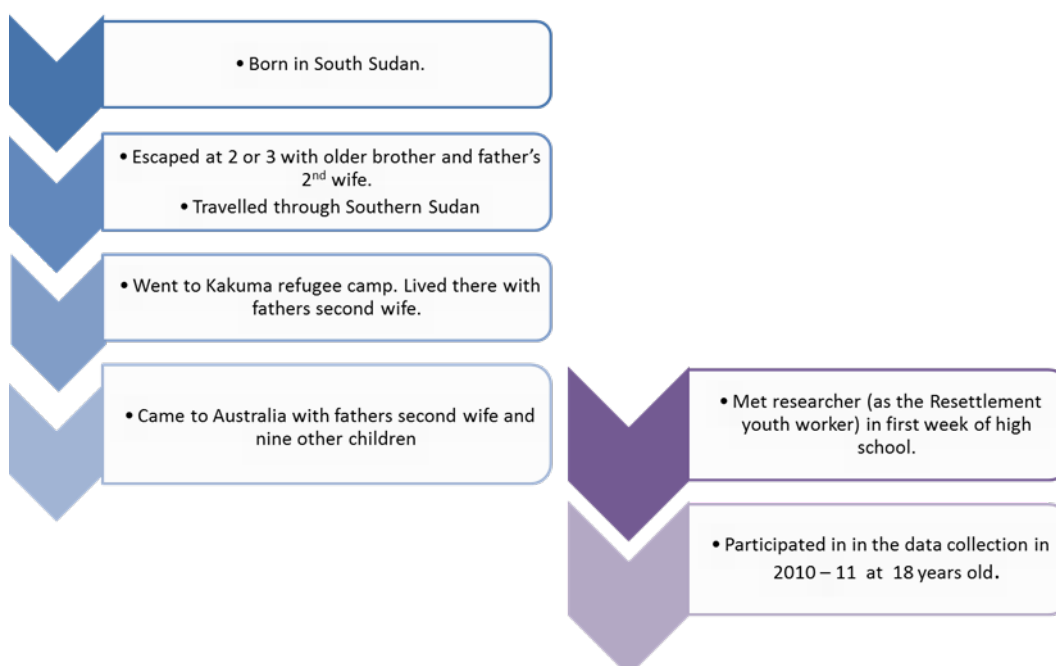
Matinda



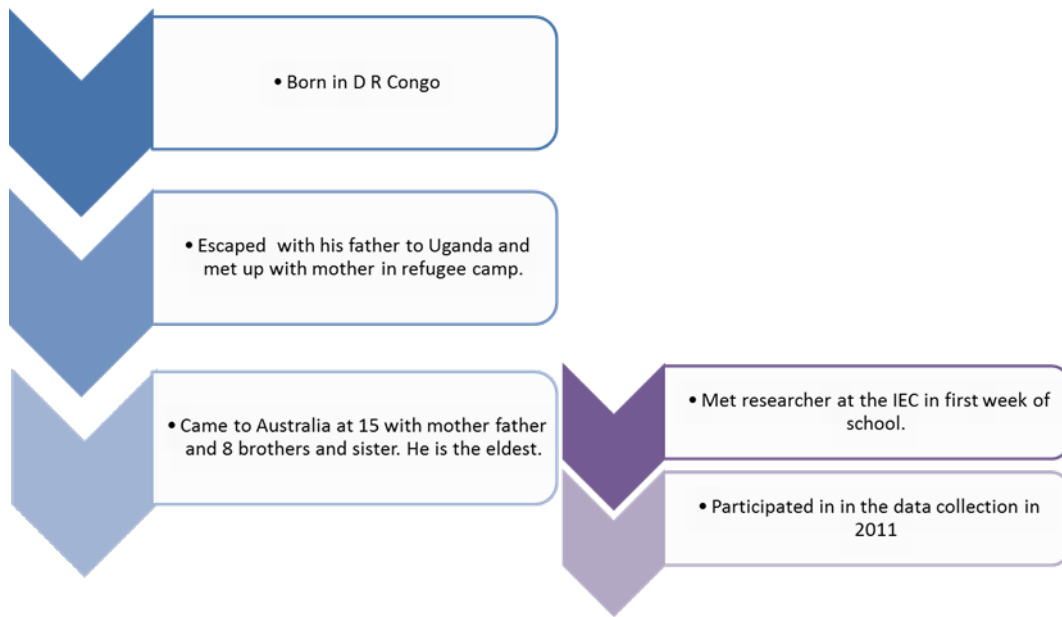
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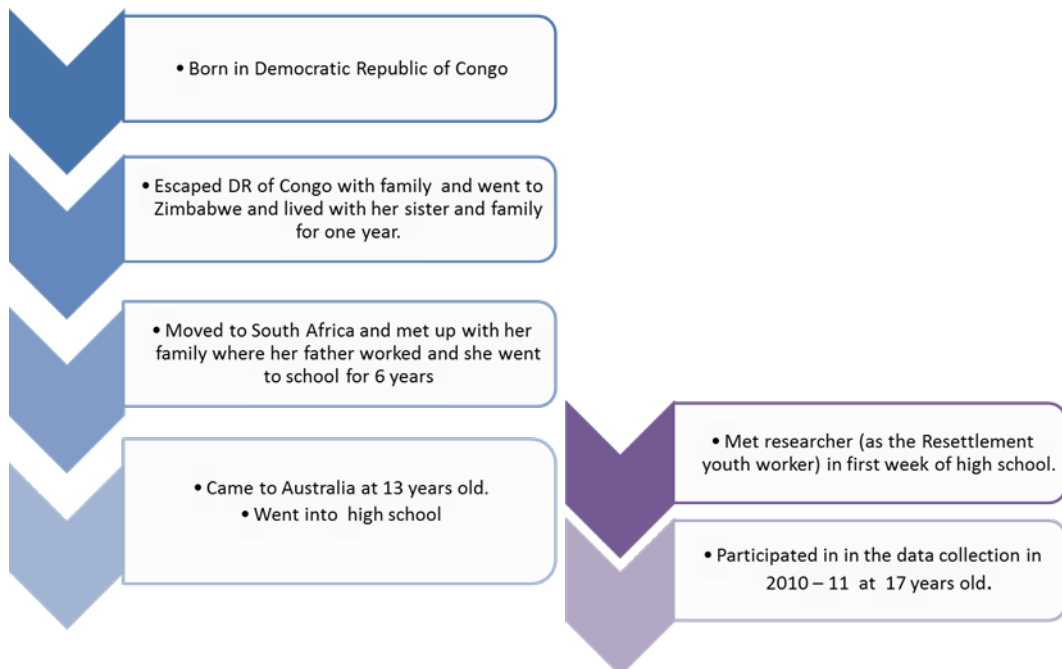
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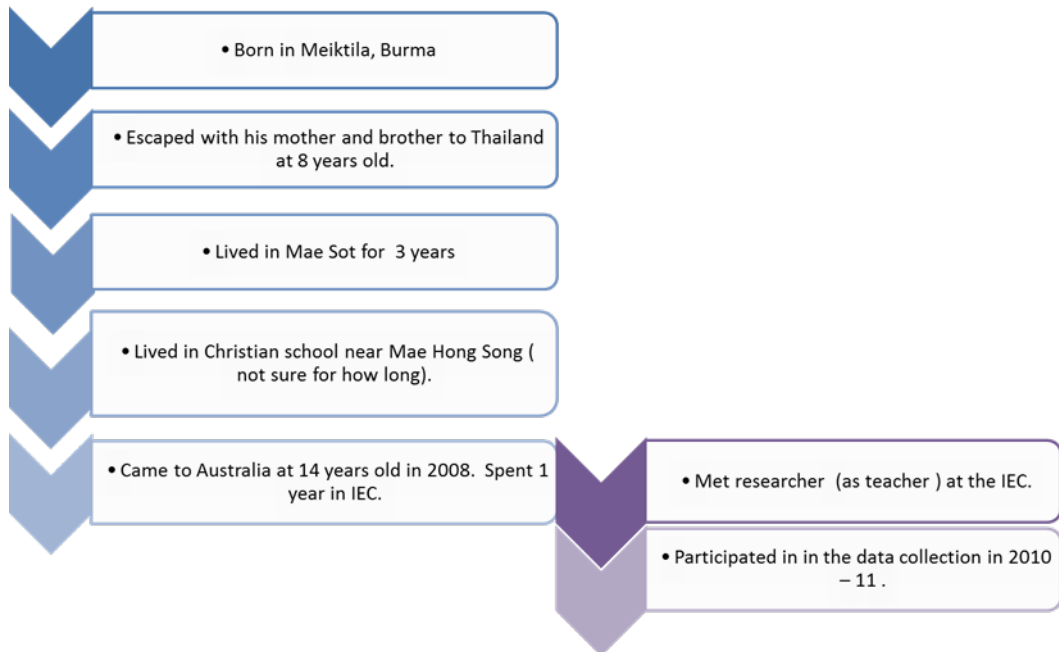
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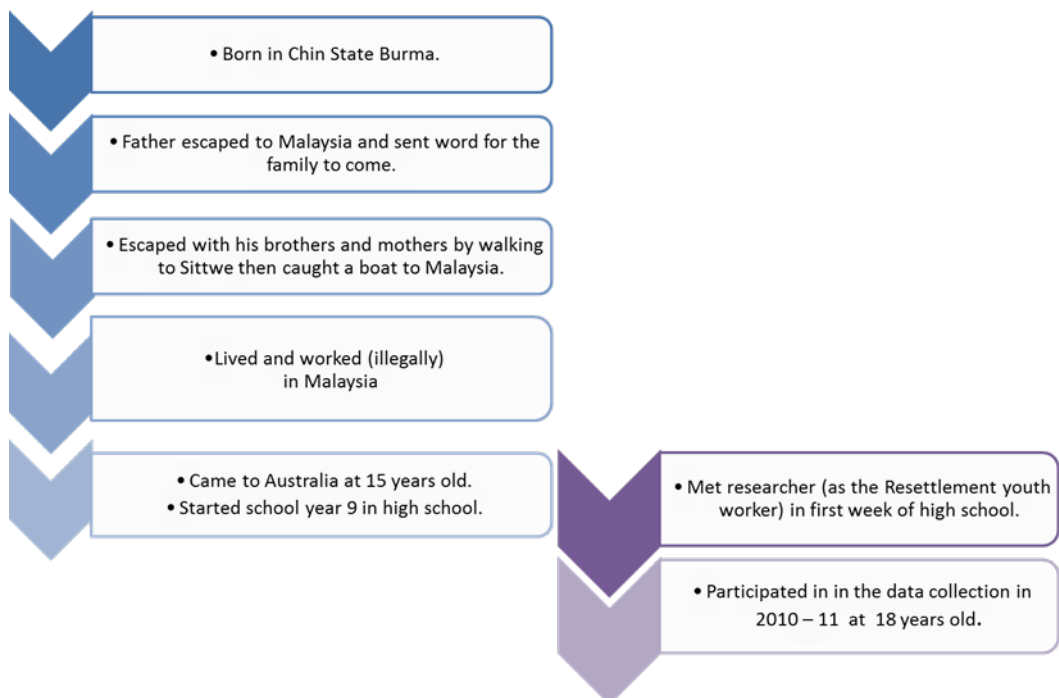
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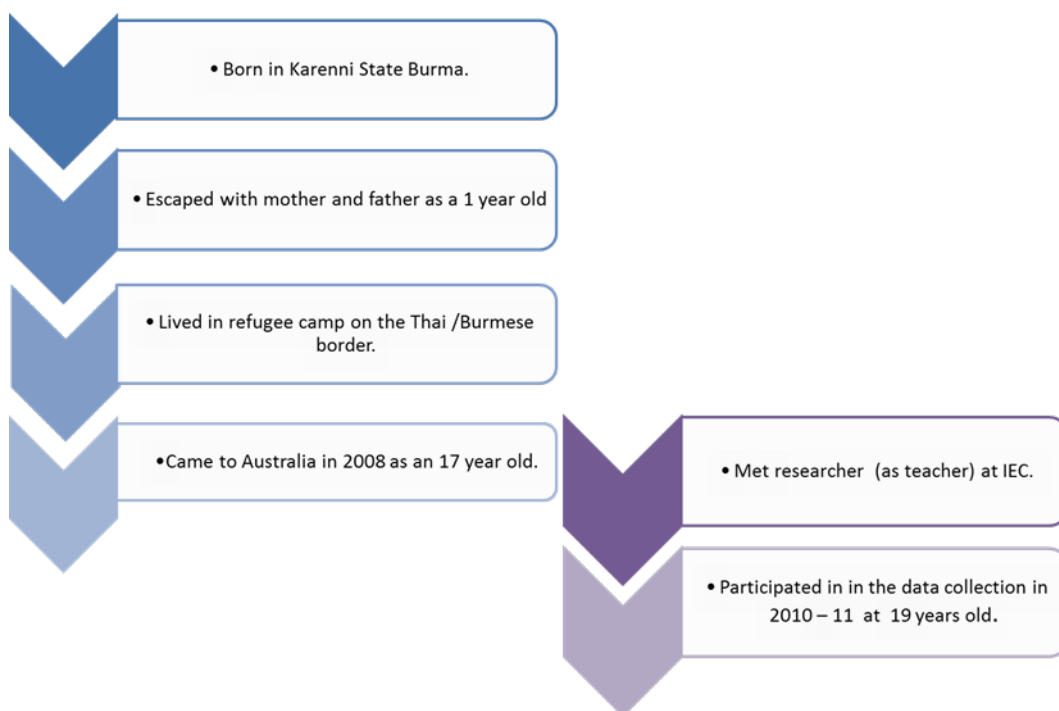
Jai



Phi Lo



Sing Me



Bu Song

