

## IDENTITIES AND BELONGINGS OF "SECOND-GENERATION MIGRANT WOMEN"

Mateja SEDMAK<sup>1</sup>

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### ABSTRACT

#### *Identities and Belongings of "Second-Generation Migrant Women"*

The article deals with issues of (cultural and ethnic) identity formation and belonging in the case of "second-generation female migrants" from former Yugoslavia in Slovenia. Subjective perceptions, the complexity of identity self-perception and the role of the wider environment (peer group, family) are explored. The article addresses three closely connected yet separate issues: (1) the problematic nature of monoethnic affiliations; (2) the fact that ethnic boundaries do not necessarily coincide with cultural ones; and (3) the complexity of self-perception processes and cultural mixing. The article questions the assumption that cultural assimilation is straightforward in the case of "second-generation migrants", addresses gender and religion as important factors, and exposes the "in-between" position of "second-generation migrants".

KEY WORDS: cultural identity, ethnic identity, mixed identity, second-generation migrant, women.

### IZVLEČEK

#### *Identitete in pripadnosti »druge generacije migrantk«*

Članek obravnava proces oblikovanja etničnih in kulturnih identitet ter pripadnosti na primeru »migrantk druge generacije« iz nekdanje Jugoslavije v Sloveniji. V njem avtorica poudarja subjektivnost percepcij, kompleksnost identitetnih samoopredeljevanj in vlogo okolja (vrstniških skupina, družine). Obravnava tri tesno povezane, pa vendar ločene teme: težavnost monoetničnega opredeljevanja, dejstvo, da etnične meje ne sovpadajo nujno s kulturnimi, kompleksnost samoopredeljitvenega procesa in identitetno mešanost. Članek zanika predpostavko o kulturni asimilaciji »migrantk druge generacije« in kot pomembna dejavnika poudari spol in religijo ter njun »vmesni« položaj.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: kulturna identiteta, etnična identiteta, mešane identitete, druga generacija migrantk, ženske.

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<sup>1</sup> Ph.D. in Sociology, Research Counsellor, Science and Research Centre Koper, Garibaldijeva 1, SI-6000 Koper; mateja.sedmak@zrs-kp.si

## INTRODUCTION

The article addresses the complex and multifaceted process of (ethnic) identity formation and belonging in the case of “second-generation migrant women”. In the article I also explore their “in-between” status which is reflected in the terminology, theory and empirical research.

I will first explore the terminology used. The term “second-generation migrants” is written in inverted commas because it is misleading. Namely, by exposing “migrantism”, we blur the fact that the women in question were actually born in Slovenia, and Slovenia (in their words) is “their only home”; they are not actually migrants. This terminological inaccuracy is not innocent, since focusing on the women’s migrant status means exposing differences and an a priori separation of “us” and “them”. This is especially important when trying to analyse and capture the process of establishing (ethnic) identity, since:

Like all marking practices, identity is subordinated to the difference, as the process works over the difference, provokes discursive work, creates boundaries and the effects of these boundaries [...]. Identity can be established only through difference, in relation to what is not, what is missing [...]. Identity has meaning only if there is something that is not. (Mencin Čeplak 2003: 30)

Focusing on migrant status thus directly highlights “non-belonging” and “otherness” in the context of ethnicity. With such terminology, “second-generation migrant” women are directly referred to as “non-Slovenes”, i.e. foreigners. According to Schneider, such contradictory terminology also reflects the general perception of the migration process as an anomaly in the “natural”, static state of the national population (Glick Schiller, Wimmer 2002 in Schneider 2016: 2). The term “second-generation migrant” is also rejected by members of the “second generation” themselves: first, the term incorrectly equates citizens who fully identify themselves with the society in which they were born and in which they grew up with an undifferentiated group of “migrants” and with the ethno-cultural background of their parents; second, such a description completely ignores the internal differentiation of the category thus defined, i.e. differences in socio-economic status, education and other factors; third, the most important objection emphasizes the correlation of such labelling with the “problem of integration”, whereby “second-generation migrants” themselves do not see themselves as migrants, and even less as the problem (Schneider 2016). Due to the misleading nature of the term, I will continue to use the term “second-generation migrants” in inverted commas.

Besides focusing on (ethnic) identity as a personal and individual property, I will also focus on the *process* of shaping (ethnic) identity and the question of belonging. Thus, the question “Who are you?” – in terms of ethnic, cultural and national affiliations – will be further highlighted with the question “How and what did you

become?" (Anthias 2002). In this way I follow the ideas of Anthias in her approach to analysing belonging and her method of narration of location. According to Anthias, the notion of identity is not capable of fully capturing the narrated sense of personal belonging and identity (*ibid.*). Moreover, identity from this perspective is a creative search for meaning and for oneself. The concept of identity is shaped as a process and is not merely a description of a person. With this approach, it is possible to capture key life events and episodes that have shaped individuals, to allow inconsistencies (which in fact are not!) in self-perceptions, movable identities and identity pluralization.

Below I first present the conceptual framework, the research design and methodology, and finally analysis of the narratives of "second-generation migrant" women from former Yugoslavia born in Slovenia. Within the latter, three closely linked, intertwining and yet separate issues will be examined: (1) the problematic nature of monoethnic affiliations; (2) the fact that ethnic boundaries do not necessarily coincide with cultural ones; and (3) the complexity of self-perception processes and mixed identity.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In this section I present some concepts and theoretical premises that are used as the framework of our research and interpretation of the results, rather than an extensive literature review on ethnicity and ethnic/cultural identity.

Ethnicity as such is, as noted by Anthias (2002), a highly contested term, sometimes denoting a sense of belonging to an ethnic group and sometimes meaning shared cultural elements. In this paper I clearly separate ethnicity from culture, and ethnic identity from cultural identity. I understand ethnic identity as national identity and cultural identity as identity that entails key cultural elements, such as language, religion, dietary habits, dress codes – in other words, material culture and cultural values in their broadest sense. Consequently, and in accordance with Fredrik Barth (1970, 1996), ethnic and cultural identity do not necessarily coincide. Thus, intercultural differences are not crucial for establishing an ethnic identity. Ethnicity and ethnic identity (as an individual and group characteristic) are constructed independently of culture, language, religion, ancestry, regionality and other materialized signs of culture. The location and meaning of ethnic boundaries are subject to constant "negotiation, revision and revitalization both by members themselves and by external observers" (Nagel 1994: 153).

Identity is also a highly disputed concept, especially in relation to ethnic/cultural identity. Some authors (Brubaker, Cooper 2000; Anthias 2002; Pajnik 2011) explore scepticism in the heuristic and analytical value of identity. Moreover, "identity is too ambiguous, too torn between 'hard' and 'soft' meanings, essentialist connotations and constructivist qualifiers, to serve well the demands of social analysis" (Brubaker,

Cooper 2000: 2). In addition, this is a way of reintroducing essentialism through the back door, and shifting attention away from context, meaning and practice (ibid.). In order at least to partially circumvent the negative aspects of the “identity concept”, in this analysis I will move away from perceiving identity as an “existing state” and focus on the process of shaping and transforming identity and feelings of belonging.

Although I am advocating a social constructionist approach to identity, I also agree that in the same way that social constructionists criticized essentialist frameworks in the study of identity formation, postmodern theorists have been rightfully critical of social constructionists for lacking a thorough analysis of variations within categories of identity such as race, class and gender (García 2004). From this perspective, social constructionists do not address the dynamic of differences and a “matrix of domination” to explain the structural and ideological conditions that play a contributing role in ethnic identity construction (Zinn & Thornton Dill in García 2004: 25). To analyse the process of identity formation and construction, I will, as suggested by García (ibid.), use the concept of a “palimpsest of identity” in viewing the social constructionist perspective through a postmodern lens.

Even if we advocate a social constructivist and post-structuralist view of identity as situational, variable, adaptable and fluid (Giddens 1991; Beck 1992; Brubaker, Cooper 2000), as well as the views of authors of hybridized (Bhabha 1990, 1996), transcultural (Welsch 1995) and mixed ethnic identities (Sedmak 2011b; Sedmak, Zadel 2015), according to which we are all more or less culturally and ethnically mixed, at the same time we must not overlook the essentialism and essentialist practices that are true and real in their consequences in the practices of everyday life (Brubaker, Cooper 2000; Pajnik 2011). Here we must be especially aware, as highlighted by Pajnik (2011), of unequal power relations and structural relations in society which influence ethnic self-identification. Your self-perception (e.g. as Slovenian) can thus easily parallel the perception of broader society or the legislative system and the official census, which label you as a “migrant” and “non-Slovenian”. In addition, as Brubaker & Cooper (2000) remind us, there is a discrepancy between theory and practice. Speaking to ordinary people about their identity reveals that the practice of essentialism is very real, and is perpetuated both by in-group and out-group members.

In addition, because the matter is even more complex, we must not ignore the fact that cultural identity, as Western thought understands it, is actually a modern social construct created by the formation of nation states. Homogenous and unambiguous cultural identity must thus be seen as a fiction that requires constant reification from the ideological mechanisms of nation states (Verdery 1996; Zadel 2016). The ideology of nationalism (Goldberg 1995; Gellner 2008) thus potentiates the habit of thinking and identifying monoculturally and does not reflect or even recognize an individual’s multiculturalism and transculturalism.

## RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This paper is based on data derived from in-depth life-story interviews of 11 women – descendants of immigrants from the territory of former Yugoslavia, aged between 21 and 38, whose parents moved to Slovenia from Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro. All of them were born in Slovenia and have lived there all their lives. Seven of them have children (six of them have two and one has three children). All of them are married or live with their partners except three who were single at the time of the research. Their family socio-economic backgrounds are very similar: their parents had a low level of education and were low-skilled and manual workers. However, their educational levels, professions and present socio-economic statuses differ: two of them finished primary school, three secondary school, one gymnasium and five university. Regarding religion, three informants declared as practicing Muslims, two as Orthodox, one as Catholic and five as non-religious. The collection of the narratives took place from May 2014 to October 2016. The interviews lasted between two and three-and-a-half hours, and the conversations were (with the consent of the informants) recorded. Prior to the recording, approximately one-hour long informal conversations were held with the informants, during which an atmosphere of mutual trust and cooperation was established. The interviews were conducted in different locations, mostly informal and outdoor, but some informants chose indoor locations. Seven interviews were repeated to clarify or explore some topics in greater depth. The criteria for selection of informants were the fact that they were "second-generation immigrants" from former Yugoslavia, female, and of the right age – I focused on the cohort of young women of the age when they start a family, finish education or are working (the phase of independent, adult and active life). I expected that this age limitation would allow us to focus more easily on the core issue of the identity formation process, so that other determinants correlated with age and different life courses connected with age differences would not interfere. The recruitment of informants took place through social networks: I was already personally acquainted with six of the women, although not necessarily very well, and the other five women were introduced to me by friends, co-workers and neighbours.

The data collection method is a combination of autobiographical story (Bertaux 1981) and narration of location (Anthias 2002). The essence of the latter is the "capture of identity" through the narrative – capturing a story about how we position ourselves in terms of social categories of ethnicity, gender, class, etc. at a specific time and in a specific space. The story I was looking for is the story of how and with whom we identify, including wider social practices and their interpretation. The collected narratives are therefore the stories of creative searching for meaning and self. The self-narrative always includes a narrative about others, and therefore a narrative about social interactions and how they influence the building of identity. The informants' stories always included a wider social context and different levels

of information, from socio-historical to intimate, personal and family narratives. The story of location, positioning and attitude towards affiliation is always a story of dislocation and change and putting down roots. This is even more important in studying the effects of migration on changes of (ethnic, cultural) identities, since migration always means relocation and dislocation at multiple levels: personal, cultural, structural. The method places a particular focus on the spatial and contextual dimensions, and sees the process of identity building, and not identity, as an individual's property. The question "Who are you?" is replaced by the question "How and what did you become?"

The concept of identity is formed as a process and no longer as a person's description. This methodological approach was also used in Slovenia by Pajnik (2011) while researching the identity issues of first-generation immigrants.<sup>1</sup>

## THE PROCESS OF IDENTITY FORMATION

This section discusses the narratives of female descendants of immigrants whose parents came to Slovenia from other republics of former Yugoslavia. The focus will be placed on the following questions, mentioned in introduction, which explore the fluid, sometimes even "split" status, the complexity of the identity formation process and the existence of mixed cultural identities of "second-generation female migrants". These questions are: (1) the problematic nature of monoethnic affiliations; (2) the fact that ethnic boundaries do not necessarily coincide with cultural ones; and (3) the complexity of self-perception processes. My final remark goes to the denial of the assumption of the unproblematic ethnic assimilation into the dominant culture of the environment into which the "second-generation migrants" were born and in which they underwent formal and institutional socialization through educational and other systems. Furthermore, in analysing the self-perception process and ethnic affiliation, the intersection of gender, religion and ethnicity must be considered.

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1 The interviews were partially structured: all informants were asked about personal and general information such as age, education, occupation, marital status, their family of origin and the family they live in today, children, the language of communication, etc. Then the conversations were less structured and took the path chosen by the informants themselves. They talked about the topics they considered important, emphasizing and analyzing the events that had special meaning for them, while I tried to influence the course and the content of the conversation as little as possible. The discussions covered the topics of growing up, education, employment, family formation and, in this context, the themes of identification, attitudes towards religion, the culture of their parents, ethnicity, the state, citizenship and other topics addressed in the article.

## The problematic nature of monoethnic identifications

The collected life stories expose the problem of simple and monoethnic identifications. The problem of a monoethnic affiliation, either to the ethnicity of their parents or that of the majority ethnic group (i.e. being Slovenian), emerges in several different ways.

For instance, in an attempt at self-determination and in the quest for an answer to the question "How [i.e. what ethnicity] would you declare yourself?", the narratives reveal a phenomenon that can be referred to as fluidity of ethnic identity. The term "fluidity" is used here to denote the moving of a person from one identity to another and back again, which can occur several times, take multiple directions and adopt varying levels of intensity during different periods of one's life. This fluidity also exposes how problematic it is to attempt to capture someone's identity with the simple question "Who are you?" In addition, it reminds us that Anthias' method is more appropriate, focusing more on the process than the "final" result. The fluidity of ethnic identity and the impossibility of declaring simply and monoethnically can be presented through the story of M, aged 38, a descendant of Bosniak parents:

I can't be Slovenian. I'm actually Muslim. This means – Bosniak. [...]. I always spoke Slovene to my mother because my mother wanted us to stick to "this system" because we are here [in Slovenia] [...] But when I was little, I wanted to be Slovenian, I felt Slovenian. I have a house here, my home's here, I was born here.

Together with the fluidity of her ethnic identity through time, M's narration also reveals her own and her mother's wish to be "Slovenian". However, the environment constantly reminded her of her different ethnic origin and the fact that her parents are Bosniak, which inhibited her from simply adopting the identity of being "Slovenian". Her narrative expresses the continual process of bargaining between two identities, two belongings: Bosniak and Slovenian. During one period of her life, M felt more Slovenian than Bosniak. This is especially true of her early childhood, when she felt "a part of the environment", "the same as other children"; she spoke Slovene and "used to live as Slovenes do". She belonged to the Slovenian ethnic community. But later the ethnic prejudice and stereotypes present in her living environment (her peers teasing her for the non-Slovenian names of her parents, insinuation of bad body odour for being Bosniak, etc.) "reminded" her of her not being Slovenian. M turned to her Bosniak ethnic identity as an act of rebellion against the negative attitude of other children, but also as an act of despair because she was not accepted as Slovenian, even if she felt so. She largely adopted a Bosniak identity after marrying a first-generation Bosniak migrant who does not speak Slovene and is a practicing Muslim, which seems to be an important factor in revitalizing a Bosniak ethnic identity (more about this in the following section). However, she does emphasize that she is a "tourist" when visiting Bosnia. What M's case also reveals is the above-mentioned

power of everyday present essentialism. Ordinary people do feel and massively perceive each other in terms of essentialist ethnic categories. Why this is the case will be explored later in this section.

A second example that exposes the problematic nature of singular, monoethnic self-perception among female descendants of immigrants is the answer “I don’t know” when asked to give an explicit answer to the question “Who are you? Are you Slovenian or Croatian? Are you Bosniak or Slovenian?” The answer “I don’t know” can, however, also apply to the unsuccessful attempt to check one’s ethnic identity in a moment as a fixed and unchangeable category and not as a process and a changeable variable.

This is clearly shown by the narrative of A, aged 32, daughter of Bosniak parents who moved to Slovenia in the late 1970s for economic reasons. A’s reply to the question “Who are you?”, referring to ethnic identity, was “I don’t know. I truly don’t know.” On a different occasion she said, “I’m mixed” and “My mother tongues are Slovene and Bosnian”. An interesting aspect that should be considered is her self-perception as bilingual, given her exclusive use of the Bosnian language in her communication with her mother and father since birth. Nevertheless, she perceives herself as bilingual and a bearer of two mother tongues. She feels both languages to be “hers” and could not choose one over the other. The majority of linguistic and ethnic studies automatically define the mother tongue as the language that a child has learned and used in their earliest years with their mother, father or caretaker(s). However, I believe that the phenomenological and subjective, self-defining approach should be followed. Despite being ethnically mixed and incapable of monoethnic self-perception, A displays a revitalization of her Muslim ethnic identity (similar to M) after her marriage to a Bosniak, a Muslim from Bosnia, whom she met in Bosnia and who moved to Slovenia to be with her. They have two sons together.

The narratives of the respondents reveal the general problem of articulating one’s mixedness. Despite their clear awareness of belonging to different cultures and ethnic groups, they find it difficult to express this in words that would adequately describe their situation. How, then, can the inability to declare oneself to be monoethnic, and the simultaneous inability to declare oneself to be ethnically mixed, be explained? Part of the answer lies in the fact that we live in a system of established modern nation states, which required a clear equation between the nation, culture and the state. Because of specific socio-historical and political processes (the emergence of nation states), Europeans have internalized the discourse of nationalist ideology that has prevailed in politics, media and science as well as in everyday life. We are used to thinking in terms of monoethnic and exclusive ethnic affiliations within the boundaries of our (home)lands, cultures and languages. We are facing the ideological “dictatorship” of monoethnic affiliation. The logic of exclusive, monoethnic definitions gained ground through official censuses, statistical records, demographics and school registers. Given that most population censuses and other statistics do not allow for the possibility of being dual or multiple, or have not done



so until recently, exclusiveness is perceived as the norm (Sedmak, Zadel 2015; Gornik 2018). If the existence of nation states presents a macro social reason, the micro-level explanation stemming from the results of my study explaining the difficulty of plural ethnic identification by "second-generation migrant" women derives from everyday nationalism. They cannot be (also) Slovenian, because their surroundings are constantly reminding them that they are not (peers who tease them, family who want them to not forget their origin). Furthermore, the micro reasons are recharged through the above-mentioned macro social processes. Finally, the interviewees did not have many opportunities to encounter appropriate terminology for their "mixed identity" and life experiences that would characterize their "mixture" as "normal".

### The issue of state, ethnic and cultural boundaries

This section will explore the relationship between ethnicity, culture and state. State identity is understood here as deriving from citizenship, the most objectively measurable identity. Nevertheless, one might not feel proud of the state or not have a positive attitude towards the state despite being a formal member of that state. Ethnic identity is understood as national identity (the term "nationality" would generally be used in the territory of the former Yugoslavia and is used instead of/as a synonym for "ethnicity"). On the other hand, cultural identity is understood as an identity that entails key cultural elements such as language, religion, values, etc.

The answers to the research questions presented above are theoretically based on the central idea of anthropologist Fredrik Barth (1970, 1996) as presented in his *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*. His work represents the turning point from the (until that time) static approach to the research of ethnicity to an interactionist approach, emphasizing the importance of boundaries and preservation of group boundaries. According to Barth, a common (homogeneous) culture is a result of a long-term process and not a primordial characteristic of groups *per se*. Inter-group cultural variations are in fact a consequence of and not a cause of group boundaries. It is the production and reproduction of differences in relation to external others that is the very essence of the creation of internal similarities among us. Thus, an ethnic group is primarily a form of social organization in which the crucial role is played by the subjective self-perception of group members as members of a specific ethnic identity. An ethnic group has to be recognized as such from the inside – by the members of this group – and from the outside – by others. The key element in this respect is boundaries that are, however, variable and changing. Therefore, we can experience changes of group culture without changing ethnic boundaries. Ethnic groups can become culturally closer while ethnic boundaries become stronger. This means that cultural variety is not essential until it is recognized as such by the ethnic groups in contact. It is the intensity of contact among groups that defines an ethnic community; in fact, isolated ethnic communities are the least ethnically self-aware (Eriksen 1993).

The narratives provided in the study corroborate the fact that cultural and ethnic identities do not necessarily coincide, as they do not display any congruence between ethnic and cultural identities. All respondents defined their state identity to be Slovenian (they have been citizens of Slovenia since birth), but the relationship between cultural and ethnic affiliation seems to be more complex.

N, aged 28, daughter of Orthodox Serbs, self-identifies as being Slovenian in terms of state identity but “Orthodox” (i.e. of Orthodox Christian religion) by culture, and says that her mother tongue is Serbo-Croatian but she is Slovenian by ethnicity. She stated that among all these identities (state, ethnic/national and cultural), the one that defines her most is cultural identity, more specifically religious identity. She perceives herself primarily as being “Orthodox”.

The incongruence between ethnic and cultural (and state) identities adopts a different pattern with M, aged 38, and A, aged 32, who define their ethnic identity as Muslim. M’s ethnic identity is Muslim with a strong religious component, while she says that her mother tongue is Slovene (element of cultural affiliation). This is yet another case of incongruence between cultural and ethnic boundaries. A’s words confirm that she is incapable of self-perception in terms of ethnic identity. The answer she gives to the question “How would you declare ethnically?” is “I don’t know, I really don’t know. I should be Muslim because my parents are Muslim but ...” When asked about her mother tongue she defines herself as being bilingual, whereas in terms of religion she is Muslim.

Likewise, the respondents whose parents came from Croatia – the nation that is culturally closest to Slovenia (similar languages, same religion, etc.) – do not exhibit congruence between ethnic and cultural identities. L, aged 29, has been using Slovene to communicate with her mother since birth, because her mother came to Slovenia as a child and is linguistically assimilated. In terms of culture she is not different from her Slovenian peers in any way (her mother tongue is Slovene; her values, dietary habits, dress codes and so forth are “Slovenian”). Nevertheless, her self-perception of her ethnicity is Croatian, emphasizing this to be an entirely personal decision that she is unable to explain rationally.

Yes, OK, language is one of the indicators of identity but it’s not the only one. My father and my mother always said we’re Croatian, when there was some political tension, but also in general, when we spoke of cultural things. I feel I’m Croatian, yes. I was probably brought up a little this way, it’s self-evident, I can’t say that I’m Slovenian, not at all!

The narrative of B, the 21-year-old daughter of Croatian immigrants, highlights another problem regarding any objective measurement of linguistic and cultural identity.

In her case, we can observe a split between her self-declared "mother tongue"<sup>2</sup> and the language that she actually uses in all speech situations, including conversations in the personal domain (within the family circle, with her siblings and parents). In B's words, "Blood is not water. I'm Croatian. My mother tongue is Croatian." Therefore, we can assume that both her ethnic and cultural identities are Croatian. B is a practicing Catholic and her other cultural elements do not significantly differ from "Slovenian" ones. A doubt about her Croatian cultural identity is nevertheless instilled by her use of Slovene when communicating with her siblings as well as parents – therefore in her personal domain. When can one's mother tongue or first language be defined as such? Is it the language that one learned to speak first? Is it in fact the language of one's mother? Is it the language that one perceives to be one's mother tongue (by self-definition) despite not using it with one's parents or even in one's private domain, when one could?

These questions provide the grounds for a discussion of differences between passive and active (ethnic and cultural) identity, and the differences in relation to one's own ethnic (cultural) community: from a passive to an active, and from a cognitive to an emotional and activity-based attitude (Mikolič 2004, 2010). Thus, ethnic identity is a synthesis of affiliation and awareness, where affiliation "merely" denotes one's personal characteristics while awareness refers to a conscious and free definition to belong (or the activity-based component). According to Mikolič: "Just as national awareness is an upgrade of ethnic or national affiliation, an upgrade of citizenship is loyalty to a state that entails an active attitude of an individual" (2004: 49). If these theoretical premises are applied to the narratives of the respondents, B's case might indicate a differentiation between a passive and an active stance or the difference between affiliation and awareness: B belongs to the Croatian ethnicity and her mother tongue is (passively) Croatian. She fosters an awareness of identity in relation to her Croatian ethnic identity, which is the activity-based component. However, this cannot be observed in relation to the Croatian language where another language (Slovene) is in active use instead, which is an example of the split between the principal and the actual "first" language.

The overlapping between cultural and ethnic boundaries was presented above; what is the role of state boundaries and state identity in this regard? The narrations of all of the informants clearly expressed the feeling of belonging to the Slovenian state and a feeling of awareness as a citizen. All the informants (predictably) perceive the Slovenian state to be their home and they do not want to move anywhere else, regardless of their cultural and ethnic affiliation. In other words, ethnic and cultural affiliation

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2 In the professional and academic linguistics community the term "first language" seems to be prevailing over the term "mother tongue". The "first language" refers to the language that speakers use in their everyday communication or accept as the "first language" of their communication in the personal or public domain irrespective of their actual "mother tongue" – the first language that they acquired. Moreover, the use of the term "mother tongue" is being discontinued because the mother may not be the transmitter of the "first" language to a child despite this most often being the case.

does not (necessarily) coincide with civic awareness, and to be of another culture or ethnicity does not mean necessarily a lack of loyalty to the (Slovenian) state.

### The complexity of self-perception processes and the identity bricolage

Based on what has been presented above, we can now turn to our next issue: the mixed identities of female descendants of immigrants whose parents moved to Slovenia from other territories of former Yugoslavia. Although mixed identity was already mentioned in first two sections, this topic will be further developed below.

Mixed, compound, hybrid, transcultural, etc. identities have been subjected to extensive research.<sup>3</sup> Mixed identities have been examined within postcolonial studies, whose representative Homi Bhabha speaks of “hybrid identities” (1990, 1996). The authors of mixed-race policies talk about “mixed races” (Ali 2011; Sundstrom 2001), Welsch (1995) speaks of “transcultural identities” (see also Eigartaigh, Berg 2010), while Milharčič Hladnik (2011, 2015) uses the term “compound” and “hyphenated” identities to describe identity mixing, and so forth.

What these approaches have in common is advocacy for the right to be mixed, dual or multiple, to be bilingual or plurilingual, to be bicultural or pluricultural, and to be complex. In addition, they share a common rebellion against the dictatorship of monolithic perceptions.

Although the discussion regarding mixed identities usually refers to children born of mixed marriages (Breger, Hill 1998; Sedmak 2001; Sedmak, Zadel 2015), mixed identities can also be observed among other population categories – for instance, migrants (Eigartaigh, Berg 2010) or traditional minorities (Sedmak 2009, 2011a, 2011b; Sedmak, Medarič 2014; Sedmak, Zadel 2015). The Anglo-Saxon world is traditionally more concerned with “racial” mixedness, whereas recently research has also turned to ethnic and cultural mixedness (Edwards et al. 2012), which prevails in eastern and central European countries.

The narratives of our informants clearly reveal the mixedness of their identities or, in Bhabha’s words (1990), the “third space” or “intermediate space” that hybrid identities embody (see also Jurič Pahor 2012, 2014). Bhabha views the third space as a metaphor for the space of cultural contact in which new (hybrid) identities are born through the processes of cultural hybridization and transculturation. (Cultural) identity is understood as an unstable space or unresolved question between several intersecting discourses. Identity is not static or unchangeable but can be processual and evolving (Bhabha 1990). Hybridization does not only mean simple mixing (a person is partly a member of one culture and partly a member of another) but is rather an expression of the selective appropriation of meanings whereby different parts

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3 Mixed and hybrid identities in Slovenia have been addressed by following authors: Jeffs 2007, Šumi 2000, Janko Spreizer 2009, 2011, Milharčič Hladnik 2011, 2015, Jurič Pahor, 2012, 2014, Sedmak 2009a, 2009b, 20011, 2015, Pajnik 2011, Vižintin 2015, Zadel 2016.

of the identity combine with others in relation to different social power relations. Hybridity is a process in which identities do not change separately on their own. Instead, elements of different cultures combine to create a different culture. The identity of the subject is or can be similar to the previous one but is not entirely the same. In this process we must, as Bhabha stresses, take into account the importance of relations of social power. And the one who has social power has the power of labeling. M, aged 38, the daughter of Muslim parents, was confronted with the original culture of her parents and, last but not least, with personal mixedness because of the negative response of classmates of the dominant culture.

I saw that I was different in the fifth grade. The teacher asked us to say the names of our parents aloud. My parents are E and D [typical Muslim names]. Everybody laughed and since then they started calling me D [her father's name] and not M [her actual name] [...] My mother and father did not know how to protect me. (M, aged 38)

I "found out" that I'm not Slovenian at school when, while fighting, the girls in my class would say "go back to Bosnia". But I didn't understand why [...] and "Bosnian louse" and "your mother dresses like a Gypsy". (G, aged 32)

I actually made the decision that I'd learn to speak Slovene so nobody would notice that I'm not Slovenian. [U speaks standard Slovene]. But they said they could see [physically] that I'm not Slovenian. (U, aged 26)

All of the narratives indicate the mixed or hybrid identities of the respondents. Their mixed identities may be explicitly expressed and reflected to a greater or lesser degree. All the women who were interviewed became aware of the cultural/ethnic background of their parents and their consequent mixedness in early childhood. Mostly, women whose parents are Muslim experienced, as children, negative and intolerant attitudes from some classmates and peers. They believed this to be because of their obviously different names and a general prejudice towards "Bosnians" and not because of their religion, which was not really discussed. In early adulthood, they accepted their ethnic and cultural mixedness as a fact, and they did not address issues of belonging unless they were forced to. The issue of ethnic and cultural (mixed) identity is again subject to re-evaluation at the time of marriage and the birth of children. Those who were in relationships with Slovenes reinforced the Slovenian part of their identity, whereas those who married Muslims from Bosnia extensively revitalized their parents' culture and ethnicity. However, in both cases the self-perceived cultural and ethnic mixedness remains recognized.

I speak Slovene and Bosnian, both are my mother tongues. With my parents in Bosnian, with my children in Bosnian and Slovene because my husband is from Bosnia and couldn't speak Slovene when he came to Slovenia. [...] I became Muslim after

getting married, I like my religion but I drink alcohol and eat pork. [...] I know that at home, I didn't have the same culture as Slovenes. I couldn't go with my friends to the seaside; we don't do this, my mother said. [...] I make pita and burek [typical Bosnian dishes] at home and prepare Slovenian food, too, mixed. (A, aged 32)

I'm mixed, a Croat who speaks Slovene and is like a Slovene [laughter]. (L, aged 30)

I feel one and the other, I speak Slovene at home, so I'm neither this nor that, I take care that my children pray to God [the respondent is Muslim], a lot of it about is food, it's different, but I cook both, I make sure my children attend a Muslim folk dance group, I don't force them to go to religion class if they don't want to. What is important is who your friends are, the society that's around you. If you're in a more religious, Muslim, society, you're more there [...]. Most of this is about feelings, I feel good here in Slovenia, I feel good when I'm making pita. (M, aged 38)

The preservation of the ethnic identity of the parents is frequently the parents' explicit wish:

Whether you want to or not, you sometimes have to [practice the parents' culture of origin through religion], because the parents are like that. (M, aged 38)

Yes, my mother wanted me to marry someone from our religion, a Muslim. She thought it'd be easier for me that way. [...] when I was younger and I wanted to go to the seaside with my female friends, I couldn't. Mother said we don't do this. It was different with my brother. He could. (G, aged 32)

Finally, from the collected narratives we can see both the mixed cultural and ethnic identities in the case of "second-generation migrant" women, and the fact that even a hybrid identity or a "third space" is not a static category but rather changeable, processual, contextual and situational. The mixed identities of "second-generation migrant" women differ through time, are different in childhood and in adult life, or after marriage. They are influenced by external socio-political circumstances, such as the war in the Balkans, which often revitalized one part of mixed identity, but did not diminish the mixedness.

To conclude, the transcultural, hybrid or mixed identities of "second-generation migrant" women are a fact and a reality that exist without internal recognition or external confirmation.

## CONCLUSION: LIVING IN THE THIRD SPACE

In trying to understand the process of cultural and ethnic identity formation and belonging in the case of female descendants of migrants from former Yugoslavia, I also tried to reflect on what the meaning of gender, socio-economic status and religion has in this regard, using Zinn and Thornton's "matrix of domination" to explain the structural and ideological conditions that play a role in ethnic identity construction (García 2004: 25).

In the interviews, the informants noted various differences related to gender. Although other studies (e.g. Levitt, Waters 2002) state that the expectations for the intergenerational transmission of cultural elements are higher in relation to male offspring, my case study does not confirm this. The narration of mainly daughters of Muslim parents from Bosnia show the expectations of parents that they will act in accordance with their culture of origin and also marry Muslims, which was not required in the case of their brothers. Gender differences can also be observed in the case where husbands from Bosnia (in three cases) expected Slovene women to adapt to their culture, language, diet, etc. These expectations must be understood in relation to the patriarchal order and traditional gender roles rather than intercultural differences as such. In my study, differences regarding socio-economic status or educational level were not considered important in terms of cultural/ethnic identity formation. However, religion (Muslim and Orthodox) has been highlighted as an important element of self-perception and identity in many places.

In conclusion, I would like to explore some other elements that are important for understanding the dynamics and process of (mixed) cultural and ethnic identity formation and belonging in the case of "second-generation migrant" women. First, the collected narratives reject the assumption of unproblematic cultural and ethnic assimilation of "second-generation migrants". On the contrary, the parents' heritage and culture are still very present and alive in the self-perceived identity of "second-generation migrant" women. As observed also by García (2004: 22) in research among "second-generation" Mexican-American women, "the second generation do not become Americans by eliminating immigrant traces". However, the question that this raises is whether we are confronted with a cultural identity mixedness in the form of a third space which is liberating, adaptable and flexible, or a third space in which we are caught in between. Are we witnessing fluid identities or being stuck between identities? At least in the case of those women who were either subjected to negative, intolerant and nationalistic attitudes in childhood because of being the "wrong culture" or subjected to the explicit expectations of their family of origin to follow certain cultural patterns and practices, some feelings of being "captured" and "stuck in between the two realities of everyday life" (Berger, Luckmann 1988) can be observed. In both cases it is the (negative) response of the others – either peer group or family – that matters: the response that "they are not and cannot be Slovenes". They are not Slovene because they have the wrong surname, they

pronounce Slovenian words differently, or their parents have the wrong first names. At the same time, we noticed an ambivalent attitude of their families: on the one hand, their daughters are encouraged to learn the Slovenian language (including by discontinuing the use of their language themselves and attempting to use Slovene in communication with their daughters) in order to assimilate into Slovenian society more easily. This, however, is accompanied by the explicit wish of the parents for their daughters to marry one of “their own” because they would have “fewer problems” or, in other words, conscious reminders of the family’s cultural origins. This is particularly explicit in Muslim families. Their narratives demonstrate that it is exclusively women who are encouraged to “marry a Muslim” and live in accordance with Muslim norms, whereas their brothers have significantly more freedom to live in accordance with the expectations of the Slovenian environment as far as, for instance, dating is concerned. Moreover, the narratives reveal that daughters of immigrants are willing to follow their families’ wishes, which are retrospectively evaluated as well-meant and “right”. One of the respondents, who refused to be subjected to the will of her (Muslim) father regarding (in)appropriate behaviour, left home at the age of 18 and broke off all contact with her family for two years.

Another aspect exposing the in-between position of female descendants of immigrants in this case study is feelings of uprootedness and incomplete belonging to either one or the other cultural environment, which results in searching for one’s identity and feelings of insecurity and lack of acceptance. However, a key element that contributes to these (mainly negative) feelings is the inferior social status frequently attributed to immigrants from territories of former Yugoslavia by Slovenes (Medvešek 2007). In this regard, “a matrix of domination” (García 2004) must be considered as an explanatory factor, as some other studies have shown that cultural mixedness in the case of women of Italian-Slovenian origin is reflected in pride and, moreover, feelings of superiority (Sedmak 2005, 2009, 2011a, 2011b; Sedmak, Medarić 2014). As the social status of the Italian minority in the local community is, for historical reasons, perceived to be high in comparison with other minority (immigrant) ethnic groups and even in relation to the ethnic majority (i.e. Slovenes), consequently the children of mixed marriages between Italians and Slovenes, who declare themselves to be mixed, perceive their own mixedness as a privilege (Sedmak 2009). However, we must be very careful not to generalize this finding too easily, as I believe that other factors such as education and socio-economic status are important in this regard.



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## POVZETEK

### IDENTITETE IN PRIPADNOSTI »DRUGE GENERACIJE MIGRANTK«

Mateja SEDMAK

Članek obravnava proces oblikovanja etničnih in kulturnih identitet ter pripadnosti na primeru »migrantk druge generacije« iz nekdanje Jugoslavije v Sloveniji in naslavlja tri tesno povezane, pa vendar ločene teme, in sicer: (1) problematičnost monoetničnega opredeljevanja, (2) dejstvo, da etnične meje nujno ne sovpadajo s kulturnimi in (3) kompleksnost samoopredelitvenega procesa ter identitetno mešanost. Članek zanika predpostavko o kulturni in etnični asimilaciji »migrantk druge generacije« in poudari obstoj hibridnih in mešanih kulturnih identitet, ki pa niso statične, temveč spremenljive in situacijske. S stališča procesa identitetnih samoopredeljevanj se med drugim kot pomembni izpostavijo spol, religija in vpliv širšega okolja (vrstniške skupina in izvorne družine), pa tudi (religija in etničnost) partnerja/ moža. Dalje, pripovedi »migrantk druge generacije« izpričujejo nesovpadanje kulturnih in etničnih meja oz. kulturne in etnične identitete ter neprekrivnost državljske zavesti in etnične ter kulturne pripadnosti. »Vmesni« identitetni položaj »migrantk druge generacije« je razviden tako v terminologiji in teoriji kot empirični raziskavi.