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Portraits of Pain and Promise: A Photographic Study of Bosnian Youth

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Au début des années 90, la guerre a éclaté en Bosnie-Herzégovine, forçant un grand nombre de personnes à fuir leur village et leur pays et à abandonner leur culture et tout ce qui leur était familier. Le conflit et le déracinement qui ont résulté de cette guerre ont mis fin de façon dramatique à la vie tranquille de ces enfants, que l'on qualifie souvent « d'innocentes victimes ». Bien que plusieurs ont pu s'échapper avec leur famille et s'installer dans des lieux plus paisibles, il existe de nombreuses preuves à l'effet que les jeunes réfugiés sont transformés à tout jamais à la suite d'une guerre et que la souffrance causée par les conflits ne prend pas fin lorsque la lutte armée est terminée. Cet article présente les résultats d'une étude menée auprès de sept enfants bosniens âgés de 11 à 14 ans, venus au Canada comme réfugiés au cours des années 90. Les défis qu'ont dû relever ce groupe et leurs luttes quotidiennes ont été explorés à l'aide d'une méthode de recherche novatrice, la nouvelle photographique. Le second objectif de l'étude consistait à évaluer les mérites et les limites de la nouvelle photographique comme méthode pouvant capter le point de vue et les sentiments des enfants. Des caméras jetables ont été remises aux participants, lesquels devaient prendre des photos de gens, de lieux et d'événements importants. L'interprétation des photographies a été faite par le biais d'un processus de dialogique appelé par les chercheurs *phototalk*. Les résultats ont révélé que ces enfants étaient dotés de nombreuses forces mais qu'ils continuaient aussi à lutter pour comprendre les événements qui ont transformé leur vie de façon si marquante. Les résultats et les implications en ce qui a trait aux infirmières font l'objet de discussions.

In the early 1990s, war erupted in Bosnia and Herzegovina, forcing large numbers of people to flee their homes and country, abandoning their culture and all that was familiar to them. For the children, often described as war's "innocent victims," the conflict and subsequent uprooting represented a dramatic end to their peaceful lives. Although many were fortunate enough to escape with their families and resettle amid more peaceful circumstances, there is considerable evidence that refugee youth are forever changed by their exposure to war and that the pain of war does not end when the fighting is over.

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This paper presents the results of a study with 7 Bosnian children, aged 11–14, who came to Canada as refugees during the 1990s. The everyday challenges and struggles faced by this group were explored using an innovative research method called photo novella. A secondary purpose of the research was to evaluate the merits and limitations of photo novella as a method for capturing children's perspectives and feelings. Participants were given disposable cameras and asked to take pictures of important people, places, and events. The meaning of the photographs was then explored through a dialogic process the researchers call phototalk. The findings revealed that while these children had many strengths, they continued to struggle to understand the events that so profoundly changed their lives. The results and the implications for nurses are discussed.

For Those Who Work To Heal

Not only the wounded
the traumatized,
but you
who work to heal them
relive the war
like miners
going deeper in
each day
crawling along
the tunnel floor
chipping
at the clay and rock
to find the speck of coal or gold
that might reflect
some Light

From *New Poems for Bosnia*
R. Menzies, 1998

During the early part of the 1990s, war erupted in Bosnia and Herzegovina, forcing large numbers of people to flee their homes and country, abandoning a culture they loved and all that was familiar to them. For the children, often described as war's "innocent victims," the conflict and subsequent uprooting represented a profound and dramatic end to their peaceful lives. The order and predictability that had characterized their everyday world were replaced by chaos, killings, fear, and uncertainty. Classmates and neighbours who had been considered friends were suddenly seen as enemies, resulting in feelings of betrayal and an enormous sense of confusion (Berman, 1999a, 1999b). Although many children were fortunate enough to escape with their families and resettle in more peaceful circumstances, geographically far removed from the terror of war, there is considerable evidence that

refugee youth are forever changed by their exposure to war and that the pain of war does not end when the fighting is over. As Menzies (1998) poignantly writes, "No war is ever over. The trauma, pain, loss and grief live on in the souls and bodies of all who survive the experience and must somehow be transformed if life is to continue with meaning and hope" (p. 6).

Research with Holocaust survivors lends support to the idea that the impact of human atrocity and suffering continues to be felt several generations after the event. According to Krell (1993), children who lived through the Holocaust were forced to learn how to stifle affect and embrace silence; to do otherwise would mean certain death. As adults, these survivors typically dampen their eagerness when enthusiastic and their grief when bereaved.

The effects of war on the lives of children are complex and not fully understood. Many of the problems that persist are subtle and often go unnoticed. As well, many child survivors demonstrate surprising resourcefulness and resilience, and go on to lead highly creative and productive lives (Krell, 1993; Werner, 1998). Although no longer living amid the terror of war, they may be haunted by their memories and experiences. The challenge for these young people is to find ways to make sense of events that in fact make little sense.

This paper will present the results of a recent study conducted with a sample of Bosnian children who came to Canada as refugees during the 1990s. The everyday challenges faced by this group were explored using an innovative research method called photo novella. A secondary purpose of this research was to evaluate the merits and limitations of photo novella in capturing children's perspectives of their lives.

Historical and Political Context: A Personal Reflection

In order to understand the experiences of refugee youth from Bosnia, one must consider the historical and political events that forced them to flee. The following description was provided by one of the authors of this paper, who escaped from Bosnia in 1993:

> *Before the war, Bosnia was a very happy place. We had security, family, neighbours, and friends who were constantly dropping in. Life changed quickly and irrevocably in the spring of 1992. Serbian artillery positions were set up on the hills around cities and shelling and shooting began. They took over many towns and started burning houses, killing, and raping. People watched their world fall apart. Understanding what was occurring was difficult, not only for children but for the adults as well. Children could no longer play outside or go to school. They could only*

comprehend that nothing was the same and nothing would ever be the same again.

In the process of genocide, carried out in the name of "ethnic cleansing," many Bosnian children, women, and the elderly became refugees. Muslims and Croats were driven from their homes by Serbian forces in a deliberate campaign of territorial conquest and ethnic purification. By 1995, the number of refugees reached 3.5 million (Fogelquist, 1996). Little international attention was paid to the tragedy that was unfolding until the world saw video footage of the appalling treatment of prisoners at Serbian-run camps.

Unfortunately, the arrival of Red Cross monitors and United Nations special missions did little to change the situation. While some prisoners were released from the most notorious camps, many others, including male children, were merely transferred to unknown locations or perhaps killed. The inability of the international peacekeeping agencies to protect us was most painfully apparent in the 1995 massacre of children in Tuzla. Despite its being declared a "Safe Area" by the UN, Karadzic's forces attacked the centre of the town where children had gathered. There they killed over 65 children, mostly between the ages of 18 and 25. In Srebrenica, also a "Safe Area," more than 6,000 people were killed. According to Selim Beslagic, mayor of Tuzla, the international community was not able or willing to protect Bosnian civilians (Beslagic, 1995).

Childhood was stolen from these children. They watched in disbelief as their lives were increasingly characterized by danger and fear. The confusion wrought by war is eloquently described by Sara, the heroine in Goran Stefanofski's (1996) play Sarajevo. *"I have never read so many papers in my life, or watched so much television or listened to the news so much, and I have never understood less."*

Review of the Literature

The study of refugee children and adolescents whose lives have been affected by war represents a relatively new, but growing, area of investigation. The findings of published studies are often inconclusive and contradictory. Several investigators have observed a wide range of physical and emotional problems among these children (Ajdukovic & Ajdukovic, 1993; Athey & Ahearn, 1991; Hjern, Angel, & Jeppson, 1998; Macksoud, Aber, & Cohn, 1996). Sack and colleagues (1995) studied the health of adolescent Cambodian refugees shortly after their arrival in the United States and again 3 and 10 years later. These researchers concluded that, although the Cambodian refugees were functioning relatively well in many areas of everyday life, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) persisted well beyond their departure from their war-torn homeland. In contrast, Rumbaut (1991, 2000) has

found little evidence of long-term harm and has observed that many refugee youth demonstrate remarkable resilience and motivation.

According to Beiser, Dion, Gotowiec, Hyman, and Vu (1995), it is likely that outcomes are mitigated by a variety of mediating variables and protective factors (i.e., individual, family, and environmental supports). In addition to these factors, Punamaki (1996) suggests that ideological commitment to the conflict may serve as a buffer against adverse outcomes. From this perspective, the capacity to rationalize and justify the war as a "necessary evil" helps to provide a purpose in life that may foster a positive sense of self. According to Kuterovac, Dyregrov, and Stuvland (1994), children and youth from the Gaza Strip and West Bank who actively participated in the Intifada (uprising) exhibited greater self-esteem than those who passively stood by.

Research with Bosnian youth is sparse. Further, most of the published studies were conducted with children and adolescents who remained in Bosnia throughout the war, or with those who resettled in refugee camps in Bosnia or Croatia, with or without other family members (Green & Kocijan-Hercigonja, 1998; Stein, Comer, Gardner, & Kelleher, 1999; Zivcic, 1993). Goldstein, Wampler, and Wise (1997) report that as many as 94% of their sample of 364 displaced Bosnian children aged 6 to 12 years met the diagnostic criteria for PTSD. Berk (1998) has published anecdotal data based on his work with a UNICEF program designed to increase resilience among Bosnian children. One result of this project was identification of several characteristics necessary for "healthy" outcomes. These included the presence of a social support network and a sense of connectedness to others, as well as the ability to psychologically distance oneself from the impact of suffering.

In one of the few studies of Bosnian adolescents living in North America, Weine and colleagues (1995) conducted psychiatric assessments and elicited trauma testimonies from 12 Bosnian youth who had recently resettled in the United States. Despite the fact that all had experienced trauma, displacement, and resettlement, and 25% were diagnosed with PTSD, participants were generally able to meet the usual challenges of adolescence. Weine et al. attribute the resilience of these young people to several factors: their lives before the outbreak of war were essentially "normal"; they were exposed to wartime trauma for relatively brief periods; they had not endured physical or sexual trauma; and most were living with their natural parents. Similar findings are reported by Berman (1999b), who notes that while participants experienced difficulty adjusting to life in Canada and most exhibited symptoms consistent with PTSD, the problems tended to subside over

time. Although negative attitudes were encountered, Bosnian children were not subjected to racism in the same manner or intensity as refugee youth who belonged to visible minority groups. While Bosnian children reported many painful memories associated with war, they also told of treasured moments before the war, as well as hopes and dreams for the future.

The Photograph as Research Instrument

Anthropologists have long recognized the scientific value of probing and understanding the visual world. According to Collier and Collier (1986), photographic ethnography can be used to document complex dimensions of social interaction and human behaviour, to reveal economic realities, to explore relationships between ecology and community, to examine the everyday patterns of people's lives and culture, and to elicit *emic*, or insider, perspectives. An early illustration of the potential merits of visual anthropology is Gregory Bateson and Margaret Mead's (1942) photographic study of Balinese culture. Thirty years later, Sorenson (1976) described the use of photographs to study child development in New Guinea. Similarly, Gesell (1945) used photographs in his groundbreaking research on child growth and development. The results of this work have profoundly influenced the field of child psychology.

In recent years, several nurse researchers have used photographs as a means of eliciting rich data about health that may not be accessible through more traditional approaches. Hagedorn (1994) used the method of hermeneutic photography in studying the family's lived experience of childhood chronic illness. According to Hagedorn, hermeneutic photography may be viewed as an aesthetic technique that allows the researcher access to unfamiliar or unknown aspects of human health experiences. Derived from hermeneutics and aesthetic philosophy, hermeneutic photography allows people to capture meaningful and symbolic life moments or events that can later be reflected upon, interpreted, and understood in new ways. In essence, the photograph constitutes an interpretive text that reveals the meaning of phenomena of interest. Just as the more familiar practice of audiotaping interviews provides verbal descriptions of experiences, photographs provide visual data. These data may be used in conjunction with other data or on their own as a means of recording visual content and experience.

Magilvy, Congdon, Nelson, and Craig (1992) describe the value of photographic approaches in exploring older adults' experiences with

home care. As part of a larger ethnographic study, these investigators took more than 400 pictures of various aspects of rural culture. Initially, members of the research team photographed the rural landscape as a means of familiarizing themselves with the environment. As relationships with the study participants evolved, cameras were brought into homes and community agencies, and pictures were taken of home-care nurses and their patients in the process of giving and receiving care. The researchers used the photographs as a means of engaging nurses, other agency staff, and seniors in dialogue in order to identify patterns of giving and receiving rural home care.

Photo novella. In contrast to the many studies in which investigators have used photographs to depict aspects of human experience from the vantage point of the photographer, a study that uses the technique of photo novella allows the participants to tell their stories from their own perspectives. Wendy Ewald (1985), a documentary photographer and educator, used this method in her work with children living in appalling conditions in the Appalachian mountains. Photo novella, which means "picture stories," lets participants make their own decisions about what to include or exclude in the photographic records of their lives, thus letting them control the images that are presented of their everyday world. The images enable participants to communicate personally meaningful thoughts or impressions in concrete terms. At the same time, the pictures provide a vehicle for researcher and participant to discuss meaningful aspects of the participant's life and to collaborate on the interpretation of experiences, feelings, and needs from the symbolic content of the photos and description of the image. This type of exchange may foster new insights into aspects of life that the participant is not able to express.

The empowerment potential of photo novella is described by Wang and Burris (1994), who used this method in a study of women's reproductive health in China. Photographs taken by the women were used to explore the ways in which their lives had changed over time, from their experiences as children to their current treatment as wives and mothers. The aims of this research included changing individual consciousness, influencing policy, and stimulating action at the individual and policy levels. Vukovic and Green (2000) used photo novella to describe the day-to-day lives of 83 persons with disabilities and to explore their needs for home- and community-based services. The investigators conclude that hermeneutic photography allowed participants to communicate issues of importance and concern to them that might not have surfaced through the more conventional method of researcher-guided interviews. Although these studies support the idea

that photographic methods hold much potential for health research, such methods remain a relatively underused approach.

Method

A convenience sample of seven refugee youths who had come to Canada from Bosnia during the 1990s were given an opportunity to tell their stories using the technique of photo novella. Identification of potential participants was carried out with the assistance of a leader within the Bosnian community who contacted families, briefly described the study, and invited participation. A meeting was subsequently held with all of the children, their families, and a translator, to describe the study in more depth, answer questions, and obtain written consent and assent. Although all of the participants were fluent in English, many of their parents were not; therefore all written information was translated into Bosnian.

The sample included four males and three females ranging in age from 11 to 14 years. All of the children were born in Bosnia and all were Muslim. The average age of the children at the time they left Bosnia was 5, and none were older than 10 at the time of departure. Entry to Canada was rather circuitous for most of the children. Only one of the six families came directly to Canada from Bosnia. Two families lived in Germany for up to 5 years prior to arriving in Canada, and the remaining four families lived in refugee camps in Croatia and Hungary before settling in Canada. The children had been living in Canada for 1 to 7 years and all resided with their biological parents and siblings. In one case, the child's paternal and maternal grandmothers lived with them as well.

Procedure

Over the course of the study the participants met with the researchers or the research assistant at least twice. During the first meeting, participants were given a disposable camera. They were shown how to use the camera and were offered an opportunity to practise using it and to ask questions. The participants were instructed to take pictures, over a 2-week period, of people, objects, or events important in their lives. Two sets of prints were made, one for the participant to keep and one for the researchers.

During the second meeting, the researcher and participant engaged in an in-depth dialogic interview about the meaning of the pictures.

Typically, we began the interview by asking the child to tell us about his or her pictures and to describe their significance. Probes were rarely needed, as the children readily discussed their photographs. In almost all cases the dialogue spontaneously turned to their lives in Bosnia, the transition to life in Canada, and their feelings about important people and events. The interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim.

Data Analysis

Analysis took place in collaboration with the participants as the researchers met with them to discuss the content and meaning of their photographs. This dialogic process resulted in what we have called phototalk, or the narrative that evolved "in between" or "beyond" the photos. Phototalk is, in essence, a synthesis of the photographs and the dialogue. The data emerging from this "space" would not have been available without the presence of the image before the researchers and the participants. Similarly, these data could not have been attained through interviews alone. The photograph stimulated a dialogic process that went beyond the content of the picture but resulted in a rich exchange of ideas and experiences between the two parties. Stories, themes, and patterns emerged from what the photographer captured in the image and the phototalk around the image. A coding system was developed whereby the photographs were categorized according to descriptions provided by the participant, rather than according to the objective content of the photograph.

Results

Phototalk resulted in the identification of themes relating to aspects of the participants' lives prior to their coming to Canada, their everyday lives today, and their hopes and dreams for the future. Although gender was not a focus of this study, and the photographs taken by the male and female participants were comparable in content, the way in which the two groups talked about the pictures differed. Typically, the girls took pictures of people, places, and objects that reminded them of Bosnia. In contrast, the boys used their cameras to capture the "here and now" of their lives in Canada. Running throughout the children's stories is a sense of strength, courage, and resilience despite the seemingly overwhelming circumstances of their lives. All of the names are pseudonyms.

Understanding so much and so little at once

Each child recalled the same moment of the war, the bombing of the bridge at Mostar, as a particularly disturbing symbol of destruction and ruin. This event surfaced in both photo content and dialogue. Marina took two pictures of a bridge near her home in Canada (Photo 1) and described them as representing "the bridge in Mostar that got wrecked in the war." Mirza explained: "Nobody knows how it [the war] started. I know only they bombed the bridge so nobody could come over or go out." Clearly, the bridge signified a moment when the world that these children had known was forever changed.

Repeatedly, the children indicated that when they lived in Bosnia they were too young to understand the dangers and the impact that the war would have on their lives. They remembered being unable to go outside of their homes, and they remembered hearing bombs. Goran recalled the image of his father being taken away by soldiers. He spoke of the effect this had on his older brother, who understood that their father might not return. While his brother was clearly distressed, Goran stated that he did not comprehend why the rest of the family was not speaking:

Every time those big rockets came we were under the stairs. And my brother was scared and he was drinking the water with sugar in it. That's what my grandma gave to him so he wouldn't get scared and stuff because he knew all that stuff. And I didn't even know it was dangerous. I was, like, talking so much and they were all scared and sitting there...

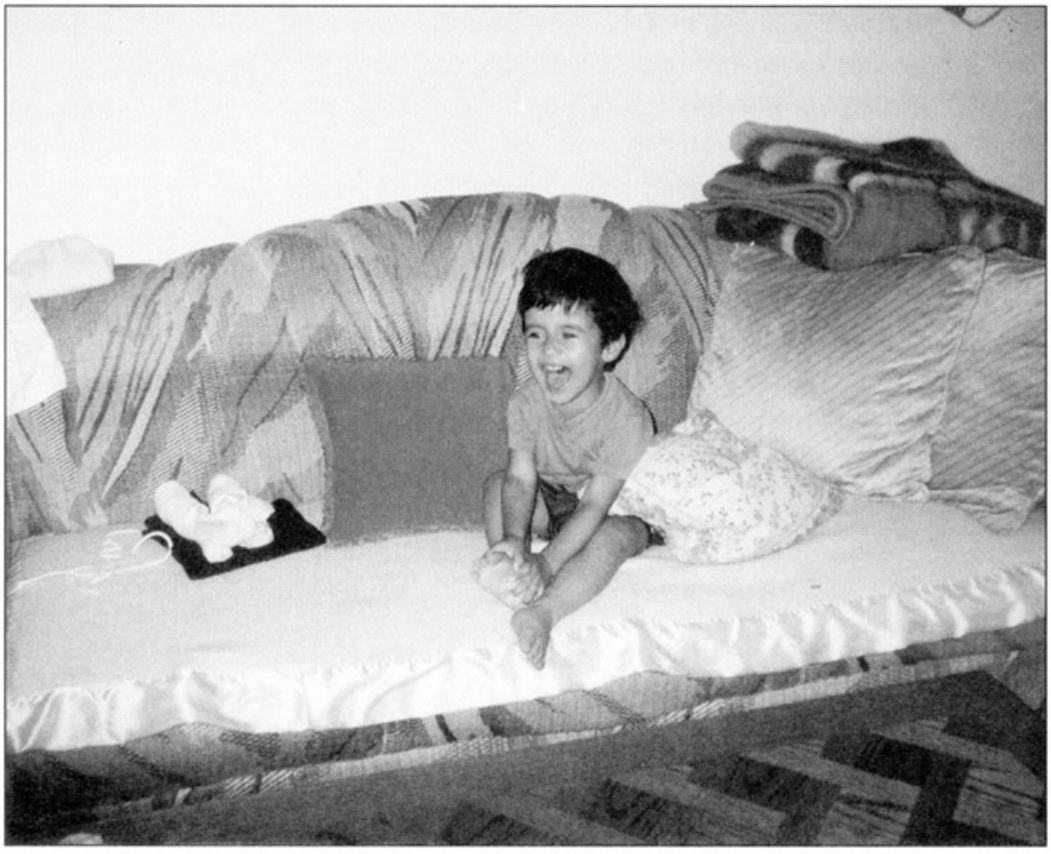
Adrijana described one of her photos as representing the Sana River. This revelation led to a conversation about the bridge blowing up and about how she would take her Barbie dolls into the bathroom, the safest place in her apartment. This was where she spent the day when her mother was at work and her father was away in the army. But she insisted that she was not frightened. She was too little. Adrijana and the other children made it clear that they were no longer too young to understand what they had lost because of the war.

We know nobody and start from the beginning

One of the strongest themes was the frequent necessity to relocate and leave family and loved ones behind. Katarina photographed a car that reminded her of one that her family had owned in Bosnia. She described the significance of this picture, but then moved beyond the image of the car as she recalled her life in Bosnia during the war and before she came to Canada: "Yeah. We got messed around. We all went everywhere... We moved around, like, six, five times... It's not that good. You make friends and then you got to go and you'll probably never see them again."

Most of the children had lived in another country prior to coming to Canada. For the majority of families, the time spent elsewhere was sufficient for them to develop a sense of community. Thus memories and feelings of being uprooted were often connected to not one place but many. Mirza, the oldest child in the study, described a photo of his family's living room as important because this was where family members spent most of their time. An excerpt from the dialogue that followed reflects the theme of moving and demonstrates the evolutionary process of phototalk:

We just came to Germany and then started to have life and then move again to new country and then again we know nobody and start from the beginning. ...five years, it's not like two months or something. Obvious, it's...a long time and then we start to know other people and then again know nobody.



Because they are my family and I love them

Virtually every child spoke about the importance of family and friends. The children's devotion to their loved ones was articulated during the interviews and was evident in both the content of the photos and the discussion of them. In a photo of a beach scene, Ivan pointed out his mother and brother. When asked why it was important for him to take this photo, Ivan said, "I always want to be with my family. I don't want to lose them." Another of Ivan's photos showed a boy standing on the balcony of his apartment. Ivan said it was a significant photo "because he is one of my best friends and I don't want to forget him." Later in the interview Ivan spoke of his recurring nightmare about losing his loved ones. Adrijana, referring to a photo of her baby sister, said that her sister was "the best thing about coming to Canada." Goran spoke similarly of his youngest brother, explaining that he was loved and treasured by the family. Goran had taken numerous photos of this little boy (Photo 2). Petar described the image of his mother and father as one of his most important photos. Examples of the children's devotion to family and friends are endless. When asked, "Why was that an impor-

tant photo to take?" they responded with quizzical expressions, as though the question was foolish and need not be addressed. Said Goran about a picture of his little brother, "...because I love him...that's the only reason I took it." Family was clearly the most important thing in the lives of these children.

Bosnia the way it used to be

Feelings of confusion were apparent when the children spoke about Bosnia. Most stated that they would like to return — not to the Bosnia of the present, however, but, as Mirza put it, "Bosnia the way it used to be." When asked if he missed Bosnia, Mirza said: "I don't know. I miss it sometime to see how it was. The only memories I have are my room and my grandpa's house. I remember, 'oh, this was there, this was there.' I miss to see how it really was. But now most things are destroyed. I don't miss it like now." The children appeared to accept their current situation. Many recounted being told by parents that going home would not be in the best interests of the family. Some expressed frustration at their inability to remember Bosnia. All clearly possessed a strong sense of belonging to the Bosnian Muslim community. At the same time, however, the majority had memories of a homeland that they knew would never be as it was before the war. There was a sense among the children of "being Bosnian" and "belonging to Bosnia" but an awareness that they had little direct, personal knowledge of this place called home. In an exchange about a photo he had taken of the sky, Goran poignantly remarked, "...sometimes it feels good, sometimes it feels bad. Then when I ask people how it is, some people say it's bad, some say it's pretty, and I still don't know how it looks." Not knowing a culture yet belonging to it was an experience common to many in this group of refugees.

My parents don't want me to forget

Ambivalence about embracing a new culture while remaining loyal to the old was evident in the children's stories and anecdotes. Katarina spoke of the decisions she continually had to make regarding when and where to speak Bosnian and the implications of choosing one language over the other. Referring to a photo of a weeping willow tree (Photo 3), Katarina described her experience of belonging to two cultures. Her words reveal a sense of loyalty to her family and her heritage. They also demonstrate a perceived need to balance the tension between allegiance to family and the desire to feel connected to Canadian life:

That tree, it's called a weeping willow. We had that tree in Bosnia and my dad was talking about it and he asked me what it was called. I said "weeping willow," and he said it in our language... I usually speak English around the house with both of my parents... I speak our language too. I speak English and they don't tell me not to speak English, but I think they'd rather I spoke Bosnian in the house. Like, when we go to Adrijana's house I'm not allowed to speak English because her parents don't want her to forget... My parents don't want me to forget, but I don't think that one little word is going to make me forget. I do talk our language a lot. I talk English too.

At a very early age the children had been forced to form new understandings about the workings of the world. With profound and articulate sensibility, they explained how they had come to accept the realities wrought by war. Katarina said, "It's a chapter. I just think, move on, find somewhere else. You have to think that way." One of Adrijana's photos reminded her of her grandmother's home: "But what can you do? You can't just think I have to go home."

Mirza reflected upon the positive aspects of the traumatic changes he had endured, articulately expressing the impact of war and refuge-

seeking on his perception of the world: "...all the things stay there, but you see the world if you move around; you learn the language." The majority of Mirza's photos reflected a stark quality that was mirrored in his words: "When I was smaller, I never thought of the negative things. I always thought of the positive... I didn't see the negative things. But now I see them."

One big messed-up dream

The surreal nature of being uprooted and moving to a foreign country was expressed both verbally and visually. One of Mirza's photos depicted the entrance to the apartment building where he and his family lived, a passage through which he walked every day. The picture appeared to function as a reminder to Mirza that his home was now in Canada. He discussed his photos in relation to having left behind everything he knew. Mirza frequently emphasized the strain of having to leave not one home but two and his difficulty in grasping the fact that he was no longer in Germany:

> *You don't really understand it. We just came to Canada and we came to the airport and everything. I didn't really realize that I was in Canada because three hours ago I was in Germany. And it went so fast. In Germany, it was like long time, it was five years, but when you go it looked so fast.*

Similarly, Katarina shared the moment when it had dawned on her that life in Canada was not a dream and that she would not be returning to Bosnia:

> *I always used to think that this is just a big long dream and it's all going to be over. That's the way I used to think about it... I was in the elevator and I was pressing the button and I just started thinking this is all one big messed-up dream and it's going to be over, you'll see when you wake up. But it's never over, I guess...that was about two years ago. If someone had told me when I was little that I would be living in Canada and, you know, moving to a house that day, I would have just said, like, you're lying.*

Life after the war

Many of the families were struggling to survive financially and were experiencing an enormous depreciation in their standard of living. Not only had they lost loved ones, but their lifestyles had changed dramatically. Houses had been replaced by small apartments. A photo taken by Mirza showed the few things that his family had been able to take with them when it was time to leave Germany. He described the frus-

tration of having to start all over again, his family's lack of living space, and the pain and confusion of knowing that their home in Bosnia was most likely still there but with other people living in it. His brother, Goran, told of their family's efforts to create a new home despite the absence of personal items, and he recalled the emptiness of an apartment the family had moved into after leaving Bosnia.

Despite the challenges, many children expressed hopes and dreams for the future. A picture taken by Ivan showed him standing proudly with a plaque his basketball team had won in a tournament. Around his neck were medals he had been awarded as Most Valuable Player. Ivan described this image as "my basketball career." Katarina pointed to an ambulance she had photographed and told of her dream to become a "pediatrics doctor." "This is something perfect for me," she said, "because I love little kids and I would love to have a job where I help someone."

Discussion

All of the participants were touched by war in deeply personal ways. Given that the actual length of time they had spent living in a war zone was relatively brief, the profound impact of war may seem surprising. Further, many appeared to be unaware of the full extent of the danger they had faced. Consistent with the findings of studies with children living in Europe during World War II (Freud & Burlingham, 1943; Henshaw & Howarth, 1941) and with children living amid war in the contemporary world, the participants' fears regarding separation from family were more pronounced than those associated with bombings, military invasions, and "ethnic cleansing" (Berman, 1999b; Garbarino, Kostelny, & Dubrow, 1991). The children's strong attachment to family was evident time and again, through their words and their pictures. Family appeared to be the most stable factor in their lives. During and after the war, throughout their displacement within and outside of Bosnia, to other European countries, and ultimately to Canada, family remained the only constant.

Childhood is typically characterized by an increasing sense of security and growing awareness of one's purpose and place in the world. For these children, however, the early years could more aptly be characterized by being uprooted and the need to form new understandings about home, security, and self. Although the children showed a great deal of confusion regarding identity, they firmly maintained that they considered themselves Bosnian. This understanding of self was complex. They knew that there was a place called Bosnia, but it was a

place that was part illusion and part reality. They remembered aspects of Bosnia through their own cherished but dim memories and, perhaps more so, through the stories told by their relatives. From their parents they learned that Bosnia was a very beautiful place before being so rudely transformed by war. Now their lives were firmly grounded in the Bosnian-Canadian community. Although they considered themselves Bosnian, in many respects they knew much more about what it meant to be Canadian. Although all participants were able to speak Bosnian, and did so to varying degrees in their homes, several had never attended school in Bosnia. While there was an almost surreal quality to the place they called home, they were nevertheless Bosnian to the core and proudly asserted their Bosnian heritage.

For many of the children, the war was symbolized most graphically by the bombing of the bridge in Mostar. This bridge spanning the Neretva River, built under Turkish rule in the 16th century, was destroyed during the war in 1993. The Croatian journalist Slavenka Drakulic (1994) ponders the significance of this event: "Why do we feel more pain looking at the image of the destroyed bridge than the image of the massacred people? Perhaps because we see our own mortality in the collapse of the bridge. We expect people to die; we count on our own lives to end. The destruction of a monument to civilization is something else. The bridge, in all its beauty and grace, was built to outlive us. It was an attempt to grasp eternity. It transcended our individual destiny" (p. 1). Although many of the children in the study had never actually seen this bridge, and most were very young when they had fled Bosnia, its destruction had a profound impact on their lives and on their understanding of the war. Like many Bosnian adults, these children appeared to have adopted the bridge as a cultural symbol of their past. Sharing this interpretation with others in the Bosnian community may have been a means of staying connected with a culture about which they remembered little.

War has been described as "the epidemic of the twentieth century" (Misgeld, 1995). It is one of the most endemic forms of violence against children, affecting millions of young lives throughout the world. Increasingly we are recognizing that, despite children's capacity for strength and resilience, the health effects of human atrocity are enormous. Nurses are in key positions to provide support to refugee youth and to play a leading role in efforts to make the world a less violent place. Such efforts require intervention at the individual, family, and community levels. The strategy of providing spaces for children to "tell their stories," to express their pain and their hopes, is one way of supporting children's views of their past and present situation; their own

perceptions of their experiences, reflecting their principles and values; and their need to find meaning in chaos. Educational strategies must, at a minimum, convey the message that human rights violations, including racial persecution, terror, and other forms of oppression, cannot be tolerated.

Although the children in this study revealed many strengths, programs and policies are needed if such children are to achieve success in life. Canada opens its doors to approximately 230,000 newcomers each year. In a recent report (Kunz & Hanvey, 2000), many health and social service providers state that their ability to offer culturally appropriate services is being hampered, particularly as they have experienced a decline in financial and human resources in recent years. The barriers they identify are language, cultural differences, and lack of knowledge about existing services. Focus groups conducted with immigrant children reveal that they are generally well integrated into Canadian society and are succeeding in school, but that they continue to encounter social isolation, racism, and ostracism.

Partnerships among community health centres, boards of education, and various levels of government are an important step in the development of multicultural programs. However, if an initiative is to be successful, we must acknowledge the significant needs of refugee youth and direct appropriate levels of funding to programs for them. As nurses become increasingly active in the political domain, we can become a strong voice for refugee youth.

Relevance of Photo Novella as a Method

Through their pictures, the children in this study told stories of pain and promise. Their stories were about sadness and confusion, but their pictures also revealed much about strength and courage, about hopes and dreams for the future, and about the promise of a better world for generations to come. Based on discussions among members of the research team, feedback from the participants and their families, and the richness of the data, we believe that photo novella holds enormous potential and that the possibilities extend far beyond what we have captured in this small study. All of the children indicated that they enjoyed participating in the study, including playing the role of photographer, and welcomed the opportunity to share their stories. For children whose verbal skills in English may be greater than their written skills, photo novella allows access to sensitive issues and ideas that might be difficult to elicit using more traditional approaches. Further, the universal appeal of pictures to all cultural groups makes photo novella an

intrinsically attractive and viable method. Although it would be an overstatement to suggest that any child was emancipated by his or her participation in this research, the persuasive power of pictures has the potential to bring about change at the individual and policy levels.

As with any method, several questions need to be addressed in determining the usefulness of photo novella. Although gender differences were noted, it is difficult to know if these were design artifacts or if they would have emerged regardless of study method. Further research is needed to evaluate this issue, and also to determine whether photo novella is most appropriate for particular age groups. Ultimately, decisions about method must be made in the context of how the approach "fits" with the research question and the characteristics of the population of interest. We suggest, however, that photo novella is a creative and innovative means for understanding and describing human health experiences, and for examining these experiences in new ways.

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