



University of
South Australia

International Centre for Muslim and non-Muslim Understanding

WORKING PAPER



Working Paper Number 19

**'Aussie Afghans' –The identity journeys of Muslim
Australians, with a focus on Hazara Afghans, as they
negotiate individual, ethnic, religious and national
identities**

Written by: David Radford

Nazia Ejaz ▲
Red City, 2013
120 x 90 cm
Synthetic polymer
paint on canvas

The University of South Australia's
International Centre for Muslim and
non-Muslim Understanding is funded by
the Australian Government Department
of Education and the South Australian
Department of Premier and Cabinet.

International Centre for Muslim and non-Muslim Understanding

Contents Page

Project Description

Methodology

Background on Afghan-Hazaras

“Aussie Afghans”: Hazaras in Australia

Academic Research on the Hazara Community in Australia

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

Hazara and Afghan identity

Conclusion

References

WORKING DRAFT PAPER

‘Aussie Afghans’ –The identity journeys of Muslim Australians, with a focus on Hazara Afghans, as they negotiate individual, ethnic, religious and national identities

Author: Dr David Radford, Senior Research Fellow, Hawke Research Institute, UniSA

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This project explores the dynamic trajectories that ‘Hazara Afghan Australian Muslims’ take as they negotiate through their multiple sense of identities in each of these categories. The investigation into the lives of Hazara Australians raises important questions and provides some interesting results. More than anything the project highlights the problematic nature of identity/ies. Identity/ies assume that individuals and social groups develop a sense of ascription, a sense of ‘self’, but that the development of sense of identity is multifaceted. It is never the same for each person or community. The complex nature of this process is reflected in the myriad ways in which the participants in this research project, ‘Aussie Afghans’, understand what it means *to be* Hazara, *to be* Afghan, *to be* Australian, *to be* Muslim, *to be* from a refugee/asylum seeker background, or *to be* an individual. Indeed whether they identify with all of these categories or none of them. If they identify with these categories in what order of importance do they hold each? I have shortened the title to ‘Aussie Afghans’ as a simple way of emphasising this complex phenomenon recognising that there are often many more elements involved. Or, if they do identify with a particular category, how they interpret or understand what they mean by that category.

The title should possibly read ‘Aussie (?) Afghans (?)’ to reflect this ambiguity. This paper will show that identities are nuanced and complex as individuals and groups negotiate their sense of identity. I will highlight the ways that Hazara Australians, ‘Aussie Afghans’, have a growing attachment and sense of belonging to Australia. It is becoming home, a place where Hazara Australians believe they have a positive future. The paper will also identify a re-imagining of Australian national identity - one that envisions Australianness as something which includes these newer Hazara Australians within the middle of Australian society, as part of the ‘Australian crowd’ as it were, rather than on the margins. Religion is an important category for Hazara but in far more complex ways than one would think. Religious identity, in the case of Hazara, Muslim identity, is reflected in both a sense of religiosity – adherence to Muslim religious beliefs and practices, and/or as a cultural or community identity, one that is reflected by certain values to be held. But religion may not be a primary self-identification. For many Hazara, it is their ethnicity, their family, their culture, their individuality that comes more to the fore. It is a reminder for researchers and for the wider public that we must be careful not to assume or ascribe categories or meanings of categories that people themselves may not hold, or view quite differently. ‘Aussie Afghans’ in the end are as complex and nuanced in their understanding of themselves *as ‘we’ all actually are.*

Muslims who have migrated to Australia face a number of challenges in adjusting to the Australian way of life, coping with settlement issues around employment, education, housing and health; and dealing with the tensions and challenges of ‘belonging’ in their adopted homeland, becoming part of what it means to ‘to be Australian’ - to be ‘Aussie’ (CMMIPS, 2009, Kabir, 2005). This process of belonging strikes at the heart of issues of identity for

Muslims as individuals, as people representing a particular ethnicity or national background, their connection with the religious symbolism, some might say stigma, of their Muslim religious faith, and of a sense of connection to an emerging Australian identity. This project aims to explore the process and experiences of Muslim Australians, specifically, Afghan Hazara, as they navigate belonging and identity as Australian citizens, as Afghans, and as people of a Muslim religious background.

Muslim population rates around the world, including Australia, are set to significantly increase over the next few decades increasing to nearly 5% or nearly 1 million Muslims in Australia by 2050. Presently the highest rate of growth among Australian capital cities is in Adelaide where there has been a 90% increase from 9548 to 18,150 between 2006-2011 (MnM, 2015). Some in the Australian community have felt resentment about refugee and Muslim immigration (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury 2008; Vasey & Manderson 2012) and there have been reported tensions in urban and rural areas between Muslims and non-Muslims (Forrest & Dunn 2013; Klocker 2004). Often this has centred on applications from the Muslim community to local councils for the building of Mosques such as in Bendigo (2014)¹ and more recently (January 2015),² in the northern Adelaide suburb of Salisbury, with opposition to the building of a mosque for the Hazara community. Equally important has been the role of international and national ‘events’ such as the arrival of maritime asylum seekers and Australian citizens fighting with ISIS in Iraq/Syria; the Man Haron Monis siege in Sydney; and government and media mediated responses (O’Doherty & Lecouteur 2007; Every & Augoustino 2008). These developments have

¹ <http://www.bendigoadvertiser.com.au/story/2361452/mosque-approved-amid-fear-and-anger/>

² <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/flyers-target-new-mosque-planned-for-greenfields-in-adelaides-north/story-e6frg6n6-1227200847779>

led to increased tensions and fears regarding the presence of Muslims and/or refugees/asylum seekers in the community (Moran 2005).

Issues around national identity are also important for this project. Moran says that 'national identity refers both to personal identity arising from membership of a national political community, and to the identity of a community that marks one nation off from others. They involve 'ethnic cores, myths, memories, religious beliefs, language, connections with territory, and political values (Moran, 2011, p. 2155, see also, Parekh, 2008)'. There have been significant migration changes especially over the last 50-60 years in Australia and this has changed the sense of what it means to be Australian (McGregor, 2006). This project will seek to identify how these changes have impacted upon and affected the experiences of Afghan Hazara migrants as they embrace Australia as their new 'home'. Another important aspect of identity and the social/cultural context is that of ethnicity (Barth, 1969, Brass, 1996, Glazer and Moynihan, 1975) and the role that religion plays in ethnic identity (Enloe, 1996, Mol, 1978, Ali, 2011, Zang, 2013). However, identity is in flux, open to change, adaptation and interpretation. While there is a strong connection between religion and ethnic identity among Afghans it does not necessarily mean that there are other ways in defining one's identity outside of the religious label (Atkin, 1992, cf. Shahrani, 1984).

Recognizing the important role in nation building and quest for national stability, the questions of formation of national and ethnic identities have been the subject of lively academic debates informed by competing theoretical perspectives. The two primary theories that form the basis for

much of these debates are primordialism and constructivism. Primordialism suggests that ethnic identity is primarily rooted in factors such as “biological descent, kinship, language, locality, religion and other ‘immutable’ cultural traits” such as family, race, blood (Surucu, 2002, p.386). It is these factors that drive ethnic identity and have an unchanging, essentialist quality. Constructivism is a more modern approach and suggests that ethnic and national identity, like most other forms of identity, is largely constructed by individuals and groups through a process of choice and incorporation from a variety of factors that include cultural materials, social conditions, and social context (Côté and Levine, 2002). As Castells (2004) explains, identity is constructed in a social context using various ‘building materials’.

The construction of identities uses building materials from history, from geography, from biology, from productive and reproductive institutions, from collective memory and from personal fantasies, from power apparatuses and religious revelations. But individuals, social groups, and societies process all these materials, and rearrange their meaning, according to social determinations and cultural projects that are rooted in their social structure, and in their space/time framework (Castells, 2004, p. 7).

Smith speaks of national identity as ‘a product of both “natural” continuity and conscious manipulation’ (in Cerulo, 1997, p. 390) and Lawler (Lawler, 2007) looks at how identities are socially produced. The ways in which Afghan Hazara have negotiated, ‘manipulated’ and constructed their new Australian identity from Castells’s ‘building blocks’ is an essential element of this project.

While individuals may hold multiple identities they may also merge one or more in a form of hybridisation (Smith and Leavy, 2008). This research understands individual, ethnic and national identities are largely forms of hybridity – a combination in various identity formulations that incorporates and blends, and at times rejects, various aspects of the identity building blocks. Therefore, any national and ethnic identity that is constructed by individuals and groups can be *re-constructed* at any given time when the circumstances are “ripe” with ‘materials’ that may be old, maybe new. As Parekh states, ‘...if identities are the products of history, they can [also] be remade by history’ (in Laitin, 1998, p. 13). At heart is the understanding that individual and community identities are not static but are constantly in a process of dynamic change albeit in some cases faster or slower speeds (Brah, 2007). It is the interactions, events and shared experiences of individuals within and between urban and regional communities, and with those concentrically moving beyond the community that help to shape the changing dynamics of those identities – who we see ourselves as individuals or as communities to be.

‘With globalisation and access to multiple sources of information, individuals are exposed to and influenced by ideas on Islam and local/global situations that constantly shape and re-shape their relationship to their immediate environment. But instead of being mere recipients of information and ideas, these individuals also become agents in their own right: they contribute to the local and global pool of knowledge and ideas and in the process shape and re-shape the context in which others develop their ideas and identities as well’ (Yasmeen, 2008, p. 2).

The accepted notion of identity is also formulated as group members identify and locate themselves and their group in opposition, in difference, or in sameness, to other people and other groups (Brah 2007). Those distinctive elements that a group identifies with become a source of bonding, cohesion and solidarity (Shahrani, 1984). The identity association that an individual may hold, claim or communicate will often vary depending on the particular social context in which they find themselves and with whom they are communicating. The 'Other' may be the next family, the next village, the next region, the next clan, the next profession, the next language, the competing economic group, the next religion or the next sect/denomination of the same religion (Barth, 1969, Horowitz, 1975, Lubin, 1995, Nagel, 1994). However, identity is in flux, open to change, adaptation and interpretation (Hall, 1994). While there is a strong connection between religion and ethnic identity among Afghans it does not necessarily mean that there are other ways in defining one's identity outside of the religious label (Atkin, 1992, cf. Shahrani, 1984).

This suggests that while one identity may or may not predominate it is also true to say that there are a number of *identities* that may be involved, all potentially held, to one degree or another, at the same time, and this is no less true for those who identify themselves as holding some form of Muslim identity (Ali, 2011, Kabir, 2013, Kabir, 2010, Zebiri, 2008) The predominance of one identity over another will be decided largely by the social context in which the member/s are involved and with whom they are involved. Depending on the context and with whom a Hazara 'Aussie' is relating to, one might be identified predominantly as an 'Afghan', a Hazara, one from Bamiyan district in the political nation of Afghanistan, 'Muslim', 'Arab', male/female, from a

particular Hazara family, educated, football crazy, 'asylum seeker/refugee', neighbour, friend, threat, 'terrorist', and yes, even 'Aussie'.

METHODOLOGY:

The research sought to understand and explore the complex ways in which these now 'Aussie Afghans' have negotiated belonging and identity transformation. It assumes that there is not homogeneity in this process nor in the ways that 'Aussie Afghans' understand what this means. Taking a largely grounded approach, allowing the data gathered from the field to guide the investigative and analytical process (Bryman and Burgess, 1994), the research investigated the ways in which individuals and communities have negotiated interactions and 'otherness' and the challenges and changes this necessarily brings to notions of individual, local community and national identities (Ang et al., 2006, Radford, 2014).

Research involved participant observation and initial informal and formal in-depth interviews. Participant observation is an appropriate method to study the lived reality of culturally complex social relations, observing people's behaviours in natural contexts (Brewer, 2000) and has resulted in the production of new knowledge about social relations, and in ground-breaking conceptual development of understandings of class, race, ethnic, and other group dynamics and relations. Participants were from the Afghan Hazara community, over 15 years of age, and across gender, marital status and education groups. Interviewees were selected purposively, through snow balling based on established relationships. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were administered to 15 people from Adelaide (10) and Naracoorte (5) locations.

Research Sites

Research sites include metropolitan Adelaide and the Limestone Coast area of South Australia (especially Naracoorte). This provides opportunity to note contrasts and comparisons between urban and regional locations.

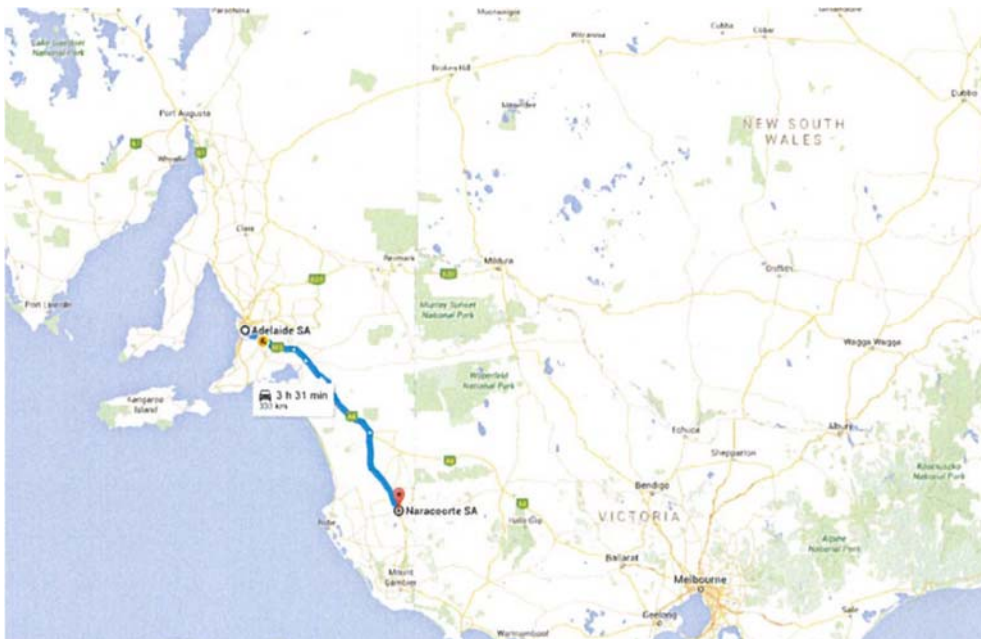
Naracoorte

Naracoorte: Naracoorte (approximately 8000 population) offers a broad range of retail, commercial, community health services and education facilities. It is a predominantly inland rural area focused mainly on cereal cropping, sheep and cattle grazing, dairy farming and viticulture, with some forestry and tourism. It has a major meat-works and wool processing facility. Employment has played a major role in the changing population landscape of the town over the last decade. With unskilled and semi-skilled industries this area has drawn immigrants. The establishment of a meatworks (in the 1970s) and rapid development of vineyards in the 1990s/2000s facilitated the arrival of increasingly non-European background migrants, mostly on skilled 457 visas, but also humanitarian migrants (refugees/asylum seekers). In this period new migrants included Maori from New Zealand, Brazilians and Vietnamese. While some of this migration has been transient increasing numbers of mainland Chinese, Koreans and Filipinos are now residing in the community. Between 2006-2011, the number of people born overseas increased by 267 or 44.3% and the number of people from a non-English speaking background by 246 or 108.4%. While a few Hazara moved into the area over ten years ago they now represent the largest immigrant group, increasing the local population by over 300 people (5-10 %) over the last five years. These Hazara are largely humanitarian migrants (refugees/asylum

seekers). Their migratory pattern to this town has been organic in nature rather than something facilitated through the the SPRM (Feist et al., 2014).

Adelaide

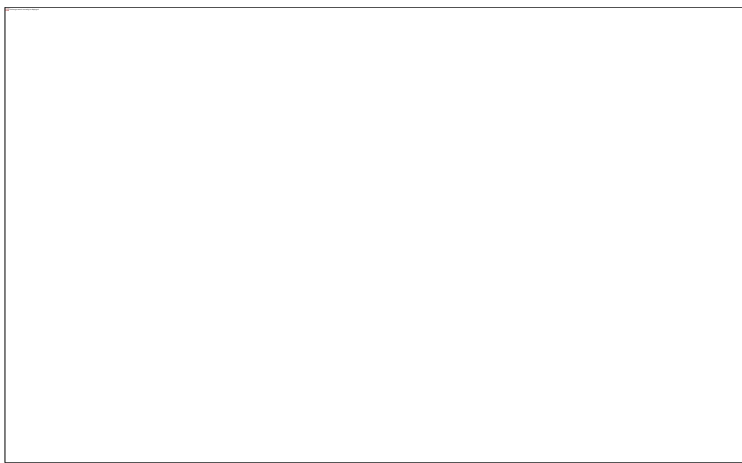
Adelaide is situated in South Australia and is known as the cosmopolitan coastal capital. The population to date stands at approximately 1.251 million, which is rising steadily. Adelaide offers a host of things ranging from businesses, education, health, law and social services, retail, commercial and social facilities. Adelaide city has become a multicultural city where migrant communities have come and settled. In addition it sees a rapid increase of international students which add to the multicultural dynamic of the city. Many Hazara's from Naracoorte have also moved to Adelaide city for education or work purposes. Adelaide is 333km from Naracoorte which is approximately 3hours and 31 minutes in traveling distance by car.



<https://www.google.com.au/maps/dir/Adelaide+SA/Naracoorte+SA>

BACKGROUND ON AFGHAN-HAZARAS

The Hazaras are an ethnic group that predominantly live in Hazarajat in central Afghanistan, where they constitute an estimated 10% of the total population (Razaiat & Pearson [2002](#), p. 5; Minority Rights Group International). Despite the large majority identifying as Twelve-Imami Shi'ites, some are Ismaili Muslims and others belong to the Sunni sect of Islam (Saikal, 2012, p.82). The Hazaras' origins can be traced to Buddhist traditions and Mongolia.



<http://files.meetup.com/1382795/Iran%20and%20Afghanistan.gif>

Historically, Hazaras have possessed an underprivileged status in Afghani society with limited participation in the political and economic power structures of the Afghani state. The Pashtun majority, which has historically dominated political and military spheres, has attempted to eliminate the Hazaras' "political, legal, national and historical identities" through the adoption of an assimilation policy (Emadi, 1997 p.385) Consequently, the Hazaras, amongst other minorities, have suffered significant persecution and exploitation in Afghanistan (Maley, 2001, p.8; Koser 2010). Under Taliban rule, the Hazaras were particularly targeted, because they are largely Shi'ites and therefore considered "heretics" by the radical Sunni members of the Taliban

(Lange et al., 2007). Post-Taliban rule, the status and plight of Hazaras has been gradually improved via increased representation in politics and society, leading to improved opportunities for secondary education and healthcare, and greater participation in the country's economy (Saikal, 2012, p.86).

Increased transnational migration, largely as a consequence of political instability and persecution in Afghanistan, has created a significant Hazara diaspora. More than half a million Hazaras currently reside outside of Afghanistan. An estimated 500, 000 Hazaras live in Pakistan, predominantly in the city of Quetta (Nowell, 2014). This community has been settled in Pakistan for more than a century. Iran's most recent census (2005) indicates that 373, 000 Hazaras also live in Iran. Following intensified persecution in Afghanistan under Taliban rule, and increased exploitation and threat of forced repatriation in Pakistan and Iran, many Hazaras migrated to Western countries, such as Canada, Australia and those in Europe.

“Aussie Afghans”: Hazaras in Australia

Australia has the largest Hazara population of any “western” country. Currently, 20, 000 Hazaras reside in Australia. The majority of Hazaras (over 60%) arrived in Australia post 2001, predominantly via “irregular” channels, such as people smuggling. Since 1999, the majority of boat arrivals in Australia from Pakistan and Afghanistan have been Hazaras (Neve, 2014 p.2). Whilst migrating to Australia, many passed through transit countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia. Upon arrival in Australia, the Hazaras were sent to detention centres while they waited

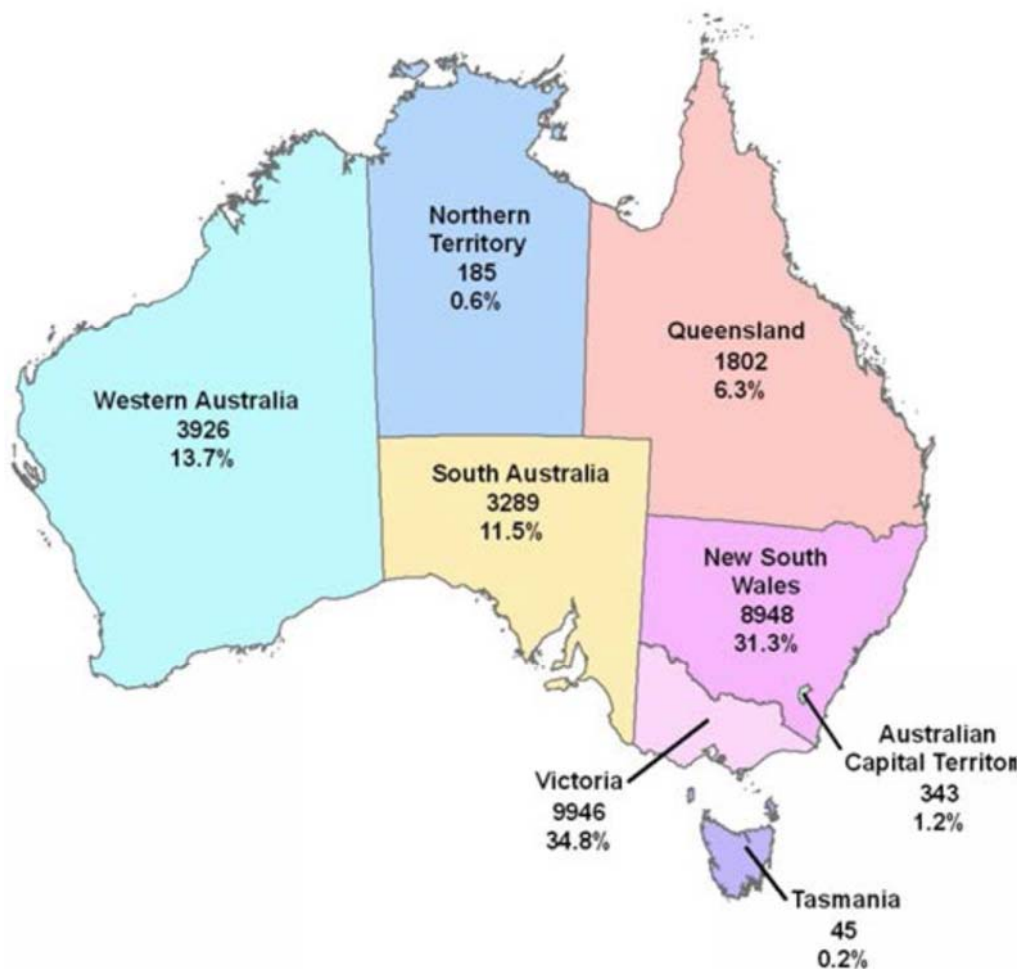
for their refugee status to be assessed. Once granted refugee status, many received three year Temporary Protection Visas, which provided them with minimal governmental legal and social support. Today the Hazara have various forms of residency status' in Australia. Most originally came as refugees or 'asylum seekers'. Many are on some form of bridging visa, some with working rights, others not; some have permanent residency, and increasing numbers now have Australian citizenship. Young men predominantly dominated earlier arrivals, however, women have been arriving in greater numbers in recent years. The median age of Afghan-born people in Australia is 30. The 2011 Census' geographic distribution by state and territory showed that the majority of 9946 Hazaras live in Victoria, 8948 in New South Wales, 3926 in Western Australia and 3289 in South Australia, Department of Social Services (2014) . Nearly half live in Melbourne's North eastern suburbs.³

Haider Ali⁴ suggests that there were 3 phases in Hazara migration to Australia:

1. 1999-2000 - when Hazaras mostly from Afghanistan reached Australia by boat to seek asylum after being persecuted by Taliban regime.
2. 2009-10 - when Hazaras from Afghanistan and Pakistan migrated to Australia as irregular maritime arrivals.
3. 2012-13 - when Hazara genocide was touching its peak in Pakistan. This included migration by boat; some also came to Australia by plane as students, visitors, tourists and businessmen but who later sought here protection due to threats to their lives in their native countries.

³ <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-06-16/omagh-celebrations/5526722>

⁴ <http://www.hazara.net/2014/05/why-hazaras-have-failed-to-get-themselves-recognized-as-a-nation-in-australia/>



Geographic distribution of Afghan-born people in Australia: Department of Immigration and Citizenship 2014

Academic Research on the Hazara Community in Australia

The role of identity in facilitating increased social cohesion is gaining increased attention in the social sciences, particularly in regards to the growing presence of diverse migrant communities.

The current political climate, both internationally and nationally, resulting from Australian citizens fighting with ISIS in the Middle East and terrorist attacks in Western countries, has

triggered intensified scrutiny and tensions towards Muslim refugees and asylum seekers in Australia. Afghan Hazaras form a substantial percentage of migrants in Australia and have subsequently become the focus of a number of studies exploring how the identities of migrants are transformed throughout the process of acculturation in a new host country.

Of particular interest is the impact of resettlement and exile upon a person's sense of belonging and identity. In regards to the Hazaras, a historical context of conflict and migration has significantly shaped both the diaspora's and the individual Hazara's sense of self. Ibrahimi (2012) analyses how this historical context, alongside contemporary social, economic, cultural and political factors, has impacted upon exiled Afghan-Hazaras' identities (2012, p. 17-18). He argues that Hazaras' identity is inextricably connected to a shared history of marginalisation and persecution following the establishment of the Afghan state. Additionally, Ibrahimi's research demonstrates that the "social and political environments" of Afghanistan and host countries such as Iran, Pakistan (2012, p. 1) reinforced elements of Hazara identity, such as religious affiliation and marginalisation.

Neve (2014) further explores the impact of resettlement and exile upon identity in her study on young Afghan-Hazara men in Australia. She argues that these young Hazara men must negotiate multiple, overlapping social memberships, both national and transnational, which directly affects the way that they self-identify and perform their identities (2014 p.iv). These memberships include religious, cultural, social and gender affiliations. In particular, Neve's research examines how the resettlement process impacts upon Hazara men's "feelings of attachment to their homeland" and their sense of belonging in Australia, ultimately transforming their identities

(2014 p.4). It is the navigation of these multiple, and sometimes conflicting, social, cultural and religious attachments that transforms an individual's identity during resettlement. Mackenzie and Guntarik (2015) also explore how new migrants adapt and develop new roles and identities in their new host country. Informed by Bourdieu's notion of "social capital", they argue that developing a sense of belonging during the transition period of resettlement is critical to the formation of migrants' political and cultural identity in the new, host society. Their research shows that the development and maintenance of social networks facilitates the construction of Hazara-Afghan-Australian identities by producing greater participation in the broader community, increasing the development of English language skills, and generating feelings of belonging in the host country.

Feelings of belonging are crucial to facilitating greater social cohesion and acculturation of migrants in a new host country. Multiple studies have shown that technology such as mobile phones and the internet play a significant role in the construction of social networks which generate feelings of belonging (Leung et al., 2009) (Dalisay, 2012). This is evident in Glazebrook's (2004) exploration of Afghan-Hazara men's use of the mobile phone as a means of maintaining social networks. Glazebrook's research explores the affective significance of the mobile phones in maintaining social networks, showing that "...exchanges [via mobile] can be deeply meaningful to people who are displaced..." because it makes them "perpetually accessible to, and [able to] access, their Hazara friends and acquaintances" (2004 p.48). The mobile therefore allows Hazaras to "reposition themselves at the locus of their own new social networks" (2004 p.48). In other words, the development and maintenance of social connections generates feelings of belonging and facilitates the acculturation process. Similarly, Tudsri and

Hebbani (2014) examine how young, Hazara men use media to integrate into their new homeland and/or stay in touch with their Afghan roots. The choice of media is shown to reflect individual attitudes toward acculturation (2014, p.1285). For example, some of the Afghan-Hazara men chose not to view English language programs, only Dari programs, in an attempt to remain more “Afghan” than “Australian” (2014, p.1281). Contrastingly, others deliberately sought out English language programs to facilitate their acculturation by improving their English language skills and learning more about Australian culture, society and politics (2014, p.1283).

As explored by Abraham and Busbridge (2014), disagreement regarding Afghan-Hazara identity and belonging has also increasingly become implicated in debate surrounding asylum and refugee status in Australia. Abraham and Busbridge examine how the “2014 Syndrome”, (uncertainty surrounding the consequences of international forces’ withdrawal from Afghanistan) has exacerbated tensions regarding “Afghan” identity in Australia (2014, p.245). In particular, they argue that historical tensions around ethnicity, identity and belonging could have potentially negative consequences for the acceptance of Hazara asylum seekers and refugees in Australian society (2014, p.250). In other words, to be considered a “genuine refugee” one must be considered a “genuine Afghan”. This is particularly problematic in regards to Afghan-Hazaras, who have been historically marginalised in Afghan society, therefore potentially excluding them from categorisation as “genuine Afghans” and “genuine refugees”.

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

Hazara and Afghan identity

Negotiating ones identity in a world that is continuously in flux according to social and political circumstances is a complex process. The responses clearly highlighted that many complexities arise when one identifies as Hazara Afghan Australian or Afghan Hazara Australian or Hazara Australian, Australian Hazara, Hazara Pakistani Australian or just Australian. In relation to how they eventually classify their identity is one that is conditioned according to their social, geographical and political context, as well as their religious affiliation (Muslim-Shia or Sunni).

All participants affiliated with the Shia branch of Muslim identity. When identifying themselves in relation to their religious identity they referred to the historical break which resulted in the Shia or Sunni group. Many of the participants referred to the historical persecution of Hazrat Hassan, as a consequent of this they saw themselves as a persecuted community, a suffering community, a community who within their ancestral homeland are persecuted and marginalised as they are deemed the minority. Some Hazara indicated that they felt that they were recognised as legitimate part of political Afghanistan. This was a common theme that developed out of the interviews, consequently within Afghanistan they identify as a persecuted community whereby their Hazara identity is conditioned in relation to the political, historical, religious, and geographical context. In particular reference was made to what appeared to be considered the 'other' for a number of Hazara – the Pashtun community who were seen as perpetrators of the suffering on the Hazara historically, especially more recently in the form of the Taliban.

I like to be identified as Hazara because, as you know, Afghan is another word for Pashtu and it's because they had the power they - and Afghanistan which means the land of Afghans, which means the land of Pashtus in a way. But some of the, I mean, at the end of the day in reality it is so difficult. It's impossible to change the name of this country now. So I feel okay to say that I'm Afghan and in a way that I'm from Afghanistan. But my ethnic background is Hasara" (Sayed Male, Age?)

I think - because - and even a lot of the generations here are living, a lot of Afghans, especially Hazaras, don't even like identifying. There's even a lot of, like, name clashes. They're like, "Don't call yourself Afghan. That's offensive." So usually most Afghans, most Hazaras don't like referring to themselves as Afghans. It's only now that we're in Australia that because we have come from Afghanistan we're kind of put into a position where we have to refer to ourselves as Afghans so that people can know where you are from on the map. But generally we don't really think about - that national identity doesn't really exist. (Meriam Age? Female)

A few participants also highlighted that the means through which one identified as Hazara was a contestation due to the lack of historical literature regarding where they came from. Furthermore what it means to be Hazara was also dependent upon their geographical location, as some fled to Pakistan, Syria, Iran, which moulded their cultural identity.

...to be honest even I - sometimes when I think about it even I don't know what it means to be Hazara or who we are as a people, or what our rules are, because obviously historically there's no clear answer to that. So he says, you know, in some ways even I don't really know what it means to be Hazara (Hussain 62 or 67 male)

To be honest I haven't thought at that point yet because I don't know the history. (Amma 23 female)

So even Hazaras don't really know what it means to be a Hazara because it's – we're all so different. Some of us have lived in Iran, some have lived in Syria, some have lived in Quetta, some have lived in Kabul so we're all very different and we all come together and sometimes argue over it, sometimes fight over it, sometimes laugh over it. (Ghulam, 22 years, Female)

When questioned about how they would identify as Hazara they stated that it was specific cultural values and beliefs that made them relate to this notion of being Hazara. One common theme amongst that was the idea of a close family bond.

It's not a defined term. Everyone defines it differently. Being Hazara, what does that mean? Being in a Hazara family that just breaks it down simple and plain. Being in a Hazara family. Whatever comes with it. The upbringing that's what makes me Hazara. I don't think - and I think this might be true for every other

culture or every group of people - a person can in their 20s come in a particular group and live there for 40 years and call themselves Hazara because your upbringing wasn't there. It's not innate but your wiring is not as hard or strong as a person that has been brought up in a Hazara family. I think if we're going to boil it down to what I really think makes me Hazara is my upbringing. (Qurban, 22 years, Male)

At home. At home with my uncle's family, my uncle that came with us, sponsored us. (Qurban, 22 years, Male)

Then I reflected back onto my upbringing and the upbringing that I've seen Hazara people - the family bond that Hazara people have. (Qurban 22 Male)

I am Hazara. Even though if I go and change, have surgery, my whole facial structure, everything. I'm still Hazara. It's in my blood. It's in the whole thing. (Sayed Male, Age?)

Thus the idea of home and family was a strong variant when asked the question 'when do you feel Hazara or how does it feel to be Harzara'. In addition to this they also stated that physical facial characteristic identified them as Hazara, the music, the food and language also played a part in them identifying as Hazara. Many of the participants within Afghanistan and Pakistan Quetta identified themselves as Hazara, however within Australia the majority of the participants reported they preferred to be identified as Afghan Hazara because they felt it was quite confusing stating to Australians they were Hazara, it was much easier to identify as Afghans.

I guess I'm very lazy when it comes to my identity so I just say Afghan because it's an easier one, because I mean, if I say I'm Hazara most people are going to say, what's a Hazara, where do Hazaras come from but if you say Afghan most would say okay, Afghanistan. (Ghulam, 23 years, Female)

It's only now that we're in Australia that because we have come from Afghanistan we're kind of put into a position where we have to refer to ourselves as Afghans so that people can know where you are from on the map. But generally we don't really think about - that national identity doesn't really exist. (Hussain, over 60 years, Male)

This notion that it was much easier to identify as Afghans in Australia was a common theme amongst many of the participants. However, some did state that when they felt that someone wanted to know a little more or that they were showing some interest, they would then go into further detail and state their ethnic identity.

With citizenship we notice a new dimension added to their Hazara identity, predominately the notion of belonging. A sense of belonging develops as Hazara settlers start to feel a sense of security having both social and civil rights, career opportunities, having choice, liberty, freedom of speech and a stable future. As a result they start to feel that they can call Australia home.

Interestingly a few participants addressed Australia's historical past in terms of its colonial past (land of Aboriginal people), and therefore considered Australia as an immigrant nation, which provided them with a greater sense of belonging.

I'm an Australian citizen and I'm also working, I've got a life, I've established my life here so now I have courage. I have a voice. A lot of people they're on a bridging visa. They don't do anything. They don't say anything because of those consequences...So here and now that's why I have a sense of belonging. I have a sense that I'm important. I have a sense that people are listening to me. I have a say in things, that I can say something in a process or in some sort of decision. So those sorts of things back then if I was in my country I wouldn't be able to do any of those sorts of things (Sayed, over 30 years, Male).

However the feeling of belonging itself is a complex journey, not only does it start to appear with citizenship rights, but for some female participants belonging was via a process of assimilation. Some felt that the removal of the headscarf was a step towards not being regarded as the 'odd one out' or it provided those with a sense of confidence that then helped them integrate with fellow students, specifically Australian.

I don't want to be that girl that wears the scarf that's representative of every other person that wears a scarf because it's a really heavy burden to carry. You kind of always think you're a representative for an entire group and so whatever you say here is going to stick with everyone and so it's just it's too much. It's exhausting to be honest... I think so. Yeah and I feel – I honestly feel much more confident without it. It's amazing to think that a piece of fabric can have such a profound impact on someone but I find that – and over the years it's been – like, I didn't think that it used to affect me in high school but over the years I've been – it's been bringing my confidence down. I don't know. I mean,

I think there's a lot of things that factor into that but over the years it's been getting worse and finally when I took it off I was like, I'm glad it's out. (Ghulam, 23 years, Female)

Nevertheless on the other spectrum there were some female participants who voiced that with citizenship they gained a sense of confidence that enabled them to remain their visible markers (i.e. headscarf).

From the responses it is evident that a rights based discourse played a dominant part in asserting a notion of Australian identity or Australia becoming a home land were the Hazara felt comfortable. Having had not many rights within Afghanistan and in many other places played a part in the Hazara Australians naming Australia as Home a place of belonging. Nevertheless this not to say that many of the participants did not have a strong connection to this notion of back home, as there was amongst many, for instance a particular participant that was a poet referred to his ancestral home land (Afghanistan) as:

I did art works and I did a work which is a building, a historical building which I placed it in - in my own body. That building is in Afghanistan. It's very close to where the real me was born... I felt that the real silent in a innermost - without any happy or sad feelings, just that moment. I felt really - I felt that - I felt really peaceful that time. And I felt that all the people - all the souls really go there; all the people who say my childhood friends who had been killed warring. I felt this is the place that all the souls go really. It that some part is ruined and that. So I paint that building on top of my own body. That

was very important for me that it's my own body and that building is there. So it has that, yeah, so it connect me to there, which is in Afghanistan...

Australia, Australia, I wasn't born in you and the hand prints of my fathers do not show in your trees. But you are my home and you are safe like my far - my far mother's embrace...

And I felt - I felt that day - from that day I felt the people I see in the streets are familiar. Before to me - they were strange. They were foreigners or I am foreigner to them. But that day I felt - from that day I felt the people on the streets in Australia are - are looks familiar...They look at me as one of them. I'm not - I'm not a stand out on the way I walk now. It's the same. I'm one of the crowd. So that was very interesting and very important day for me. (Ramazan, Male, Age?)

CONCLUSION

To conclude one can argue that the dialogue highlighted that Hazara Afghan Australian/ Hazara Australian/ Hazara Pakistani Australian/ Afghan Hazara Australian or Australian identity was not fixed but rather a fluid concept that moulds according to one's social, political, and geographical context. The feeling of belonging to Australia or considering Australia as home, a place that offers a positive future demonstrated that there was a particular notion of ontological security which provided Hazaras confidence. More importantly it appears that the Hazara have reimagined Australia as a place where many immigrant communities come and settle. Therefore they feel that they are also part of this community, where they can still practice their belief and

be proud of their ethnic identity, while embracing a new culture and adopted Australian identity. Consequently the notion of Hazara-ness or what it means to be Hazara is therefore a complex process, that is being reconstructed and reproduced according to family bonds that they maintain, Hazara gatherings, their food, cultural values, language, their historical past (persecution), their place in society, both Afghanistan and Australia.

References:

- ABRAHAM, I. & BUSBRIDGE, R. 2014. Afghan-Australians: Diasporic Tensions, Homeland Transformations and the "2014 Syndrome". *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 34, 243-258.
- ALI, S. 2011. The politics of Islamic identities. In: ELLIOTT, A. (ed.) *The Routledge Handbook of Identity Studies*. London and New York: Routledge.
- ANG, I., BRAND, J. E., NOBLE, G. & STERNBERG, J. 2006. Connecting diversity: Paradoxes of multicultural Australia.
- ATKIN, M. 1992. Religious, National and Other Identities in Central Asia. In: GROSS, J.-A. (ed.) *Muslims in Central Asia*. Durham: Duke University.
- BARTH, F. (ed.) 1969. *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries - The Social Organization of Culture Difference*, Boston: Little, Brown and Company.
- BRAH, A. 2007. Non-binarized Identities of Similarity and Difference. In: WERTHERELL, M., LAFLÈCHE, M. & BERKELEY, R. (eds.) *Identity, Ethnic Diversity and Social Cohesion*. London: Sage.
- BRASS, P. R. 1996. Ethnic and Ethnic Identity Formation. In: HUTCHINSON, J. & SMITH, A. D. (eds.) *Ethnicity*. Oxford: Oxford University.
- BREWER, J. 2000. *Ethnography*, McGraw-Hill Education (UK).
- BRYMAN, A. & BURGESS, R. G. 1994. Reflections on Qualitative Data Analysis. In: BRYMAN, A. & BURGESS, R. G. (eds.) *Analyzing Qualitative Data*. London: Routledge.
- CASTELLS, M. 2004. *The Power of Identity - The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture*, Malden, MA, Blackwell.
- CERULO, K. A. 1997. Identity Construction: New Issues, New Directions. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 23, 385-409.
- CMMIPS, C. F. M. M. A. I. P. S. 2009. Muslim Voices: Hopes & Aspirations of Muslim Australians, Melbourne.
- CÔTÉ, J. E. & LEVINE, C. G. 2002. *Identity Formation, Agency, and Culture: A Social Psychological Synthesis*, Mahwah, NJ, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- DALISAY, F. 2012. Media use and acculturation of new immigrants in the United States. *Communication Research Reports*, 29, 148-160.
- EMADI, H. 1997. The Hazaras and Their Role in the Process of Political Transformation in Afghanistan. *Central Asian Survey*, 16, 363-387
- ENLOE, C. 1996. Religion and Ethnicity. In: HUTCHINSON, J. & SMITH, A. D. (eds.) *Ethnicity*. Oxford: Oxford University.
- FEIST, H., TAN, G., MCDUGALL, K. & HUGO, G. 2014. Enabling Rural Migrant Settlement: A Case Study of the Limestone Coast. Australian Population and Migration Research Centre (APMRC).
- GLAZEBROOK, D. 2004. Becoming Mobile After Detention. *Social Analysis*, 48, 40-58.
- GLAZER, N. & MOYNIHAN, D. P. (eds.) 1975. *Ethnicity - Theory and Experience*, Cambridge: Harvard University.
- HALL, S. 1994. The question of cultural identity. *The Polity Reader in Cultural Theory*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- HOROWITZ, D. L. 1975. Ethnic Identity. In: GLAZER, N. & MOYNIHAN, D. P. (eds.) *Ethnicity - Theory and Experience*. Cambridge: Harvard University.
- KABIR, N., AFROSE 2010. *Young British Muslims: Identity, Culture and the Media*, Edinburgh, University of Edinburgh.

- KABIR, N., AFROSE 2013. *Young American Muslims: Dynamics of identity*, Edinburgh, University of Edinburgh.
- KABIR, N. A. 2005. *Muslims in Australia: Immigration, race relations, and cultural history*, London, Kegan Paul.
- LAITIN, D. D. 1998. *Identity in Formation - The Russian-Speaking Populations in the Near Abroad*, Ithaca, Cornell.
- LANGE, C., KAMALKHANI, Z. & BALDASSAR, L. 2007. Afghan Hazara Refugees in Australia: Constructing Australian Citizens. *Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture*, 13, 31-50.
- LAWLER, S. 2007. *Identity: Sociological Perspectives*, Cambridge, Polity.
- LEUNG, L., LAMB, C. & EMRYS, L. 2009. *Technology's refuge: the use of technology by asylum seekers and refugees*, Sydney.: UTSePress.
- LUBIN, N. 1995. Islam and Ethnic Identity in Central Asia: A View from Below. In: RO'I, Y. (ed.) *Muslim Eurasia: Conflicting Legacies*.
- MACKENZIE, L. & GUNTARIK, O. 2015. Rites of Passage: Experiences of Transition for Forced Hazara Migrants and Refugees in Australia. *Crossings: Journal of Migration & Culture*, 6, 59-80.
- MCGREGOR, R. 2006. The necessity of Britishness: Ethno-cultural roots of Australian nationalism. *Nations and Nationalism*, 12, 493-511.
- MNM, I. C. F. M. A. N.-M. U. 2015. *Australian Muslims: A Demographic, Social and Economic Profile of Muslims in Australia* Adelaide: University of South Australia.
- MOL, H. (ed.) 1978. *Identity and Religion - International Cross-Cultural Approaches*, London: Sage Publications.
- MORAN, A. 2011. Multiculturalism as nation-building in Australia: Inclusive national identity and the embrace of diversity. *Ethnic and racial studies*, 34, 2153-2172.
- NAGEL, J. 1994. Constructing Ethnicity: Creating and Recreating Ethnic Identity and Culture. *Social Problems*, 41, 152-176.
- NEVE, A., , , <> 2014. An Exploration of the Renegotiated and Performed Identities among Hazara Men in Australia. [Accessed 11 December 2015].
- NOWELL, L. 2014. The Hazaras of Dandenong. *Age*, July 17, 2014.
- PAREKH, B. 2008. *A new politics of identity: Political principles for an interdependent world*, Palgrave Macmillan.
- RADFORD, D. 2014. Contesting and negotiating religion and ethnic identity in Post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan. *Central Asian Survey*, 33, 15-28.
- SAIKAL, A. 2012. Afghanistan: The Status of the Shi'ite Hazara Minority. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 32, 80-87.
- SERVICES, D. O. S. 2014. *The Afghanistan-Born Community, Settlement and Multicultural Affairs*. 2014 ed. Australia: Department of Social Services
- SHAHRANI, M. N. 1984. From Tribe to Umma: Comments on the Dynamics of Identity in Muslim Soviet Central Asia. *Central Asia Survey*, 3, 27-38.
- SMITH, K. E. I. & LEAVY, P. 2008. *Hybrid identities: theoretical and empirical examinations*, Brill.
- SURUCU, C. 2002. Modernity, Nationalism, Resistance; Identity Politics in post-Soviet Kazakhstan. *Central Asia Survey*, 21, 385-402.
- TUDSRI, P. & HEBBANI, A. 2014. Now I'm Part of Australia and I Need to Know What Is Happening Here': Case of Hazara Male Former Refugees in Brisbane Strategically Selecting Media to Aid Acculturation. *International Migration & Integration*, 16, 1273-1289.
- YASMEEN, S. 2008. *Understanding Muslim identities: From perceived relative exclusion to inclusion*, Department of Immigration and Citizenship Canberra.
- ZANG, X. 2013. Major Determinants of Uyghur Ethnic Consciousness in Ürümchi. *Modern Asian Studies*, 47, 2046-2071.

ZEBIRI, K. 2008. *British Muslim Converts - Choosing Alternative Lives*, Oxford, Oneworld.