

Review of: "Post-Conflict Reconstruction: How Social Identity Change Informs our Understanding of the Ukrainian Experience of Forced Migration"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

The article presents research findings on the impact of changes in social identity on the psychosocial well-being of Ukrainian refugees in the United Kingdom, who found themselves in this country after the Russian aggression that began in February 2022. The authors successfully integrate various theories, such as the SIMIC framework and Collective Self-Realization, Social Identity Theory, and Self-Identification Theory, providing the work with theoretical depth and laying the necessary groundwork for further discussion. Including references to previous research, especially the works of C. Haslam, Iyer, Jetten, Muldoon, and others, provides scientific support to the piece and connects it with existing theories and findings.

The structure of the article is clearly organized, starting with an introduction and statement of the research aim, then sequentially discussing the results through various themes and subthemes. This ensures ease of comprehension and a coherent flow of arguments. The work consistently links the psychosocial approach with the concept of social identity, emphasizing the importance of social identity support in mitigating secondary stressors.

The article presents an extensive review of the social approach to identity in the context of forced migration and brings important insights into how social identities can serve as both a "social cure" or a "social curse" for refugees. However, the use of the terms "social cure" and "social curse" may be ambiguous for the reader. Although the concept "social curse" is mentioned, its definition and connection to previous research in this area are not provided, which hinders a complete understanding of this concept.

The use of in-depth interviews focusing on narrative storytelling provides flexibility and inductiveness in the research. This allows participants to freely express their experiences, providing deeper and more detailed data. The application of the "talking stones" method adds an original and projective aspect to the research. This method not only helps participants visualize their social identities but also creates space for a more creative and profound understanding of their experiences. This contributes to reducing potential researcher bias and enhances participants' sense of agency. Including direct statements from research participants (Ukrainian refugees) makes the article vivid and allows readers to better understand the emotional context of their experiences. The emotional depth experienced by participants in connection with the conflict caused by the Russian invasion of Ukraine is effectively conveyed. Quotes from participants demonstrate the intensity of feelings and the complexity of their thoughts.

The study explores aspects of despair and uncertainty, presenting an analysis of the complex and emotionally charged

experience of refugees from Ukraine, focusing on the emotions associated with their status and relocation to another country (in this case, the United Kingdom). Emotional and psychological aspects of relocation and uncertainty are presented, creating an impression of candor and sensitivity to the complexity of the refugees' experiences.

The impact of alienation on labor identity is shown, which can influence professional identity, particularly through changes in employment status. This draws attention to a wide range of changes in refugees' lives. An important question of "stigma awareness" is raised, along with the complex aspects of loss of identity meaning among refugees from Ukraine. The metaphorical representation through the "social level" clearly illustrates how valuable social connections support the individual, adding depth to the understanding of the alienation process.

The research findings emphasize the importance of resources and knowledge in refugees' adaptation and highlight how these resources provide support in difficult situations. Mentioning that not all Ukrainians had the same level of support provides a balanced view of the diversity of situations. The authors pay attention to how shared social identities (e.g., 'being Ukrainian in the UK') can contribute to overcoming individual differences and promote collaboration and support. The importance of communication in the adaptation process of refugees is explored, highlighting conflicts arising during identity reconstruction.

Despite the significant contribution of this study to understanding the process of post-conflict reconstruction, certain aspects are not sufficiently developed. For instance, the fragment mentions tension regarding the use of the Russian language within the Ukrainian community but does not provide a deeper analysis of this phenomenon. However, this aspect is quite problematic and reflects the issue of confrontation between Ukrainian and Russian-speaking citizens in Ukraine.

The aspect of self-identification is presented somewhat superficially. Only two statements are provided, assessing the arrival in the UK as an opportunity to start a new life and as something they dreamed of. While this may be clear for young women, there is no information regarding the elderly. Situations of women with children, who are also part of the sample, are not analyzed. In the article, there was a statement from a woman with higher education and a strong professional background about how she has to work as service personnel, which greatly oppresses her. This also relates to self-identification. However, there is no information about how she sees her future in the UK, whether it is temporary or permanent, or her intentions to return to her home country.

Although participants express positive perspectives on their future in the UK, it would be important to provide additional context to understand what specific opportunities the new country provides them with and what challenges they have to overcome. While quotes from several participants are provided, the study could be strengthened by adding more diverse examples to highlight commonalities or differences in experiences.

Given that the study is focused on a short period of time (seven to nine months), it may be limiting, excluding long-term consequences and identities that may develop after a longer time in the new environment.

The authors clearly outline the limitations of the study, which helps to identify opportunities for interpretation and

understanding of the research results. Based on the above, this work makes a significant contribution to understanding the process of integration of Ukrainian migrants into the UK and the post-conflict reconstruction of their social identity.