

Developing Selves: Adolescent 'men' on the move

Exploring the meaning of forced and onward migration to young Eritrean refugees

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CONTEXT

ADOLESCENTS - have a significant presence within the overall refugee population with a higher ratio of adolescent refugee boys to girls. In 2017 93% of unaccompanied children arriving in Italy, Greece and Bulgaria were boys between 15 and 17 years of age.

ERITREANS - formed the 9th largest refugee population in the world in 2017. Eritreans are granted prima facie asylum in Ethiopia. A UNHCR survey (2016) found that 80% of registered Eritrean refugees move-on within a year of arriving in Ethiopia's northern refugee camps.



RESEARCH CHALLENGES

LANGUAGE - can we assume that "truth" can be adequately accessed across the language barrier?

RETICENCE - what kind of cooperation can be expected in a social context of suspicion and secrecy arising from surveillance and control?

ETHICS - the entire process must be imbued with ethical sensitivity - particularly due to the young age of participants (16 - 20 years old).

IDENTITY - How will the researcher and participant perceive one another? What power dynamics will shape the process?

SOME KEY CONCEPTS

Migration and Gender - migration as a gendered social process.

Migration as a rite of passage/strategy to achieve "social becoming" (Ungruhe & Esson); to achieve a masculine sense of self and move towards "adulthood" (Tefferi 2007).

"Waithood" versus "Agency" (Belloni, 2019)

"Youth" as a meaningful life stage between childhood and adulthood

METHODOLOGY

Research Aims - to explore the meaning of migration (forced and onward) to young male refugees' developing sense of self as they transition towards adulthood.

Qualitative paradigm - well suited to addressing questions of meaning.

Epistemological Reflexivity - How is the design of this study affecting the kind of knowledge that is being generated?

Personal Reflexivity - In what ways is the researcher (with their assumptions and world view) influencing the research process, and how is the research impacting on the researcher?

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