

ETHNIC IDENTITY OF THE FIRST POSTWAR GENERATION OF AUSTRALIAN SLOVENES¹

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INTRODUCTION

The history of Australia is doubtlessly connected with the rapid population growth of the continent which is the result of the continuing immigration from 1788, that is the onset of the British colonization, onward. The colonization by the British caused two demographic processes: at first a rapid decrease of the Aboriginal population, which started to climb gradually² only after 1945, and constant immigration of the English, Scots, and the Irish; from the beginning of the 19th century onward these were followed by other ethnic groups. Since this ongoing immigration to Australia has always determined the destiny of the country and its population, immigration to the fifth continent plays a primary role in Australian history, politics, economy, culture and, last but not least, in daily lives of those who consider themselves Australians (Anglo-Saxon whites, born in Australia), as well as those who had immigrated there (the so-called »new Australians«).

Especially the latter, and among them Australian Slovenes as well, were in the course of this process of their adaptation to the life in a new natural and

¹ This paper was presented at the 50th AAASS National Convention in Boca Raton, Florida, in September 1998.

² When white people came to Australia, Aboriginal population numbered 300,000 (*Australian Information Service, Australia – an Introduction*, Canberra 1981, p. 11), 67,000 in 1901 (Jock Collins, *Migrant Hands in a Distant Land, Australia's Post-war Immigration*, Sydney: Pluto Press, 1988, p. 19), 160,915 in 1976 (*Australian Information Service, Australia ...*, p. 11).

social environment strongly influenced by the official Australian immigration policy. Between 1947 and 1966, thus in the period during which a great majority of postwar Australian Slovenes immigrated to the Australian continent³ it was based on the principle of assimilation of new immigrants advocated by the Australian government. This was the period of the »complete melting with the Australian culture,« the roots of which were still in the prewar racist and British aspirations to preserve an ethnically homogenous »Australian race.« This was followed by the period of the so-called integration of immigrants (1966–1972) which, because of the mixture of ethnically heterogeneous »new Australians,« caused radical changes of the British uniformity of the Australian population. Last but not least, the growing demands for an equal status of the new immigrants, chiefly those who were not of Anglo-Saxon origin, with other Australians, in 1972 forced the government to adopt a new, more tolerant immigration policy called multiculturalism.

These were the postwar political and historic circumstances in which the ethnic identity of first-generation Australian Slovenes originated and developed. This ethnic identity remains an ongoing dynamic process which is closely connected to the broader social processes of the changing emigrant and immigrant societies of the immigrants.

SOME THOUGHTS ON IDENTITY

Etymologically speaking, identity denotes »sameness« in Slovene.⁴ This definition can also be found in the work entitled *Identiteta (Identity)*, Ljubljana 1993, p. 11) by Slovene anthropologist Stane Južnič. After Južnič I cite two kinds

³ In 1951, when Australia had a population of about 8.5 million, there lived about 3000 Slovenes (*Misli*, 1/1952, No. 9); in 1963 the Australian population was about 10.5 million (Charles A. Price, *Australian Immigration, A Bibliography and Digest*, No. 2, Canberra 1970, p. A 55), between 10–15,000 of them Slovenes (*Misli*, 11/1963, No. 7); in 1981 the population of the fifth continent already numbered around 14.5 million (*Atlas svijeta / World Atlas*, Zagreb: Jugoslavenski leksikografski zavod »Miroslav Krleža«, 1988, p. 229); about 25–30,000 of them were Slovenes (this information appears from 1975 onwards; in: Jože Prešeren, *Izseljenci v Avstraliji / Immigrants in Australia*, *Enciklopedija Slovenije*, IV, Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 1990, p. 221).

⁴ France Verbinc, *Slovar tujk (Dictionary of Foreign Words)*, Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 1987, p. 279.

of identity: personal (consisting of an individual's selfidentification and of an identification a society affixes to an individual) and group identity (which, just like an adherence of individual members of a certain society, can be extremely heterogenous). Both are formed through the relation of an individual toward him- or herself, and toward others. Through his personal identity an individual takes part in group (social) identity which is as unstable and diverse as an identity of an individual is multilayered and stratified.

One of the group identities is »movable« identity brought about by the »general mobility of the modern, developed society.«⁵ Physical mobility of individuals – immigrants – is a part of this process. A characteristic trait of immigrant identity is that in a new environment it assumes »innumerable aspects«,⁶ namely as many as there are differences (racial, ethnic, cultural, etc.) between themselves and the native population. These »aspects« form a component part of group identity as well. Any identity, however, has to be placed within the social reality in which it exists, or else it remains beyond our understanding.

Let me add to this anthropological view of identity also the viewpoint of social psychologists: according to them, the process of socialization, and especially of social interaction between an individual and others, is of utmost importance for the formation of identity. According to Mirjana Nastran-Ule these processes represent »a mirror in which he ... observes himself.«⁷ It is this so-called »effect of the mirror self,« in which an individual recognizes himself through the acceptance or the rejection of what others think about himself, which influences the formation of his identity. This identity is divided into personal identity, social identity, and the identity of the self. The first comprises individual characteristics of an individual and his or her capability of action; the second represents the totality of normative expectations an individual has to meet in a social situation, and at the same time the totality of identifications through which he or she is recognized by others; an individual acquires the third identity by maintaining the balance between the personal and the social one. Since this balance cannot be successfully preserved at all times, an »identity crisis of an individual«⁸ often occurs in the process of formation of the identity of the self; in searching for him-

⁵ Stane Južnič, *Identiteta (Identity)*, Ljubljana 1993, p. 132.

⁶ Idem, p. 138.

⁷ Mirjana Nastran-Ule, *Socialna psihologija (Social Psychology)*, Ljubljana 1992, p. 366.

⁸ Idem, p. 368.

or herself, a person feeling that everything is possible, that numerous possibilities for his or her identification are thus open, can get lost. The choices of identifying with something are so numerous that a person's identity gradually becomes imperfect, partial, dispersed. Social psychologists call it »patchwork identity.«⁹

This patchwork identity often occurs also among immigrants, in the ethnic identity in which we are especially interested. Life stories of individual immigrants, in our case of Australian Slovenes, best illustrate how their ethnic identity was formed during the course of several decades of living in their new geographical, social, and cultural environment. Their stories speak not only about themselves,¹⁰ but also about others,¹¹ which within the framework of life stories also fulfills the basic prerogative for a formation of any kind of identity, that is the we – others relationship. From the viewpoint of immigrants their relationship with others reflect the personal and the group identity of the narrator, into which Južnič classifies ethnic identity as well, as has already been said. The necessity of placing the contents of a life story in a historic context enables one an easier understanding of the process of formation of ethnic identity of an individual – an immigrant – in a definite time and place.

AUSTRALIAN SLOVENES ON ETHNIC IDENTITY

Autobiographies of informants,¹² first-generation Australian Slovenes who came to Australia after 1947, present the basic source from which I had drawn in

⁹ Idem, p. 376.

¹⁰ Linda Degh defines autobiographies according to two basic criteria: 1. they are spontaneous oral narratives of individuals, 2. they narrate about oneself (the narrator). See: Linda Degh, *Beauty, Wealth and Power: Career Choices for Women in Folktales, Fairytales and Modern Media*, in: *Life History as a Cultural Construction / Performance*, ed. Tamás Hofer and Péter Niedermüller, Budapest 1988, pp. 13–19.

¹¹ Velčić's definition of autobiographies is somewhat different: according to her they are based on the dialogue between the narrator and the interrogator, and speak not only about the life of the former, but also about other people incorporated into the story of the narrator's life. See: Mirna Velčić, *Odtisak priče, Intertekstualno proučavanje autobiografije (Impression of the Story, Intertextual Research of Autobiographies)*, Zagreb 1991, p. 38.

¹² The article will cite authors of autobiographies (e.g. A. Mariza Ličan). In this manner life stories of Slovene immigrants, recorded in Australia in 1981/82, 1984, and 1990,

order to depict the origin of and the changes in their ethnic identity in the course of their life in immigration. Since most of these autobiographies have already been published,¹³ let me just recall certain excerpts from their contents, especially those which vividly illustrate the experience of changes brought about when a certain group of people moves to another part of the world. Visible as well as invisible («ungraspable») symbols of their ethnic identity, which are closely connected to the old, original society as well as the new, host society, are manifested precisely through these experiences of the new, initially foreign, then gradually familiar environment.

Most members of the first generation of Slovenes who had moved to Australia after World War II came there between 1947 and 1968, either as »displaced persons« (D.P's), or as »refugees« (reffos). Since the Australian immigration policy treated all of them on an equal basis, after their arrival to Australia the journey of all the selected informants proceeded in a similar manner: arrival – immigration center («kamp,« »lagar,« »hostel») – moving around Australia (changing jobs and dwellings) – settling down (obtaining permanent jobs, housing arrangements, secured existence, family life, acquired knowledge of at least colloquial English). These were simultaneously the main elements in the autobiographies of Slovene immigrants with which in the course of their daily lives they demonstrated their difference from other immigrant ethnic groups, and even more so from the Australians. These differences were even more pronounced in the period before these Slovene immigrants learned the language of their new homeland:

»During these six months (after her arrival to Australia in 1965, author's note) ... I met Irishmen, Scots, Englishmen. Yet I cannot even begin to describe how miserable I had felt then. They spoke English and I could see them looking at me, asking things, but I was not capable of answering them. I was really de-

are kept at the Institute for Slovene Emigration Studies (Centre of Scientific Research of the Slovene Academy of Sciences and Arts) archives (the Autobiographies of Australian Slovenes Fund).

¹³ See: Breda Čebulj-Sajko, *Med srečo in svobodo: Avstralski Slovenci o sebi (Between Happiness and Freedom, Australian Slovenes about Themselves)*, Ljubljana: published by the author, 1992, pp. 87–231; B. Čebulj-Sajko, *Posledice »dvojnje identitete« v vsakdanjem življenju avstralskih Slovencev (Consequences of »Double Identity« in Everyday Life of Australian Slovenes)*, Doctoral thesis, Ljubljana: Department for Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology of the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, 1994, Appendix.

pressed. Often I would just evade their company, so they finally thought I disliked socializing with them, disliked people. When in reality there just wasn't any communication.« (A. Mariza Ličan)

For the majority this language barrier denoted an otherwise isolation as well, but it gradually disappeared when contacts at work were formed and when marriages occurred.

At the same time, comparisons between what they had left at home and what they encountered in their new environment became part of their everyday reality:

»Wide-eyed we stared from the train. It was the first time that we laid our eyes upon this country (Australia, in 1948, author's note). We were not used to this, there were no villages along the railtracks. Just the rails, and nothing on either side.« (A. Egon Katnik)

»When we got to Sydney (in 1948, author's note), everybody left the ship and proceeded to Bathurst, the central immigration center. There were some sort of military barracks there which had been used during the war. And we were put there ... men in one camp, women and kids in another ... There was plenty of food, just not the kind we could eat. We were served Australian sheep, prepared the Australian way. It had such a smell that we just couldn't eat. So we lived mostly on jam ..., cheese, bread, and porridge.« (A. Jože Čuješ)

»When we came here (to Australia in 1959, author's note), I went to a store ..., into a large Davis Jones. And I looked at those materials and shoes – awful! You couldn't get a decent pair of shoes, or a decent pair of pants ... Ready-made clothes were really terrible. Well, so I said to my sister-in-law, 'Dear god, it was much better in our country!' (in Slovenia, author's note)« (A. Milena Mavko)

»At the train station (in Sydney in 1965, author's note) I watched people. They hurry. If one fell down, maybe nobody would notice. Everybody hurrying by, and you stand there and watch, a stranger among them, ... as if you were not human. And then I was really surprised at houses, at apartments; everything is so different. Especially the city, it does not offer much, it's all the same. ... If I saw a fir tree I thought it was wonderful. It reminded me of home. ... For instance, when you walk around and somebody tells you: 'This is a school.' You gaze at it, seeing those doors and a couple of playgrounds, but they don't mean a thing. Back in my country (in Slovenia, author's note) you walk by a school and know right away that you are passing a school, an institution.« (A. Mariza Ličan)

Even though the majority of immigrants had no intention of remaining abroad permanently, none of the selected informants returned to their original

homeland to stay. During the period in which they became materially independent, thus when they found permanent work, saved enough money to buy an apartment or a house, and sorted out their family life, their emotional connection with their original homeland gradually diminished. It could also be said that their feeling of belonging solely to what is defined as Slovene has started to disappear parallelly to their increasing material independence. Furthermore, simultaneously with this process a double identity gradually started to take shape: the one connected with the Slovene community in Australia and with their previous homeland on one hand, and the one connected with the Australian society on the other. A Slovene immigrant had put it this way:

»Well, I have already learned enough to feel this (Australia, author's note) is my second home, right?« (A. Hedviga Samsa)

It could also be said that this double appurtenance is a compromise between the »old« and the »new«.

In the us – others relationship, namely in the relationship between Slovenes and the Australian society, an important role of distinction was played by the visible symbols of ethnic identity. Since national costumes, ethnic food, music, dances, and singing remain the most recognizable symbols of ethnic identity of the first generation of Slovenes in Australia, this is perfectly understandable. In this respect they are no different from other ethnic groups in Australia. From the very beginning of the Australian multicultural policy other »new Australians« used similar symbols to express their ethnic origins, especially during yearly ethnic events and festivals. This was therefore a process of mutual recognition of the fifth continent's ethnically heterogenous population.

Now, when the first generation of Australian Slovenes are getting older, the tendency of expressing their ethnic identity in everyday public life is less pronounced; stronger is the wish to preserve this ethnic identity within the second generation, be it in societies and religious centers, or within families. During this process the members of the first generation assumed the role of transmitters of the traditions and the culture of their emigrant society onto their children. This was mainly the tradition and the culture which had existed at home in Slovenia at the time of their emigration:

»We, that is the first generation, are not aware that back home (in Slovenia, author's note) everything had changed as well. We still see the Slovenia we had left, right? So we want to educate our young in the same spirit, right? We don't allow the young to proceed beyond that ... They don't need these Slovene traditions. It's more their parents' wish than their own.« (A. Vinko Ovičaj)

The fact is that the children of first-generation Australian Slovenes, thus those who were born in Australia, are primarily Australians, only then Slovenes. Due to their impeccable knowledge of English they are, above all, the link between their parents and the Australian society, much as the first generation of Australian Slovenes were the link between their children and Slovenia:

»When they go home (to Slovenia, author's note), they (the two daughters of a Slovene couple, author's note) say: 'We are going home.' There is something there for them. Their grandmother is there. When we go on holiday to Adelaide, there is no grandmother, there is no aunt. And right away you know who belongs to your family. Our two daughters are proud to be Australian. At the same time, though, they are proud to say: 'We are Slovenian descendants.'« (A. Marta Obleščak)

Children remain one of the most decisive reasons why their parents decided to permanently settle in Australia:

»No, because of my two daughters I could not go back (to Slovenia, author's note). We are friends and have established a close relationship. Nobody, not even the whole of Slovenia, could ever have given me what my daughters and I share.« (A. Marta Obleščak)

Despite the fact that their homeland cannot replace their nuclear family, the life of Slovene immigrants in Australia remains split: their children and an adequate standard of living tie them to Australia, while their feelings and their reliving of their life in Slovenia leave a psychic void in their everyday life:

»I think it is easier to forget one's mother than one's homeland. Mother dies. It is rough. There is the grave, the burial. But living abroad, one gradually forgets. One's youth, the place where one grew up, however, is never forgotten.« (A. Jože Čuješ)

»I have adapted; Australia did me no harm. I do love Australia in my own way, but my roots are back home (in Slovenia, author's note). We do not have two homelands! We all know that we have but one, and that is final! My heart is torn in two halves ... I became accustomed to Australia, but Australia is not my homeland.« (A. Pavla Gruden)

»It may be true that we do not live exactly as we did back home (in Slovenia, author's note). But it is also true that we have not exactly adapted to the Australian way of life.« (A. Vinko Obleščak)

The myth of Slovenia is built upon the nostalgia for the time spent at home, in Slovenia. Slovene immigrants are thus even more torn in their ethnic identity:

»I am downright scared to return to Slovenia. I am afraid I will be disappointed, expecting the beauty I remember from then. ... Those pretty forests of Pohorje, for instance, the things I remember so well. I am really afraid there is already a road identical to the one we have here (in Australia, author's note).« (A. Jože Čuješ)

This idealized notion of their homeland and the people they had left behind has been shattered in some of those who had gone to Slovenia for a visit. Faced with a reality different from the one they had expected, they were disappointed. This disappointment is also reflected in a statement of one of them:

»I went home (to Slovenia, author's note), but you don't have anything there. You do not have what I had left behind ...« (A. Jože Voršič)

According to their opinion their emigrant society had not accepted them anymore, so a return to Australia denoted coming back to a refuge where they could continue remembering their life at home. Yet they have not given up being Slovene, for »Our homeland has been, is, and shall always be in our hearts.« (A. Frido Mavko)

Those, however, whose experience of the nature and people in Slovenia had remained unaffected by the changes there, felt even closer to their original homeland and its people after having returned from a visit:

»I go to Slovenia. My home is there. My brother lives there. I go home and sit in front of our house, and nobody can change that valley. That is the most beautiful image ever painted on this earth.« (A. Marta Obleščak)

Regardless of their relation toward their original home, the inner split of these immigrants still persists. It is based on the fact that they were born in a culture different from the one they live in at present. Their awareness of belonging to both cultures, and its manifestation on the spiritual, emotional, and material level of their life manifests itself as the basic inner conflict of the majority of informants:

»I find myself in a place with no starting-point. It looks like a labyrinth, and I want to rise above it. Rising above it means you have to go home (to Slovenia, author's note), you have to leave your children, your house, and everything. And yet at home you cannot adapt. You are already too old.« (A. Pavla Gruden)

Since they always place themselves in two roles, in the case of Slovenes in Australia the we – others relationship is twofold: in relation to their homeland they see themselves as emigrants, while in relation to the host society they are immigrants. An awareness of their ethnic origins, which forms the basis of their ethnic identity, is always present in both. This ethnic identity was formed in a social process in which – from the viewpoint of the present – both periods in the

lives of immigrants had left their traces: their life at home, spanning from their birth to the time of emigration, and the one afterwards. The result of both is their double ethnic identity which influences their daily lives abroad, be it on the level of individuality (memories of their homeland), family (raising their children in the spirit of tradition and the language they had brought with them to the fifth continent), Slovene community (associations, churches, and religious centers in which the aforementioned visible symbols of their identity are maintained), or on the level of the Australian society as a whole (where, compared to the Australian one, their ethnic identity remains much more defined).

WHY THE »DOUBLE« ETHNIC IDENTITY

As has already been mentioned, the ethnic identity of Australian Slovenes was formed through the we – others relationship on the level of an individual, of his or her family, Slovene community, Slovene homeland, and the Australian society.

Belonging to something, also identifying with something, thus represented the decisive element which had been changed and transformed throughout different historical periods. Among the first generation of Australian Slovenes this process is not yet completed. Despite this, an analysis of the condition of their ethnic appurtenance at the beginning of 1980's presents an opportunity for at least a hypothetical argumentation of this double identity which is also evident in their autobiographies. I shall analyze it according to the generally established criteria of belonging to the territory, the community, culture, and language,¹⁴ on which an ethnos, and its subsequent ethnic identity, are formed:

– in the process of the formation of immigrants' double ethnic identity the appurtenance of an individual to the territory of his or her ethnic group is especially important. In the case of Australian Slovenes this is an emotional appurtenance to the territory of »domesticity and security«, which they define geographically – it denotes the place where they were born (professional literature defines this appurtenance with the notion of symbolic territoriality).¹⁵ Because they permanently live in an immigrant society, however, in my opinion theirs is also

¹⁴ I summarize this definition after Južnič, *Identiteta...*, p. 268, and after Južnič, *Antropologija (Anthropology)*, Ljubljana 1987, p. 223.

¹⁵ Južnič, *Identiteta*, p. 149.

the case of »actual territoriality«, consequently belonging to the area in which they live;

– furthermore, a more palpable proof of their double ethnic identity is their feeling of belonging to the community. Again we refer to the community in which immigrants were born (the community of origin),¹⁶ as well as the one to which they moved permanently, and which is different from the community of origin (it can also be termed the »immigrant« community). Since immigrants are incorporated into it only gradually, we can also speak about a simultaneous process of the formation of their new – this time double – appurtenance: to the old, emigrant community, and to the new, »immigrant« one;

– within this process the appurtenance to the culture (Austrian Slovene) and the language (English – Slovene) is formed anew.¹⁷ In immigration both criteria of ethnic identity become split.

In view of the doubts regarding the individual, for whom it is »Almost impossible ... to be 'ethnically split' or to have double ethnic identity«,¹⁸ the situation of the immigrant in a foreign environment is so specific that it is getting nearer to, if not entirely identical with, the indicated possibilities of double identity. In view of the criteria analyzed above this identity can be termed ethnic identity. And since the condition of their community in Australia is reflected through the experiences of several individuals – Slovene immigrants, we can speak about double ethnic identity on this level as well.

Yet in formulating this double ethnic identity in such a manner there remains an impression about a rather static, obvious process in the life of the immigrant. In order to avoid this we should consider the fact that identity had not been given to a person at the time of his or her birth, but evolves, as had been stressed by social psychologists, in the course of his or her interaction with others. In order to fulfill this condition it is necessary to live in a social environment in which an individual assumes his or her role and strategy in relation to others. It is this very strategy that enables the manipulation in expressing his or her ethnic identity, especially in a multiethnic society such as the Australian one. According to K. F. Lian this is the only possible means of survival and of cohabitation of the

¹⁶ Južnič, *Antropologija*, p. 223.

¹⁷ Aside from the already-mentioned adherence to a territory and a community, according to Južnič the most important continuities of ethnic identity are the appurtenances to a culture and to a language (*ibid.*).

¹⁸ Južnič, *Identiteta*, p. 269.

members of different ethnic groups which form such a society.¹⁹ These groups combine the knowledge about their emigrant as well as their immigrant society. Their identification with their original country, community, culture, and language becomes just as acceptable for them as their identification with the country, community, culture, and language of their immigrant society. This is aptly reflected in a reply in the form of a rhetorical question of an Australian Slovene after he was asked whether he was Slovene or Australian:

»Well, how shall I put it?« (A. Bill Marinič)

Eventually it is the specific social situation which decisively influences an immigrant's strategy of expressing his or her double ethnic identity. In the case of ethnic groups in an ethnically diverse society in which their ethnic, cultural, religious, and other differences are slowly diminishing, even a term »multi-ethnic identity«²⁰ appeared of late – as opposed to the reservations about the possible existence of double ethnic identity. Last but not least, it could be classified as one of the »patchwork identities«, and certainly it also belongs to the complex of »movable identities.« As has already been mentioned, there are »endless« aspects of immigrant identity, and of ethnic identity as well. Double identity is but one of them.

POVZETEK

ETNIČNA IDENTITETA PRVE POVOJNE GENERACIJE AVSTRALSKIH SLOVENCEV

Breda Čebulj Sajko

Vsebina članka osvetljuje dva osrednja problema: teoretično opredelitev pojma identiteta (na osnovi socialnoantropoloških in socialnopsiholoških definicij) in osebno doživljanje razvoja in spreminjanja etnične identitete posameznika.

¹⁹ Kwen Fee Lian, *Identity in Minority Group Relations, Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 5 (1982), No. 1, pp. 49, 50.

²⁰ Idem, p. 51.

nih avstralskih Slovencev (pripadnikov prvih generacij, izseljenih v Avstralijo po letu 1945) v novem družbenem in geografskem okolju, in sicer v okviru širšega zgodovinskega procesa spreminjanja izvirne in vselitvene družbe izseljencev.

Avtorica postavi tezo o možnosti obstoja dvojne etnične identitete, ki se izkaže za relevantno že v sami analizi poteka vsakdanjega življenja informatorjev: ko so le-ti dosegli zadovoljivo stopnjo materialne neodvisnosti, je pri njih začel izginjati občutek pripadnosti zgolj k vsemu, kar so imeli za slovensko. Vzporedno s tem procesom pa se je postopoma izoblikovala nova pripadnost, pripadnost avstralski družbi.

Pripadnost nečemu, tudi poistovetenje z nečim, je bil torej tisti odločilni element, ki se je v toku družbenih dogajanj v posameznih zgodovinskih obdobjih spreminjal in preoblikoval. In če upoštevamo zgolj etimološko izpeljavo pojma identiteta, ki v slovenščini pomeni istovetnost, se je le-ta lahko oblikovala le v t.i. odnosu mi – drugi, ki je tudi sicer osnovni kriterij za oblikovanje katerekoli identitete. V primeru avstralskih Slovencev se je izkazal za dvoplastnega, saj sami sebe vedno postavljajo v dve vlogi: v odnosu do rojstne dežele v vlogo izseljencev, do vselitvene družbe pa v vlogo priseljencev. V obeh je stalno prisotno zavedanje etničnega porekla, na katerem temelji njihova etnična identiteta. Kakšna je dejansko, je razpoznavno na ravni posameznikove individualnosti (spominov na domovino), njegove družine (npr. vzgoje otrok v duhu slovenske tradicije in jezika), slovenske skupnosti (društev, klubov, verskih središč) kot tudi na nivoju avstralske družbe v celoti (kjer ostaja njihova etnična identiteta prepoznavna predvsem skozi »vidne simbole« slovenstva – narodne noše, jedi, pesmi...).

Dvojnost v izražanju etnične identitete izseljencev v avstralskem okolju avtorica razloži še s teoretičnega zornega kota: v analizi splošnoveljavnih kriterijev pripadnosti teritoriju, skupnosti, kulturi in jeziku, po katerih se oblikujeta etnija in iz nje etnična identiteta, gre za odraz dejanskega stanja: poistovetenje z izvornim prostorom, skupnostjo, kulturo, jezikom postane za izseljence ravno tako sprejemljivo, kot je sprejemljivo njihovo poistovetenje s prostorom, skupnostjo, kulturo, jezikom vselitvene družbe. Kdaj biti »Slovenec« in kdaj »Avstralec« pa je odvisno od določene družbene situacije, v kateri se znajde posameznik. Zaradi tega lahko govorimo o dvojni etnični identiteti.

V nasprotju s pomisleki o možnosti obstoja tovrstne identitete pa avtorica v zaključku omeni še termin »multietnična identiteta«, ki je v veljavi v multikulturalnih družbah, kakršna je avstralska. Za pripadnike etničnih skupin, ki živijo v takšni družbi in med katerimi se postopoma brišejo etnične, kulturne, verske in druge meje, postaja multietnična identiteta edini možni način sožitja in preživetja.