

From Refugee to Citizen: 'Standing On My Own Two Feet'

A research report on integration,
'Britishness' and citizenship.



REFUGEE
Support

Specialists for over 50 years



Part of  Metropolitan
Support Trust

**Jill Rutter with Laurence Cooley,
Sile Reynolds and Ruth Sheldon**

October 2007

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Foreword

Barbara Roche,
Chair of Metropolitan Support Trust

It is a great pleasure to introduce the first piece of research commissioned by our new Research and Consultancy Unit. It explores the experiences of refugees who have arrived over the last 50 years and their sense of Britishness. Fifty years ago, Refugee Support (at that time known as BCAR Homes) was established, and we wanted to tell the story of our service users and other refugees over that time.

From Refugee to Citizen: Standing on my own two feet allows refugees to speak for themselves. It highlights the high level of political participation and volunteer activity among refugees here in the UK and shows how integration works at the household and individual levels. Britishness is seen as an identity that many refugees come to embrace, not particularly at a cultural level but as a set of values which symbolise freedom of speech and security. We see, through the refugees' own stories, how integration happens over time, not in a linear way but in reaction to everyday experiences, successes and set backs.

I am grateful to those that took part in the research and know that their stories will contribute a great deal to our understanding of these issues.

This is the first of many research projects that Metropolitan Support Trust/ Refugee Support will undertake as it develops its research role, and I hope that this book, in particular, will provide a valuable contribution to the current debate on refugee integration.

The Institute for Public Policy Research (ippr) is the UK's leading progressive think tank and was established in 1988. Its role is to bridge the political divide between the social democratic and liberal traditions, the intellectual divide between academia and the policymaking establishment and the cultural divide between government and civil society. It is first and foremost a research institute, aiming to provide innovative and credible policy solutions. Its work, the questions its research poses and the methods it uses are driven by the belief that the journey to a good society is one that places social justice, democratic participation and economic and environmental sustainability at its core.

For more than a decade ippr's Migration, Equalities and Citizenship Team has been leading the way in promoting a rational, balanced and fair debate on issues of asylum, migration, integration, race equality and citizenship. Our strong publications, links in government, and considerable media attention allow us not only to influence, but also to figure largely in domestic and international policy debates on the issues. Today, the Migration, Equalities and Citizenship team is a key centre of research on migration policy. Our research has covered key themes, including:

- the economic impact of migration
- migration and development
- emigration and secondary migration
- integration and diversity in the UK.

This report has been written for Refugee Support by Jill Rutter, Laurence Cooley, Sile Reynolds and Ruth Sheldon. The views expressed in it do not necessarily represent the views of ippr or Refugee Support.

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Institute for Public Policy Research
30–32 Southampton Street
London WC2E 7RA
Tel: 020 7470 6100
Fax: 020 7470 6111
www.ippr.org
Registered Charity No. 800065

Refugee Support

Refugee Support is one of the country's leading providers of housing and support for refugees and asylum seekers, and is the name of Metropolitan Support Trust's (MST) refugee services. MST is part of Metropolitan Housing Partnership, a family of social businesses that support and complement each other's work.

Refugee Support was established in 1957, as the British Council for Aid to Refugees (BCAR) Housing Society. Its first challenge was to house some of the Hungarian refugees who came to the UK after the 1956 uprising. In 1994 BCAR Housing merged with the Refugee Council's Housing Division, to become Refugee Housing Association. In 1997, Refugee Housing Association – the previous name of Refugee Support – became an independent subsidiary of Metropolitan Housing Partnership.

Metropolitan Housing Partnership, the parent organisation of MST, also works with many refugees, who form part of the diverse communities it serves. Metropolitan Housing Partnership is one of the fastest growing registered social landlords in the UK, responsible for over 34,000 homes in London and the Midlands. It also builds shared ownership properties and is involved in housing regeneration projects and community development.

MST was created in April 2007 from four organisations (Refugee Housing Association, StepForward, Threshold Support and Walbrook Support) coming together to provide a wide range of specialist services to vulnerable people. It is a registered social landlord and a registered charity. The purpose of joining forces was to share the skills and experiences of the four organisations to offer greater choice to service users through the provision of a wider range of specialist support services. MST operates across London, the East and West Midlands, and Yorkshire and Humberside, and works with refugees, people with mental health needs, older people and women fleeing domestic violence. It plans new services, such as in migrant support, education and training, and community investment. MST also advocates for progressive social policy.

One of the exciting new developments within Refugee Support is the new Ashmore Fund and Research Unit. The Ashmore Fund is a restricted fund within MST which was created from the free reserves of the former Refugee Housing Association. It is named after the former Chair, Gillian Ashmore. The purpose of the fund is to support innovative initiatives for the benefit of refugees and migrants, and the Research Unit has received funding for set up costs from it. The Research Unit will commission a programme of research of which this 50th anniversary research study is the first. It is staffed by a Research and Consultancy Manager, Charlotte Keeble and a part-time Research Assistant, Nura Veret.

Housing continues to be the anchor of all MST's work, as it remains a priority element of refugees' integration, but MST organises its services around the individual and aims to assist every service user to make a positive contribution to the UK.

About the authors

Jill Rutter is a Senior Research Fellow at ippr and leads the Migration, Equalities, and Citizenship Team's research on refugee and asylum issues. She has published extensively on all aspects of the refugee experience in the UK and abroad with well over 40 books, chapters, and papers on the issue. Prior to joining ippr Jill was Senior Lecturer and Course Director in Citizenship Education at London Metropolitan University. From 1988–2001 she was a Policy Adviser at the Refugee Council, London. Jill's doctoral thesis was on 'Refugee Education in British Secondary Schools, 1989–1999' and she holds a BA and MSc from the University of Oxford.

Laurence Cooley was formerly a Research Assistant in the Migration, Equalities and Citizenship Team at ippr and is now a postgraduate research student at the University of Birmingham. He holds a first class honours degree in Economics and Politics from the University of Bath and an MA in Politics with distinction from Queen's University Belfast. His research interests include the political economy of migration, particularly in a European context, and ethnic conflict. He has previously worked at HM Treasury and for a human rights organisation in Osijek, Croatia.

Sile Reynolds is a researcher at the Refugee Council and is working on a project examining the apprehension of forced migrants in transit in Europe. Before joining the Refugee Council she was a Policy Officer at the Commission for Racial Equality and had responsibility for policy issues relating to immigration and asylum. Sile has extensive experience providing advice and advocacy to asylum seekers, refugees and immigration detainees. She has also worked as a Campaigns Officer at Student Action for Refugees, managing a campaign on age-disputed asylum seeking children.

Ruth Sheldon is a Research Assistant in the People and Policy Team at ippr, working on public attitudes and involvement. Before joining ippr, Ruth worked as a Research and Development Officer at Neil Stewart Associates. Since May 2006, Ruth has been doing freelance research for the *HISTORYtalk* project. This qualitative work involved conducting life history interviews with elderly people in West London. Ruth has a BA in Philosophy, Politics and Economics from the University of Oxford and an MA in Continental Philosophy from the University of Essex.

Acknowledgements

The authors, because of the pioneering nature of this study, are indebted to those who have provided support, advice and encouragement to us. We are grateful to those whose academic work on forced migration and integration has influenced our thinking. They are many, but include Sarah Spencer, Khalid Koser, Ash Amin, Nick Van Hear, Roger Zetter, David Griffiths, Gaby Atfield and Therese O'Toole.

We would like to thank Laura Chappell, Naomi Newman, Rick Muir, Jim Bennett and Kate Stanley at ippr, for feedback and ideas. Louisa Friddle's administrative assistance was also much appreciated. Dhananjayan Sriskandarajah, Director of Research Strategy and Head of the Migration, Equalities and Citizenship Team, deserves special thanks. Without him, the project would not have been conceived and his feedback and encouragement have been invaluable.

Refugee Support staff and trustees have also provided enormous support. We would like to thank staff in Refugee Support's London and Sheffield offices who helped us find interviewees. The feedback received from Charlotte Keeble and Gene Johnson was also appreciated. Thanks are also due to Barbara Roche, for her support throughout. Paul Birtill, Refugee Support's Director of Investment and Development, was also instrumental in the project. His advice and enthusiasm were much appreciated.

Thanks are also due to Jana Buresova, Anood Al-Samerai, Richard Cohen, and Rakhia Ismail. We would also like to thank our colleagues at the Greater London Authority who kindly provided us with Census data for England and Wales by country of birth.

Lastly, the 30 interviewees who gave their time to us deserve particular thanks. Their names remain anonymous, but we are deeply grateful to them. We hope that this research will contribute to a better understanding of refugees' experience and play a part in advocating for more progressive integration policies.

Glossary and acronyms

BCAR – British Council for Aid to Refugees. This was a refugee NGO, founded in 1950, renamed the British Refugee Council in 1981.

BIA – Border and Immigration Agency. This is the shadow agency, reporting to Home office ministers, which has responsibility for the day to day operation of the asylum determination system and asylum support system, *inter alia*.

CLG – Communities and Local Government. This is the English central government department with responsibility for social cohesion.

Diaspora – a minority ethnic community which has migrated from an original homeland. Members of diasporic communities often maintain transnational links with co-ethnics in other countries.

EAL - English as an Additional Language, the accepted terminology used in schools, for example EAL classes, EAL teacher.

ESOL – English for Speakers of Other Languages, the accepted terminology used in colleges and adult education, for example ESOL classes, ESOL teacher.

NGO – non-governmental organisation.

RCO – refugee community organisation.

Refugee – the term has a legal meaning: a person who has been given refugee status, according to the provisions of the 1951 UN Convention and 1967 UN Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, after having been judged to have fled from his or her home country, or been unable to return to it 'owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion'. The term refugee is often used generally in many texts, including this book, to describe forced migrants.

SUNRISE – Strategic Upgrade of National Refugee Integration Services. This is the delivery mechanism for the UK government's integration services for refugees. It includes an interview, soon after refugee status or leave to remain is granted, with follow up case work. The interview and case work support aim to help refugees find work, housing, education, training and healthcare, as well as make plans for their integration in the UK.

UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Chapter One

Introduction

“When the war happened I went to Saudi Arabia for a while, but then Ethiopia before coming here – in refugee camps. I walked through the desert to Ethiopia. I managed to get a flight, my aim was to go to Canada, but I stopped by in London, Heathrow airport. There was a kind of a transit, while I was in this hold the police came and asked me where I was going, where are my documents and then suddenly it came up that I didn’t have the right documentation to go there (to Canada). So then I ended up in Heathrow. I was interviewed at the airport and I applied for asylum at the airport.

When I arrived, it was rough ride, I can say that...I was in a hostel for a couple of days at the airport. Very nice bed and breakfast, I thought that this is nice. Around two weeks later, they (the Refugee Council) gave me a note to go to another bed and breakfast in Croydon. No-one gave me a map, nothing to go to that place and they gave me £28 to get a ticket and from there I had to manage by myself.”

The testimony above was given by J, a Somali refugee. Since arriving in the UK, J has completed a bachelor’s and a master’s degree, has taken out British nationality and now has a successful career as a senior teacher. He is also an active volunteer in his spare time, chairing a charity helping refugee children. J is one among many millions of refugees in today’s world, some of whom, like him, have been able to integrate and rebuild their lives in their countries of asylum.

Host country integration is seen by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as one of the solutions to refugee migration. Additionally, in most European countries, policy debates about refugee and migrant integration have intensified during the last five years, as a result of concerns about ‘unassimilable’ migrant and minority ethnic communities and the growth of religious extremism (Ager and Strang, 2004; Home Office, 2005b; Spencer, 2006). There is also growing interest in notions of integration and

'Britishness' among political leaders and the media in the UK, part of a larger debate about social cohesion¹. As this book was being drafted, government ministers published a proposal for a Britain Day (Kelly and Byrne, 2007), and the Commission on Integration and Cohesion presented its final report (Commission on Integration and Cohesion, 2007). However, relatively little attention has been paid to how migrants and refugees themselves feel about integration, or about becoming and being British. In the little research that exists about refugee integration, refugees are presented as rather passive recipients of advice, vocational education and other interventions designed to integrate 'them'. Indeed most research on refugee integration focuses on the institutions of integration and seldom analyses the voices of refugees (Korac, 2003).

This book presents some of these missing voices. It is published to mark the 50th anniversary of Refugee Support, a non-governmental organisation whose remit includes the provision of services to promote refugees' integration. The book documents the life stories of 30 refugees who came to the UK during the last 50 years. We use a life history research methodology to collate and analyse refugees' experiences: pre-migration, during flight and after their arrival in the UK. We examine what integration and Britishness meant to refugees and what factors aided or hindered their integration. In particular, we set out to answer a number of questions that relate to refugees' integration and their Britishness, namely:

- how did interviewees understand their own integration?
- what factors, pre-arrival and after arrival in the UK aided or hindered integration?
- where did interviewees feel that they 'belonged' and where did they feel home was located?
- how did interviewees define Britishness and what factors influenced their understanding of Britishness?

As noted above, there is much current interest in refugee integration in the UK. The remainder of this chapter outlines the context of our research, as well as introducing the 30 refugees whose testimony is given later in the book.



The context: concerns about integration and social cohesion

Refugee organisations, as well as those representing ethnic minority communities, have debated the needs of their client groups for many years. One landmark document was *Settling for a Future*, produced in 1987 as part of a campaign to improve refugees' employment prospects and educational outcomes (British Refugee Council, 1987). Throughout the 1990s, refugee organisations continued to lobby to improve the settlement experience of refugees. Some of this lobbying has targeted central government - better inter-departmental co-ordination of refugee integration policy was one key demand.

In the late 1990s, central government started to show greater concern for the integration of migrant and minority populations, as well as broader issues of social cohesion. The latter was a concept first discussed by Durkheim, in relation to the interdependence of people in newly industrialised cities in Europe (Durkheim, 1893). In the early 1990s moral panic about urban decay fuelled research into social cohesion in North America (Elster, 1989; Putnam, 1993). Although a complex and contested term, cohesive communities are usually defined as communities where there is:

- progress towards equality
- the integration of community members in economic activity
- a sense of belonging to a locality and nation
- trust and reciprocity between members of the community
- social integration of community members facilitated by social networks, and thus the development of social capital, and
- shared values (Griffiths *et al.*, 2005).

In the UK, notions of social cohesion influenced the urban regeneration policies of the 1997–2001 Labour Government, with focus given to removing income inequalities and social exclusion in deprived communities. But since 2001, social cohesion has taken on new meanings that emphasise race, religion and immigration. In some government documents, social cohesion is equated with race equality and good race relations (see Home Office, 2005). Other government publications present social cohesion programmes as a means of tackling religious extremism. Other components of cohesive communities, such as income equality, have often been afforded less emphasis.

This policy shift was caused by concerns about religious extremism after the 11 September atrocities, the Bradford and Oldham disturbances of 2001 and the publication of the Ouseley and Cattle reports into the latter events (Bradford Vision, 2001; Cattle, 2001). Both these reports identified the housing, educational and employment segregation of Muslims within a number of British cities. At the same time, multicultural policies of tolerance of diversity and support for minority community organisation were attacked by some commentators. Multiculturalism was blamed for accentuating cultural difference and social segregation, as well as threatening a shared national identity (see the debates in Modood, 2003, 2005).

In response to these concerns, central government published a strategy on social cohesion (Home Office, 2005b). In May 2006, responding to the need to create more coherent integration policies, the Government amalgamated parts of the Home Office dealing with race, faith and cohesion within the new Department for Communities and Local Government (now called CLG). Since then, CLG has initiated an Independent Commission on Integration and Cohesion, as well as publishing a wide range of guidance for public sector and non-governmental organisations.

Integration

Alongside social cohesion, the Government has also intervened to promote the greater integration of migrant and minority communities. The Home Office has published two refugee integration strategies for England (Home Office, 2000, 2005c). The Government is also redirecting its funding for integration services to refugees, through the SUNRISE programme, a co-ordinated advice and casework service for those who have recently been granted refugee status or leave to remain in the UK. While government is working closely with refugee organisations in many of these programmes, there remains a key point of conflict between them. The Home Office sees its refugee integration programmes targeted at those who have been granted refugee status or leave to remain in the UK. On the other hand, most refugee organisations argue that integration should start at the point of arrival of asylum seekers (Refugee Council, 2004a). Government integration policy is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two.

The journey to citizenship

The achievement of citizenship, too, has been a public policy concern of recent governments. The Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 provided the legal basis for a citizenship and English language test, to be taken by applicants for British citizenship. The Act also provided for a compulsory citizenship ceremony involving an oath of allegiance to Queen and country.

Citizenship, like integration, enshrines the relationship between the individual and the collective. It carries with it legal, political and social rights, as well as responsibilities. It is over 50 years since T. H. Marshall wrote *Citizenship and Social Class*. He argued that a person is only a full citizen when he or she possesses civil rights (such as the right to a fair trial), political rights (such as the right to vote) and social rights. The latter comprise the right to a decent standard of living, education, health care and dignified work. Marshall's understanding of citizenship was equated with formal membership of the nation-state (Marshall, 1950). Since then, European societies have experienced increased international migration, as well as the development of the supranational institutions of the European community. National citizenship, with its rights and responsibilities, is increasingly mediated by their membership of other collectives: political, social, ethnic, local, regional, supranational, as well as transnational. European societies, however, seem unable or unwilling to acknowledge multiple and multi-layered citizenship, other allegiances and belongings, especially when cultural difference and transnational belongings come under attack from some politicians and media commentators.

Existing research about social cohesion, integration and citizenship

Political and media interest in integration has prompted more research about refugee integration. This research generally comprises three different types. Firstly, there is a theoretical literature that examines refugees' identity and the links between identity and integration (see, for example, Berry *et al.*, 1987; Harrell-Bond and Voutira, 1992; Bourhis *et al.*, 1997). Secondly, there is a body of research that examines the factors, for example level of education, that influence refugees' integration (see, for example, Portes and Rumbaut, 1990; Crisp, 2004). A third body of literature examines refugees' experiences of integration within particular domains or institutions such as schools and colleges (Zetter and Pearl, 1999; Bloch, 2004; Rutter, 2006; Spencer, 2006). Existing research on integration is discussed later in this book.

Despite a growing literature on refugee integration, there are some major gaps in knowledge. Much writing about refugee integration fails to provide clarity about this rather intangible process. There is very little writing about the effects of pre-migration and migratory experiences on subsequent refugee integration. There is very little examination of how refugees' identities and feelings of belonging play themselves out in everyday social interactions. Finally, there is little research on refugees' own ideas about integration. We hope this book will fill some of the above research gaps, as well as providing greater clarity for policy makers.

The 30 refugees

We documented 30 unique stories of integration in the UK. Our interviewees had come to the UK during the last 50 years, and were chosen to represent different lengths of residency in the UK. Interviewees came from 15 different countries of origin, and within these countries from different ethno-linguistic groups. Those who we interviewed included a sibling pair, and a husband and wife. Most refugees had fled war, or persecution, or both. However, three refugees had no direct experience of persecution, having been outside their home country when conditions changed.

Table One, below, provides summary data about the 30 interviewees. As not all of them saw themselves as refugees, we refer to them as interviewees throughout the book.

Table One: Summary data

Name	Gender	Age	Country of origin	Year of arrival	Current nationality	Current place of residency
1. A	Male	64	Hungary	1956	British and Hungarian	Rural, south west England
2. B	Female	64	Czechoslovakia	1968	British and Czech	Urban, south east England
3. C	Female	59	Czechoslovakia	1968	British	London
4. D	Male	61	Czechoslovakia	1968	British and Slovak	London
5. E	Male	56	Chile	1976	British and Chilean	Sheffield
6. F	Female	45	Vietnam	1979	British	London
7. G	Male	41	Vietnam	1984	British	London

Name	Gender	Age	Country of origin	Year of arrival	Current nationality	Current place of residency
8. H	Male	43	Iran	1985	British and Iranian	London
9. I	Female	42	Somalia	1988	British	London
10. J	Male	48	Somalia	1989	British	London
11. K	Female	36	Eritrea	1989	British	London
12. L	Female	45	Afghanistan	1992	British and Afghani	London
13. M	Female	32	Sri Lanka	1992	British	London
14. N	Female	68	Sierra Leone	1992	British and Sierra Leonean	London
15. O	Male	25	Afghanistan	1993	British	London
16. P	Female	28	Afghanistan	1994	British	London
17. Q	Male	39	Kenya	1995	British, unable to hold dual nationality	Urban, south east England
18. R	Male	20	Turkey	1998	Turkish, but has just applied for British nationality	Urban, south west England
19. S	Male	20	Somalia	1999	British and Somali	London
20. T	Male	30	Afghanistan	2000	British and Afghani	London
21. U	Female	47	Somalia	2003	Initial asylum application refused, spent a long period as an irregular migrant, then made fresh asylum application.	London
22. V	Male	45	Uganda	2003	Refugee status	London
23. W	Male	45	Afghanistan	2003	Afghani, but has ILR ⁱⁱ	Sheffield
24. X	Male	23	DRC	2003	Refugee status granted after appeal	Sheffield
25. Y	Female	36	Iran	2004	Iranian, has ILR through marriage	Sheffield
26. Z	Male	32	Ethiopia	2005	Refugee status	Sheffield
27. AA	Male	21	Eritrea	2005	Refugee status	London
28. BB	Female	28	Afghanistan	2006	Afghani, has ILR through marriage	London

The structure of the book

Chapter Two provides an outline of refugee migration during the last 50 years. It also examines policy responses to refugees and other social and political factors that have shaped refugee integration since 1957.

Chapter Three outlines the research methodology we utilised, as well as discussing the particular challenges in interviewing refugees. We also discuss how life history research can contribute to evidence-based public policy.

There has been little previous research on pre-migration and migratory factors that may influence integration and citizenship. **Chapter Four** addresses this gap in knowledge, outlining the pre-migratory and migratory factors that influence later integration and ideas about Britishness.

Chapter Five analyses the arrival experiences of refugees, in particular their experiences of applying for asylum, finding accommodation and receiving assistance.

Chapter Six documents the institutional integration of interviewees, in the workplace and in education. It highlights success, but also records the widespread feeling of institutional racism held by many of those we interviewed.

Chapter Seven examines the social networks and social interactions of interviewees. It highlights their lack of interaction with their neighbours, and some of the factors that cause this social distance.

Chapter Eight looks at the participation of our interviewees in political organisations and in community groups. It finds a high level of voter participation, as well as active engagement with a variety of community groups.

Identity is closely related to integration. It affects refugees' acculturation and also their attachments, which in turn influence integration. Decisions about where to live, and about political and social engagement are influenced by identity. **Chapter Nine** examines interviewees' acculturation, identity and ideas about home. It concludes that most of them felt British, albeit with qualifications. Many of those who were interviewed had strongly held dual or diasporic identities, for example, as a British Somali or British *and* Chilean.

Chapter Ten examines interviewees' notions of Britishness, set in the context of debates about national belonging and national cohesion.

Chapter Eleven summarises our findings and presents a series of public policy recommendations that aim to promote refugee integration, social cohesion and progressive notions of Britishness.

The book – *Standing on my own two feet* – derives its title from a response given by a 20 year old Eritrean refugee we interviewed. Of those we met, he was newest to the UK, having lived here for just one year. He possessed fewest of the functional indicators of integration – his English was poor and he was not working. When asked how long it would take to feel British, he replied

“I will feel a British person when I am standing
on my own two feet.”

His was one of 30 very different stories told to us. There were very many differences in interviewees’ backgrounds and in their experiences in this country. Yet common threads emerged. Interviewees emerged as a highly educated group. The persecution and deprivation of rights that refugees experienced in their home countries heightened their sense of freedom and fairness in the UK. Most refugees defined their integration in terms of their labour market experiences and social interactions in their neighbourhoods. Almost all our respondents recounted experiences of institutional racism, particularly in job-seeking and the workplace. Many interviewees had also experienced racial harassment and few knew or spoke to their neighbours.

Interviewees’ ideas about Britishness were personal and often idiosyncratic. Britishness emerged slowly, and not always in a unidirectional manner. Yet most of our interviewees felt British, usually because they appreciated the freedom and security afforded to them in the UK. But we felt that refugees experienced what we term a ‘*discongruity of belonging*’. Britishness was not fostered by local integration and a sense of local belonging, but was experienced nationally, through refugees’ appreciation of freedom and peace.

Our interviews showed that multiple identities and belongings did not preclude their integration into British society. The research also highlighted the contributions that most refugees had made to life in the UK, as workers, volunteers, community activists and neighbours. It is a generally optimistic account of successful settlement. Above all, we concluded that Britishness should be fostered at two levels: at the grass roots and at a national level.

We hope, that by telling these stories, we will contribute to more informed debates about social cohesion, integration, Britishness and citizenship, and ultimately to better policy interventions for both refugees and receiving communities.



Chapter Two

The last 50 years of refugee migration to the UK

Refugee Support's origins date back 50 years, to 1957 and the arrival of Hungarian refugees who were evacuated to the UK from camps in Austria. Since then there have been many diverse migratory movements to the UK and many changes to the way that policy makers have responded to these population movements. In order to understand the context of the arrival and integration experiences of our interviewees, this chapter provides an outline of refugee migration during the last 50 years and analyses UK policy responses to these population movements.

The 1950s:

Hungarian refugees and the founding of British Council for Aid to Refugees (BCAR)

The arrival of refugees in the UK is not a recent trend and during the early years of the 20th century many thousands of refugees arrived here including eastern European Jews, Belgians, Basque children and those fleeing Nazi-occupied Europe. Between 1939 and 1949 nearly 360,000 Polish refugees arrived in the UK (Sword, 1989). The reception of Basque, Jewish and Polish refugees during the 1930s and 1940s was criticised for poor co-ordination. As a response to this lack of co-ordination, the British Council for Aid to Refugees (BCAR) was formed in 1950, at the request of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (British Council for Aid to Refugees, 1980). BCAR is the predecessor organisation of both Refugee Support and the Refugee Council.

At its founding BCAR's aims were two-fold: to bring to the UK vulnerable groups of refugees who were still residing in refugee camps in Europe, and to co-ordinate the agencies involved in the resettlement of refugees in the UK. Soon after BCAR's establishment, the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees was adopted. It was ratified by the UK in 1954 and enshrines the rights of asylum seekers and refugees, preventing them being returned to countries where they fear persecution.

BCAR's first big test was to co-ordinate the reception of Hungarian refugees fleeing the uprising of October and November 1956 and the subsequent clampdown on political opposition. By 1957 some 180,000 refugees had entered Austria and a further 20,000 had crossed into Yugoslavia (Colville, 2006).

In mid-November 1956 the Home Office invited BCAR and the National Coal Board to organise support for 20,000 Hungarian refugees. Some 3,500 refugees were to be settled by the National Coal Board and the remainder by BCAR. Much popular writing about Hungarian refugees assumes that western governments welcomed these refugees as escapees from Communism. However, this conclusion highlights shortcomings in the nature of historical research about refugees. Researchers mostly draw on the records of refugee organisations. Relevant government policy texts are rarely examined. A number of authors contradict the dominant narrative of welcome and suggest that the Home Office initially tried to prevent and then to limit the number of Hungarians permitted to enter the UK to 2,500 persons. However, Foreign Office pressure at the time of the Cold War, the need for foreign labour and a supportive public changed an initially restrictive policy (Kushner and Knox, 1999: 248–252).

The Hungarians, like the Poles who came in the aftermath of World War II, and later the Chileans and Vietnamese, were 'programme refugees'. Their immigration status had been granted overseas and after arrival in the UK they were also entitled to a resettlement programme comprising housing and social welfare support.

Some 21,451 Hungarian refugees eventually entered the UK, including 398 unaccompanied refugee children. There was a wide range of occupational backgrounds (British Council for Aid to Refugees, 1957; de Kisshazy, 1979; British Refugee Council, 1981). A tragic characteristic of the Hungarian exodus



was a high proportion of refugees with criminal records or experiencing mental illness: prisons and psychiatric hospitals had been unlocked during the uprising and many inmates took the opportunity to escape (Mezey, 1960).

BCAR was granted the use of army barracks as initial reception hostels. These hostels, however, were soon replaced by one large reception centre at Rugeley in the West Midlands. After the reception phase, the refugees were moved into 'secondline hostels' mostly in government buildings (de Kisshazy, 1961). Many refugees found work at this time, often in construction, mining, agriculture or other industries experiencing a scarcity of labour. By the end of 1957 only 1,000 adult Hungarians were without work, although 6,172 of the original 21,000 arrivals had left the UK, for Hungary, or to live in Canada or Australia (de Kisshazy, 1961; Ambrózy, 1984; Kunz, 1985).

Once refugees had found work, most then moved from hostels into nearby privately rented accommodation, much of which was temporary or of poor quality. (The 1950s were a time of acute housing shortages in the UK and permanent housing could not be found for many of the refugees). It was for this reason, as well as the vulnerability of some Hungarian refugees, that the BCAR Housing Society was founded in late 1957, with a grant of £200,000 from the Lord Mayor's Fund. Within a year it had supplied flats and houses to over 350 families (British Refugee Council, 1981).

1957–1970

Between 1957 and 1970 the numbers of refugees settling in the UK were small. They included programme refugees admitted to the UK as part of the 1959–61 World Refugee Year Scheme. This scheme aimed to empty refugee camps in Europe of remaining refugees, many of whom were elderly or disabled. Another important group of arrivals during this period were more than 5,000 refugees from Czechoslovakia who sought sanctuary in the UK following the Soviet invasion of 1968 (British Council for Aid to Refugees, 1969, 1980). Some of the Czech and Slovak refugees were visitors or students at UK universities and did not want to return home, others were new arrivals – between 2,000 and 3,000 people by September 1968. The overwhelming majority were well-qualified professionals (British Council for Aid to Refugees, 1969). They were not initially recognised as refugees, either by UNHCR or by the British government, as testimony given by our interviewees tells. The Home Office took the lead in co-ordinating the settlement of the Czechs and Slovaks and granted them temporary visas and permission to work – in effect

treating them as guest workers. Some of those with additional social needs were supported by BCAR and the BCAR Housing Society.

Ugandan Asians and Cypriots

On 4 August 1972, Idi Amin, then President of Uganda, decreed that Uganda's Asian community had 90 days to leave the country. Despite public hostility, the British government agreed to accept 28,000 Ugandan Asians who held British travel documents and some 400 stateless households. Central government took a direct role in formulating and implementing settlement policy for the Ugandan Asian refugees, founding the Uganda Resettlement Board, which reported to the Home Office. BCAR and the BCAR Housing Society had very little involvement with Ugandan Asians - only assisting with family reunion.

Some 16 'resettlement camps' were set up where the refugees were received before being moved to their own homes. Many negative accounts of camp life survive (see Kushner and Knox, 1999: 281–286). There was a deliberate attempt to disperse this group throughout the UK, with government nominating certain places as red 'no go areas' – usually cities with high proportions of minority ethnic communities and high unemployment. Such a restrictive housing policy was new. (Interestingly, it has some parallels with today's government policy of dispersing asylum seekers away from London and the south east.) Despite the attempts to prevent Ugandan Asians from settling in some parts of the UK, some 62 per cent of Ugandan Asians ended up living in 'no-go' areas. Racial harassment, the desire to be near compatriots, employment opportunities and housing shortages in some 'green' areas all led to settlement in the no-go areas (Community Relations Commission, 1974). Narratives of rejection and racism also emerge in many refugees' accounts of this period, as illustrated below.

“Integrate where? In England? When I am part of an unwanted minority? No, definitely not. Just one day out of the camp, a couple of nasty experiences was enough to send us back to our kith and kin...in Balham, in Wembley, in Leicester and in Birmingham...in a hostile environment you stick together.” (Mamdani, 1973; cited in Kushner and Knox, 1999: 286.)

The Community Relations Commission carried out a study of Ugandan Asian resettlement one year after their arrival in the UK. Unemployment, lack of recognition for overseas qualifications and poor housing were dominant themes articulated by the refugees (Community Relations Commission, 1974). Later studies showed greater labour market integration, although overcrowded and unsatisfactory housing remained as concerns. Twenty-five years later Ugandan Asians and their children are considered to be a successful group. Children of Ugandan Asian descent achieve among the highest school examination results in the UK (Gillborn and Mirza, 2000).

Less successful were the estimated 10,000 Cypriots who fled to the UK in 1974 and 1975 following the partition of the island. The 1974 arrivals joined a larger Cypriot community who had migrated to work in the UK or had fled inter-communal violence in 1963 and 1964. Greek Cypriots outnumber Turkish Cypriots in Cyprus, yet the Greek and Turkish Cypriots community in the UK are approximately the same size because the poorer Turkish community migrated in larger proportions (Taylor, 1988).

The majority of the Cypriot refugees of 1974 settled in London, particularly in the London boroughs of Hackney, Haringey, Islington and Enfield (Kyambi, 2005: 61). Both Greek and Turkish Cypriots were largely reliant on social networks to find housing and work, a factor accounting for their housing segregation. As with the Ugandan Asians, BCAR and the BCAR Housing Society had little involvement with the settlement of those fleeing Cyprus.

Research on Greek and Turkish Cypriots notes concerns about their employment experiences – low pay and labour market segregation – and educational achievements. Concerns about Cypriot children’s educational achievements were raised as early as 1968 (Inner London Education Authority, 1969). Twenty years on, Turkish Cypriot children, including descendants of the 1974 refugees, are still securing lower results in national tests and GCSEs than their white peers, although Greek Cypriot pupils now secure similar examination results (Dedezade, 1994; Department for Education and Skills, 2005; Mehmet Ali, 2001).

The Chileans and the Vietnamese

In September 1973, the Chilean socialist government of Salvador Allende was toppled in a coup. During the next three years over one million Chileans fled their homeland (estimate cited in Kay, 1987). In the UK there was a well-organised campaign to support persecuted and exiled Chileans, led by the trade

unions and Labour Party activists. For example, E, one of our interviewees, was able to come to the UK as a result of a campaign organised by trade unionists based in Coventry. The media coverage and public welcome afforded to the Chileans contrasted with that meted out to Ugandan Asians. Labour movement solidarity, the smaller size of the Chilean evacuation and that the media coverage constructed Chileans as white, accounted for this warmer welcome. It was this public support that led the Government to implement an evacuation programme. Between 1974 and 1977, 3,000 Chileans and a small number of Argentinians were admitted to the UK as part of a government programme subcontracted to BCAR and the World University Service (WUS). These two organisations formed the Joint Working Group for Refugees from Chile in Britain (JWGRCB) (World University Service (UK), 1974).

Once in the UK, the Chileans were granted full refugee status and housed in reception centres staffed by BCAR, WUS and volunteers. The refugees were then resettled in housing found by local refugee support committees, whose members were usually labour movement activists. Because of the distribution of the local committees, many Chileans ended up living in northern cities with an active Labour Party; however, these were areas of high unemployment.

The Chilean programme was followed by the admission of 24,000 Vietnamese who came to the UK between 1979 and 1992. The first major flow of refugees leaving Vietnam began in 1975 with the fall of Saigon. Most were ethnic Vietnamese (*Kinh*), and the majority of this group settled in the US. A second migratory movement began in 1977 and about 880,000 people left all parts of Vietnam, many of them by boat.

In 1979, the movement of people from Vietnam was so great that the United Nations convened an intergovernmental conference. It was here the UK government agreed to accept 1,500 refugees from camps in Hong Kong (Refugee Council, 1991). Among them was F, who arrived in the UK as a 17- year-old girl. In July 1979, government agreed to accept a further 10,000 Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong. These two groups comprised the First Vietnamese Settlement Programme that accepted refugees until the end of 1982. About 80 per cent of the Vietnamese on the First Vietnamese Programme were ethnic Chinese (*Hoa*), the majority from North Vietnam (Refugee Council, 1991).

The First Vietnamese Programme was overseen by a government body – the Joint Council for Refugees from Vietnam (JCRV) – while three refugee organisations – BCAR, the Ockenden Venture (now Ockenden International)

and Save the Children – ran reception centres for the refugees. After a period of time in the reception centres, refugees were moved into local authority housing. Its availability was the key issue that determined where the Vietnamese were settled and they were moved to all parts of the UK. Many Vietnamese ended up living far from their compatriots. Secondary migration, mostly to London, Birmingham and Manchester was substantial (Robinson and Hale, 1989). An evaluation of the First Vietnamese Programme also concluded that refugee agencies were only concerned with the short-term needs of refugees, and not their long-term integration. The term ‘front-end loading’ was used to describe this approach, with the majority of financial resources put into reception services, rather than long-term support (Refugee Council, 1991).

The Second Vietnamese Programme ran between 1983 and 1988 and comprised three groups: boat rescues, members of the Orderly Departure Programme from Vietnam (4,475 people) and family reunion cases. G, another of our Vietnamese interviewees, arrived at this time; he had come to join his father already living in the UK. The Second Vietnamese Programme was administered by Ockenden Venture, Save the Children and Refugee Action (Duke and Marshall, 1995). After staying in reception centres, refugees were housed in ‘cluster areas’ of 80 to 200 people, usually in larger conurbations such as Newcastle, Southampton and Oxford. This policy was meant to stop secondary migration, but also to avoid ‘ghettoisation’ (Jones, 1982). However, the Vietnamese were again sent to where refugee agencies had identified housing, rather than where there might be employment. As a result of housing-led dispersal, unemployment was a major problem affecting the Vietnamese community (Refugee Council, 1991). Again there was also extensive secondary migration away from cluster areas, again mostly to London, Birmingham and Manchester.

In 1989 the Government agreed to admit a further quota of 2,000 Vietnamese, selected from the camps in Hong Kong. The Third Programme was administered by Refugee Action, which set up reception centres in Oxford and Derby before moving the refugees into permanent housing. Both the Second and Third Programmes were largely ethnic Vietnamese from North Vietnam.

Data indicates a complex picture in relation to the integration of Vietnamese refugees. English language fluency among many adult Vietnamese remains poor many years after their arrival, with a 1995 research report indicating that 50 per cent of a sample could only speak a few words of English (Duke and Marshall, 1995: 21). This is despite the provision of English classes in reception

centres. Census data shows that just 40 per cent of persons born in Vietnam aged 16–64 are in employment. There is also considerable labour market segregation. A greater proportion of persons born in Vietnam (27.5 per cent) are employed in the hotel and catering industry than any other national group (Spence, 2005). Despite secondary migration, the Vietnamese, however, have experienced much less residential mobility than most refugees, a factor that may aid their integration and attachments to their neighbourhood (Robinson and Hale, 1989).

Younger Vietnamese have experienced some educational success: educational achievement data from the London Boroughs of Lambeth and Southwark, the heart of the Vietnamese community in the UK, indicates that ethnic Vietnamese and Chinese children are consistently outperforming all other ethnic groups, although there is a gender gap with girls securing far better test and examination results (Francis and Archer, 2005).

The 1980s: more diverse migratory movements

The 1980s marked a turning point in both asylum migration and government responses to asylum seekers. Before the 1980s most refugees had either come from a small number of eastern European countries, or had been admitted as programme refugees. The 1980s saw a much more diverse range of asylum seekers arrive in the UK, from African and Asian countries as well as eastern Europe. Between 1980 and 1988 the two largest refugee groups to enter the UK were Iranians and Sri Lankan Tamils. Other significant groups of asylum seekers were Iraqis, Turkish nationals (including Kurds), Poles, Ugandans, Ghanaians, Ethiopians, Eritreans and Somalis. This was essentially a migration to London – between 1980 and 1997 it was estimated that some 90 per cent of the UK's refugees lived in the capital (Refugee Council, 1997). Despite more diverse and more complex migratory flows, total asylum applications were relatively small during the 1980s, averaging about 3,000 applicants per year (British Refugee Council, 1989). BCAR Housing Society, as well as the Housing Division of the British Refugee Councilⁱⁱⁱ, later to become part of Refugee Support, worked with a large proportion of refugees who arrived in the 1980s. Both organisations ran receptions hostels for the most vulnerable new arrivals, as well as other housing projects.

Unlike the 1990s, there was little media coverage of asylum. However, the first modern restrictive policies aimed at asylum seekers began in the mid-1980s. In 1985, a visa requirement was introduced for Sri Lankan nationals who wished

to travel to the UK – a barrier to many endangered Tamils wanting to flee the worsening conflict. Carrier sanctions were then introduced in Germany and emerging intergovernmental co-operation on asylum led the UK also to adopt such penalties, with the passage of the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act 1987 (European Council for Refugees and Exiles, 2004). In the same year the Government enacted changes to social security regulations, restricting the benefits paid to asylum seekers to a level of 90 per cent of that granted to other claimants.

1989–1993: restrictive legislation

Asylum applications increased significantly in 1989, with 11,640 asylum applications lodged that year, and continued to increase in the 1990s. Most of the new arrivals came from conflict zones: Bosnia-Herzegovina, eastern Turkey, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sierra Leone, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo (then Zaire), Angola, Iraq, Sri Lanka and Colombia. In addition to spontaneous arrivals, the British Government granted temporary admission to 1,000 former Bosnian concentration camp detainees plus their dependents in November 1992^{iv}. This group were housed in reception centres and later moved to social housing in a resettlement programme led by the Refugee Council.

Prompted by increasingly negative press coverage, the Government started to view asylum as a policy problem. Fears of greater immigration from the 'East' and the identification of asylum as a major political issue in mainland Europe led European governments to move towards asylum policy that essentially aimed to:

- erect barriers to prevent asylum seekers entering the UK, for example visa requirements, carrier sanctions and immigration checks at overseas airports
- restrict asylum seekers' social and economic citizenship rights, as a deterrent measure. Such deterrents have included the use of detention, the restriction of welfare benefits, housing, work and education. This is an EU-wide trend, with constantly shifting boundaries between citizen and outsider (Morris, 1998; Levy, 1999; Minderhoud, 1999)
- tighten the criteria by which the Home Office judges an asylum application, so that larger proportions of asylum applications result in refusal.

From the late 1980s onwards Europe-wide policy initiatives have also

influenced UK asylum policy, through a process of harmonisation, initially though intergovernmental treaties such as the 1990 Dublin Convention and now through European Community institutions.

An initial attempt at changing asylum legislation occurred in 1991, with the publication of the Asylum and Immigration (Appeals) Bill. The Bill failed to become law in 1992, but was presented to Parliament again and received Royal Assent in July 1993. Significantly, it amended housing entitlements for asylum seekers, who lost their right to be accepted as 'homeless' if they had any other accommodation, 'however temporary'. Moreover, while an asylum case was being determined, no asylum-seeking household could be offered a secure social housing tenancy. Instead, they could only be offered temporary housing. Families with children were most affected. After the passage of the Asylum and Immigration (Appeals) Act 1993, schools and refugee organisations noted large increases in asylum-seeking children's mobility (Power *et al.*, 1995; Dobson *et al.*, 2000; Rutter, 2003). Research on the effect of temporary housing on refugee children has highlighted problems in securing school places, difficulties in building social relationships within schools and achieving continuity of education and care. Other pupils, too, can be affected by high pupil mobility as teacher time is spent settling in new students (Power *et al.*, 1995). Through the disruption of social networks, housing mobility also prevents children and their carers developing attachments to their localities and an accompanying sense of belonging.

Immigration Rules – statutory instruments attached to immigration law that determine in practice how a person can enter or stay in the UK – were also amended in 1993. The changes widened the criteria for refusal of an asylum application. For example, an asylum seeker who could reasonably live in another part of their home country would be refused asylum in the UK. Consequently there was a large increase in the proportions of asylum seekers refused asylum, from 27 per cent in 1993 to 74 per cent in 1994. But while refusals rates were high, few who were refused asylum were removed from the UK, with many remaining as irregular migrants.

Asylum applications continued to increase in 1994 and 1995; Kosovar Albanians and Algerians were significant new groups at this time. Many Kosovars arrived as clandestine entrants, often hidden in trucks, or left at the side of trunk roads. Among the Kosovars were large proportions of unaccompanied children. Their arrival highlighted the inadequacy of support for unaccompanied refugee children in the UK, a concern articulated in much

action research undertaken by refugee organisations, with most 16–17-year-olds placed in hostels or hotels without access to a named social worker (see, for example, Munoz, 1999; Kidane, 2001; Stanley, 2001). As a consequence of these concerns, a number of refugee organisations, including Refugee Support, extended their work with unaccompanied refugee children. Today Refugee Support runs three London-based housing projects for young refugees aged 16–21.

The Asylum and Immigration Act 1996

Negative coverage of asylum issues in the tabloid press also continued. In October 1995 the Government announced that benefits would be removed from all asylum seekers who had lodged their claims ‘in country’ rather than at the port of entry, as well as those appealing against a negative initial decision. This proposal was met by initial disbelief among refugee advocacy groups, many of which undertook a period of intense campaigning. However, few asylum seekers were rendered destitute. Within days of the removal of their benefits, a legal challenge was mounted and the Courts reversed this policy. The Government did not accept this judgment and published the Asylum and Immigration Bill soon afterwards. This gained Royal Assent in July 1996, again removing benefits from in-country asylum applicants and asylum appellants. The new legislation again attracted legal challenges from solicitors representing asylum seekers. These were successful and case law invoking the National Assistance Act 1948, the Children Act 1989 and Scottish equivalents made local authorities responsible for supporting asylum seekers who had been denied benefits.

In England and Wales adult asylum seekers were given supermarket vouchers and housed in hostels or other forms of temporary housing by local authorities. Families with children were given a cash allowance and temporary accommodation. However, there was insufficient hostel and temporary accommodation available in London, where most asylum seekers lived. By 1997 significant numbers of asylum seekers were moved by local authorities to accommodation outside the capital, often to poor quality hotels in seaside towns.

Local authorities were not fully compensated by central government for the services they provided for destitute asylum seekers. In order to meet their statutory duties to asylum seekers some social service departments were forced to make cuts from other parts of their budgets^v. Headlines

such as ‘*Old folk’s home to be hostel for refugees*’ (Harrow Leader, 16 July 1998) became commonplace. Public hostility to refugees, including racially aggravated assaults, appeared to increase significantly after 1997 (Fekete, 2000; Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees in the UK, 2004).

Immigration and Asylum Act 1999: formalised dispersal

The newly-elected Labour Government inherited an asylum support system that both local government and refugee organisations regarded as chaotic. A number of local authorities in Greater London and the south east lobbied central government to repeal the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 – arguing for a national system whereby asylum seekers would be dispersed equitably across the UK. The Government responded by publishing a White Paper on asylum and immigration (Home Office, 1998). Soon after, the Immigration and Asylum Bill was presented to Parliament; it received Royal Assent in 1999. At the same time the Home Office took action to speed up the time taken to receive an asylum decision, a move that has acted to promote the earlier integration of asylum seekers.

The Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 profoundly changed the way that asylum seekers were housed and supported in the UK. Removing existing rights to housing and all types of benefits, the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 set up a new housing and sustenance scheme for asylum seekers, administered by the National Asylum Support Service (NASS), now part of the Border and Immigration Agency. Homeless asylum seekers were housed in specially commissioned emergency accommodation when they first arrived in the UK. After this they had the option to apply for a ‘subsistence only’ package, or for subsistence and accommodation. Until April 2002 subsistence entailed a cash allowance of £10 per person per week, plus vouchers exchangeable at designated retail outlets. After a campaign led by refugee organisations and trade unions, vouchers were abolished in April 2002, and replaced by a cash allowance.

The Home Office also commissioned housing for asylum seekers who required accommodation. This was provided by private landlords, local authorities and, in some cases, Registered Social Landlords such as Refugee Support, who began to work with asylum seekers in South Yorkshire and the East Midlands.

The new support system was beset with many initial problems. Vouchers did

not reach asylum applicants. Asylum seekers also faced problems in making basic purchases, as not all shops accepted the vouchers. Although much housing was of good quality, some housing offered by private landlords was not – an issue acknowledged by the Home Office^{vi}. Some accommodation was located in deprived outer-city estates and significant numbers of asylum seekers requested to be moved as a result of racially aggravated attacks. Housing quality for those opting for ‘subsistence only’ support and living with family and friends remains an issue of concern – it is inevitably of a temporary nature and overcrowded. On 31 December 2006 some 29 per cent of asylum seekers supported by the Home Office were in receipt of subsistence-only support (Home Office, 2007).

Although voucher support has been replaced by cash support, adult asylum seekers are still supported at levels below the income support offered to mainstream claimants. An account of the poverty faced by many asylum seekers is given in the Refugee Council and Oxfam study *Poverty and Asylum in the UK* (Penrose, 2002) which describes how many of them experience hunger on a regular basis.

Refugee organisations argue that the Government needs carefully to consider the wider impacts of restricting welfare benefits granted to asylum seekers. Two sections of recent legislation – Section 55 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 and Section 9 of the Asylum and Immigration (Treatment of Claimants etc) Act 2004 have attempted to remove the right of cash support to some asylum seekers. Research has shown that the impacts of such poverty extend beyond asylum-seeking households. Refugees often provide financial assistance and lodgings to friends and family on lower incomes (Lewis, 2007). Sharing already scarce resources can have a negative impact on a refugee household.

2000–2002: new integration agendas

Asylum applications peaked between 2000 and 2002. Much of the increase in applications was caused by a greater number of arrivals from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Sierra Leone, Somalia and Zimbabwe, all countries experiencing armed conflict or gross violations of human rights (Castles *et al.*, 2003). Asylum issues continued to grab the headlines throughout much of 2001. There was another White Paper on immigration and asylum: *Secure Borders, Safe Havens: Integration with diversity in modern Britain* (Home Office, 2002). As well as proposing many of the measures that were eventually

implemented in the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002, the White Paper was the first public articulation of a managed migration programme, putting the case for giving those with potentially unfounded asylum cases a legal way of entering the UK to work.

The 2002 Act also gave a legal basis for funding a new refugee resettlement programme^{vii}, whereby persons of concern to UNHCR would be identified by them, brought to the UK and offered a package of support by local authorities and refugee organisations. The Government envisaged about 500 persons would be brought to the UK every year as part of this programme. At the time of writing a few hundred refugees from Liberia, Sudan, Burma and the Democratic Republic of Congo had arrived in the UK as part of the Gateway Protection Programme. Refugee Support is one of the partner organisations involved in the Gateway Protection programme. It has provided support and specialist housing to a number of those evacuated as part of this and other resettlement programmes.

The White Paper also proposed interventions that aimed to help refugees integrate into life in the UK. As already noted, there was considerable debate about the integration of minority, migrant and refugee communities in the UK, as well as the broader issue of community cohesion, discussed in Chapter One. The Government was concerned about the housing, educational and employment segregation of British Muslims within a number of British cities. Some policy makers also expressed concern about the racial harassment meted out to asylum seekers in new areas of dispersal as a threat to social cohesion.

In response to these concerns about integration, the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 introduced the legal basis for citizenship tests and a compulsory citizenship ceremony involving an oath of allegiance and pledge to the UK, as well as a citizenship test, to be taken by applicants for naturalisation in the UK. The first ceremonies were held in 2004. From 2005, all applicants for naturalisation have had to sit and pass a 'Life in the UK' citizenship test, or pass an ESOL course with a citizenship component in the teaching. In 2007, this requirement was extended to those applying for permanent residency in the UK.

In May 2006, responding to the need to create more coherent integration policies, the Government amalgamated the parts of the Home Office dealing with race, faith and cohesion with local government functions elsewhere to form a new Department for Communities and Local Government (now called

CLG). Other central government departments are involved in the provision of settlement services for new migrants, for example, the Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Department of Health. However, there is still a lack of a strong cross-departmental lead on refugee integration in England. This gap has been partly filled by local and regional authorities.

The Government has also initiated a programme of work that aims to assist refugee integration. It has published two strategy documents on refugee integration and afforded regional migration bodies the task of co-ordinating regional refugee integration (Home Office, 2000, 2005c). The Government is presently funding a refugee integration project: the SUNRISE programme (Home Office, 2005c). Those granted refugee status or leave to remain are allocated a caseworker who gives advice and support on issues such as housing, education and training, helping them formulate a Personal Integration Plan. Crucially, SUNRISE allows follow up and advocacy on behalf of individual clients, helping them solve problems such as access to housing. Refugee Support has been involved in the SUNRISE Programme in Yorkshire and Humberside. Interviewees such as X and Z, who we met in Sheffield, had been assisted by the SUNRISE programme.

While interventions such as SUNRISE and the Gateway Protection Programme have been broadly welcomed by most refugee organisations, other aspects of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 have aroused opposition from refugee organisations. The new legislation curtailed asylum seekers rights of appeal and, as noted above, gave the Home Secretary the power to withhold support from some asylum seekers, such as those who cannot provide a clear and coherent account of how they came to the UK^{viii}.

2002–2007: further curtailments of asylum rights

Further negative media coverage of asylum issues continued throughout 2002. One focus for anti-asylum sentiments was the publication of quarterly asylum statistics. The Home Office published this data and the tabloid press responded with articles on the growing asylum crisis. This 'crisis in numbers', coupled with a tough-talking government, reinforced popular views that asylum was a major social problem and that hordes of people were seeking to enter the UK (Crawley, 2005; Lewis, 2005).

In response to negative media coverage, the Government enacted further

measures to restrict the legal and social rights of asylum seekers. In July 2002, all asylum seekers lost the right to work, a policy that appeared contradictory in the context of the increased allocation of work permits by the Home Office. In April 2003, the Home Secretary ended the granting of Exceptional Leave to Remain (ELR), a form of temporary protection that was granted to many asylum seekers. Some civil servants had argued that ELR was a pull factor for asylum seekers. It was replaced by the new statuses of Humanitarian Protection and Discretionary Leave.

In Spring 2004, the Government introduced a limit to the amount of legal aid that could be claimed for an initial asylum application. From this time, legal aid costs were limited to five hours work, unless special permission was granted from the Legal Services Commission (Refugee Council, 2005). A number of eminent firms stopped undertaking asylum cases. In the same month, the right to free non-emergency secondary healthcare was removed from 'failed' asylum seekers. This move, too, followed hostile newspaper articles, such as reports about the higher prevalence of HIV among migrants from sub-Saharan Africa ('HIV Soars by 20%: migrants blamed for increase', *The Sun*, 25 November 2003).

The Immigration and Asylum (Treatment of Claimants, etc) Act 2004 amended the Housing Act 1996 by stipulating that dispersed asylum seekers needed to have a local connection with the local authority in which their accommodation was located, as an attempt to prevent secondary migration of refugees within the UK (Refugee Council, 2004b). As noted above, it also created a further class of person ineligible for support: a 'failed' asylum seeker with family, also known as a Section Nine case. Asylum-seeking families who had exhausted the appeals process would lose their support if they failed, 'without reasonable excuse' to leave the UK voluntarily. The legislation also prevented local authorities from providing housing and subsistence to a child's parents.

Hostile media articles continued and asylum was an issue in the 2005 General Election. In response to Conservative proposals, the Government rushed to publish *Controlling Our Borders*, its own five-year strategy on asylum and immigration (Home Office, 2005a). This plan proposed changes to asylum policy as well as further asylum legislation, now part of the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Bill 2005. These changes included an overhaul of the asylum application process, with the introduction of a new application system – the New Asylum Model – where asylum cases are dealt with by named immigration officers. Although there have been some criticisms of

this system, the New Asylum Model has considerably speeded up the asylum determination process. As our research shows, this can only promote the early integration of those who receive a positive asylum decision.

Less welcomed by refugee organisations has been the move to limit the period of settlement to those granted UN Convention refugee status to a period of five years, revocable at any time during this period. This suggests a clear expectation that those with refugee status would return if conditions improved in their home countries. (Before 2005, those with refugee status were granted indefinite leave to remain in the UK at the same time as their grant of refugee status). Refugee organisations have criticised this move, as it may limit refugees' ability to integrate and make long-term plans for life in the UK – a criticism that was borne out in some of our interviews.

Further immigration legislation was published in 2006. The UK Borders Bill makes changes to the asylum appeal system, among its many clauses. Day to day implementation of asylum and immigration policy was moved from direct Home Office control to the new Border and Immigration Agency (BIA) which came into existence as a shadow agency in April 2007. While there are likely to be many benefits of this policy change, it may make the task of achieving cross-departmental government co-operation on refugee integration more difficult.

In the short term it is likely that there will be further changes to UK asylum legislation and policy. A new asylum and immigration bill is likely to be put before the 2007–2008 Parliament. In future, Europe-wide policy initiatives will also have greater bearing on British integration policy.

Conclusions

The lessons of history are of relevance to those working with refugee communities today. This brief historical review highlights a number of important issues. What is striking is that concerns about homelessness, unemployment and underemployment, and access to English language support are not new issues. Annual reports of the BCAR articulate these problems as early as 1957. The review also highlights a real lack of transmission of knowledge about the settlement of refugees from one migratory movement to another. Better ways of promoting reflexivity and institutional learning need to be developed.

An analysis of the lessons learned from previous refugee settlements indicate that refugees experience greater labour market integration if their dispersal is employment-led rather than housing-led. Hungarians settled where there was employment, whereas Vietnamese, Chileans and Bosnians were among the groups who were obliged to settle where housing was provided. Indeed there has been a long history of unsuccessful housing dispersal, followed by secondary migration back to large metropolitan areas.

Curtailments of asylum seekers' rights have reduced their ability to develop attachments to local communities and the nation state. Permanency of immigration status and housing tenure help to develop a sense of belonging, but both have been restricted.

From the review, three factors appear important in determining refugee integration and the development of a sense of belonging, namely:

- the reception climate: media, community and institutional welcome
- secure immigration status, and
- early access to decent, permanent housing.

All the above factors promote the well-being of refugees and thus their integration.

The reception climate for new arrivals, including the welcome they receive from government, media and the community, is critical in shaping how well they adjust. Over the last 50 years, the reception offered to various refugee groups has varied considerably. Over the last 15 years, the reception climate, particularly in terms of media coverage and government restrictions on asylum seekers, has deteriorated noticeably. This change makes the work of refugee integration more difficult than ever. The heated nature of media debates about asylum circumscribe the scope for policy makers to respond in a way that promotes the integration of refugees. Securing more positive media coverage of asylum and changing public attitudes must be a key aim of refugee organisations. Only then can one expect government asylum and integration policy to be positive.

Chapter Three

Research methodology

The research for this book adopted a life history research methodology to document the life stories of 30 refugees who have come to the UK during the last 50 years. Life history research, part of a broader range of methodologies comprising oral history, provides a unique way of understanding memory. Unlike documents that come to us *from* the past, interview materials are unique in that they are sources *about* the past, in which the interpretation of past reality is included in the source itself (Foot, 2003).

This chapter starts with a discussion of the distinctive aspects of oral history as a research methodology. We also debate how life history interviews can contribute to evidence-based public policy. We then outline the particular challenges involved in planning a life history research project with refugees, including the cross-cultural aspects of research. The chapter then describes the eventual research methodology that we utilised.

The uniqueness of life history interviews

Today oral history is used across a range of academic disciplines including sociology and anthropology. Oral history has also been used in community development – as a way of empowering disadvantaged groups to challenge dominant narratives. It is also used as a therapeutic tool, and has been used in this manner with refugee populations, in both developing and more economically developed countries, to help psychologically vulnerable groups come to terms with traumatic events or changed circumstances (Richman, 1998; McCallin and Fozzard, 2000).

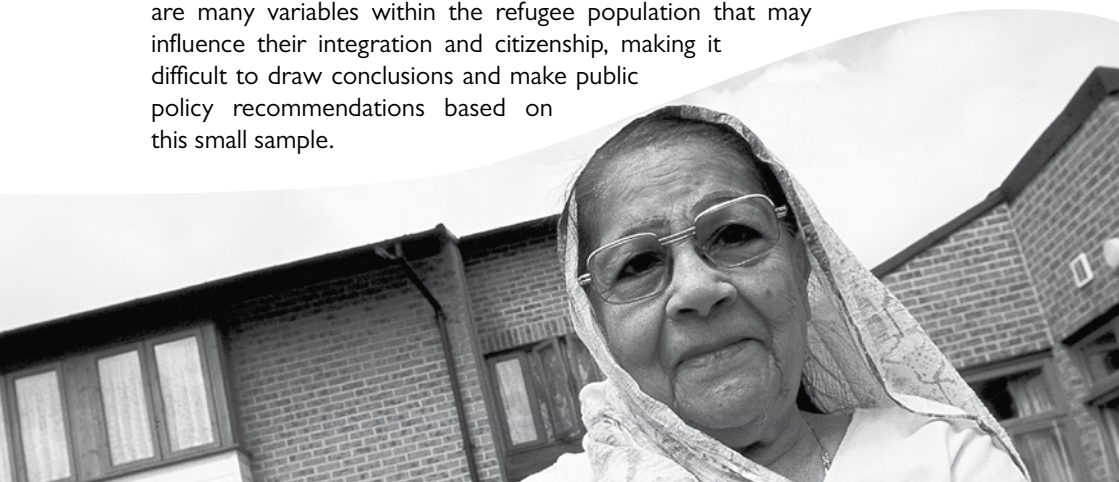
Oral history falls within a social research paradigm generally defined as being subjectivist. Subjectivist approaches to social research differ from objectivist approaches, in a number of ways. Rather than attempting to discover overarching social theories and to test these theories as outlined below, subjectivist research aims to discover how people interpret and make sense of their worlds (Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Cohen *et al.*, 2000).

Within the oral history tradition, life history interviews are one of a number of methodologies that can be utilised. Other methods of data collection include the production of diaries, or written autobiographical accounts. Group interviews and community interviews are also sometimes used in oral history research. Interviews can be enriched and affected by other techniques – the use of photographs, film, artefacts and of music. The importance of place in memory and reflection can be emphasised, by conducting an interview in a specific location, for example, oral history projects on the Nazi Holocaust have taken survivors to locations such as death camps, or childhood homes, to recount their experiences^{xi}.

Life history interviews are normally one-to-one encounters between interviewer and narrator. A life history interview allows a person to narrate the story of his or her life in all its dimensions. An alternative form of life history interview explores a single issue and gains testimony about that particular aspect or period in a person's life.

The use of life history interviews to inform public policy

Biographical research methods, including life history interviews, have gained in popularity as social scientists increasingly recognise the value of subjective data in social research. However, life history interviews have rarely been utilised to inform public policy in the UK. There are a number of reasons for this. Firstly, life history interviews are time-consuming to conduct, transcribe and analyse. Time constraints and costs mean that only small samples of respondents are interviewed. Research that is based on a small sample can also be viewed as unreliable. We interviewed 30 refugees, from a population of about 500,000 persons who have settled as refugees in the UK. There are many variables within the refugee population that may influence their integration and citizenship, making it difficult to draw conclusions and make public policy recommendations based on this small sample.



Secondly, the use of memory as a source has been criticised as unreliable. In the early 1970s, positivist critiques of oral history argued that memory was distorted by:

- the deterioration of memory, especially in old age
- the personal bias of both interviewer and interviewee
- nostalgia for a time or place, and the influence of collective versions of the past (O'Farrell, 1979; Perks and Thomson, 2006).

Thirdly, there is also sometimes a wide gulf between the language of public policy and the language of marginalised groups who are constructing oral history, making some researchers reticent in using oral history.

We approached these methodological criticisms by triangulating our data with other quantitative and qualitative research on refugee integration. For example, many of our respondents talked about being trapped in low-skilled and badly paid jobs. There is qualitative research about refugees' employment experiences to which we have referred in order to corroborate our findings (see, for example, Carey-Wood *et al.*, 1995; Bloch, 2004; Spencer, 2006). We referred to quantitative datasets, such as the Census, the Labour Force Survey and analysis of the School Census to back up our findings. (An analysis of 2001 Census data is given in the appendices). We also built peer debriefing into the research, and our findings were discussed with colleagues and a small number of academics and refugee activists during the research.

Most interviews lasted between one and two hours, although some lasted longer. The level of detail in our data as well as the reflexivity in this process is itself a source of validity.

We collected 30 very different accounts of integration and the journey to Britishness. These refugees' stories were valuable in their uniqueness and in all their idiosyncrasies. There were very many differences in refugees' experiences in this country, a powerful argument against a 'one size fits all' approach to refugee integration. Yet common threads emerged, for example most refugees talked about their lack of social interaction with their neighbours. Many adult refugees described their experiences of institutional racism, particularly in job-seeking. We felt that the dominance of some narratives did enable us to draw conclusions that were valid and reliable.

Planning life history research

There are a number of different methodological questions that need to be addressed in planning any life history research project. When drafting the interview guide we debated how structured we wished the interviews to be. Bozzoli (2006) highlights the differences between conducting an ‘open’ interview, in which the flow of the interview is dictated by the interviewees, and a more formal questionnaire-based interview. The need to collect consistent and complete data led us to use an interview guide as a prompt. However, a questionnaire-based interview runs the risk of being shallow and static. We needed to give interviewees space to tell us what they thought mattered.

Some approaches to life history interviews suggest breaking up the interview into several sessions. This provides an opportunity for reflection, both on the part of the narrator and the interviewee (Slim *et al.*, 2006). However, time did not allow for this approach.

We used a visual questionnaire to collect data about identity. Visual methods, such as creating a diagram, can take the place of potentially difficult or awkward interactions between interviewer and narrator. They can also complement, assist and encourage people’s verbal communication. Such visual techniques include:

- timelines – lists of key events, changes and landmarks which can help discussion by providing a historical framework
- visual biography – a chart which traces the ‘life’ of a particular phenomenon
- maps, drawings and models to represent particular events, locations and memories
- historical transects (representing changing conditions through time, usually compiled by walking through an area with inhabitants recording their memories at different points (Slim *et al.*, 2006).

Our research examined acculturative change and identity, as it relates to integration and Britishness. Identity, however, can be an abstract concept to discuss. Its intangible nature poses particular challenges when an interviewee is not fluent in English. We decided to use a spider diagram to collect data about identity (see appendices). The spider diagram was used as a prompt for further questions, to inspire the narrator and jog their memory, for example:

‘Are there situations when you don’t feel British, or feel more British?’

We also spent time debating how the interviews should be transcribed and analysed. During the last 30 years, researcher objectivity has been increasingly questioned by some academics, who have started to become reflective about the relationships that they formed with their narrators (Perks and Thomson, 2006). Yow argues that from the late 1980s a new oral history paradigm has developed:

“... a conceptual shift which makes acknowledgement of the interviewer’s reactions to, and intrusions into, research speakable.” (Yow, 2006: 55)

The inter-subjectivity of the interview process has been seen as a rich source of data, for example, in terms of the boundaries of common identity established between interviewer and interviewee. As such there has been much interest in the overlap and difference between psychoanalytic understandings of life story narratives and life history approaches in the social sciences (Samuel and Thompson, 1990). Psychoanalytic readings of interviews argue that the interview is not merely a narrative but a relationship with two subjectivities at play and informed by unconscious dynamics (Anderson and Jack, 1991). Key dynamics are lost by writing one side of the conversation out of the historical process. We decided to record our own impressions of each interview and include this in the analysis.

Planning research about refugees

The research planning also had to account for the particular characteristics of refugee populations. Refugees can be a ‘hidden’ community and difficult to locate; many refugees, too, have limited fluency in English (Bloch, 1999). Most writing about researching refugees focuses on five, often interrelated issues, namely:

- sampling refugee populations
- securing access to refugees
- issues around trust
- cross-cultural aspects of research, and
- ethical issues involved in researching refugees.

Additionally, there is a more recent literature that concerns refugees’ participation in the research process, as researchers, or as advisers (Boyden and Ennew, 1997; Temple and Moran, 2006).

Sampling and access

Much research about refugees in the UK has been criticised for poor sampling strategies, in particular the random selection of refugees for research (Bloch, 1999). Refugees are a population that contains many different variables (age, sex, nationality, class, educational background, linguistic background, ethnic background, immigration status, length of time in the UK, and so on). To secure a probability sample that was large enough to illuminate each major variable was well beyond our resources. Instead, we decided to adopt a quota sampling strategy, with four key variables: gender, length of residence in the UK, region of origin and occupation.

The use of refugee community organisations (RCOs) to locate refugees has also been subject to criticism, as those who use these groups may not be representative of refugee populations (Bloch, 1999). There are some refugee groups, for example, Eastern European refugees, who do not have a tradition of forming community groups (Kelly, 2003). Some sectors of particular refugee groups, for example those working long hours, may not use RCOs. We decided not to use RCOs to locate potential interviewees, instead using personal contacts, the Refugee Support client database and a research recruitment agency to recruit interviewees.

Trust

Establishing rapport is critical to the research process, and this is even more complex when the research participants come from different cultures (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998). Refugees pose particular challenges when establishing trust; a number of research projects have documented their reticence about discussing home country experiences, family left behind or smuggling routes, for fear of jeopardising the safety of others, or damaging their credibility as asylum applicants. We felt our selection of people who were British citizens or had been granted refugee status or leave to remain made the establishment of trust much easier. We also spent time prior to the interview talking about the process of the interview and guaranteeing confidentiality. Our first questions were basic data gathering ones (see appendices); we hope that asking these questions at the outset gave our interviewees the opportunity to relax.

Cross-cultural issues

The research has cross-cultural aspects, as it was about people who had migrated from other countries. Many of those we interviewed had learned

English comparatively recently. We, as researchers, are also products of particular cultural environments and our ascription of meaning may well reflect our values and upbringing. There were, therefore, many cross-cultural aspects of this research.

There is an extensive literature on cross-cultural research methodologies, some of which has been written about researching refugee communities (Brislin, 1986; Kinzie *et al.*, 1986; van de Vijver and Leung, 1997; Ahearn, 2000; Boyden and de Berry, 2004). This literature mostly examines the equivalence of research instruments such as questionnaires and focus groups, language usage, translation and interpreting issues and the interactions between researcher and participant. Some of the research also examines the impact of different societal factors on research, for example, how different cultures construct adolescence (Boyden and de Berry, 2004). The specific issues that relate to this project are discussed below.

1) The culturally specific nature of interviewing.

There is a growing awareness that interviewing is significantly culturally specific. Briggs has observed that, in some cultures, the interview is not an established type of speech event and there can be incompatibility between interviews and the norms of communication (Briggs, 1986; cited in Slim *et al.*, 2006). So a vital part of any preparation for an oral history project should involve learning a little about the norms of communication, as well as preparing potential recruits for interview. We spent time explaining to potential recruits about the interview process. For almost all of them, it was the first time they had been interviewed in the context of social research.

2) Language.

The language in which an interview takes place is extremely significant. It may or may not be the first language of the interviewee or interviewer. If interpreters are used, there may be insider interactions hidden to the primary interviewer. We decided that as many as possible of our interviews should be conducted in English, because we wanted the direct voice of the interviewee, not a second-hand interpretation. Inevitably, an interpreter will compress the original speech. Some 28 of the 30 interviews were eventually conducted in English and most interviewees were fluent English speakers. We found rapport and trust to be crucial in collecting rich data from interviewees who had less fluent English. Where we used an interpreter in an interview, we used a second person to listen back and give an independent translation.

3) Insider and outsider status.

Our interviews were conducted by ‘outsiders’ as we, as interviewers, came from outside interviewees’ countries and cultures. Insider-outside issues have long vexed those involved in cross-cultural research. Debates around the insider-outsider status of interviewers have focused on the contrast between the perceived objectivity and detachment of researchers with outsider status as opposed to the benefits of otherwise obscure ‘special insight’ that might be open to insiders (Perks and Thomson, 2006). Burton argues that interviews both lose and gain something from being cross-cultural. What they lose is meanings – especially those conveyed through tone or silence. However, as an outsider, interviewees may feel more able to be open.

“Speaking with a foreigner, many women also felt free of cultural and linguistic restrictions, and consequently were more prepared to state their own opinions and disagree with accepted wisdom.” (Burton, 2006: 173)

However, the distinction between ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ researchers has been critiqued as a false dichotomy. The fact that the participant is being asked to reflect and objectify their experiences means that they are always interpreting them for an outsider (Ryen, 2002). In societies comprising class, ethnic, political, religious and other differences, a fieldworker cannot be accepted as an insider of every section of society. Any interviewer will be an ‘insider’ in some ways and an ‘outsider’ in others.

One way we overcame the difficulties of cross-cultural interviewing is to recognise the potential of the interview as an opportunity to develop a shared meaning through collaboration. This can be as basic as asking questions about interviewees’ countries of origin, or about aspects of the interview that were unclear. During our interviews many questions were asked when particular issues were not clear.

There have been fierce political debates about the role of insider and outsider researchers in life history research. For example, at a 1979 Oral History Society’s conference on black history some participants argued that the conference was another example of the majority community patronising black communities by ‘giving back’ their histories. Others have examined issues of power in relation to insider-outsider debates, with a number of oral historians suggesting that dominant and powerful groups have constructed the very realities they claim to be researching (Stanfield, 1993; Olesen, 1994;

as cited in Ryen, 2002). This raises the question of how academic researchers and community members can participate on equal terms and have shared authority in these processes, an issue that remains unresolved in much refugee research, including this research, but an issue to which all researchers must remain alert. We did, however, give those who requested it the opportunity to see and comment on the transcription of their interview.

What we did

Our research had a number of interrelated aims. Firstly, we wanted to collect data on refugees' pre-migration, migratory and post-migratory experiences, in relation to their integration. We wanted to find out what factors aided or hindered interviewees' integration.

Secondly, we wanted to see how interviewees understood their own integration. Thirdly, we wanted to find out where interviewees felt that they 'belonged' and where they felt home was located. Finally, we also wanted to examine how interviewees defined Britishness and what factors influenced their understanding of Britishness. We were also interested in how integration and Britishness were interrelated.

Our methodology comprised a literature review, the drafting of an interview guide, the selection and location of interviewees, followed by 30 life history interviews with refugees who had arrived in the UK over the last 50 years. Most of the interviews were between one and two hours in length, although some were longer. Interview transcripts, contextual notes and data collected on two questionnaires were coded, then analysed thematically.

The interview guide aimed to provide a focus to the questions asked in the interview. It was used as memory jogger and to enable us to collect consistent data around the themes we were researching. The questions we used are given in the appendices. As four of us undertook interviews we held a briefing session to familiarise all those involved in the project with the methodology and the interview guide.

Sampling

In order to select refugees for interview, we decided to adopt a quota sampling strategy, with four key variables:

- **gender:** we wanted to secure a 60:40 ratio of men to women, to reflect the gender balance of asylum seeker arrivals in the UK
- **date of arrival in the UK:** we wanted to ensure that we had a balance of new arrivals and the longer established. We grouped potential interviewees into three arrival cohorts – 1957–1975, 1976–1995 and post-1995 – and attempted to ensure an equal balance of the three cohorts
- **region of origin:** we wanted refugees from the main regions of origin –Europe, African, Asia and Latin America
- **social class:** we wanted to recruit from a range of professional and educational backgrounds.

We specified that all recruits had to have secured UK nationality, refugee status, leave to remain or another secure immigration status. During one interview it became obvious that the interviewee did not have citizenship, refugee status or leave to remain in the UK, although this had been assured to us before. After some deliberation we decided to include her story in our analysis, as we felt it illustrated a number of important issues.

The life history interview involves the interviewee reflecting on their experiences. In order to ensure that participants had time to reflect on their experiences of Britain, we specified that all recruits should have lived in the UK for minimum of 12 months.

We used personal contacts and the Refugee Support client database to approach an initial group of refugees to interview. A proportion of refugees were recruited in Sheffield, where Refugee Support is providing housing and other services to refugees. We found it particularly difficult, however, to recruit recently arrived women. We had instances when an interview was scheduled and the interviewee pulled out at the last minute. Inevitably this reticence was caused by a lack of trust. To ensure that there was a gender balance we used a research recruitment agency to select a final group of five female refugees.

Summary data about each of the 30 interviewees is given in Chapter One and the appendices.

The interview process

The interview process had three components:

- a brief questionnaire to collect basic data on age, age on migration, nationality and so on
- a visual questionnaire, where participants completed a spider diagram to illustrate components of their identities. The visual data was then used in the interview as a prompt for questions
- a taped retrospective life history interview (see appendices).

All participants were guaranteed confidentiality and were asked to fill in a copyright and consent form.

At the end of each interview, we recorded our own post-interview reflections, as an aid to the analysis of the material itself.

Analysis

Interview summaries were written up immediately after the research, including our own commentary on particular issues that arose during the interview. We also transcribed vignettes of text, to illustrate each of the key findings of the interview. These, together with the two questionnaires, and interviewers' field notes, were then coded thematically (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The lead researcher then listened to each of the 30 tapes in full, amending some analysis to ensure consistency. A manual analysis of narrative and content was then undertaken by the lead researcher.

Reflexivity

Review was built into the research process. Indeed, a number of issues did emerge as the research progressed. We changed the wording of questions to make them more open or clearer to interviewees. We initially planned to use interpreters if an interviewee's English was not fluent. However, we abandoned the use of interpreters after an early interview. Here, the interpreter's presence was intrusive. At one point during the interview, the interpreter commented on the interviewee's response. Throughout the research, only two interviews were conducted using an interpreter. We were successful in collecting rich data from refugees whose English lacked fluency.



Chapter Four

Pre-arrival factors

While there has been extensive research about refugees' experiences in countries of exile, very little research links the pre-migratory and migratory experiences of refugees with their integration. Indeed, almost all UK writing about refugees' integration fails adequately to acknowledge their diverse experiences prior to arriving in the UK. The effects of pre-migration experiences on integration are barely acknowledged in public policy responses, nor are their experiences of flight to the UK.

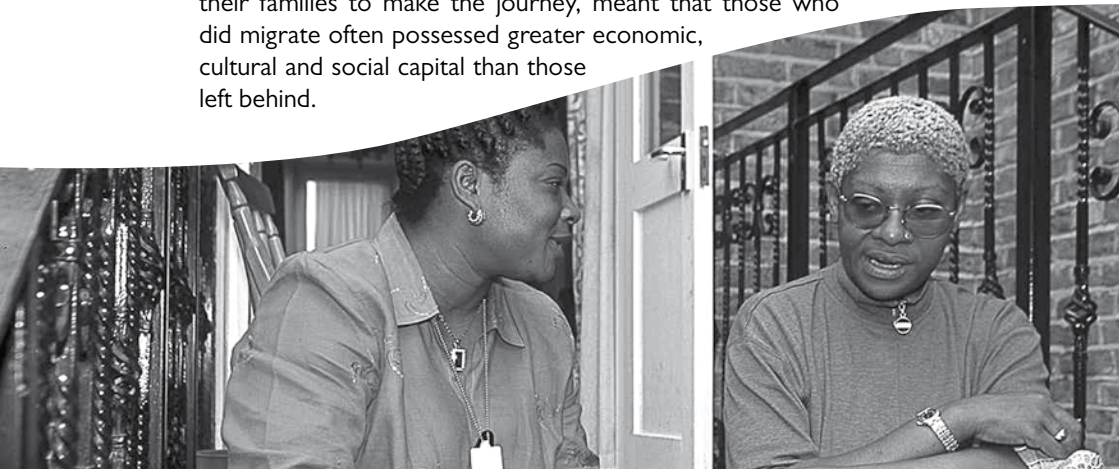
This chapter addresses this knowledge gap. It starts by providing an analysis of the pre-migration and migratory experiences of the 30 interviewees. We then examine their class backgrounds, prior education and their experience of persecution and of flight.

Key findings

Interviewees came from 15 different countries and from different ethno-linguistic groups within their countries of origin. Refugees also left their home countries for many different reasons. The key findings are given below.

- The majority of those we interviewed were from the elite or from middle class families in their home countries.
- All of those who left their home countries as adults had completed compulsory education.
- Eight of the 11 interviewees who came to the UK as children experienced prolonged interruptions to their education in their home country or during flight, with three of them receiving little or no education before arrival in the UK.
- Half of those who left their home countries as adults had undertaken some higher education prior to departure.

- Many of those who had worked in their home country found that their existing skills and experience could not easily be transferred to the UK labour market.
- Seven of our interviewees had received some or all of their education through the medium of English.
- Most refugees were fleeing war, or persecution, or both. However, three refugees had no direct experience of persecution, having been outside their home country when their home country conditions changed. Political engagement and persecution made many refugees aware of the importance of human rights.
- Three refugees (from Chile, Vietnam and Afghanistan) came to the UK as part of resettlement programmes and four refugees came as a result of family reunion.
- Only ten interviewees had made a direct journey to the UK. For the majority of refugees, journeys to the UK had been long and complex. Many refugees had spent protracted periods living in third countries.
- Refugees' reasons for migration to the UK included existing family already living here, evacuation on a UK settlement programme or as a result of decisions made by people smugglers. One third of those we interviewed had little choice in their destination.
- Over half (18 out of 30) of the refugees paid for the services of agents and smugglers, to provide forged documentation, arrange border crossings or transport them to the UK. That financial resources were needed to migrate to the UK, and that refugees had sometimes been selected by their families to make the journey, meant that those who did migrate often possessed greater economic, cultural and social capital than those left behind.



Educational background in refugees' countries of origin

All of those who left their home countries as adults had completed compulsory education. Among interviewees there was a much higher rate of participation in higher education (50 per cent) than the UK population (the 2001 Census indicated that 32 per cent of the UK population had higher level qualifications, comprising A levels, their equivalents or higher education qualifications). That refugees are more likely to have studied in higher education institutions is a finding that comes out of many studies that have profiled refugee communities in the UK (Carey-Wood *et al.*, 1995; Haringey Council, 1997).

C, from Czechoslovakia, had just completed the third year of a four year psychology degree before coming to the UK as a working student during the summer vacation of 1968. She decided not to return home after the Soviet invasion. A friend told her she should apply for Oxford as she had good marks in Czechoslovakia. C wrote a statement and her English teacher corrected it for her so it didn't have mistakes.

“The first college I walked in, they took me to the principal. I gave her this letter where she could read what my qualifications were. I had my little book from Bratislava University with all my results and they had a tutor of Slovak languages who was able to translate that. And that was it.”

C was lucky that her overseas qualifications were recognised in the UK, but this is not always the experience of refugees who come to the UK. A lack of recognition in this area can sometime contribute to their unemployment or underemployment (Bloch, 2004). Indeed, that adult refugees are generally well-qualified when they come to the UK heightens the iniquity of their labour market experiences in this country (see Chapter Six).

Seven of our interviewees had received some or all of their education through the medium of English. (They were from Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sierra Leone, Kenya, Uganda and Afghanistan). They spoke good or fluent English on arrival in the UK and recounted how this made their first months in the country less stressful and enabled them to find jobs as soon as they were able to work. V, from Uganda, was refugee who had been educated through the medium of English and stated:

“I reflected and I said, if I had not learnt English (in Uganda) how would I be in this country, and I wouldn't like

to see myself being there waiting for some services and I had somebody to interpret for me, no.”

Those who came to the UK as children, however, had different experiences of education in their home countries or during flight. Eight of the 11 interviewees who came as children experienced prolonged interruptions to their education in their home country or during flight. Three children had not attended school in their home country. They included S, who had survived the civil war that engulfed Mogadishu, Somalia; a war that closed all schools. DD, from a small village in Afghanistan, also saw his school closed by war. G, from Vietnam ceased to attend school as chaos descended on Saigon, his home city. His father, who had worked as a doctor, fled on a boat, leaving the rest of the family behind. G was forced to earn his living selling cigarettes on the streets of Saigon.

“Things were very bad for us in Vietnam. We were on the losing side so everything was chaos. When my father left on the boat we didn’t know whether we would see him again. My mother sold everything to support us, including the glass from our windows.”

The long-term consequences of an interrupted schooling are examined in greater detail in Chapters Five and Six.

Labour market experiences in the home country

Some 15 of the 19 adult refugees had worked in their home countries in various occupations that comprised:

- administrative and clerical work – 5
- school teacher or university lecturer – 4
- gynaecologist – 1
- librarian – 1
- restaurant owner – 1
- factory worker – 1
- agricultural worker – 1
- hairdresser – 1.

Many interviewees felt that their labour market experiences in their home countries had usually left them ill-equipped for working in the UK as they did not have the required skills, for example, the use of information technology.

There was an exception: those whose pre-migration employment ensured fluency in English. Six of those interviewed had used English in their workplace prior to their migration to the UK, for example, as school teachers or clerical workers. J, from Somalia, found work in a refugee camp in Ethiopia after he fled from his home city.

“My English was good enough when I came. Put it this way, I did not need a translator, except when I went to the Home Office. When I was in Ethiopia, I worked with a refugee organisation for a while and that developed a lot of confidence in the way I was speaking.”

Persecution

The interviewees had very different experiences of persecution, the push factor that caused them to migrate. Reasons for migration included political, religious and ethnic persecution, as well as armed conflict. Seven refugees experienced direct persecution because of their political action in their home country. Another nine refugees had been forced to leave their home country because of the political activities of their parents or spouses. Sometimes a combination of factors caused refugees to flee. Q was a pro-democracy activist while at university in Kenya.

“We were always on strike, we were always protesting. I was also active in the constituency of the Vice President. That man knew me, he knew my family, that’s why he wanted me out.”

Some interviewees, like S, fled armed conflict in Somalia. He told how his family fled soon after his father was killed.

“I was really young then. I was living with my family... there was always conflicts going on, people fighting each other. There was war, tribes fighting against each other. But we were just a regular family. We were not part of the fighting or the politics. Everyone was moving from the city. There were a lot of people dying, so my mother decided we needed to move. So the little money she had we took a bus and the bus eventually got us to Ethiopia.”

V, from Uganda, experienced religious persecution. Government officials came looking for him because he was a member of a movement called the

Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God.

“Being a teacher I was made somebody to mobilise others and to recruit so I was known to the people, so the government was looking for me.”

They shot his wife but V escaped through the back of his house and was hidden by members of his community until he was able to leave Uganda.

“I ran from there, then I found my way to the neighbourhood to others to keep me there and then from there I had to run and run until I went to Kenya eventually and from Kenya I came to here.”

CC was a refugee twice in his life. His family were Eritrean, but had lived in Ethiopia for many years. A territorial war between Ethiopia and Eritrea broke out in 1999, and CC's family, along with many other Eritreans, had to flee from Ethiopia. However, in Eritrea his family experienced religious persecution – they were Pentecostalists. CC's father was killed and he and his mother were imprisoned. He was 15 at this time.

“Eritrea, oh my god, it's a difficult country for me. There were a lot of problems for my family because of the government. It doesn't accept my religion, first problem. Second problem: it killed my father. After that, me and my sisters and my Mum have to rest in the prison. Me and my sisters have to wait two days for the prison, after two days the government said this religion you've got (pause) it's not allowed. I thought maybe they are going to kill me or they're going to put us back in prison.”

CC and his siblings were released from prison and his aunt arranged for him to travel to the UK. Sadly, he has not spoken to his mother for two years and is not sure if she is still alive.

There is an extensive literature that examines refugees' experience of persecution and the psychological consequences of armed conflict and persecution (see, for example, Kinzie *et al.*, 1986; Macksoud, 1992; McCallin and Fozzard, 2000). Most of this research concludes that the greater the exposure to violence, the greater the likelihood that a person will manifest mental illness, in particular post-traumatic stress disorder^x. Much, although not all, research on the psychological sequelae of war and persecution

concludes that refugees manifest high levels of mental illness, meaning their ability to function in normal social settings is severely and adversely affected^{xi}. Psychiatric morbidity, therefore, prevents successful integration. However, the small size of our sample, as well as our research methodology, did not enable us to examine persecution in relation to mental health, although two refugees did talk of experiencing mental health difficulties.

We concluded that persecution had another effect on refugees' sense of belonging and Britishness. Political engagement, persecution and the deprivation of human rights in countries of origin and sometimes during flight seemed to have made interviewees aware of the importance of security, freedom and rights. H, from Iran, faced political persecution. When talking about his work in the UK he stated:

“I like to fight for my rights. You know, that is why I left the country – I fought the government, I was beaten up for what I believed was right, I was put in prison.”

This awareness of rights heightened refugees' sense of Britishness as shared values and the possession of rights and affected their attachment to the UK. We explore these issues further in Chapter Ten.

Flight

A number of respondents talked of leaving as the political situation worsened at home. Both I and J had lived in the Gulf States in the mid-1980s, as more and more opponents of the Somali dictatorship faced arrest. C was already in the UK when political events changed in Czechoslovakia, her home country. At that time, many people were leaving on foreign holidays, as they thought that the borders would soon be closed.

“In 1968 I came here for a holiday, not as a student. I came here for a working holiday in Bognor Regis, for Butlins' holiday camp as a bar assistant. I was here for about two weeks when the Russians invaded Czechoslovakia in 1968, and a day later my parents sent me a telegram not to come back.”

D, the brother of C, was also in the UK at the time of the Soviet invasion. He also received a telegram telling him not to return.

“Three days after the Russians marched in I had a telegram from Vienna, from my parents, and they said that they are in Vienna... I think what happened to me, if you want, psychologically, that as soon as I had the telegram I didn't sleep the whole night. That I do remember very well. Suddenly, I realised that I've lost my home. So in fact it came in two stages because the first bit of excitement was when the early evening papers came out saying Czechoslovakia was invaded. Somebody lent me a car and I went to Bognor Regis to see my sister and we just agreed, you know, until the Russians leave Czechoslovakia or until things change we're not moving anywhere. But the real psychological shock came after that telegram when I've realised that I left on a holiday with a thirteen kilogram suitcase with all my summer things and I'll never go back.”

Three refugees (from Chile, Vietnam and Afghanistan) came to the UK as part of evacuation programmes. Their journeys and immigration clearance were arranged by the organisations that co-ordinated their evacuation. Here G, from Chile, recounts how he came to the UK. He was one of 3,000 Chileans who were admitted to the UK as part of a government refugee resettlement programme (see Chapter Two).

“My brother came here a year before. He organised a campaign to free me... He and a couple of Chileans who were in Coventry with the trade unions. I was adopted by the Trades Council in Coventry.

“I had been arrested in 1983, I was originally sentenced to death, the military court then sentenced me to life in prison. A week later, (after being arrested) I married my wife who was expecting a child... when I came to the UK and I got a visa, they transferred me to a prison in Santiago that was a kind of preparation for people coming out. They allowed them to grow their hair and put on a bit of weight. In fact I met my son only then, at two and a half years. I joined the family on the airplane, five minutes before take-off... so when I arrived here I arrived free, a father and a husband.”

Three women married men who had been previously granted refugee status or leave to remain in the UK. Two refugees, from Vietnam and Turkey, came to join their parents who were refugees living in the UK.

Those who were fortunate enough to come as a result of family reunion or evacuation programmes were in a minority. Most refugees had difficult and extended journeys. Of those who had no prior immigration clearance, only three refugees flew directly to the UK. Some 19 interviewees had spent protracted periods living in a country of first asylum, or had spent extended periods in transit. The mean period in transit was 22 months.

One refugee who had experienced a prolonged and complex journey was K, an Eritrean women. She fled Asmara with her mother and siblings when she was eight, at the height of 1962–1991 war. They left the city to hide in a small village and then slowly her mother took each of the children out to Sudan. They lived in a refugee camp in Sudan, until K's father heard that his family was 'out' and came from Italy to Sudan to search for them. He took them to his friend's house before taking the youngest children and K's mother to Italy. K spent eight years as an unaccompanied child in Sudan, before coming to the UK by herself at 18 years. Here she tells of her journey to the UK.

“As the war got worse we decided we had to leave. We went out from the city into a small village, then slowly mother took each of us out to the Sudan.”

They had to walk 40 kilometres in the night to reach the village where K's mother had a friend. The friend lived in a clay house; K was not used to village conditions, as her family was comparatively wealthy.

“Something I never forgot, she (her mothers' friend) gave us tea and there was no sugar because there was shortage of sugar and I said 'Mum, how I am going to drink it?' and she took sweets to eat and she said 'put it in your tea'. There was food without salt and we said 'Mum, we can't eat it' and she said 'you have to eat it there is no choice'.”

The next day they had to walk another 40 kilometres to where their soldiers, the 'rebels', were and they had to sleep in an open area.

“And I remember my Mum was the whole night awake to check for us... We didn't know where we were going; we

didn't know what was happening, where she was taking us.
We didn't have any idea.”

One issue we wished to explore was how conditions of flight affected refugees' eventual integration into the UK as there is very little existing research on this issue. Some psychological research suggests that those who have longer to plan for their flight show less psychological vulnerability in exile, than those whose flight was immediate and unplanned, usually because they were fleeing armed conflict (Baker, 1983; Melzak and Warner, 1992; Melzak, 1997). Psychiatric morbidity, as noted above, will usually limit successful integration.

We were interested to see if a prolonged journey to the UK or a lengthy time spent in a third country hindered refugees' integration and development of attachments in the UK. For example, might a prolonged period spent in transit or a third country lead refugees to feel that their time in the UK might comprise yet another temporary sojourn? We found that prolonged journeys to the UK did affect the eventual integration of one group – those who fled as children. The educational progress in the UK of eight interviewees was negatively affected by long and complex journeys. All of them had spent protracted periods out of school. S, from Somalia, whose story is told above, did not attend school in either Somalia, or Ethiopia, his country of first asylum. It was not the prolonged journey *per se*, that had a negative effect on child refugees' eventual integration, rather the effects of an interrupted education coupled with an absence of appropriate educational support in the UK. This issue is examined in Chapters Five and Six.

Choosing the UK as a destination

All our interviewees were asked why they had chosen to come to the UK, as factors surrounding the choice of the UK as a country of exile may also influence eventual integration of refugees. The reasons given for choice of the UK as a destination are given in Figure One below. One third of those we interviewed had little choice in their destination. This decision was made for them by the agents or people smugglers they used, as H, from Iran and Z, from Ethiopia, stated:

“I didn't know that I was coming to the UK. I just wanted
to get to a safe place. It didn't matter where it was.”

“The agency he chose for me. ‘UK or Germany’, he said. He

chose for me. My first choice was to go to the United States, to go to my wife, but he told me that is not so easy.”

Two interviewees had been evacuated to the UK as programme refugees, and were presented with a limited choice of countries by the organisations that arranged their evacuation.

The remainder of those we interviewed exercised greater agency in choosing their eventual destinations. Four chose to come to the UK because they spoke fluent English, including Q, from Kenya:

“I chose the UK for one main reason, the language barrier. There was an option of me going to Belgium or to Norway, but I thought, why should I go to a country where I cannot understand the language, so I chose the UK. I didn’t want to be trying to climb a mountain in a country where I didn’t speak the language.”

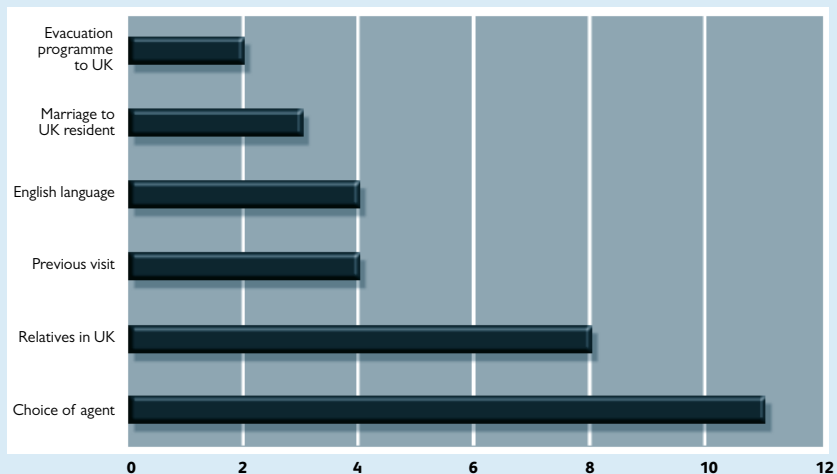
Reasons given to us for the choice of the UK as a destination concur with other research on this issue (Koser, 1997). We concluded that there were three effects on integration of making a positive choice to come to the UK. Firstly, if the UK was the chosen destination, interviewees were more likely to see it as a permanent or semi-permanent home and invest in careers and education. Secondly, those who chose to come to the UK to join relatives were likely to have the support of their relatives, although, as discussed in the next chapter, the actions of relatives were not always in the best interests of individual refugees. Thirdly, those who chose the UK because they spoke English had an obvious advantage in their early integration.

The use of people smugglers

Conditions of flight impacted on refugees’ eventual integration in one other significant way. Reliance on agents meant that migration was a selective process. Those with money, the ability to work en route, or social networks were more likely to reach the UK, a finding noted in other research about refugee flight (Koser, 1997; Van Hear, 2004).

The use of forged documents, or the services of agents or people smugglers was very common among those we interviewed. In total, 18 of our interviewees had used agents or people smugglers at some point during their journeys to the UK. A and his mother were smuggled across the Hungarian border in 1956.

Figure One: Reasons for choice of UK as a destination



Source: Author interviews

N=32 (multiple answers from 30 interviews)

“During the Hungarian Revolution I was there on the streets. When it looked as if it was successful, the last thing I thought about was leaving because we were optimistic. When it had been put down so brutally, it was such a grey, awful time, it suddenly became so depressing. It was winter, we just suddenly felt that this was it.

“Where we stayed was too dangerous during the second part of the fighting. When the Russian tanks came back, we moved to a slightly safer place with some very close friends. We came out together leaving on 8 December 1956. My mother got some false papers. She was quite good at this, she did that before when we were dodging the Gestapo. But it wasn’t much use because we were arrested on the border. It was on the second time we got out. We were staying with a local peasant. He took us over the border, starting at three in the morning, climbing, crawling under what was the Iron Curtain and arriving with just a rucksack.”

H, an Iranian refugee, narrated how he worked in his country of first asylum in order to pay for an agent to take him to Europe or North America.

“I went to the United Arab Emirates, Dubai in particular. I didn’t have a passport or visa, so I worked every day for a year so I could buy one. I bought the passport and I tried to go to Canada, but I was stopped in Turkey halfway there and was deported back to the UAE. From there someone helped me to come to the UK... My father found someone at the airport, and he asked me ‘where do you want to go?’ I said any country that accepts refugees and I ended up here.”

T, from Afghanistan, told of a four-month journey where he almost lost his life. Again, his journey was arranged by agents.

“I came from Mazar. From Mazar, we came to Tajikistan. From Tajikistan, then the journey started. They took us here and there in different countries. We were not allowed to go out, so we did not know which country it was, or which city is that one.

“Sometimes they put us in trolleys, sometimes they put us in cars that were covered. Then when they took us out of the car, they put us in a house with the windows that were covered. You couldn’t go out and you couldn’t talk by phone or email. Just they brought us food and then they put you in another car. That was their technique to bring the refugees from different countries.

“Four times I was near dying because they put us in different small ships in the river. Near the river there was a lot of snow. Then they said to us ‘jump in the river.’ They had pistols and they had knives in their hands and they said, if you don’t jump we will kill you. We fell down into the water and the water was very cold. When we came out we had to walk through one or two metres of snow. So it was like that, they don’t care about you, they just care about the money.”

M, from Sri Lanka, told how her family and friends had pooled their resources to pay for her journey to the UK. In the process her family had to make a difficult decision about who was to flee first. The pooling of resources and the

choice of the most resourceful family member is a common strategy adopted by forced migrants.

“It was my Daddy who was meant to come. But as he had lived in Saudi Arabia for ten years and he did not want to leave. He should have gone, because he was helping the Tigers, he was giving them food. My brother was too young, so they decided that I should come out first.”

We felt that the costs attached to the use of ‘agents’ or people smugglers meant that the refugees we interviewed possessed greater social, economic and cultural capital than compatriots who were left behind, a finding supported by Van Hear (2004), who linked the ability to migrate to the possession of social and economic capital. Using Bourdieu’s conceptualisation of social class (see below), Van Hear argued that refugees need social capital – the information about migration routes transmitted through social networks – in order to migrate. They also need economic capital in order to pay agents. Refugees, therefore, are more likely to be from the elite or middle classes of their home countries.

Class stratification within refugee communities, however, is an issue that receives little attention from researchers, policy makers or from refugee organisations. It is rarely mentioned in the literature of refugee organisations (Rutter, 2006). Social class as a concept, too, is difficult to ascribe to refugees. Definitions of social class comprise culturally specific identities. Social class is also defined by markers such as the possession of economic capital and by occupation. However, wage levels for different jobs and the status attached to them differs between countries. For example, a general practitioner is well paid in the UK and has a high status job. In Russia, doctors are poorly paid and the job is afforded much less status (Marshall, 1989). A useful theoretical framework, however, is offered by Bourdieu who modifies Marxist notions of class and capital. He suggests that class differences can be distinguished by the possession of different forms of capital in different amounts, namely:

- economic capital
- social capital, comprising resources based on social networks
- cultural capital, for example skills, work experience and qualifications, and
- symbolic capital – the value that is attached to economic, social and cultural capital (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Bourdieu, 1986).

Bourdieu further distinguishes different forms of cultural capital. It can exist in an objectified state, as objects such as books, or in an institutionalised state – in the form of academic qualifications. It may also exist in an embodied state – within the dispositions of the individual. The commitment to self-improvement through education is a form of embodied cultural capital which Bourdieu terms *habitus* – a socially acquired and embodied system of dispositions that causes one to act in a certain way and is determined by the way a person is socialised by family, peers and wider society (Bourdieu, 1986).

The financial costs of migration and the fact that social networks are needed to facilitate migration means that refugees who are successful in making the journey to the UK usually – although not always – are those that possess greatest economic and social capital. There is a strong correlation between household income and the levels of education in poor countries, with only the wealthiest able to afford secondary or university education. Economic capital is, therefore, correlated with educational cultural capital. That families sometimes select the most resilient or resourceful member to make the journey also adds to the selective nature of refugee migration to European countries.

The majority of those refugees we interviewed were from families who could be described as middle class, and had access to economic capital. Those who we interviewed (26 out of 30) were also predominantly from urban areas. The high proportions of university graduates among those we interviewed, the ownership of land and property, as well as prior employment, provided evidence that many refugees came from wealthier sectors of society. I, from Somalia had first cousins who were educated at British public schools and her uncle attended Sandhurst. T, from Afghanistan, told of his previously privileged life.

“In England, they think you have come to grab your economy, but we had a good house back home, a nice home and a nice garden and a playground for the children. What they show you on the television (about Afghanistan) is not true. I came here to save my life. I did not come here to have a good life. The life there was better, I had two pharmacy shops in the centre of the city. I had a good house. I had a good car. I don’t have a car here.”

Conclusions

This chapter shows that adult refugees are likely to be those in possession of greater social, educational and economic capital relative to their counterparts left behind. This, in turn, gives support to the theory that forced migration is a highly selective process. Refugees' possession of various forms of capital affects their ability to integrate into the host society – cultural capital among refugees represents potential, but potential that is often unrealised in the UK.

Child refugees' education was often seriously disrupted by conditions in the home country, or the inability to access education during the journey to the UK. This may affect their integration in the UK. Our research highlights the differences between the educational background of adult refugees and those who flee as children, with the latter experiencing many interruptions to their education. While it is important to recognise the qualifications that refugees may bring, it is also important to acknowledge that not all refugees are well-qualified.

Our research suggests that pre-migratory experiences affected feelings of Britishness. Political engagement, persecution and the deprivation of human rights in countries of origin, and sometimes during flight, made refugees aware of the importance of security, freedom and rights. This awareness of rights heightened refugees' sense of Britishness as shared values and the possession of rights. It positively affected their attachment to the UK.

One long-standing issue that has not been extensively explored in research on refugee integration is the extent to which country of origin affects integration. Do Ugandan refugees find it easier to integrate than Iranians? Our evidence led us to conclude that there were no uniquely national factors than impacted on integration. Rather it was combinations of pre-migration ecologies – not specific to particular countries – that affected integration. These included pre-migration educational and labour market experiences, family income and, as noted above, fluency in English.

The findings presented in this chapter highlight the need for policies of refugee integration to be based on a better understanding of the pre-migratory experiences of refugees, particularly those detailed above.

Chapter Five

Arrival

This chapter examines how arrival experiences affect refugees' eventual integration, belonging and citizenship. It analyses their experiences of applying for asylum, finding accommodation and receiving assistance. It argues that the availability of secure housing and English language tuition promote the early integration of both adult and child refugees. The chapter also argues that the granting of time-limited immigration statuses may influence refugees' decisions about employment, as well as their broader integration experiences.

Key findings

Those we interviewed had diverse arrival experiences, summarised below.

- The majority of arrivals had family and friends already living in the UK. In most cases, these social networks made the initial weeks less stressful for refugees. However, in a few cases the actions of some family members or friends impeded the eventual integration of refugees.
- Seven refugees arrived in the UK by themselves and had no close family or friends living in the UK. Those who arrived by themselves appeared to experience more stress and anxiety in their first weeks. However, those who arrived by themselves were also compelled to actively seek out friends and advice. This may have promoted better eventual integration.
- Refugees had very diverse experience of their initial housing. Many refugees had lived in overcrowded or poor quality accommodation.
- Initial housing mobility impacted on eventual integration of some child arrivals.
- Refugees had diverse experiences of the asylum system. However, rapid decisions appear to promote early integration.

- The time-limited settlement afforded to those who have gained refugee status since 2005 appears to have impacted on career choices.
- Some 23 of the refugees arrived in the UK speaking little or no English. All but one of the refugees who arrived in the UK before 2000 were able to secure access to ESOL teaching, and most of those we interviewed now spoke English fluently. Many recent arrivals, however, received no ESOL support at all when they first came to the UK.
- Eleven refugees arrived in the UK as children, with five of them coming as unaccompanied children. Most recent arrivals were shocked by the poor behaviour and endemic violence in British schools. They also received little support in learning English.
- Half the refugees we interviewed received little or no support from helping agencies on arrival in the UK.

Arrival

Interviewees' initial experiences of arriving in the UK were very diverse. Some had friends or family who were able to meet them; others did not. Some interviewees made their asylum application at the port of entry, others applied later – 'in country'. M, a Sri Lankan Tamil, recalls her arrival at Heathrow. Her two cousins had promised her parents that they would pick her up at the airport and look after her, but they later refused to do this, saying it would lead to scandal. She was eventually picked up by another family friend.

“I came in June 1992, at Heathrow. I was really hoping that they would come and pick me up, but they refused because they were boys. They were scared to have me with them because people would talk, they would talk that she was his girlfriend, or she would marry him. Then another family friend came to pick me up, I had to stay a couple of days with them, but they didn't have room, so I moved to another friend's house where they had a box room. But after that I had to move because they were buying a flat.”

U, an older Somali woman, was left in the arrivals hall at Heathrow by the agent who brought her from Yemen.

“The agent who supported me said ‘this is London, you said you wanted London, so this is London’ and left me right in the middle of the airport, so I walked over to a telephone box and I stayed around the telephone box to see if there could be any Somalis around. Luckily I saw this lady, and she helped me because I was a Somali and also I was a Muslim as well, and a person who needs charity. The lady said ‘I will help you so far, you are welcome to my home. And since you come to my home as a Somali Muslim person, I can help you with the Home Office, but all I can give you is my food and there is a bed to sleep on. But I cannot help you any further than this.’”

CC, an Eritrean refugee was also brought to the UK by an agent. He was 15 when he arrived at Heathrow Airport, and had his younger sister with him. After they were left by an agent, they were found by some Eritreans who took them to their home before taking them to the Home Office.

“When I came to this country, the businessman, he left me. He said to me ‘I’m going to buy cigarettes.’ I said to him ‘OK’ and after that I never saw him again. My sister she was crying and some Eritreans asked me ‘why is she crying?’ They took us to Kilburn and here we stayed for two days.”

Two refugees were held in immigration detention centres on arrival in the UK. AA, an Eritrean who also arrived in the UK by himself, recounted his discovery.

“We came in a lorry from France, the owner of the warehouse in Swindon where we got out, he called the police and the police came and picked us. The police took us to the police station and then to immigration detention and they did a screening. I got caught in Swindon and they sent us to Bristol and in Bristol we were in a hostel for a lot of people.”

A number of refugees made their asylum applications at their port of entry. Q, from Kenya describes his arrival.

“The gentleman that had organised my flight disappeared miraculously, so I was left standing, thinking, what I am going to do? So I queued and I explained that I did not have a passport, and said to the lady that I want to claim asylum. So they took me to a small room, and I was kept there for almost four hours. What I got from them was a lot of cups of coffee and a sandwich later.”

Applying for asylum

The refugees we interviewed had very diverse experiences of applying for asylum. We have summarised these in Table Four in the appendices. The majority of those we interviewed had fairly straightforward and rapid experiences of seeking asylum. (Our research brief stipulated that we interviewed those who had been granted refugee status or leave to remain in the UK, and in this respect, interviewees were not typical of contemporary asylum seekers in the UK, many of whom may have had different pre-migration experiences to those granted refugee status or leave to remain^{xii}.)

Some of those who had lived in the UK for a long period felt their favourable treatment was due to their arrival at a time when the UK was more sympathetic towards refugees. A, from Hungary, was given refugee status on arrival – he believes this was because the UK Government felt guilt over its foreign policy. It was so pre-occupied with the Suez crisis that it did not object to the Soviet Union’s actions in Hungary.

“We were given refugee status on arrival, which is a sharp contrast with everything that has happened since... I have written several times about the contrast with my reception and what’s been happening over the last 20 years.”

Many of those who we interviewed talked about the stress of waiting for an asylum decision. I, from Somalia, waited three years for a decision on her case. She wanted to study in a higher education institution, but was unable to do so, as she was an overseas student. She was eventually given a bursary.

“I wanted to study computers when I first came to London. I went to Hackney college, but they turned me down on the basis that I hadn’t got the legal right to stay... This was a bad time, I didn’t know if I was going to stay or go back

to Somalia... I then went to an opening in Hackney town hall and I saw a beautiful display of Cordwainers' College, hand-made bags and everything. I said 'who is responsible for this' and they said it was Cordwainers, so I went and I walked in and I felt like a child in a sweet factory. The college was really so good to me, they realised I hadn't got the papers, they realised I hadn't got the money, they gave me a bursary."

We felt that recent arrivals had benefited from government policy to speed up the asylum determination procedure. They were able to enter the labour market and make long-term plans soon after their arrival. V, from Uganda, received refugee status after six months and stated:

"When I was given status, straight away I didn't want even to sleep, no, it was as if I was just a bird let out of the window to go look for work."

This positive policy development is counterbalanced by the decision to limit the period of initial settlement to those granted refugee status. Since 2005, those granted refugee status have been granted five years' residency in the UK; previously they were given the right of permanent residency. Four of those who we interviewed had been affected by this policy change, especially in relation to decisions they made about future careers. CC and Z, both from Ethiopia, were balancing career choices. CC was academically able and wanted to go to university. However, he felt pressured to earn money, to cushion him when or if he was forced to leave the UK. He was contemplating taking a vocational course to qualify him to work as cabin crew, as he felt this was a skill that he could use in any country. Z, who had run a restaurant in Ethiopia, was debating whether to take a nursing degree or to work in catering, with a view to setting up his own restaurant. Although cooking was his first love, a nursing qualification would enable him to work in any country.

Three of those who we interviewed were refused asylum and then appealed. Q, from Kenya, tells of his experience below. At the time he was living in Leyton, east London.

"In Leyton, my case was refused, so the Income Support could not pay for me, but luckily I had met someone who had given me a job. I did appeal, I was actually due to be

deported at the end of '97. I put the appeal through, paid the barrister and went to the court. The judge told me 'you will hear from me in two weeks time', but it took her two months. Then they sent me a piece of paper that said on it 'allowed'. I could not understand it, I was so confused I went to the solicitor to ask what it meant and he said congratulations, they have given you leave to remain. So by then I had saved some money. I had begun saving up, because I thought I was going back home, but the money I saved I used to buy a house in Tilbury."

O, an Afghan, came with his family. His father had been a diplomat for the Communist government. It took seven years to receive a decision on the family's application for asylum. Eventually, they were given ELR, after the 1999–2000 asylum backlog clearance exercise, where asylum seekers who had waited for more than three years for a decision were allowed to apply for leave to remain in the UK.

"The first year we were given a six month visa, and then one more year. Then after that, that year that visa expired, our case was, it was just being assessed by the Home Office, so we did not have anything. I think after the seven years there were changes in the law where it was stated that most cases that had come between 1993 to 1996 would be settled after that. We were one of them. I think it was after that seven years that, after the Home Office decided to sort out these cases we were given leave to remain here."

O's family lived in temporary housing during that period – bed and breakfast hotels and short-term housing provided by the local authority. He was forced to move school many times.

U, an older Somali woman, had the most dehumanising experience of the asylum process of all our interviewees. She applied for asylum in early 2003 and was refused asylum in August 2003. U had fled from Mogadishu and was a *reer Hamar*, a minority group also referred to as Benadiris. They have no militia to protect them and are perceived as being richer than ethnic Somalis, making them a target for militia. The Home Office disputed that she was Somali or *reer Hamar*, stating in U's letter of refusal of asylum that it thought U did not look like a typical *reer Hamar* and it thought that she was Yemeni. We

believed U's account of her background. She was told to leave the country and given the address of the International Organisation for Migration^{xiii}, but she ignored this order. She made a fresh asylum claim in February 2007, as her lawyer said that there was substantial new evidence for this. At the same time, U also applied for permission to work in the UK. A supporting statement for the asylum application was given by an eminent anthropologist with expertise on minority groups from Somalia, who questioned U about key landmarks, and persons in Mogadishu. From U's replies the independent expert was confident that U was Somali and *reer Hamar*.

U, in her period as an asylum overstayer, is one among at least 380,000 principal asylum applicants who have been refused asylum in the UK and have not been removed or left voluntarily. Many of them are from zones of conflict such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia or the Democratic Republic of Congo^{xiv}. Asylum overstayers are one group among those whom the Home Office terms 'asylum legacy cases'. This group also includes:

- asylum seekers with cases outstanding who are not part of a new asylum determination process called the New Asylum Model
- asylum seekers such as U, who have made a fresh claim for asylum
- asylum seekers with outstanding appeals, and
- cases where a person has been granted leave to remain or a time-limited refugee status and this needs to be renewed (Immigration Law Practitioners' Association, 2007).

Although the government has increased the number of staff working to clear asylum legacy cases, it has announced that many of them will not see their cases resolved until 2011. In total there are an estimated 450,000 'legacy' cases in the UK. They are people who are among the most socially excluded in the UK and whose presence, under current circumstances, makes building cohesive communities more difficult. Many of them, like U, not only face insurmountable barriers to their integration, but also feel that they do not belong.

"I am staying with my friend, occasionally I go, but mainly I am staying there, because if I move out, I lose the Home Office address for correspondence, because I am wanting the papers from the Home Office. I am having great difficulty in living where I am at the moment, people can only give so much to charity to me. I have such huge problems. Where will I go? My friends give me a bus pass

now and again, and food. I eat with the lady I live with and that is it... I did not think it would be such a struggle. I have nothing positive to look forward to at the moment, but I hope.”

U is being supported by a member of her own community, who is herself not a wealthy woman. British research on asylum overstayers, irregular migrants and other migrant groups without recourse to public funds shows that it is almost always community members themselves who support these destitute groups (Lewis, 2007). Many refugees who are providing lodgings and food to destitute co-nationals are themselves surviving on benefits or a low income. The burden that this places on hosts can limit their own social and institutional integration. Three other interviewees, all from Somalia, talked about the burden that supporting destitute co-nationals placed on refugees. S talked about the impact that overcrowded housing has on children, where families take in co-nationals.

“They all sleep in one room, it makes it really difficult, especially for the children and the homework.”

Our interview with U, as well as the testimony given by other interviewees and evidence gathered from our literature review, led us to conclude that the best way for the UK government to deal with asylum legacy cases from zones of conflict would be to undertake a regularisation programme. Such a regularisation programme, perhaps similar to the 1999–2000 backlog clearance exercise, under which O and his family were granted leave to remain in the UK, may be the only practical option in dealing with this group of asylum overstayers. Their removal would be difficult and costly and might also be in contravention of human rights law. Our analysis of Home Office asylum statistics suggests that there are up to 110,000 people in this group, from countries experiencing serious ongoing conflict such as Afghanistan, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Ivory Coast, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan and Zimbabwe. Granting people in this group leave to remain would enable them to participate fully in British society, rather than living at its margins, and become active members of their communities.

Initial housing

Interviewees had very diverse experiences of initial housing. Those who came to the UK as part of an evacuation programme already had their housing prepared for them. Refugees with family or friends in the UK tended to

stay with them, until they could secure more permanent accommodation. Those without close family and friends had to fend for themselves. B, a Czech woman who was living in the UK in 1968 at the time of the Soviet invasion, found herself homeless. She and her new husband bought a tent and went to Crystal Palace camp site. They stayed there for months, until they could afford a deposit for a rented room.

“We did try when we couldn’t raise the deposit for a flat or room, we went to the Czech Refugee Fund, which was a charity organisation for Czechs that someone told us about. But they said that they didn’t have any funds for this sort of thing and we didn’t get it. Camping and going to work from camp was quite difficult, but when you are young you can cope with anything.”

Q, from Kenya, described his initial housing after his arrival in 1995.

“I was taken to a hotel, I cannot remember where. We were all booked in lots of people from different countries, then everyone was dispersed. I was dispersed to Forest Gate in east London and got Income Support^{xv}, something I had never had. I hated living on handouts.”

Q shared a room with a Togolese refugee. He was beaten up by a Nigerian gang in the hostel. Soon afterwards he moved to a rented room in a house in East Ham which he shared with another refugee.

K, from Eritrea, was also housed in a refugee hostel after she had lodged her asylum application.

“I was sharing a room with another person. A person who I don’t know. The bed was one next to another. There was not much space. It was not nice. But you cannot do anything. The girl used to bring her boyfriend and I had to listen to whatever they were doing. It was not comfortable.”

As noted in Chapter Two, the housing entitlement of asylum seekers has seen many recent changes. The Asylum and Immigration (Appeals) Act 1993 prevented asylum seekers from being offered a secure social housing tenancy. After its passage, local authorities and refugee organisations noted increases in

asylum-seeking children's mobility, often to the detriment of their educational progress (Power *et al.*, 1995; Dobson *et al.*, 2000). Among those affected by this change was O, an Afghan who arrived in the UK aged 11. Here he talks of these moves of school:

“The first few months were very tough. I went into that school, then after two weeks we were in Willesden and then we were moved to Edgware, so again I had to change schools. I couldn't settle straight away, then we moved to another house and I had to go to another school. When I went to that school they told me that I should not have been enrolled for secondary school, I mean because I couldn't speak any English, they put me a year back, into primary school.”

The Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 further restricted asylum seekers' rights to social housing and removed the right to all benefits from in-country asylum applicants and appellants. It also marked the point when significant numbers of asylum seekers began to be housed outside Greater London, often in poor quality hotels in seaside towns. The Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 again changed the way that asylum seekers were housed and supported in the UK. It removed the right to Income Support from all asylum seekers and set up a parallel housing and sustenance scheme for asylum seekers, now administered by the Border and Immigration Agency (BIA).

Since 2000, homeless asylum seekers have been housed in specially commissioned emergency accommodation when they first arrive in the UK. They have the option of applying to the BIA for a 'subsistence only' package, or for subsistence and accommodation. All housing for asylum seekers was, and still remains, located outside Greater London, save that for a small number of torture victims. On 31 March 2007, some 23 per cent of asylum seekers supported by the Home Office were in receipt of subsistence-only support, largely remaining in Greater London and other large cities (Home Office, 2007). We interviewed three people who, as asylum seekers, had opted to remain in London. Future employment opportunities and the desire to live near friends were the reasons cited for staying in London.

Additionally, there is evidence of substantial secondary migration away from areas of initial dispersal. Robinson *et al.* (2003) tracked 56,000 asylum seekers over a 21-month period. They found that 20 per cent of them moved

while waiting for a Home Office decision on their asylum application. Racial harassment and isolation were the causes of this movement. The research showed that more asylum seekers move after they receive a decision on their asylum case, to Greater London or other large cities. Z, an Ethiopian, was initially dispersed to Newcastle. He told us of his decision to move from there.

“When I was in Newcastle, that place where we lived was called Benwell. That place is a known bad place, not a good place. Even when we were going to our home, some people around that area, they were drunk, they were taking some drugs. Sometimes they told us ‘why do you come here?’ They kicked us. We passed them and we tried to be nice... two or three friends, also from Ethiopia were beaten in that area.

“Then I got information that there are so many Ethiopians here in Sheffield, and also I thought if I want to do my own business, when I get a restaurant, that this is the best place, maybe a good place for me, so many people from Ethiopia, so many Oromo here. They also told me, Yorkshire peoples are very nice people, friendly people. So I moved to Sheffield.”

We felt that initial housing destination, secondary migration and housing mobility had a major effect on the long-term social integration of refugees, and their development of attachments to a locality. If asylum seekers felt secure, welcomed and settled in their initial areas of dispersal, they would be more likely to remain there after they received a positive asylum decision, providing there were employment opportunities.

Interviewees who moved to London as asylum seekers, or after receiving refugee status or leave to remain, inevitably spent long periods of time in privately rented accommodation, as did asylum seekers who chose to remain in London. Here their accommodation was often of a temporary nature, and located in areas experiencing great population churn. It was this mobility and lack of social cohesion in their places of residence that prevented refugees from integration and forming local attachments.

Unaccompanied children

Five of our interviewees had arrived in the UK as unaccompanied children, either by themselves or with younger siblings. They included DD, from Afghanistan. He was smuggled into the UK after a long overland journey from Pakistan. Here he describes his arrival in the UK:

“When I came here, with the man I gave money, he took me to here, he brought me to here. We arrived, I don’t know where it was. He said ‘Here is England, you can go anywhere you like.’ And after I took a train. I didn’t have any tickets. I came here and the checker caught me – ‘where’s your ticket?’ – he told me. He said ‘get off the train’, and I was looking for the police. I found the police and they helped me at the police station to find the social worker.”

After about a week DD and his social worker went to the Home Office to apply for asylum. In England and Wales, the Children Act 1989 makes a local authority’s social services department responsible for supporting all ‘children in need’ living within its boundaries, although this legislative framework may, in future, change for asylum-seeking children. Social services departments generally place younger children in foster care or sometimes in children’s homes. The poor quality of local authority social care for older unaccompanied children is a concern articulated in much action research undertaken by refugee organisations (see, for example, Munoz, 1999; Kidane, 2001; Stanley, 2001). These concerns were not borne out in our interviews. However, M, from Sri Lanka, who came as a 17-year-old, had no contact with social services or any welfare agency. This was despite her enrolment at school. In her first year in the UK she lived with three different Tamil families, none of whom she knew. She was very unhappy at this time and often cried herself to sleep.

“They had to find me another place, in the Pinner Road. I stayed there for about six months, but what happened the lady made a lot of noise, all the time and talked about me to other people. I was really fed up and I cried a lot. She didn’t allow me to go out or to study. She said don’t go out anywhere: boys will talk and look at you. So I was speaking to a friend at school, she said ‘I’ve got a big room, we can share it’, so I moved to Alperton.”

M arrived in 1992. She did not appear to have any support from a social worker at this time. Despite government and local authority guidance on unaccompanied children, research shows that in some local authorities there remain such children who have no contact with social services (Wade *et al.*, 2005). Our findings, as well other research projects, suggest that there may be many ‘hidden’ unaccompanied children living in the UK, whose presence is unknown to social workers or educationalists.

English language learning among adult arrivals

Only seven of our interviewees spoke good or fluent English on arrival in the UK. The remainder spoke little or no English on arrival, and often stated that their lack of English compounded their initial disorientation. E, a Chilean refugee, recounted:

“When I came I spoke nothing, zero. Although English was part of the secondary curriculum, there was a way you could drop it, and I dropped it, I never did any English.

“I went to live with a host family, the man spoke perfect Spanish and that didn’t help in terms of the process of integration. They were fantastic, but it was a cultural shock, it was new for me, but at the same time there was a total disconnection and I didn’t understand what was going on in terms of understanding the conversation, because of the language.”

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision, therefore, is essential for the successful integration of refugees. It enables confident and unmediated access to public services such as healthcare and further education. A worker with fluent English is able to access training opportunities, as well as understand safety instructions. The opportunity to study English also confers psycho-social benefits on refugees, helping them to feel that they are making progress and achieving control over their lives. Z, from Ethiopia, was one of a number of interviewees who talked of the psychological benefits of further education:

“If I did nothing, no courses, no work, then I would get really stressed.”

English language fluency also facilitates social interactions between newcomers and the receiving community, thus contributing to the development of cohesive

communities. However, policy reports and research about the settlement experiences of migrant communities has highlighted major inadequacies in English language teaching for both adults and children (National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, 2006; Rutter, 2006). This finding is borne out in our research. All but one of the refugees who arrived in the UK before 2000 were able to secure access to ESOL classes, helping them to gain invaluable skills, networks and confidence.

In contrast, many recent arrivals received no ESOL support at all when they first came to the UK. Exceptionally long waiting lists for ESOL courses, coupled with housing mobility, usually prevented their attendance. Among those unable to find a suitable course was Y, from Iran. It took her three years before she was able to enrol for an ESOL course. Even today, she struggles with her English and considers it a factor in her lack of contact with her neighbours.

“At first I could not speak anything, because in my country we only learned some words and people did not speak to each other in class. Now I speak some, but I know the English people are tired when I am speaking because my grammar is very bad and my dialogue is very bad. My accent especially is not very well, but the people are very kind to me, they try to understand me... My language is not very well. I don't like I start to speaking and somebody say me 'sorry.' If somebody told me 'sorry' or 'pardon' I stop to speaking, I say 'OK, nothing' because I don't like it. I'm shy.”

Between 2001 and 2007 any adult who was legally in the UK was entitled to universal free English language (ESOL) classes up to a Level 2 qualification standard^{xvi}. This entitlement, implemented in 2001, was a welcome policy move; it extended the number of groups entitled to free ESOL. However, it came at a time when there was increasing demand for ESOL classes, from dispersed asylum seekers, as well as from increasing numbers of migrant workers. Despite increased demand, there was little expansion in the provision of ESOL classes at this time. A 2006 inquiry into ESOL provision in England highlighted 'significant unmet demand for ESOL' with similar situations in Scotland and Wales (Rice *et al.*, 2004; National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education, 2006). A London further education college might typically have a waiting list of 1,000 students; in rural Nottinghamshire ESOL providers counted 990 persons waiting for ESOL classes in early 2007 (BEGIN, 2007). Nor has there been a broadening of the types of ESOL courses – in many parts of the UK, ESOL provision comprises solely basic classes, at entry

level, with no advanced ESOL.

Policy changes implemented in England in April 2007 have amended entitlements to adult ESOL, and will have an adverse affect on asylum seekers' early learning of English. The Government has shifted money away from basic ESOL, and put this money into employment-related training. Asylum seekers who are over 18 are no longer entitled to free ESOL provision, unless they have waited more than six months for an asylum decision, or are in receipt of Section 4 support^{xvii} because they cannot be returned to their home country. Essentially, it prevents asylum seekers from enrolling on ESOL courses when they first arrive in the UK. This policy change may mean that colleges cut ESOL classes. There are now reports of large cuts in basic (Level 1 and 2) ESOL provision, particularly in London, as well as tutor redundancy^{xviii}. Yet research shows that those who are able to access language classes soon after arrival in a new country are the most motivated and effective language learners (Baker, 2006). Delays in learning English will impede refugees' early access to the labour market. F's story is a cautionary tale of what might happen if newly arrived asylum seekers are not given access to ESOL. F, a 45-year-old Vietnamese woman, arrived in the UK at 17. Her first months were spent living in a reception centre run by the Ockenden Venture. Here she received some English lessons.

“We do have lessons in the camp, lessons not good, we just talk in Vietnamese. I just learn a few simple sentences in English, simple English, just a few words.”

F and her family were then sent to live in Liverpool. She received no ESOL support in Liverpool, but after a long delay, took a short typing course. For a year, she worked as a typist, before moving to London to get married. F relied on her husband and children to act as translators. She has not worked since 1985; her poor English has undoubtedly prevented her securing employment. At one point in the interview she described herself as 'a nobody':

“I am a nobody now, my English bad, no job, let's say.”

Initial schooling

Eleven refugees arrived in the UK as children, aged between 11 and 17 years. Eight of these refugees enrolled at school, two enrolled at further education colleges and one refugee did not enter education in the UK. Apart from A,

who arrived in the UK in 1956, all of those we interviewed found their initial school experiences to be very different from their expectations. Recent arrivals were shocked by the violence and poor behaviour of their British peers, and in some cases were themselves the targets of bullying at school. Few students received English language support on arrival in the UK.

Many refugees also experienced long delays before they could find a school that would accept them. It took CC, an unaccompanied Eritrean refugee, four months to secure a school place, despite statutory guidelines giving him the right to access education (see Department for Education and Skills, 2000). He liked school, but disliked the behaviour of some of his fellow students.

“The bad experience is, this country, a lot of younger people they smoke cigarettes, they smoke weed in school and that’s disgusting for me. In my country it’s not allowed to smoke cigarette before 18.”

Three refugee children had never attended school for any sustained period before they came to the UK. One of them was S, a Somali refugee now aged 19, who came to the UK aged 12. He had fled from Mogadishu aged nine, then lived in Ethiopia for three years. He had been unable to attend school in either Mogadishu or in Ethiopia, although his father had taught him at home. S, too, faced a long delay in finding a school that would take him. He felt the first school he attended was violent and many of his peers used drugs. He also received little help in learning English, or making up for his missed education. He was an articulate and likable young man, but at 19, he was unemployed and had no qualifications. He tells of his initial experiences at school:

“And I started school, and school was the most difficult part... because of the kids. I didn’t understand what anybody was saying... and when the teacher wanted to speak to me he had to talk to one of the other students that came from my country, he had to translate. It was really difficult. Every time I wanted to say something someone had to translate it for me. I wasn’t confident to talk, I was really quiet. Then I start learning, bit by bit, bit by bit, and I got involved in a lot of fights. Because of where I come from, because of my situation and because of my education, and how I was raised, I didn’t accept bullying. So every time when someone made fun of me, I had to fight him.

“I started in year eight straight away, so I missed year seven and I missed primary school. And they were teaching maths, English, science, geography, history, all these subjects. And I didn’t speak English and I didn’t have any other education. I knew how to read my language because my father taught us at home, but I didn’t know how to read English or write English or speak English.

“They were teaching GCSEs and it was really advanced because I didn’t have education from the beginning, I never went to primary school. And all the kids I was sitting with, they all went to primary school. It was really difficult. I had no education. I didn’t know what was going on. I was in a new country, and new faces, I was scared, you know what I mean.”

S talked about bullying in the school.

“I never got bullied because I was standing up for myself, but I did have a lot of fights. It’s kind of like being in the jungle, the other animals can smell if you fear them.

“And kids, you know, that’s what they do, just their sense of fun is just to make fun of other kids. So I wasn’t like allowing someone to make fun of me, if someone makes fun of me, I will, you know what I mean, attack them, or make fights. They make me think like your country is bad place.

“Me and the teachers, we couldn’t really understand each other and the fact, this stereotyping ‘ah, you’re from Somalia, you people are fighting each other, that’s why you came here’, that idea, that idea when you fight you know, and coming from a country who’s been in conflict for years. They assume that you’re violent.

“I thought it was safe (at school) and I then realised that no matter where you go nobody is safe.”

All of the refugees who arrived as children received very little help in their learning of English. A, who arrived in 1956, recounted:

“Other than tolerance we weren’t given any specific help with English... It was a case of sink or swim, they (the school) gave us books and we just had to learn as we went along. It was desperate measures. (At home) we started to have strict house rules, all of us Hungarians speakers, that between certain hours of the day, except for my grandparents. My grandmother spoke some English, my grandfather none, but he was desperately trying to learn. We banned Hungarian and we rushed to dictionaries and tried to communicate with each other in English even if it was desperately hard... We learnt English by immersion, we weren’t taught English at all.”

When A arrived in the UK, there were no teachers of English as an additional language (EAL) employed in schools^{xix}. It was not until the 1960s that British schools began to employ EAL teachers for new migrant and refugee children. At the time of writing, EAL teaching in England is funded by the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG)^{xx}. However this funding has decreased at a time when the numbers of children requiring EAL support continues to increase. Research indicated that in London, refugee children received an average of six hours additional language support in their whole school career. Few children who have achieved some oral competence in English receive any additional help. Those with little or no prior education also receive little help (Rutter, 2006). The lack of support that S received certainly contributed to his failure in examinations. None of our interviewees was able to recount receiving significant amounts of help in their learning of English – although many interviewees talked about general help and advice from their teachers.

This level of support prevents children developing academic literacy and accounts for the educational underachievement of groups such as Somali, Congolese and Turkish-speaking children (Department for Education and Skills, 2005). Debate about the real costs of providing English as an additional language support is needed, in school and in further education settings. It is likely that underinvestment in the early English language teaching of refugees and other newcomers who settle in the UK may seriously undermine the future contribution of these groups.

Helping agencies

Refugee community organisations (RCOs) and larger refugee organisations are considered integral to the reception and eventual integration of refugees

in the UK (Home Office, 2005c). Half of the refugees we interviewed received help from the following non-governmental organisations when they first arrived:

- Refugee Council – 6 listings
- Student advice organisations, for example, the National Union of Students – 4
- Refugee community organisations – 4
- Refugee Support – 2
- Women’s Royal Voluntary Service – 1
- Ockenden Venture – 1
- Methodist church – 1
- Red Cross – 1.

Just over half of those we interviewed, however, were largely dependent on friends and family for advice and help with asylum applications. Fifteen refugees had no contact with any helping organisation on arrival in the UK. O, an Afghan refugee, recounted:

“We weren’t given any help whatsoever. I remember basically just we had to support ourselves, so I remember my mother always going to the store and she didn’t know anything as well, she was going to the nearest store where now we know the differences in terms of prices where you go to somewhere just local rather than ASDA or Sainsbury’s so it was very difficult and nobody had given us any information or any help whatsoever, none at all.”

The lack of contact with helping agencies on arrival surprised us. Another unexpected finding was that it was the more recent arrivals who had least help when they first came to the UK. Obviously, asylum seekers who were dispersed to smaller conurbations outside London may not have received help from RCOs, because so few are operational outside cities such as London, Birmingham and Manchester. But many refugees who had managed to remain in London as asylum seekers also had very little contact with helping agencies. There may be many reasons for this; Griffiths *et al.* (2005) suggest that lack of funding, preoccupation with immigration emergencies and the sectarian nature of some RCOs limits their capacity to provide comprehensive reception and integration advice. We consider that government needs to be aware of the present limited capacity of RCOs and other non-governmental organisations to provide good quality initial advice to new arrivals.

Family and friends: a blessing or a curse?

As noted above, many refugees were dependent on family and friends for advice and initial housing. We felt that this support contributed to the earlier integration of many of those we interviewed. Family and friends provided a sense of security and removed many of the anxieties that refugees felt, over issues such as housing. The advice of family and friends also enabled earlier access to the labour market and education. Q, for example, made friends with a Togolese refugee, who directed him towards a good solicitor, as well as warning him about poor quality legal representation.

“When I came I met a guy from Togo, who was a refugee as well living in the room we were sharing. He directed me to these immigration solicitors and that man really helped me, and pursued my case. I paid him and the barrister because I didn’t want a refugee solicitor. There were rumours that refugee solicitors gave up so easily if they were not paid. I paid him cash. I knew people who had gone with the refugee solicitors and had solicitors leaving in the middle of the case or losing your file.”

U, a Somali, had been offered work through her friends, although her immigration status meant that she was unable to take it up.

“This lady, she has a job for me to look after Somali children. But I can’t take this job because of my status. There is a lady, too, working in Woolwich, where she runs a day care centre, and ideally she would like to hire me to work with the Somalis.”

But not all the activities of family and friends supported the integration of the refugees we interviewed. Some of the actions of family and friends were unintentionally damaging. I, from Somalia, told of how she thought her cousin had made an asylum application on behalf. She did not understand the process. It was not until she tried to enrol at college that she realised that she had no right to be in the UK.

“I arrived in 1988, I got a visa. I didn’t understand the legality of asylum, refugee status and family reunion, I didn’t understand the difference. It was really, really very

difficult for me. All I wanted to do was go to college and study, I couldn't, because of the fact that I hadn't got the papers to say I was legal, or whatever. I can't even get a grant, that was really hard. I didn't even know people could claim the dole. I was staying with my cousin and I didn't know people had that right."

M, a Sri Lankan refugee, found herself exploited by acquaintances of her family.

"I was working at the same place until I had my first baby. After that I left my job. It was sad at this time, because the home we were living in was so bad. At that house, they shouted at us all the time. We eat with them and we paid them, but still they shout at us 'where have the fruits gone, where have the biscuits gone?' The children ate them, but they blamed us. We picked the children up at 3.30, then they eat and mess around, but still they blamed us. We couldn't even change the TV channel without asking them. We were not allowed to keep any food in our room, or even drink if we were thirsty. We gave them rent and food money, all our money we give to them. We were not allowed to listen to the radio, even..."

"In the house I lived there was a Tamil family, a lady with a little baby, really cute. They were really good neighbours, we talked to them a lot and we go to them to use the phone, because we were not allowed to call anyone at our house. My landlord was strict and said if we had a phone we would talk to boys or something. He said you are not allowed to touch the phone, so I went next door to phone my Mum."

L, an Afghan woman, left Austria, her country of first asylum, to marry another Afghan refugee. Her marriage was not as happy as she expected it to be.

"I married someone who was not supportive, he had mental problems and I was locked in my house. I wasn't allowed out, to go to courses. I wasn't allowed to go to college, I was only let out to go to the shops."

While a strong network of family and friends had many benefits, there were also advantages experienced by refugees who arrived in the UK without such networks. Those who came by themselves were initially more isolated, but had been forced to look for friendships and support because of their initial isolation. Those working with refugees tend to assume that those with the strongest social networks are the least vulnerable. Our findings indicate a more complex picture: family and friends can offer advice and support, but conversely can render a newly-arrived refugee more vulnerable, and impede their long-term integration. This is a strong argument for conceptualising integration as a household process and not just as something experienced at an individual level.

Conclusions: reconceptualising resilience

Our examinations of arrival experiences lead to a number of policy recommendations – increased funding for adult ESOL and EAL support in schools, for example.

Many of our interviewees told of the stressful nature of their early months in the UK. The asylum application process, an uncertain future, a lack of access to key services and the temporary nature of housing caused a great deal of anxiety among many of those we interviewed, who often stated that they felt they had little control over their lives. Two of our interviewees talked about the mental health difficulties they experienced in their early months in the UK.

We believe that government, as well as refugee organisations, need to consider how they promote psychological resilience among adult refugees. Resilience, we feel, promotes integration. The concept of resilience draws on work with physically and sexually abused children and the observation that some children survive abuse without manifesting severe psychological distress while others do not (Rutter, 1985). However, resilience is rarely discussed in relation to adult refugees.

Researchers have outlined protective factors (sometimes called mediating factors) and resilience on one hand, and conversely risk factors (adverse factors) and vulnerability. Protective factors are attributes or conditions that make it more likely a person will achieve some degree of resilience as an

outcome and less likely that a child will manifest distress severe enough to render them dysfunctional. Risk factors are attributes or conditions that make it less likely children will achieve some degree of resilience (Elbedour *et al.*, 1993). Masten *et al.* provide another definition of resilience as:

“... the process of, capacity for or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances.” (Masten *et al.*, 1990)

Our interviews led us to conclude that protective factors for refugees include:

- having English language fluency
- having access to other people, particularly from their own community, who can give friendship and support
- possession of religious or political beliefs
- having access to secure housing
- understanding the asylum process and having an early resolution of an asylum application
- feeling that they have some measure of control over their lives
- remembering good things about life in the home country
- feeling optimistic about the future
- being able to talk about stressful events and thus gain mastery over them
- being able to ask for help when things go wrong
- having a hobby or interest to pursue or having the opportunity to study.

We believe that interventions to promote integration must aim to minimise refugees' vulnerability and maximise their resilience. Such interventions may include moves to ensure that a greater number of refugees have access to high quality English language classes. Ensuring that refugees have access to leisure, arts and sporting opportunities in their neighbourhoods could also promote resilience. In our conclusions, we make a number of recommendations that aim to promote both refugee integration and their resilience.



Chapter Six

Institutional integration

This section analyses refugees' experiences after they have received a decision on their asylum application. It focuses on employment, education and housing issues, all of which are components of refugees' institutional integration in the UK and their ability to function in society. It is this aspect of their integration, rather than social interactions, that have been most researched in the UK. The institutional integration of refugees has also been the focus of government intervention, most recently the development of the SUNRISE programme, an advice and casework service that aims to help refugees secure housing and assist job-seeking.

Key findings

We analysed data on interviewees' employment, educational and housing experiences, as well as their own ideas about integration. This is summarised below and in Table Five in the appendices.

- A significant minority of interviewees had forged successful careers in the UK in a wide range of jobs. There was a marked correlation between career success and the length of time spent in the UK. No-one who arrived after 1989 was experiencing success in the labour market.
- Many of those who had successful careers had previously spent long periods of time in low-skilled jobs, where their qualifications were not utilised. However, many of those we interviewed spoke of the benefits of part-time work that could be combined with studies.
- A further third of our interviewees were unemployed and looking for work.
- Many of those we interviewed did not receive appropriate careers advice, or received none at all. This resulted in interviewees making inappropriate educational and career decisions.
- Interviewees felt they faced much discrimination in job-seeking. They felt that employers were prejudiced because of their accents or overseas qualifications.

- Interviewees defined their integration in terms of their labour market success, their social interactions and their personal happiness.
- Some 17 of our interviewees had studied or been accepted on university courses in the UK. Eight of interviewees held UK master's degrees.
- Those who arrived as children experienced much less educational success than adult refugees. Few passed GCSEs or other Level Two qualifications on their first attempt. Many of the child arrivals had to retake courses in further education colleges.
- In addition to a secure immigration status, interviewees felt that tolerance, English language fluency, secure housing, social networks and the long-term support of a professional helped them integrate.

Employment

Employment provides income, and often aids English language development and cultural knowledge. There are also marked psychosocial benefits for refugees – it gives them a sense of control over their lives. Government has long recognised that employment is fundamental to integration and it comprises a major strand of its integration strategies (Home Office, 2000; Department for Work and Pensions, 2003; Prime Minister's Strategy Unit, 2003; Home Office, 2005c). The EU also stresses the role of employment in integration, with the Common Basic Principles for immigrant integration policy stating: "Employment is a key part of the integration process and is central to the participation of immigrants, to the contributions immigrants make to the host society, and to making such contributions visible" (European Commission, 2005: 2, cited in Somerville and Wintour, 2006).

However, most research on refugee employment highlights high levels of unemployment among many refugee groups and discrimination in job-seeking. A survey conducted in 2003 cited an unemployment rate of 36 per cent among refugees with permission to work (Bloch, 2002). Male refugees are more likely to be unemployed than women, usually because they lack the 'female' skills needed in an economy dominated by the service sector. For those refugees in work, high proportions spend long periods of time in low-skilled jobs, where their qualifications are not utilised (Carey-Wood *et al.*, 1995; Dumper, 2002; Bloch, 2004; Somerville and Wintour, 2006).

One third of our interviewees had forged successful careers since migrating to the UK. Their success spanned a wide range of jobs: interviewees

included a head teacher, senior teacher, librarian, writer and journalist, senior telecommunications engineer, housing manager, hospital consultant, arts educator and refugee adviser. The majority of those who had well-paid or high status jobs held master's degrees. Indeed, 17 interviewees had studied or been accepted on university courses in the UK – often in addition to higher education courses studied in their countries of origin. Eight interviewees held UK master's degrees, making this group of interviewees considerably more qualified than the UK average.

There was also a marked correlation between career success and the length of time spent in the UK, a finding of other research on the labour market experiences of refugees (Carey-Wood *et al.*, 1995). No-one who arrived after 1989 had secured a well-paid or high status job, although we acknowledge it takes time to climb the career ladder. Many of those who had successful careers had spent long periods in low-skilled jobs, where their qualifications were not utilised. We felt much refugee potential was wasted. Many of those who had forged successful careers felt they faced discrimination while seeking work, particularly in their first years in the UK. E, from Chile, stated:

“For more than half of my working life in the UK I have been underemployed. I have faced so much discrimination.”

Many interviewees, however, talked about the benefits of their first jobs. Work, including low-skilled work, had many social benefits, assisting in social integration, as well as helping refugees learn English. In the short-term many low-skilled jobs could be combined with study. G, from Vietnam, now a hospital consultant, told of his first job, which he combined with studying medicine.

“I worked at McDonald's and that was about three months after I came to England. (It was) very difficult, but that's the best way to learn English. You have to speak the language and within one year I didn't need my dictionary. I worked at McDonald's for eight years until I qualified as a doctor.”

Nine other interviewees worked in the catering sector – McDonalds and Burger King – as well as more upmarket establishments. T, who held a graduate teaching qualification from Afghanistan, talked about his job in a pizza restaurant, which he sought with the encouragement of his GP. He worked part-time while he studied. He now works full time to support his family,

but hopes to work part-time again if he takes up the university place he has secured.

“My GP then said ‘it will be better for you to work a bit, because you will have a social life and you will get to meet different people’. Then I started work in a pizza parlour, part-time.

“I am working here for four years. At the beginning it was a bit difficult for me. You say ‘isn’t it’, but in some people’s accent they say innit, especially the people in Peckham and Camberwell. The people’s accent is very difficult, especially on the telephone. Sometimes when I take the orders, I miss the address, I miss the words. But after one or two weeks I manage to control the situation... it’s like I own the shop now. My boss, he is also very kind and helpful and I am also very grateful.”

B, from Czechoslovakia, found a job as an usherette in a cinema.

“I quite enjoyed it, I couldn’t have afforded to go to the cinema so I could watch the films and it was quite useful for learning English, if you see the same film everyday, you start listening to it differently and you don’t understand everything immediately and the next day you watch for that word, so that was quite useful.”

E, from Chile, also found work in a cinema.

“I felt very confident. I looked for a job advertised as a cinema usher. I went to the interview and I got the job. It was my first job and I started work the following day. The problem was they exploited us, during the film they gave us a break of almost an hour and they didn’t pay us. I couldn’t go and come back, so I watched the film, but I learned so much of the language then.”

Much research about refugees’ employment has focused on their barriers to employment. Poor English language fluency, the type of qualifications and the country where they were obtained, a lack of previous UK work experience, immigration status, length of residence in the UK, employer discrimination,

child care obligations, age and social networks are all cited as the most significant barriers to employment (Bloch, 2004; Somerville and Wintour, 2006). Our interviewees also told of the barriers they faced, which included the English language, child care obligations and lack of UK work experience. English language fluency was a barrier for six of those we interviewed. However, employment regulations were also proving unhelpful for some of those who were still learning English. Z, from Ethiopia, was one of three refugees who had been forced to give up an English course in order to find work.

“Job Centre, they told me you have to find a job, but if I choose New Deal and get a job, I lose everything, English courses, IT courses, everything, I have to work.”

L, from Afghanistan, studied medicine in Cuba, before working in obstetrics and gynaecology in Afghanistan. She talked of how her Cuban medical qualification was not recognised in the UK. At present she is working for a refugee community organisation and as a classroom assistant in her children’s school.

“In Austria, I went to see if I could work as a doctor, and they said yes, but I had to pass an exam. But I came here and when I applied to the General Medical Council, they said no, they refused me, they had no relations with Cuba. This was breaking my heart. I lost everything, I lost my country, I lost my career. I was told, we don’t need any doctors, only technician’s assistants. I thought it is not worth it, you study for seven years and at the end of it you are a technician’s assistant.”

Many refugees received little careers advice and also had little knowledge of the UK job market. Others did not know how to search for jobs in the UK. These culturally specific aspects of job-seeking are often not understood by Job Centre staff (Marshall, 1989). Some of those who did receive careers advice at college found it inappropriate. H, from Iran recounted:

“When I went to the college adviser I told them ‘I want to be a doctor’ and they told me that, oh, in order to be a doctor either your father or your mother have to be a doctor, and I thought, you know, what’s the relation, that’s the career advice that they told me and I gave up the

idea... they just give me wrong advice, I know now it's not related... I never forget that advice."

One barrier to employment emerged in a large number of interviews – that of employer prejudice. Ten of those we interviewed talked about this issue, including Q, from Kenya, worked as a chef in a prestigious restaurant. He found the job while still an asylum seeker – at the time asylum seekers were still able to apply to the Home Office for permission to work, a right that was removed in 2002. Q worked as chef for nearly eight years before enrolling at university to study for a teaching qualification. On completion of a post-graduate certificate in education, he failed to find a full-time teaching post. This was despite very good references from his tutor and teaching practice school. Q then secured supply teaching work in November 2006 and now has a job teaching history and citizenship. He feels that he has suffered discrimination because of his accent.

"Being a refugee, you had to prove yourself day in, day out. You have to work that extra mile. I used to work seven days a week. The days off, where I would go to socialise, I was so tired, I would spend most of my time in bed. I gathered most of my consolation from going to church on Sundays."

E, from Chile, also talked extensively about the discrimination he experienced.

"There is no question that I have to be better than an English person. In every moment of my professional life I am reminded I don't belong. I still feel a refugee in terms of opportunities, in terms of racism, in terms of institutional racism... Half of my working life I have been underemployed."

C, a refugee from Czechoslovakia, who gained a degree from Oxford noted:

"Wherever you go as a foreigner of course it's difficult. Wherever there is a competition for a job – if perhaps my English was absolutely perfect, without an accent, which – I don't have a musical ear – and it's also very difficult if you don't start to learn a language before 12 or 13, you'll always have an accent. So every time I open my mouth everybody knows I'm a foreigner. So when there was a job

competition that I was competing against English people. I was always at a disadvantage, it will never be mine.”

Many recommendations to increase rates of employment among refugees have been made in the numerous reports on this issue (Phillips, 1989; Prime Minister’s Strategy Unit, 2003; Bloch, 2004; Somerville and Wintour, 2006). They mostly comprise recommendations to improve ESOL provision, extend vocational training, improve careers advice and increase the number of volunteering and work experience places. These are all important recommendations – for example, places on work experience schemes are very limited in the UK. Additionally, there is a need to tackle *underemployment* among refugees – a rather neglected issue. Broader interventions are also needed to challenge employer discrimination faced by refugees and many other migrants. As a nation we should stop judging people by their accents. Government, trade unions, employers, migrant and equality organisations should collaborate on public relations campaigns to tackle widespread prejudice about migrants’ employment capabilities.

Children’s long-term experiences of education

Eleven of our interviewees arrived as children, and understanding their integration involves an examination of their educational experiences in school and college. The previous chapter examined the initial educational experiences of this group and highlights the lack of support in learning English, as well as the impact of the poor behaviour of their fellow students. We examined the long-term educational experiences of the eleven child arrivals. Of this group, nine were enrolled at school when they came to the UK and one at a further education college. Those who enrolled at school experienced much less educational success than adult refugees. Only two child arrivals passed GCSEs or other Level Two qualifications^{xxi} on their first attempt. Seven of those who arrived as children left school with few qualifications, or sometimes none at all. Many of the child arrivals had to retake courses in further education colleges. This group included P, from Afghanistan, who now holds a master’s degree. She spoke very little English when she came to the UK, although her parents had taught her a little at home. Although she was 15 she was placed with a sixth form group, to study for a GNVQ in Business Studies. She had little interest in the subject and her placement there was determined by her school.

“The teachers were very supportive, they were really good. Now that I remember, the essays I used to copy from

books, it was just amazing, I just used to copy from the book and gave it to the teacher as an essay and they knew that I did not know any language, but they were OK with it. But my brother and I went to the same school so we had no support, no other support apart from this, but after a few months we gathered that there were colleges which offered evening classes where my Dad attended. So I went to school during the day and I went to college in the evenings with my Dad to learn English.”

P wanted to be a doctor, but she did not know that she needed science qualifications. She then moved school and started some two-year GCSE courses, but not in science subjects. She failed most of these examinations on her first sitting and had to re-sit the courses. It was while retaking her GCSEs that P undertook a work experience placement at the BBC World Service. Her second attempt at GCSEs was not successful and P attributes this to a lack of EAL support. She then went to a further education college where she enrolled for A level Media Studies and GNVQ Advanced Business Studies, despite continued pressure from her parents to pursue a medical career. After this P went to university to study film and TV and then took a master’s degree in cross-cultural psychology.

S, from Somalia, also failed his GCSEs at school. This was not surprising, as he had received no education until he was 12 years old. But he knows he disappointed his mother and was disappointed in himself. At college he had to enrol on a Level One course because he did not have GCSEs. Soon he stopped going to classes and dropped out of college. He went back to a different college but enrolled on the same courses: ICT and business foundation studies. Again he dropped out of college, as he was not interested in business studies. He started doing short courses at the local community centre – poetry, singing, rapping, acting, film and an intermediate English course. He really enjoyed the short courses and learnt a lot.

“Me and my friends we made the rap group as well, and we start performing into clubs. We weren’t getting paid, first we started on community centres, and then they would call us, we would perform, I would perform one poem or two poems. I would go to another area or another town, and I started getting connections with other people who do poems, you know. And there was this African liberation day and I did a poem, in a big club, and they have poems. And

what I learned from my poetry is pride and because I saw a lot of poets, you know, on stage and all their poems are about where they came from or who they are, and that's why I went back to my roots and start learning about where I came from."

He wants to work now and is looking for a job. He regrets not studying and not going to university with his 'good' school friends.

We have discussed some of the reasons for poor progress at school in the previous chapter. The most significant factors comprise an interrupted prior education coupled with a lack of language and curricular support in the UK – issues highlighted in other research about refugee children's progress at school (Rutter, 2006). Residential mobility and an inability to find a school place also contributed to the underachievement of some of those we interviewed.

National data on test and examination results shows that some refugee groups underachieve in national tests and examinations (Department for Education and Skills, 2005). Children who arrive in the UK late in their educational career are at particular risk of underachievement in GCSE examinations at 16. This makes education provision in further education colleges of great significance for refugees – to enable them to retake the examinations that they have previously failed. However, there is very little research on young refugees' progress in post-16 education. The little research that exists highlights a lack of good initial assessment, poor careers advice, a lack of ESOL support and the channelling of young refugees into inappropriate vocational courses (McDonald, 1995). Nor is there clear government practice guidance for this group, unlike school-aged children^{xxii}. Indeed, government indicators on the successful integration of refugee children focus on their test and GCSE results at 16 (Ager and Strang, 2004). There is a clear need for policy guidance on the post-16 education of young refugees, coupled with more research on refugees' experiences in post-16 education.

But broader changes are needed to promote the successful integration of young refugees. As noted in the previous chapter, debate about the real costs of providing English as an additional language support is needed, in school and in further education settings. The experiences of interviewees who arrived as children leads us to conclude that government should consider the reform of 14–19 education, a move suggested in other research about refugee education (see discussion in Rutter, 2006). Such a review was undertaken in 2003–2004, led by Mike Tomlinson, the former Chief Inspector of Schools in England. His report proposed a single school leavers diploma to be awarded at four levels: Entry (pre-GCSE), Foundation, Intermediate and Advanced (A

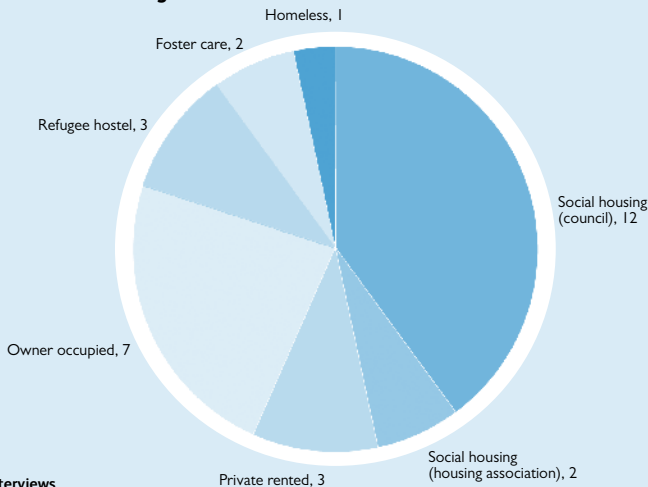
level equivalent). The diploma would replace GCSEs, A levels and the myriad of occupational and vocational qualifications. Students would study ‘core’ subjects – information technology, maths, English language. Volunteering, community activities, work experience and citizenship education would also be included in the core. Outside the core would be choice of optional subjects and students would be able to take a mixture of academic and vocational subjects if they desired. The diploma would be assessed by examinations and the submission of a single piece of coursework. Regrettably, the Government decided not to adopt Tomlinson’s proposals, although lobbying on this issue continues.

The proposed 14–19 diploma offered real opportunities for refugee children, including those we interviewed. The original proposals would have let young people progress through education at their own rate; mixed-age classes would be an outcome of this reform. Young refugees would be afforded the chance to catch up with new curricular concepts, as well as develop language fluency in mixed-aged classes. They would also be able to study different subjects at different levels. Children, such as S, who arrived in the UK with little or no prior education, would be more likely to leave school with a qualification.

Housing and integration

Secure housing is also key to integration. It affects refugees’ psycho-social well-being and their ability to find work. Residential mobility may negatively impact on the education of refugees and their families. Our research also showed that refugees experience the greatest amount of negative social interactions in their immediate neighbourhoods – an issue we explore in Chapter Seven.

Figure Two: Current housing tenure



Source: Author interviews

N=30

We asked interviewees questions about housing tenure, and the results are presented in Figure Two, below. Five interviewees were receiving support from the housing association that also provided their accommodation. One interviewee was homeless, having spent nearly five years sleeping in a succession of beds and sofas provided by compatriots.

Even if age is factored into our analysis, far lower proportions of our interviewees were owner-occupiers than the UK population, and greater proportions lived in social housing (some 70 per cent of UK households were owner occupiers and 20 per cent lived in social housing in 2002^{xxiii}). Tenure patterns among refugees also differ from labour migrants, who largely rely on private rented housing (Phillips, 2006).

Interviewees who were owner-occupiers, with one exception, had arrived in the UK before 1986. Invariably they had well-paid jobs, or a spouse with a well-paid job. In this respect housing tenure was indicative of economic integration.

Seven of those interviewed talked of the role that their housing played in their integration in the UK. Many refugees spent long periods of time living in privately rented accommodation of very temporary nature, or temporary forms of social housing. Generally, interviewees did not move for employment – a positive form of residential mobility. Rather, they moved because tenancies had expired, or for other housing-related reasons. Residential mobility had a negative effect on their well-being, sense of local belonging, as well as their and their children’s education. Data on residential mobility is given in the appendices. J, from Somalia talked about his moves.

“First I came in London, then I moved to Sheffield, then I moved from Sheffield to Bristol and I stayed in Bristol for a while, then I moved in London several times. One of the crucial things that helped me find my feet, helped me to settle, was a permanent home, somewhere to stay.”

P, from Afghanistan, and her family spent nine years living in temporary accommodation before getting a council flat.

“After eight years we moved to bed and breakfast because they did not have housing, so we were there for a year... every day we would go to housing and try to get a house. It was a really difficult time because my parents bought furniture and things and then they had to throw everything

away because bed and breakfast has two rooms for all of us, and there was eight of us.”

Many of the 12 interviewees who lived in local authority social housing lived on large and deprived estates. Much research shows a correlation between deprivation and racially aggravated violence (Smith *et al.*, 2002; Hewitt, 2003). Interviewees who lived in deprived areas did experience violence, as well as damage to their property and verbal abuse, something we examine for its effects on social integration. We look at this issue in greater detail in Chapter Seven.

Interviewees also felt policy makers needed to give more attention to the housing conditions of refugees. Despite the centrality of housing to successful integration, housing provision is the poor relation within refugee integration policy (Zetter and Pearl, 1999). There has been little research on how housing circumstances affect refugees’ integration, nor has much policy guidance been issued on refugee housing and integration. We do not know how many refugees – such as U – make up the hidden homeless, sleeping on the beds and sofas of their friends.

Since 1997 asylum seekers requiring accommodation have been dispersed to different parts of the UK, first of all by local authorities and after 2000 by the Home Office. This dispersal has not taken asylum seekers’ post-decision employment opportunities into account. A lack of work in areas of dispersal, as well as community tensions and the absence of compatriots, have been factors that have caused considerable secondary migration of refugees in the UK. Good practice in diffusing community tensions needs to be better recorded and disseminated to local practitioners. Despite some excellent practice, housing associations have a mixed track record in working with refugees (Phillips, 2006). Again, much good practice is again not recorded or disseminated.

Refugees’ perspectives on their integration

Integration is a complex and contested term and there has been much research attempting to define refugee, migrant and minority integration^{xxiv}. It is a term used in some contexts to describe acculturative change, but also used in a more functional sense to describe the experiences of minority communities in the workplace, in education and in their experiences with other public services. We were interested to see how interviewees defined their own integration.

Invariably, they defined their own integration as comprising their labour market experiences and their local social interactions. (We examine the latter issue in the next chapter). Many of those we interviewed expressed the opinion that prolonged low-skilled employment did not comprise integration. E from Chile told of his experiences. The first job he held after gaining a BA in Sociology from the University of Birmingham was as a cinema usher. He spent nine years in low-skilled jobs before finding a job working for a housing association.

“Then I applied for a hospital porter’s job in an NHS hospital, now closed down. I did work there for about a year and a half... Then I went back to university again and I paid for my course by mini-cabbing. I finished my MA successfully, but no jobs, but because I had passed my test I did a bit more mini-cabbing, then delivery driving, cleaning, you name it. This was not integration.”

Another key difference between policy makers’ conceptualisations of integration and those of our interviewees concerned the lack of consideration for inter-generational and spousal aspects of integration. Four of our interviewees felt that integration took place at a household rather than an individual level. Decisions taken by one member of a refugee household could adversely impact on the integration of another. A person might be forced to give up a job or course because the head of household decides to move. Children might also be adversely affected by the working hours of their parents and their absence from home (Rutter, 2008, forthcoming). E, from Chile, told of his decision to move to London.

“I went to London, I don’t know why. I took my family with me, it was an horrendous decision. My wife was studying at Wolverhampton Polytechnic and she was forced to follow me. In a way I feel ashamed about it now. So I ended up in London in a flat on the 24th floor.”

F, from Vietnam, was forced to give up her job when she got married in 1985. She has not worked since then.

“I go to London to get married, that job stop, even though my husband had no job in London. He wanted to live in London.”

Our research led us to conclude that the integration of primary asylum applicants cannot be seen in isolation from the integration of dependents. Arguably SUNRISE integration interviews should include dependents as well as the primary asylum applicant.

Many interviewees felt that long term contentment – happiness, fulfilment, a sense of security, the absence of anxiety and feelings of welcome and belonging – should comprise part of what is seen as integration. They felt that refugee organisations did not place enough emphasis on achieving their long-term happiness. E, from Chile, and W, from Afghanistan, stated:

“Integration is about my safety, my security and my love for my family.”

“It’s (integration) about being happy and I’m very happy here in Sheffield, in my home and in my garden.”

Some interviewees felt that the government had placed the responsibility for social integration on them, but the problem lay with the majority community. They felt that the British did see integration as a two way process. This is an issue we explore in the next chapter.

Policy makers need to review their understandings of integration, incorporating the feedback of refugees. We have drawn on the work of Ager and Strang (2004) and Zetter et al. (2002), as well as recent writing on progressive approaches to citizenship, to come up with a working definition of integration. We suggest that integration is both a process – not necessarily linear – and a condition or outcome. It comprises six facets, namely:

- psycho-social **contentment**: happiness, fulfilment, a sense of security, the absence of anxiety and feelings of welcome and belonging
- **interaction** between members of a household and wider society
- **participation** in civil society institutions, in public institutions, the workplace and in political life
- **equality** of access, for example to the labour market, housing, education, healthcare and social welfare. Equality of treatment within the workplace and public institutions, as well as progress towards equality of outcome within education and employment

- **respect** for the rule of law and the liberal values that underpin society
- the possession of civil, political and social **rights**.

We believe that integration enshrines the relationship between the individual and their household *and* wider society. It is a process and condition that applies to every member of society, not just migrant or minority households. Integration is obviously linked to social cohesion, although integration is an individual and household condition, while social cohesion takes place at a community, regional and national level. In short, social cohesion is the outcome of the individual and household integration. A community or nation cannot be thought to be cohesive if there are significant numbers of individuals who are not integrated.

We consider integration to take place within different domains: the institutional domain of the workplace, college and so on, the social and socio-spatial domain of the community and neighbourhood, and the political domain of trade unions, political parties and civil society organisations. A member of a refugee household may be integrated within one domain, for example, the workplace, but less integrated within another domain. This is the bumpy integration described by Gans (1992). Indeed, integration in one domain may limit integration in another domain. A demanding job, for example, may impede social activity or involvement in political organisations. Integration, too, may not always be a linear process.

Although our definition of integration has many similarities to those of Ager and Strang (2004) and Zetter *et al.* (2002), there are key differences. Firstly, we argue that integration needs to be conceptualised as occurring at a household as well as individual level. Subsequent chapters of this book examine familial and inter-generational aspects of integration in more detail.

Secondly, we believe that social contentment should comprise a facet of the process and outcome of integration. There is growing interest among policy makers about well-being and happiness (Donovan and Halpern, 2002; Layard, 2005). However, notions of contentment and happiness have barely been discussed by those concerned with migrant and minority integration. Indeed, most writing on the social aspects of integration has stressed social networks and the formation of social capital. We believe the achievement of contentment is a long-neglected facet of integration, with which policy makers must engage.

Thirdly, we argue that the integration should not be defined as a process that only applies to minority communities; rather it should encompass all residents of the UK, migrants and non-migrants.

Refugees' reflections on factors that helped in settlement

We asked interviewees what had helped them settle in the UK. Overwhelmingly, they felt that tolerance, English language fluency, a secure immigration status, secure housing, social networks and the long-term support of trusted professionals helped them integrate. Much less importance was given to formal advice.

For J from Somalia, and W, from Afghanistan, secure housing was most important.

“One of the crucial things that helped me find my feet was a home, somewhere to stay and the second was having the language.”

“I think with Refugee Support there I found my father, mother, sister, brother, everything; I think I found my family... they're very nice people, they gave me everything: house, food... too much; I think every day that I need to give something to the Refugee Housing Association (to repay them).”

R, from Turkey talked at length about what helped him to settle down and succeed at school: the help of good teachers, a befriending scheme in his school for new arrivals, access to students who could speak his language, and being able to participate in sports.

“It was difficult, but I had a teacher – I still remember his name, Mr Young – and he was a really good teacher. He helped me, he was a really good teacher, he helped me really much... Miss Casey she's a great teacher, she's probably one of the best teachers you can ever find. She put me with someone, he was English, put me with him so for two weeks he can tell me the things around the school, you know, where's the lunch and where's the canteen and everything. He was telling me the things and I was really good friends with him in the first week of secondary school.

Afterwards I started making new friends, not only in my class but throughout the year, everyone in the year.

“There were a few Turkish people in my class as well – about four – so that was good to settle in as well because they were speaking really good English – they’re born here – and when I was with them they were speaking Turkish to me but English to other people so I would learn, I was asking as well.

“Football, that’s a good way of settling in actually because if you’re good at a sport, they want to be with you. Same with me in snooker, because I’m playing really good snooker.”

Conclusions

Our interviews yielded much evidence of unemployment and underemployment of refugees. Our findings concur with our analysis of national datasets such as the Census and Labour Force Survey given in the appendices.

Those who arrived as children experienced much less educational success than adult refugees. Interrupted prior education, delays in accessing school places, and a lack of English language support were all factors that hindered the educational integration of child arrivals.

We defined equality of access, equality of treatment within the workplace and public institutions, as well as progress towards equality of outcome within education and employment as components of integration. We felt that refugees’ workplace experience contributed to what we have termed a ‘discongruity of belonging’, which we discuss in Chapter Ten.

Our findings prompt many policy recommendations. Clearly policy makers need to take into account refugees’ views about their integration and the factors that helped them settle. The underemployment of refugees is a neglected issue and broader interventions are also needed to challenge employer discrimination faced by refugees and many other migrants. Policy recommendations are discussed in our conclusions.



Chapter Seven

Social interactions

A key component of integration is the everyday interaction between members of a household and the wider society. Social interactions also contribute to psycho-social contentment – happiness, fulfilment and feelings of welcome and belonging – that we argue comprise another facet of integration. This chapter examines the social networks and social interactions of refugees, in their neighbourhoods and their schools and workplaces. It highlights refugees' lack of interaction with their neighbours, and some of the factors that cause this social distance. Its findings are developed in the next chapter, which examines refugees' participation in politics and community life.

Context

During the last five years policy makers have placed greater emphasis on the social integration of minority communities. In much writing, social integration is seen as a one-way process – with the onus placed on the migrant to mix with the majority community. This focus was partly prompted by the findings of reports into the 2001 disturbances in Bradford and Oldham (Bradford Vision, 2001; Cante, 2001). Both reports highlighted the social segregation in these cities – that the Muslim British and white British communities seldom had meaningful social contact.

At the same time as debates about the integration of Muslims, policy makers have also focused on the integration of refugees. Both government and researchers have given greater recognition to the role played by social networks in the integration of refugees (Boyd, 1989; Home Office, 2000; Griffiths *et al.*, 2005; Home Office, 2005c). Social networks, manifest in terms of refugee community organisations (RCOs), assist their members in finding employment, training and other forms of support through formal advice, as well as the more informal word-of-mouth contacts. In many ways, government has given out contradictory messages. While praising RCOs, as well as expecting them to deliver support services, migrant and refugee communities have also faced criticism for the very tightness of their internal social networks and their lack of social interaction with the majority community.

Analyses of social networks and the process of social cohesion, draws on theories of social capital, as elaborated by Putnam (1995) who in turn draws from Bourdieu (1986), Coleman (1988) and the classics of sociology such as Tönnies's *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* (Tönnies, 1963). Putnam sees social capital as 'networks, norms and trust' and suggests a typology of social capitals, namely:

- **bonding capital** – strong ties within kinship networks or among friends who see themselves as alike
- **bridging capital** – weaker ties outside kinship networks or among people who do not have close affiliations
- **linking capital** – ties between those in power within organisations and the clients they serve.

Putnam also writes extensively about 'hunkering down': the individualisation of society that causes social isolation and a lack of trust. Social capital theories have attracted much criticism, however, not least because of social capital's often intangible nature. Putnam also faces accusations of over-romanticising community life.

Despite these criticisms, much recent research on migrant integration has used social capital as a conceptual framework, for example examining the gendered nature of social capital within migrant communities (Zetter *et al.*, 2006). How social capital can enhance or detract from the process of integration has also been studied (Van Hear, 2004). Zetter *et al.* (2006) examine the work of RCOs from the perspective of social capital. They conclude that the increased number of RCOs and other forms of migrant association do increase social capital, in particular bonding capital. But they conclude that "RCOs perform an essentially defensive role", for example in their immigration advice, and therefore "resist participation in formal institutional frameworks" such as local government and local public service structures. They conclude that this form of tight bonding capital is not a vehicle for social cohesion (Zetter *et al.*, 2006).

Key findings

Most of those interviewed felt themselves to have strong social networks and to be socially well-integrated, with some qualifications. Our findings are summarised overleaf.

- Some 25 of 30 interviewees maintained UK-based friendships with people from their countries of origin.
- Some 24 of 30 interviewees had made friends with people outside their country of origin – other migrants and those whom our interviewees considered to be British. Friendships were forged in the workplace, at school, college, places of worship, or through sport.
- Some 22 of 30 interviewees had made friends within their own community, with other migrants resident in the UK and those whom they considered to be British.
- Many interviewees forged friendships through their leisure activities, such as volunteering and political activities, sport or by visiting bars and restaurants.
- Interviewees' leisure activities were very similar to the UK-born population, although they were more likely to be a volunteer and were more religiously active than the UK population.
- Six of our interviewees were socially isolated, having few UK-born friends or those from their own community.
- Just four respondents felt they were friends with their neighbours. Most of those we interviewed did not know or had never spoken to their neighbours. Our interviewees felt the biggest barrier to social interactions outside their communities was the unfriendliness of their neighbours, which in some instances amounted to overt hostility.
- Residential mobility in the UK limited refugees' social interactions with neighbours. Interviewees felt that temporary accommodation and having to move home frequently limited their neighbourhood social interactions.
- The built environment – housing design – and the existence of soft infrastructure such as parks, sports and community facilities influenced neighbourhood social integration.
- Some 21 of 30 respondents had experienced racial harassment, such as name-calling, verbal abuse and damage to their property. One respondent had been physically attacked on two occasions, and three interviewees reported that family members had experienced racially aggravated violence.

Almost everyone who was from a visible minority ethnic group felt safer in multicultural areas.

Seven interviewees felt that the UK had become a more hostile place for migrant and visible minority communities since the terrorist attacks of 2001 and 2005. Those who had come to these conclusions were both observant Muslims and interviewees who were not Muslim or were secular.

The unfriendliness of neighbours and hostile social interactions in their neighbourhood prevented many interviewees feeling that they 'belonged' in their locality.

Friendship networks

Some 25 of 30 interviewees maintained UK-based friendships with people from their country of origin and 24 of 30 interviewees had friends from outside their country of origin. Over two-thirds (22 out of 30) of those we interviewed had forged friendships outside *and* within their own community. D, from Czechoslovakia, talked about his friendships:

“Well, my closest friend, in this country, really, apart from my wife, is a chap from Iraq with a similar background to mine – he is Jewish, came here as a refugee – he is possibly in this country my best friend, closest friend. I may not see him most often, may not see him that often... it's a kind of, it's similar background and yet a totally different background at the same time. But I think probably in that case it gets down to the combination of things and down to his individuality who I like. But your question was who I generally interact with, yes? The rest of the people: friends who I have from university here, friends who I had at university back in Czechoslovakia and they happen to be here. Up to the political changes I really didn't socialise too much with the Czechoslovak community, I do now mainly because my professional and private life is overlapping, so there is a, there are people in the Czech and Slovak community who I'm friendly with. There is the Jewish community, through the local synagogue, and also I think there is perhaps another group of friends who I was sharing flats in my single days, and those relationships remained. And of course with the development of internet and all the communications suddenly all my friends years back, before I came here, are very easily contactable. And with them,

I think I have a kind of, what do you say, kind of a virtual village really – very close, though you may not see them.”

H, from Iran and O, from Afghanistan also had friendship networks within and outside their own communities.

“We probably get on well and are good friends because although some of them are like, white British, and some Iranian friends... because the ways we think are similar rather than the background, their mentality I think”.

“Usually, you find that after school finishes people go their own ways and, but for us (friends from secondary school) we’ve still been close friends and it’s, like I said, it’s different backgrounds. There are two, three boys that are from here, that are British, one born in Somalia and another boy that’s Moroccan, another boy that’s from Kenya – Asian Kenyan – so it’s different. That’s the most brilliant thing, that’s what I love about it because I know so many people from so many different backgrounds. I’m quite close to all of them as well, so it’s a mixture of backgrounds actually.”

L, from Afghanistan had two close English friends, who she met through her children’s nursery. One of them was Jewish, and L’s Afghan friends were surprised that they got on so well. L also had Indian, Pakistani and many Afghan friends, too.

“I have a lot of friends. My best friend is Jenny. She is English and she is Jewish. Some people say, you cannot be, as you are a Muslim and she is Jewish, and I say yes, we can, we are best friends.”

Z, from Ethiopia, also talked about his friendship networks and how he had built bridges with groups of people with whom he had previously been in conflict. They meet and talk in an Ethiopian restaurant every week.

“Most of the Ethiopians here, they are my best friends. In Sheffield, I don’t choose Oromo, Amharic, Tigrinya or something. Here the Ethiopian people who are living here, they forget about the politics in Ethiopia... I’ve also got English friends. One of my friends is on the IT course. He is

a good guy and he gave me so many informations about the driving licence; he is British.”

G, a successful doctor, has many Vietnamese and non-Vietnamese friends. He likes to socialise in a Vietnamese restaurant owned by friends and also enjoys attending Arsenal matches with friends. But he freely admitted his closest friends are Vietnamese, because he felt most comfortable with them.

“My closest friends are the Vietnamese, I’m afraid... we just feel much more comfortable because we share the same way of life and therefore we feel comfortable, whereas with my British friends, which I have quite a few, I just don’t... not quite sure the way I behave is the correct way or the expected way to do it. British people always thank you, whereas Vietnamese people don’t – you just know that they appreciate it.”

For A, from Hungary, the friendship of his classmates had aided his integration. When asked what helped him settle he replied:

“The amazing tolerance and friendliness of classmates. There were bits of negative experiences that we could laugh off in the midst of a tolerant atmosphere.”

Over two thirds of those interviewed – 22 of 30 – had friends and acquaintances from many different ethnic groups and enjoyed the multicultural nature of life in British cities. For them, friendship networks comprised members of their own community, other minorities and migrants, as well as those they considered to be British. V, from Uganda, came to the UK by himself. He was just one of the interviewees who took pleasure in forging friendships with people from many different countries. Here he talks about his friendship networks:

“They are not just friends from my country, no, they are not, my friends at work, people I meet, are from all across the world.”

V lived in a rented house with a number of other single men from Africa. It is the second rented house where they have lived together – they decided to stay together after being forced to leave a previous flat. He felt that his relationship with his flat mates helped him to feel that he belongs in the UK and develop an emerging sense of Britishness. He felt that his flatmates are

at present his family – his brothers. They do not spend much time together during the week, but at weekends they go sightseeing in central London.

“I feel I do (belong). I have all the reasons to feel that I do belong there... the atmosphere which is there, conversations with my friends, make me belong.”

He has also met some people through his church community, another place where he feels he belongs.

“The priest makes people participate in the liturgy, so he can say this Sunday, people from for instance a group from Nigeria would be responsible for mass, everything, the singing and then you see the beauty of the Nigerian community, which I had never seen in my country. And then next Sunday he says people from Bangladesh because we have a lot of Indians, Pakistanis, so he knows how to mobilise the people. Then you see how the Pakistan people how they bring their liturgy. And then the following Sunday he can say people from Uganda and then there you feel a little bit of you are back at home... that’s why I like it.”

V’s story illustrates some benefits from arriving in the UK without family and friends. He was forced to look for friendships and support from outside his community because of his initial isolation. However, his work commitments now limit his ability to socialise.

“Actually that was very, very difficult when I was still studying because from 9 to 6 I would be on the job... but I asked I can’t do that so I would go from 9 up to 5 then the lectures would begin from 6 up to around 9, 9:30 in the evening. So right from the job I would just run to the tube. And then you when you are given homework – oh my God even the weekend does not exist for you.”

Generally, our findings challenged the belief that migrants confine their friendships to their own community and do not mix with wider society. The findings also question the view that super-diverse cities – those where many different ethnic, faith and class groups live side-by-side – possess the least social capital and are the least cohesive (Putnam, 2007). We saw extensive evidence of our interviewees mixing within and outside their communities, albeit from a small sample. The accounts we collected provided ample

evidence of bonding and bridging capital being developed – in workplaces, bars, schools and colleges and through sport. Perhaps further research is needed on friendship networks in super-diverse British cities.

Barriers to social interaction

Rather than focus on debates about forms of social capital in migrant communities *per se*, we feel that public policy should focus on barriers to social interactions – barriers to the formation of social capital. Organisations providing support to refugees should also focus on those whose isolation threatens their psychological well-being.

Six of our respondents appeared very isolated. A lack of English language fluency limited the social interactions of three of them. G, from Vietnam, talked about how he felt himself to be integrated once he became a fluent English speaker.

“The first few years, very difficult – I just feel like I’m not part of the community at all. And then after the language becomes better I felt more and more integrated into society.”

Childcare responsibilities and the demands of work also limited friendship networks for some interviewees, both within and outside the interviewee’s community. Residential mobility, poverty and overcrowded housing, too, limited friendship networks and social interactions. Two respondents were unable to afford to visit and entertain friends. T, from Afghanistan, talked about how the temporary housing offered to him by the local authority prevented him from cooking meals for his friends:

“The temporary accommodation was hard. Ten persons live in one house and shared the kitchen and the living room. I couldn’t bring my friends, it was hard.”

E, from Chile, talked about how the design of his council flats meant that he had very little opportunity for chance encounters with his neighbours. He was one among five interviewees who talked about how the built environment impacted on their social interactions.

“I remember in three years I said hello to my neighbour no more than ten times, so there was no connection,

no contact, no attempt at conversation. I never had a conversation with anyone when I was there, over three years. The way our flats were designed were not meant for this, it was just a door and then the stairs. In Catford, this was changed. I was more confident. I developed a very good relationship with my two neighbours, one very young and the other one a retired person. I built my barbecue in the back and as soon as I cooked a chicken, after my neighbour smelled it, he came and started talking to me. I had to put a second chicken wing on and share it. It was fantastic.”

A number of our interviewees described how economic hardship, as well as a lack of acceptance from UK society made them turn towards people who had similar experiences to their own. After 40 years of residency in the UK, C’s closest friends are Czechs and Slovaks who live in the UK, whom she feels have similar life experiences. She talked about how very subtle rejections over many years had made her turn more to friends from her own country.

“I do have English friends who I speak to them, I like them, but there’s still something there, there’s still a part of me that they don’t know. If I was in trouble or something, I don’t think I would phone up one of my English friends... What you find generally is that they might become your friends, they might invite you, include you on their Christmas list or party list – it might be in my head – but when they speak to you there’s this feeling like it’s an act of charity that they include a foreigner – how very liberal of them – this is what makes you eventually try to look for people who are in the same boat.”

Neighbourliness

Our interviewees felt the biggest barrier to social interactions outside their communities was the unfriendliness of their neighbours, which in some instances amounted to overt hostility, a finding similar to that of another recent research project on the integration of eastern European migrants, who often found British people to be distant (Spencer *et al.*, 2007). The lack of meaningful social interaction with neighbourhoods surprised almost all refugees from Latin America, Africa and Asia. A sentiment expressed in many interviews was that media and government placed the responsibility for social

integration on refugees, but the problem lay with the majority community. Many of our interviewees felt that the British did not see integration as a two-way process.

Just four interviewees felt they were friends with their neighbours. M, from Sri Lanka, was one of them. Unlike many of those we interviewed she did not work. Childcare obligations meant that on most days M remained in her locality and she has also forged friendships through her children. She lived in a more prosperous London suburb.

“The neighbour on that side is a white English lady, 87 years old. The neighbour is really good, whenever Christmas or Easter comes, she brings the chocolates to my children. Every morning she says hello and talks to me. She says you are good neighbours and you look after your children. Anything she does, cakes, she passes on to me. And I give to her as well, Indian food, she love it... Our only trouble is a set of neighbours with teenagers, they vandalise the cars, and fighting in the streets.”

Most of those we interviewed did not know or had never spoken to their neighbours. Below we reproduce a selection of testimony on neighbourhood social interactions:

“The biggest shock I had when I came to the UK is that people don’t talk to each other. It is very difficult to interact in the British society. I can talk to my next door neighbour and say hello to the children, but still I feel a bit strange. I don’t feel in belong in my neighbourhood because people don’t talk to each other.”

“When I am with the wider community where I live, I feel I am a foreigner there, or a refugee there.”

“Oh my god, my neighbours! The area where I live is worse than Dagenham. It’s EC1, its one of the most racist areas one can think of. It took me a while to feel part of the community. I am still not accepted. Nobody has invited me (to their home), although I invite people to my house, and occasionally a lady says fine and I give this lady some traditional stuff, but that is it, that’s the barrier.”

“They are not bad, but sometimes when they have a birthday party – they can get drunk... they smashed my car... I witnessed an argument here last week; you wouldn’t believe it, this black lady shouting at this white woman... the things she was saying to her, I couldn’t believe it.”

“I don’t want to have a problem with these kind of people who are shouting because I don’t have this nature. I don’t have the language confidence, so I try to avoid them. So I said to my son ‘don’t play football with them’ because I see how when they have a problem, how they behave.”

“No, I don’t really talk to my neighbours, sometimes ‘hello’, but that is not friendly. They say ‘hi’ and ‘bye’ and that is it.”

“It’s us who’s trying, it’s not them who are trying, it’s us, we continually try, we say ‘hi’ to them, we send them Christmas cards, we try to be, but we’re not very close. We just say ‘hi’ and ‘bye’ when we see each other, but it’s them who are just, kind of keeping themselves quite distant from us. For example, there are times when we would say ‘hi’ and they not answer and we think OK, maybe he or she did not notice and so OK, I’ll say ‘hi’ next time as well, but it hasn’t changed.”

“I used to catch the 6.23 train to work, same people, same place, same time. For seven and a half years no-one ever spoke to me at that station.”

“It’s like you just open your door and then close it. You can say ‘hi, hi’: finished. At least you know who lives there, but apart from that, that’s it.”

“I’m living here for four years now. During my first year here, I went to distribute to everyone Christmas cards. I thought maybe we could be friends. So I distributed cards, but when I went out, they didn’t even say hello to me. People back home don’t know how unfriendly the UK is.”

“One day I came from work, I was downstairs by the gate. It was about one o’clock at night and they stopped me and said give me your money. I said ‘I have no money’ so they took a knife and said ‘give me your money’. So I gave them £10. I hate this area. I came from Afghanistan in a country that is 30 years at war, but it is not our culture to stop your neighbours on the road and take their money. I came from Afghanistan to save my life, but just for £10 I could lose it.”

“In Thurrock I only knew one man. It was everyone for himself apart from this man. I never went to anyone’s house. I never had a decent conversation with anyone, apart from this man. The only reason I started talking to him, was that he saw some boys breaking into my garage. And no-one liked him in the neighbourhood, so he found some consolation, by talking to me.”

“To be honest, if I knew England would be like this, I would never have come here. The media, the TV, the radio, they say different things. I thought that people would be friendly. The majority of people is nice, is friendly, is good, but some people they do not respect you.”

“For me maybe, I don’t drink alcohol, I don’t go to pub. So my neighbours maybe say ‘come have a drink!’ I say ‘I can’t go for a drink’. Maybe that pulls me away. English life – the style maybe does not go with my lifestyle.”

“The neighbourhood is changing, more violence, more disruption, people is not the same as before. All the time there is problems with council flats and council houses – noise, harassment, drugs, all this is happening and getting worse.”

Hostility

Most of the hostile behaviour experienced by refugees took place in the immediate environs of their homes. Those who we interviewed believed that endemic racism in British society, the UK’s inability to accommodate difference, and the scapegoating of groups such as asylum seekers had contributed to the hostility they experienced.

L, from Afghanistan, was among those who had experienced many hostile social interactions. She had suffered a great deal of racial harassment in the area in which she lives. She had called the police; this stopped the harassment for about a month, but then it resumed. The perpetrators attended the same school as her children.

“We had a lot of problem, because they used bad language. Everyone who has dark hair, dark eyes, they call ‘Paki’. My children suffered from this in the area. They used to spray graffiti on my doors and put rubbish through my letterbox. All of them who do this are children, but behind the children are their parents. It is difficult because the parents don’t take responsibility for their children’s activity. They encourage their children to do this, they say ‘it is not your country, get out.’”

Q told of his experiences when he moved to a town east of London.

“My wife would clean the windows. The next minute there were eggs there. My double glazed window at the front was broken. I confronted the mother of the child that did it, not knowing that this would make it worse. I told the police, and I am sorry to say this they behaved like Essex boys. They were part of the problem. They did not believe me. So I phoned McKinley, the MP for Thurrock, I used to help in his campaign. I spoke to him and he referred me to the councillor. The councillor wrote to the police and that is when they came to my house and dealt with the case. By then we decide to move... Neither of us was physically attacked, but my wife’s friend was. She was from Jamaica. As she was leaving the station, she was thoroughly beaten by a group of seven boys. The only thing that stopped us being attacked was that we parked the car here, right next to the front door. You don’t go to the corner shop. You go to Tesco or Morrison in the car. Because the moment you venture to the corner shop, this is when the trouble would occur.”

Seven interviewees had felt that their neighbourhoods had become a more hostile place for migrant and visible minority communities since the terrorist

attacks of 2001 and 2005. Those who had come to these conclusions included observant Muslims, those who had a secular lifestyle, as well as non-Muslims. I and J, both from Somalia, noted:

“I have to make myself be welcome. I have had so many problems, I have had so many children shouting that I am claiming the dole. I look at them and think this is because I am wearing the hijab.”

“Recently, I think something is building up, the Islamophobia. People threw eggs at me several times where I live in Edgware, the first time this happened.”

K has found that her neighbours have started calling her Indian as form of insult.

“They see me with a scarf – I’m wearing a scarf because I’m Muslim, I cover it, even though I’m not covering it the way other people do, because of my work... I’m not comfortable that way. So sometimes people say to my son, ‘your Mum is Indian’ and that time I feel like – or they throw stuff through the letterbox or something – really upset I say ‘I shouldn’t be here’ or ‘I don’t belong.’ But where we going to go? I lose my confidence even when I drive into my road. I think ‘what am I going to find under my letterbox today?’ but sometime I also say ‘well I belong here’ and whatever’s happened well we have to deal with it.”

Fear that her neighbours would find out that she was Afghan prevented P from talking to her neighbours.

“When we moved from that house it was kind of the end of 2001 when the 9/11 happened and we couldn’t tell anyone that we were Afghans. Because of – I don’t know if I should say fortunately or unfortunately, the way we dressed and the way we, we just didn’t bother ourselves with neighbours. No-one knew where we were from, but they knew that we are not English. So it was still like when we walked on the street, people, maybe the children, would

come and tell us something, but we ignored, we just totally ignored them.”

Many of those we interviewed saw their integration in terms of their local social interactions and attachments. Those who felt they belonged in the UK were those more likely to have formed these local attachments and less likely to have hostile experiences in their neighbourhood. There are many public policy interventions that will promote local social interactions, for all sectors of society, not just refugees. Measures to reduce residential mobility, school mobility and ensure access to decent housing are important in building cohesive communities where people feel they belong. Low pay and long hours limit social interactions, as does long-term unemployment or a lack of fluency in English.

Many interventions lie in the arena of criminal justice. Refugees need to be able to seek redress for racial harassment and the criminal damage of their property.

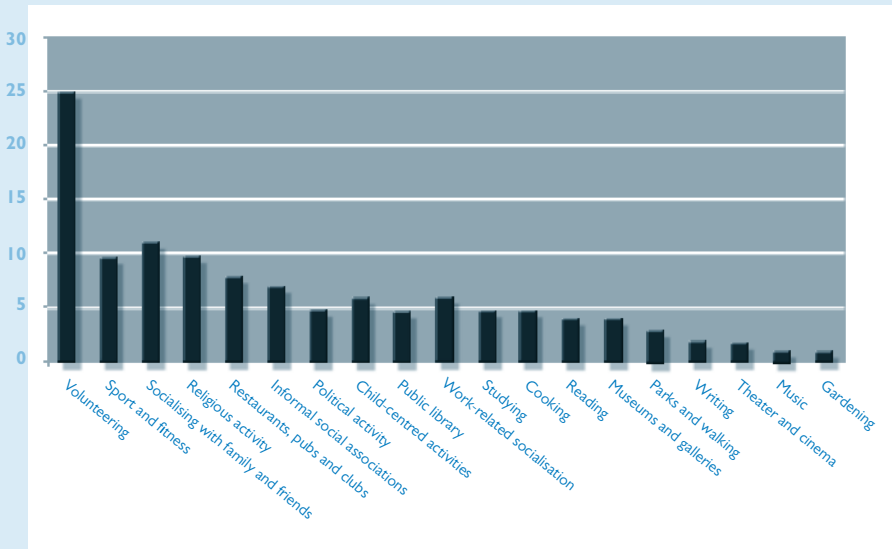
Recovering the public sphere

The promotion of social integration is a much broader task than implementing policy recommendations that focus on employment, education and housing. Much broader behavioural change is needed, if new migrants are to feel welcomed in their locality and the receiving community is to feel unthreatened by migration. British society needs to learn better to accommodate difference. Communities that can accommodate difference may well be more contented; we have argued that migrant and receiving community contentment is a facet of integration.

Perhaps this aspect of social integration can be developed, as Amin (2007) suggests, by recovering the public sphere – the collective space where contested narratives are articulated and negotiated and where civic skills are formed. The individualisation of society caused by work and leisure patterns has decreased this collective space.

Small publics remain – groups of people gathered around shared interests, associative circles, volunteering and political activity and friendship networks. Our interviews provided much evidence of this – we asked them how they spent their leisure time, with the findings given in figure three on opposite page.

Figure Three



Leisure activities of interviewees

Our data was compared with research on the current leisure activities of the British population. Our interviewees were more likely to volunteer than the general UK population, and were more religious (see Self and Zealey, 2007). Some interviewees also spent their leisure time at community centres specific to their community, or in informal social associations such as alumni groups, again specific to their community. K, for example, attended an Eritrean women’s club and M went on trips organised by her husband’s alumni association. The role of these informal community associations in refugees’ lives is seldom acknowledged by grant-making trusts and policy makers, who put stress on activities such as advice-giving.

Apart from the above exceptions, we were struck by the similarities between the leisure activities of our interviewees and the UK population. The ordinariness of interviewees’ leisure activities highlighted the inaccuracy of much media portrayal of refugees, which often labels refugees as alien and different.

Many of the leisure activities cited by interviewees were also those that brought them into contact with a wide section of society. For example, O, from Afghanistan, played football in his spare time, and has done ever since his school days. He goes out with friends for a drink or to a club on a Friday night. H, from Iran, volunteered with a community group, went to the gym, took his children swimming, went to the cinema at the weekends and played football and table tennis with his son. H enjoyed his barbecue and, like many people in the UK, enjoyed visiting the pub.

“I like the countryside and people outside London because when you go to the countryside or small villages the reception is much better and you go to the local pub and everyone come and talks to you, and it’s a wonderful experience.”

Most of the above activities took place in public spaces: parks, neighbourhood parks, courtyards, playgrounds, leisure centres, allotments, museums and galleries, youth centres, restaurants and bars. Such spaces might be considered to be the ‘soft’ infrastructure of settlements (Bennett, 2006). Recent research has examined the role that public space might play in promoting meaningful contact between different groups of people, and thus promoting social cohesion (Dines and Cattell, 2006; Commission on Integration and Cohesion, 2007; Holland *et al.*, 2007). Public spaces enable us to mix with each other, as well as develop local attachments. They can also contribute to the development of well-being, trust and reciprocity – features of cohesive communities. However, not all public spaces contribute to social cohesion: perceptions of difference, or the particular behaviours of groups of people in public spaces, can make them divisive.

People tend to be drawn to public spaces where they feel secure, and which offer comfort and stimulation, or conversely, tranquillity. The need for attractive public space has been acknowledged by central government, in the context of its urban regeneration plans. However, the role of public space in promoting social cohesion has received less consideration, particularly at a local level. Local authority duties to promote social cohesion are very broad and do not specify that housing and planning departments should be involved in strategies to promote social cohesion. (Currently in England, the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, Comprehensive Performance Assessment targets and the Education and Inspection Act 2006 include broad duties to promote social cohesion). Planning departments are not always included in discussion about social cohesion strategies. The impact of new

urban developments on social cohesion is not always considered. Today, large housing developments are being planned in south east England, with very little consideration given to soft infrastructure and thus to social cohesion (Bennett, 2006). Housing design itself also affects social interactions, something not always acknowledged in all new developments. There is a need to draw in a broader range of actors into debates about the built environment and social cohesion, including Registered Social Landlords.

But meaningful social interaction is about more than the provision of attractive public spaces. Some interviews – those that documented hostility – led us to conclude that many among the UK population are struggling to accommodate difference brought about by international migration. Research suggests that a media which has been hostile to many minority groups is partly to blame, as are some political leaders, who have either failed to provide leadership or have stoked tensions by their use of language (Hewitt, 1996, 2003; Finney and Peach, 2004; Lewis, 2005). But many people do not have the skills to debate controversial issues such as race, faith, migration and ‘Britishness’. As a nation, we often lack the civic skills needed to live in an increasingly diverse society. We feel that a community can only be defined as cohesive if its members possess civic skills. Interventions to promote social cohesion must aim to promote such skills.

That many adults and children lack political literacy and the skills to debate controversial issues has been acknowledged by government. England, Northern Ireland and Scotland have now introduced compulsory citizenship lessons in secondary schools, lessons which aim to develop an understanding of religious and ethnic diversity, as well as British identity, and equalities legislation (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2007). However, much citizenship education focuses on the acquisition of knowledge, for example, about the different waves of migration to the UK. Rarely are children equipped with the skills to live in a diverse and changing society. Debate about controversial issues is seldom encouraged, partly because it is a very difficult task to facilitate. Many teachers lack the skills to do this, particularly with students whose behaviour is challenging. Research also shows that some teaching about migration and diversity can accentuate children’s notions of cultural difference if badly undertaken (Hewitt, 1996). There is a clear need for in-service professional development about teaching controversial issues.

There is an implicit assumption in many public documents about social cohesion that citizenship education in schools is a ‘cure all’ for tensions around race, faith, migration and national identity. In order to develop civic skills,

policy makers need to focus on audiences other than those in compulsory education. Sports and the arts offer potential. Creative writing, drama and the visual arts appear to be successful in developing empathy as well as breaking down barriers between ‘them’ and ‘us’.

There are some examples of successful arts projects that have brought communities together (Gould, 2005). Just one example was ‘George’ a play about Englishness undertaken in the London Borough of Southwark, a very diverse part of London. In response to criticisms that the local authority did not commemorate St George’s Day, the council commissioned two theatre groups to work with cross-generational groups to script and perform a play about the meaning of Englishness in multi-ethnic societies^{xxv}. The play was performed in community settings and at the same time the local authority produced a booklet about what Englishness meant to its residents. However, the methodologies of working and lessons learned from such projects are seldom disseminated. Many such initiatives struggle for funding.

Refugee organisations and others that work on race issues need to consider how they can better communicate pro-refugee and pro-diversity messages. There are few accessible websites that aim to educate the public about refugee issues. Grant making trusts might consider funding some of the larger local refugee groups, to enable them to carry out public education and media work in their locality. Many refugee organisations are using volunteers in their work, and there are a number of mentoring and befriending projects working with refugees. Volunteers can act as messengers and a means of communicating positive messages about refugees, and their potential could be better utilised.

This chapter suggests many public policy recommendations, which are given in the conclusions. But above all, opinion formers need to better communicate the two-way nature of integration. Communities receiving migrants have responsibility for the integration of new arrivals – everyone needs to be a good neighbour.



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Chapter Eight

Active citizens: political and community participation

This chapter examines refugees' participation in politics and community life. Our evidence suggests greater political participation among refugees than among the UK population as a whole, as well as high levels of volunteering. We felt that most of those we interviewed were already active citizens.

Political participation and active citizenship are important to current debates for two reasons of interest to us. High levels of voter turnout and vibrant and independent non-governmental organisations are considered to be essential components of a healthy democracy. Additionally, participation in political life and in civil society organisations is an essential component of integration.

A number of government interventions have sought to increase political participation, for example, through the formal teaching of politics – citizenship education – in schools. Central and local government have increased their funding of non-governmental organisations, and see them as being a vital part of the regeneration of deprived neighbourhoods. There has also been greater political debate about the importance of volunteering, with a number of initiatives supporting youth volunteering. And during the last two years, a number of government ministers have suggested that all applicants for British naturalisation should undertake a period of compulsory community service^{xxvi}.

Key findings

Our respondents had diverse experiences of political participation and volunteering.

- All but two of the 20 adult respondents with the right to vote had exercised this right, with some respondents feeling they were privileged to be able to exercise this political right.

- Four respondents were active members of UK political parties. One respondent was a councillor; another refugee had considered standing in local government elections. There was no strong relationship, however, between political activity in refugees' home countries and their political activity in the UK.
- Just three refugees had been involved in transnational political activity relating to their home country.
- Some 26 of the 30 respondents had undertaken some volunteering and all but one is still giving their time as a volunteer.
- Some 14 refugees had undertaken volunteering work in refugee community organisations (RCOs) that worked with their own refugee group. Translation and interpreting for compatriots was a common form of voluntary activity for those who gave their time to RCOs, as well as a number of refugees who were not involved in RCOs.
- Six refugees had volunteered for organisations that worked with refugees from outside their own community and five refugees were active volunteers in mainstream non-governmental organisations.

Voter participation

Voter turnout is significantly lower in the UK than in many other western European countries (Rose, 2004). In the 2005 general election, 61 per cent of the electorate tuned out to vote (Electoral Commission, 2005). Ethnicity, as well as age and social class, all affect electoral turnout in the UK. Generally, voter participation among black and minority ethnic groups is slightly lower than the white British community. However, there are significant differences between communities. Among communities of Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin, voter turnout is higher than the white British community. Those of African, African-Caribbean, mixed and 'other' ethnic origin are less likely to vote than those of white British origin. Voter participation is lowest among the under 35s from these groups (MORI, 2005).

We found high levels of voter participation among interviewees who had the right to vote in the UK. All but two respondents voted in general elections, with some respondents feeling they were privileged to be able to exercise this political right. V, from Uganda, looked forward to voting. He passed the 'Life in the UK' citizenship test earlier this year.

“I thought whatever is in the book is proper for anybody to do. To know the different parts of England, different people, where they come from, where the original people came from, some people will speak different dialects, the structure with the government. So I think I am more knowledgeable to the political structures in the UK than in Uganda... The more you know about the structures, the more you know about your rights, and the more you know about your duties, what are my duties as a citizen... I know it is my duty as a citizen to do the voting and that is something I look forward to.”

The refugee non-voters had specific reasons for their decision. These were a dislike of politicians caused by home country experiences and disagreements over British foreign and immigration policy. The data we have illustrates that higher proportions of refugees vote in elections than the British population as a whole (90 per cent of our sample voted, compared with a 61 per cent turnout in the 2005 general election). Reasons for this high level of voter participation may include higher levels of political activity among refugees, and that they tend to be a well-educated population. Of course, our sample was small and it would require a much larger survey to establish a comprehensive picture of the political participation of refugees.

Political activity

There has been little written about refugees’ participation in political life in their countries of exile. The existing literature largely focuses on different forms of transnational political organisations, usually migrant organisations that aim to transform the homeland (Al-Ali and Koser, 2002; Griffiths, 2002; Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003; Vertovec, 2004; Torres, 2006). These transnational political organisations include:

- the external offices of political parties
- migrant groups lobbying for political change in the homeland and
- migrant organisations undertaking lobbying focused on both the home country and country of exile.

Some migrant community groups have UK welfare programmes *and* explicit political affiliations. There are also the solidarity pressure groups in the UK, such as the Colombia Solidarity Campaign, that involve members of migrant and majority communities.

Given the above literature and dominant belief that most refugees and migrants are orientated towards 'over there' – political conditions in the home country – we were surprised how few of the refugees we interviewed were involved in transnational political organisations: just three refugees out of 30. This may reflect our sampling strategy; for a number of reasons we decided not to recruit interviewees by approaching RCOs, many of which do have political affiliations. Nevertheless, our findings suggest that most refugees who are resident in the UK have comparatively little involvement with the politics of 'over there'.

Of the three refugees involved in transnational politics, E, from Chile, had been the most active. While his involvement with the Chile Solidarity Campaign helped in his initial integration, he saw long-term involvement as detrimental to some refugees.

“I had a lot of support from the Chile Solidarity Campaign – it was active and I went to meetings to tell the story of what happened. We did a very big campaign and we rescued quite a few families and brought them to Coventry and people adopted certain prisoners and managed to get them visas.

“Beyond the individual support, you had the solidarity. Looking back now it was an edgy situation. In my view many of the Chileans became victims. Because of the story they had to tell (to meetings) they were victims of this horrendous situation back in Chile and stayed there. I know people who even today have never formally worked (in the UK) and confronted the system. If you went to a meeting everybody buys you a drink and talks to you and you openly talk about how you had such a dreadful life. I was not looking for that pity.”

Eight refugees talked extensively about current affairs and politics in their interviews. Four refugees were involved in UK party politics, a greater level of engagement than we expected. The most politically active was A, who arrived from Hungary in 1956. He was one of the first Green councillors in the UK. A's political activity emerged from his involvement with non-governmental organisations. His second wife lived very nearby and had lived in the village all her life. Through her and his children's friends, A got to know many people in the village. He was an active Quaker and became a school governor at his children's school. He also joined the Green Party. Slowly, A became more

active in village life. He also worked as a special adviser for Mencap in North Somerset, so he got to know the whole area and more families. His community involvement culminated in him standing as a councillor:

“Being elected and re-elected... I feel that people are genuinely pleased and bringing problems to me – so one could say ‘how more accepted can anybody get’ and how much more can this feel like home!”

Volunteering

Central and local government have increasingly seen non-governmental organisations as being a vital part of the regeneration of deprived neighbourhoods. Government policy has also given greater importance to volunteering, with a number of initiatives aiming to promote youth volunteering (Russell, 2005). Citizenship education in schools will also place greater emphasis on volunteering in future (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2007). Baroness Neuberger, a ministerial volunteering champion, was appointed in June 2007, to develop volunteering activity.

There are debates about the role of volunteering in building cohesive communities, as well as in refugee integration (Home Office, 2005c; Commission on Integration and Cohesion, 2007). The Home Office considers volunteering will form part of refugee integration programmes and refugee integration case workers are meant to direct refugees towards volunteering activities. During the last two years, political leaders, including Gordon Brown, have suggested that all applicants for British naturalisation should be encouraged to undertake a period of volunteering^{xxvii}. Ruth Kelly and Liam Byrne, presently both Government Ministers, propose that British citizenship should be awarded after the accumulation of a certain number of points, with awards of points for volunteering (Kelly and Byrne, 2007). Compulsory volunteering as a component of naturalisation has, however, met with opposition from groups representing migrants as well as those promoting volunteering. They have argued that there is presently insufficient capacity among non-governmental organisations to take migrants who want to volunteer.

We found very high levels of volunteer activity among those we interviewed. This activity extended outside the refugee sector. Some 26 of the 30 interviewed (87 per cent) had been volunteers. This level of activity is considerably greater than the UK population; a 1997 survey suggested about 48 per cent of the adult UK population were involved in volunteering (Institute for Volunteering Research, 1997).

There may be many reasons for the high level of volunteering among our sample, which include highly educated retirees, a group who are among the most active volunteers. A need to gain skills and experience relevant to the UK labour market was one reason for volunteering cited by a number of those we interviewed. Political commitment, altruism and the desire to repay a country that has given sanctuary were other reasons given by interviewees, as were the desire to occupy their time and make new friends. Here V, from Uganda, explained his many reasons for volunteering.

“I didn’t want to be idle, no, I just wanted to forget what I had gone through. It helped me, I did three voluntary works, outside in the neighbourhood... One was with the elderly... and I went there, and said I want to volunteer. So they ask me can you be a receptionist? I said yes, I can be anything. So I was there, I was put on the switchboard... I would do that twice a week.”

This work improved his communication skills.

“... one was improvement of my communication skills, then the accents, I learnt some new accents, the post codes. I was not used to post codes... in my country we don’t have post codes...”

V also volunteered at a refugee project in west London. He translated from English to Kiswahili for the refugees from Kenya and Tanzania. Here he made new friends: refugees and British people running the projects.

“I enjoyed it because it gave me an opportunity to meet different people, share the experiences, some are the similar experiences like me, some are the more horrible experiences. I think I enjoyed it, the voluntary work... It helped me to find jobs later on.

“... think they also helped me then get new friends as well... and later on to know the contacts, yes, they helped me to know where to apply and where to go for the jobs, different contacts, different people. It was a very, very useful experience for me, and they were very instrumental to getting a job. They also acted as my first referees in the UK, which is a pre-requisite here. Who knows you? Nobody knew

me (in the UK), so I think that is a very important point... they acted as my first referees.

“I also felt happy because I said I can do something even in the UK, I didn’t know I could. I said thank God and thanked my parents for giving me the education, because I can do something here. I felt very, very happy with it.

“Translating gave me an awareness that people go through a lot of difficulties. I said I think God loves me in a way because I thought I was badly off, but other were more badly off. It really changed even the way I was looking at myself... I was more positive.”

At least eleven people interviewed were giving considerable amounts of their time to volunteering. They included L, an Afghan refugee:

“I am working in the community. I work as a helper in my children’s school, for the Parent Teacher Association as a volunteer and I work in a community organisation... also I run a Farsi school for Afghan children, and I do translation as most of the people when they arrive here they have no English.”

Her volunteering had initially been an altruistic gesture, while child care obligations prevented her from working. She enjoyed her work with children so much that she was now looking for work as a classroom assistant. Another active volunteer was W, also from Afghanistan. He spent many years living as a refugee in Russia, before being evacuated to the UK by the Red Cross. Both he and his wife had serious long-term illnesses. W was a committee member on his local tenants’ association, which makes him feel proud, and accepted by the local community. He also intends to volunteer for Refugee Support, because they gave him a great deal of help.

“I want to help, because they helped me; if I can help, why not? I’m ready to help.”

Interviewees’ volunteering activities comprised:

- refugee community organisations (RCOs) working with the interviewees’ own group – 14 interviewees

- voluntary translation and interpreting outside RCOs – 12 interviewees
- refugee organisations that worked with refugees outside the interviewees own group – six interviewees
- mainstream UK non-governmental organisations – five interviewees
- faith-based community initiatives – five interviewees
- refugee community schools – three interviewees
- campaigning organisations that relate to refugees – two interviewees
- mainstream school-based volunteering such as volunteer reading – two interviewees
- youth volunteering – one interviewee.

Helping other refugees

Volunteering for RCOs was the most common form of volunteering activity, with nearly half of our interviewees involved in RCOs that worked with their own communities. Three refugees had set up RCOs. They included I, who founded a Somali arts and women’s welfare organisation. Here she recounts how she founded this group.

“Even when I was really young, I am talking about eight years old, back home, there were ladies gathering in front of their houses, weaving... After many years of work in different places, I took a gap year to work. Some people I came across, mostly British, white British, where I was working said ‘why are you wasting yourself to be a shop assistant?’ I got to know Oxford House^{xxviii} from other people. I went to Oxford House to start helping them set up art projects. I wanted to put art into my people, people who have suffered the trauma of war, not like me, and use art and art therapy. I said ‘guys, why can’t we set up a Somali young arts project?’

“From Oxford House, I set up Back to Basics. I had a child then and I was pregnant with my second child and I decided that I am going to set it up by myself. I set up Back to Basics from home. Being an artist and a Mum can sometimes be difficult, especially visual arts. So I set it up and then I linked up with schools.

“From there my second daughter and my first daughter started going to an under fives centre, that is when I said,

I will work for the under fives centre for free, I will be a volunteer. From there it just moved on.”

Volunteering in the refugee sector enabled many of our interviewees to develop their skills and knowledge of UK institutions. J and I, from Somalia, had to apply for funding for the RCOs that they set up. L runs an Afghan community school that meets on a Saturday. She had to find premises for the school and register it with the local authority.

Translation and interpreting for compatriots was a common form of voluntary activity, for those who gave their time to RCOs, as well as a number of refugees who were not involved in RCOs and gave their services more informally. M, from Sri Lanka, recounted:

“I am interested in helping people. Sometimes people cannot read what is in the schools’ letters, people are coming from our country now. As soon as they come, children go to school, but they cannot read the letters. People are coming and they haven’t really studied, they just come as housewife. Sometimes the helpers in the school ask me to translate.”

Two interviewees were involved in campaigning organisations that aimed to help refugees. D, from Slovakia, told of his involvement in human rights campaigns:

“I was active in the local group of the Amnesty International, and I worked soon after I lost my job, I worked in the, now, London – I think it’s called London Detainees Centre, I’m not giving you the exact name but it is an organisation which does, like you’ve got the prison visitors, the people who visit prisoners, there are people who visit the detainees who are asylum seekers – I think it’s called London Detainees – but it’s basically I worked as a volunteer visiting the detainees who were detained to be either repatriated as asylum seekers or in the process they managed to qualify as bona fide asylum seekers and stayed here, so I was for maybe a year and a half I was involved in that.”

Volunteering outside the refugee sector

Fewer interviewees volunteered outside the refugee sector, a finding supported by a recent study of refugee volunteering in the UK (Wilson and Lewis, 2006). Those who were volunteers outside the refugee sector were involved in mainstream UK social welfare organisations, faith-based community initiatives, mainstream school-based volunteering such as volunteer reading and youth volunteering activities. They included S from Somalia. He was 20, had left school without qualifications and was unemployed when we interviewed him. His commitment to volunteering was encouraging. It also countered some of the negative discourses attaching themselves to young, male Somalis. He had given a lot of his time to a refugee centre and to a British Heart Foundation shop.

“The refugee centre, I volunteered for them, just to help the students, like the new students, who didn’t speak English. I would talk to them, I would be their friend and help them. You know, it was nice, because when you become friends with one of those students, they would take you to their house and they would be happy. You know, you’ve seen the smile on their face and it’s like you’re helping them. They don’t have no friends, because they’re new to the country and they don’t speak any English. And by being with them, by being friends with them they’re learning English from you, and it was a fulfilling job, it was kind of cool I was doing something that would help people.

“At the British Heart Foundation I got experience, so that’s good for my CV and I made friends as well. So nowadays I have got a lot of friends, that’s good for me. The more people you know, if you need help... so they help you... My life experience in this country is like, full of good memories, at the same time I do have bad memories, you know, I got hit by a car, so I was in hospital for some time. I cover the bad memories with good memories... the volunteering was a nice memory.”

Conclusions

Our research findings suggest greater political participation among refugees than among the overall UK population, as well as high levels of participation

in a wide range of non-governmental organisations. Volunteering comprised both formal activities, such as chairing an RCO, and more informal ones, such as cooking for cultural events.

Most volunteer time was given to RCOs. But we did *not* feel that RCO volunteering activity limited refugees' integration by limiting their interactions with outside society as suggested in some research (see discussion in Griffiths *et al.*, 2005; Zetter *et al.*, 2006). The tight bonding capital accumulated in RCOs did not come at the expense of bridging and linking capital. Volunteering activity in RCOs helped develop refugees' skills. Tasks such as interpreting developed language skills, as well as refugees' knowledge of UK society. Activities such as the organisation of cultural activities, fundraising, and the completion of regulatory documents – all part of the everyday activities of formally constituted RCOs – developed bridging and linking capital among interviewees. Our research challenges the message that volunteering within RCOs increases the segregation of refugees.

Volunteering outside the refugee sector also developed refugees' skills, as well as increasing their social integration. More research on political and community activity among refugees is needed, drawing from a larger sample of refugees. A larger research study might establish whether particular refugee groups were more active volunteers, and the reasons for this activity. This research should feed into the development of volunteering initiatives to support the integration of refugees.

We concluded that volunteering can be an important tool for promoting refugee integration. This potential could be realised if a wider range of organisations included refugees and asylum seekers as volunteers. We also believe that there should be closer work between government and refugee organisations to develop strategic approaches to refugee volunteering. This would enable existing good practice, including Refugee Support's own volunteering programmes, to be better disseminated.

Our findings prompt a number of other policy recommendations. One challenge for refugee advocacy groups is to communicate to UK society this high level of active citizenship among refugees. Such a message counters some of the negative public discourses about asylum seekers and refugees. It is also important to influence debates about the role of volunteering in community cohesion and compulsory community service in the process of naturalisation. These issues and policy recommendations are discussed in greater detail in the conclusions.



Chapter Nine

Acculturation, identity and belonging

Acculturation, identity and refugees' notions of home and belonging influence their integration. Career choices, decisions about where to live, and about political and social engagement, are influenced by a person's social identities. We argue that feelings of welcome and belonging are a component of integration. A feature of cohesive communities is a sense of belonging held by residents. As already noted, much recent policy debate has focused on British identity and the need to develop an inclusive notion of Britishness.

This chapter examines refugees' acculturation, identity and ideas about home. We start by outlining research perspectives on refugee acculturation and identity. We then present our research findings and discuss acculturation and changing identity, before examining multiple identities and ideas about home and belonging.

Research perspective on acculturation, identity and belonging

There is extensive academic literature about refugee acculturation and identity, drawing from psychological as well as sociological research. Acculturation refers to the changes that occur when two or more cultures come into contact. One of the most widely cited models of acculturation is Berry's model of intercultural strategies outlined in Figure Four, on opposite page (Berry *et al.*, 1987; Berry, 2001). Berry's model and those who draw from it have attempted to conceptualise integration and have influenced public policy. But his model is rather static and does not take into account wide variations in identity and cultural norms within minority and majority communities, nor shifting and multiple identities. Nevertheless, Berry's work is important in that it enshrines the notion that migrants do not have to abandon their home cultures in order to participate in society.

Figure Four:

Varieties of intercultural strategies in immigration groups and in the receiving societies

	Cultural maintenance = Yes	Cultural maintenance = No
Contact participation = Yes	Integration	Assimilation
Contact participation = No	Segregation	Marginalisation

Source: Summarised from Berry (2001)

Other acculturation and identity models acknowledge acculturative change over time. Such writing generally falls into two groups:

- 1) staged approaches to the study of refugee identity
- 2) non-staged conceptualisations of identity: segmented assimilation theory and multiple identities.

Staged approaches to the study of refugee identity stress the processual nature of refugee adaptation and place great emphasis on temporal dimensions of exile (Vasquez and Arayo, 1989; Griffiths, 2002). Baskauskas' study of Lithuanian refugees in the USA offers another staged approach to the study of refugee identity and adaptation with stages comprising:

- initial conservatism – soon after arrival in the host country, traditional cultural norms are reactivated as a safeguard against the new and unfamiliar
- bereavement – a process of working through loss of home
- innovation – recovering from the loss of the old, and moving forward, to a new hybrid identity (Baskauskas, 1981).

Harrell-Bond and Al-Rasheed advance a further staged model with their concept of 'liminality' – a threshold and dislocated state where refugees' social structures and identities break down (Harrell-Bond and Voutira, 1992; Al-Rasheed, 1993; Eastmond, 1993). Refugees go through three stages, involving:

- physical segregation as refugees in a new host country
- the stage of liminality where old forms of social stratification and cultural norms break down

- reincorporation – either into the home country, as a juxtaposed community, or into a new hybrid identity.

However, all processual studies of identity assume a more or less linear pathway towards eventual incorporation into the host society or return to the home country – in short, a story with a happy ending.

Segmented assimilation theory is a challenge to staged models of acculturation. Drawing on fieldwork in the United States, Portes and Zhou (1993) suggest that immigrant children may follow one of three trajectories in their incorporation into US society. One group of immigrant children enjoys educational success at the same time as adopting the cultural forms of middle-class, white America. A second group of children experiences downward social mobility. They do not succeed at school, because they assimilate into the cultural forms of the ‘underclass’. A third group of children of immigrants may enjoy educational and economic success at the same time as maintaining the social networks and cultural forms of their minority community (Portes and Zhou, 1993; Portes and Rumbaut, 2001; Rumbaut and Portes, 2001).

Segmented assimilation theory stresses the preservation of immigrant values, such as hard work, as a means of achieving economic advancement. With its emphasis on personal and family values, segmented assimilation theory is now the dominant American explanation for the differential educational performance of immigrant communities. But it has attracted critics (for a discussion, see Boyd, 2002; Farley and Alba, 2002; Waldinger and Feliciano, 2004). Most importantly, with its emphasis on social capital and the values of immigrant communities, segmented assimilation theory appears too narrow in its explanations of differential educational and economic progress. It does not account for policies in institutions receiving migrants.

Other non-staged approaches to the study of ethnic identity have developed in the context of accounts of globalisation that has brought about:

- an erosion of national identity and its replacement with cultural homogeneity in some instances
- the strengthening of national or ethnic identity in other instances, as a way of resisting globalisation
- the development of diasporas and communities that have transnational links

- the greater juxtaposition of different cultures in the same neighbourhood, and
- syncretisation and the development of new identities of hybridity to replace old national identities in other instances.

The globalised subject is an individual with multiple, shifting identities and a person whose identity is socially, spatially and historically defined (Hall, 1991, 1992; Cohen, 1997). Central to much writing about identity and globalisation are the concepts of diaspora and transnationalism, with diasporic and transnational identities examined by those researching refugees (Cohen, 1997; Griffiths, 2002). Cultural syncretisation and the emergence of new ethnic identities are outcomes of migration and transnational communities, for example, Griffiths (2002) writes about new forms of Kurdish identity among young Kurds from Turkey resident in London.

Much research on multiple identities explores geographical and non-geographical options for identification: locality, the nation state, cosmopolitanism, ethnicity, class, political allegiance and religion. For example, Stone and Muir (2007) found that identification with one's locality actually increased between 1990 and 2000 across all generations, in direct contrast to the decreasing popularity of all other territorial identities, including region, nation and globe. While over 50 per cent of the population identify primarily with their locality, only 25 per cent identify with the nation. Fenton (2007) suggests that black and ethnic minority people tend to identify more strongly with their local area than the general public. Furthermore, this sense of local belonging is stronger than any identification with an ethnic grouping or country of origin. This is supported by a 2002 MORI poll undertaken for the Commission for Racial Equality^{xxix}, which found that although ethnicity was a more important component of identity for ethnic minority people than for the general British population, locality was more important for non-UK-born ethnic minority people than for the general population, overriding ethnicity (MORI, 2002).

While evidence suggests younger people are much more internationalist and cosmopolitan than older generations, this sense of global identity has not grown despite increasing globalisation. Compared with international trends, World Values Survey data shows that there has been a halving in the number of Britons who describe themselves primarily as global citizens. A sense of belonging to the European community is relatively marginal among the UK population and black and ethnic minority communities are even less likely to identify themselves as Europeans (Stone and Muir, 2007).

Despite extensive research on social identities and ethnic minority populations, much of this writing is abstract. There has been little examination of how social identities impact on a person's institutional and functional integration – everyday decisions that relate to issues such as employment – as well as everyday social interactions. Few researchers have translated their findings about refugee social identities into public policy recommendations, a gap that this research hopes to fill.

Key findings

Those we interviewed all articulated multiple identities. As well as national identities, regional, global, diasporic, ethnic, religious, gendered and occupational identities were also important to them. Data on social identities collected through the interviews and questionnaires was analysed and is summarised below.

- All of those we interviewed described the multiple components of their identities, as well as changes to their identities and ideas of home and belonging brought about by migration to the UK.
- Most interviewees stated that they were keen to hold on to aspects of their material and non-material cultures, such as food, their home languages and values that they linked with their home country. Retention of aspects of material and non-material cultures did not jeopardise social integration.
- Some 25 of our interviewees said that they felt British or English, or held diasporic or dual identities which incorporated Britishness. However, three interviewees who held British passports stated that they did not feel British in any respect.
- Many refugees stated that they started to feel British when they made return trips to their home country.
- There was a strong association between a refugee identity and suffering and rejection in British society. When an interviewee faced economic or social problems themselves, or saw other refugees experiencing difficulties, they felt themselves to be refugees.

- Just two interviewees professed a class identity, a finding that contrasts with strongly held class identities among the UK-born population.
- Many of our respondents held strong occupational identities, for example, motherhood was a gendered and occupational identity held by seven respondents.
- A number of interviewees prioritised aspects of their identity, with these being occupational identity (six interviewees), cosmopolitan identity (two), black ethnic identity (one), Islamic identity (three), Somali identity (one) and British Ugandan identity (one).

Table Two: Components of interviewees' identities

Type of descriptor	Descriptor and frequency			
UK identity	British	11	British <i>and</i> English	1
	English	1		
Other national identity	Afghan	5	Sri Lankan	1
	Eritrean	3	Ethiopian	1
	Iranian	2	Kenyan	1
	Somali	2	Slovak	1
	Somalilander	2	Ugandan	1
	Czech	1	Vietnamese	1
Supranational identity	African	4	European	1
	East African	1	Latin American	1
Overseas regional or local identity	Mogadishu resident	1	From Kunduz Province	1
UK regional or local identity	Londoner	5	West Country villager	1
	Yorkshire/Sheffield	2		
Global or universal identity	World citizen	6		
Diasporic identity	British Somali	2	British and Hungarian	1
	British Afghan	1	British and Iranian	1
	British Asian	1	British and Vietnamese	1
	British Turk	1	British and Sierra Leonean	1
	British Ugandan	1	English Slovak	1
	British and Chilean	1	Slovak Jew	1

Refugee identity	Refugee	11		
Racial and ethnic identity	Black African	4	Reer Hamar	1
	Black	2	Kikuyu	1
	European Jewish	2	Tamil	1
	Pushtun	2	Oromo	1
Linguistic identity	Italian, Tigrinya, Amharic and English speaker	1		
Religious identity	Muslim	5	Hindu	1
	Secular	3	Muslim and a woman	1
	Christian	2	Methodist	1
	Pentecostalist			
	Jewish	2	Unspecified Christian	1
	Roman Catholic	2	Quaker	1
	Non-observant Muslim	2		
Gendered identity	Mother	7	Wife	2
	Woman	5	Father/grandfather/husband	1
	Man	4	Sister/daughter	1
	Brother Father/husband/brother	2	Widow	1
Class identity	Middle class	2		
Political identity	World citizen	5	Green Party member	1
	Activist	3	A democrat	1
Age-related identity	Middle aged	3	Elderly	1
	Young	3		
Identity based on sexuality	Heterosexual	2	Single	1
Occupational identity	Mother	7	Business person	1
	Student	6	Care assistant	1
	Refugee worker	3	Doctor	1
	Housewife	2	Journalist and writer	1
	Linguist	2	Librarian	1
	Teacher	2	Restaurateur	1
Educational identity	Multilingual	3	Well-educated	3
Identity based on living conditions in UK	In limbo	2	Alone	1
	A newcomer	1	Struggling	1
Identity based on personality type	Caring or a helper	6	An immigrant achiever	1
	Footballer/other sports	5	Honest	1
	A learner or intellectual	4	Liberal	1
	Friendly	3	Lively	1
	Quiet	3	Reflective	1
	Active	2	Talkative	1
	Ambitious	1		

Acculturation and changes in refugees' identities

Many of our interviewees talked about how they had changed since they arrived in the UK. These changes encompassed material cultures, values, identity and attachments. Among the most articulate was S, from Somalia. When he arrived his identity was largely defined by his parents and their beliefs. He went through a liminal stage of feeling he was a 'nobody' when he first arrived. As he grew up in the UK he felt he became more open to the influences of the outside world.

“From what I learnt and what I know, is that the environment changes you, and I think if we were in different environment it would be difficult but maybe my life would be different. The country changed me, the area changed me, the people around me changed me. You don't have a sense of who you are when you come, because you are a person who came from a poor country and you come here and you're nobody, you become nobody. Back in Somalia, I was somebody... the people around me in my town they know me, you know, I was the troublemaker, or I was the smart kid or the funny kid, whatever. When you come here, you don't speak English, you're isolated because you had to, you know, understand. You look for a sense of who you are, who you want be and then when you make friends you become who your friends are. If your friends were good persons who love education, you'll love education.”

Other interviewees equated a refugee identity with a liminal period, where old social structure and certainties no longer provided an anchor. O stated that he felt confused and neither Afghan nor British during his early years in the UK. Asked when he stopped feeling he was a refugee, he replied:

“That's a good question actually. Yes, you could say that, I mean I haven't thought about it so I mean, yeah, when say, five, six years ago I did feel different, you know, I am outsider and a nobody, but not so much now, no. I don't see myself in that way, I suppose.”

Other respondents did not appear to pass through a liminal or limbo stage. For them, their main cultural change was the slow acknowledgement that they felt themselves becoming more and more British. B, from Czechoslovakia, noted:

“I think this feeling British has a lot to do with years, if you are here for ten years you feel very differently than if you are here for 30 years or 40 years. For me, it has just be 40 years so... it's a lifetime. You don't feel as a native because on the one side there is much more to your past, you are interested in things that people in this country are not because you've got another country behind you and there is always something left there that is of interest. So you are different from that point of view but it certainly doesn't mean you feel like a stranger all the time.”

Not everyone's acculturative change was linear, or followed the staged pathways, described above. In the first part of his life A tried very hard to be British. Then there came a point in his life where a Hungarian identity became very important to him – during the Glasnost era of the late 80s and early 90s.

“There was this sort of wave of becoming very assimilated, marrying into an English family, feeling very British, going through the career as established as you can – becoming the head of a British school... so becoming absolutely accepted... but then there was a phase of – yes I'm Hungarian and I want to do and I (first through Quakers) started to do a lot with East-West relations and conflict resolution but at the same time getting rooted into this (North Somerset) locality.”

Retaining the cultures of the homeland

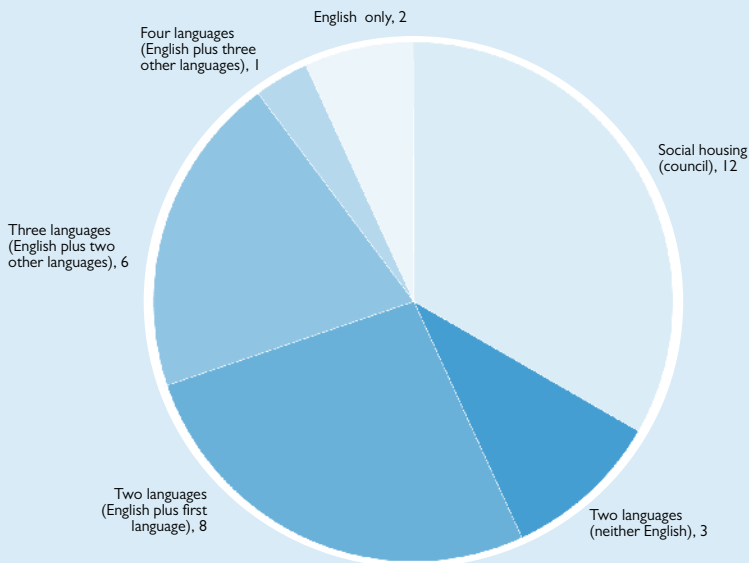
Despite acknowledging cultural change brought about by migration to the UK, all of the interviewees were keen to hold on to aspects of their material and non-material cultures. The interviewees wanted to retain their food, music and their home languages, as well as many of the values that they linked with their home country. K, from Eritrea, kept a small flag in her house. Every time there is an event relating to Eritrea, for example Independence Day, she took her children to the celebrations. She cooked Eritrean food and as a Muslim, K read the Q'uran with her children and prayed with them.

All but two of our interviewees spoke their first languages at home – the two respondents who did not had both married English-speaking British women and had lived in the UK for 40 years or more. Figure Five, on opposite page,

shows language use at home. Almost all of our interviewees wanted their children to speak their home language, often encouraging them to attend community schools. The desire for children to speak the home language was not always achieved, as D, stated:

“When my oldest son was born, I actually only spoke to him in Slovak because I wanted him to learn, and his first words were in Slovak. So the attempt was there but it was, you know, it wasn’t, it was quite futile because my wife – mother tongue is not called mother tongue for nothing, you know my wife doesn’t speak the language and I think it became more difficult when the second child was born because then eventually, you know they spoke to each other in a language, it was English, it wasn’t Slovak. So I suppose my oldest son understands maybe still a little bit of Slovak, even the younger one would know the odd word. The fact that we had Czech and Slovak au pairs may have helped but they don’t speak the language.”

Figure Five: Languages spoken at home



E, from Chile stated:

“I still keep my music, dance, cultural expression and simplicity of life.”

One particular value that our interviewees were keen to retain was their children’s respect for family and community elders and their children’s retention of the moral values of their homeland. This, as well as a ‘British’ poor behaviour and lack of respect for elders was articulated in eleven of our interviews. H, from Iran, stated:

“One [aspect of Iranian culture that he tries to preserve] is, which I think we used to see the same in England, was to respect the elders and the family, protect your family always. But now I see that children are, in this country, becoming too independent too quickly and they want to do everything on their own. They don’t care what the parents think and they want to do everything the way they want it... I’m hoping that I’m keeping my children brought up the way I was brought up and the way maybe the old British people were brought up, just to have some respect.”

R, who was 20 years old, stated:

“Just respecting my parents is something I want to keep, because in Turkey you have to earn respect and people older than you. That’s what I want to preserve actually because I see a lot of people in here don’t respect people older than them. I have a experience of this: there were two boys talking really loud at twelve o’clock in the night and a lady came out from the window and said ‘Can you be quiet please?’ and she was like, an old lady, ‘Can you be quiet?’ and they started swearing back at the lady saying ‘shut up, we can talk as we want’. I don’t want to do that, I never did it and I don’t want to do that and I just want to preserve that really.

“It’s not (distinctly) Turkish to respect your elders, it’s just about personality, the characteristics you have, but in Turkey they teach you that in school and in the mosques

where you go. They teach you that it's against Islam, it's against my religion actually to disrespect people older than you, and they teach you that in Turkey so I had that experience in Turkey, they taught me, and when I came here I just wanted to preserve that."

Retention of aspects of material and non-material culture did not jeopardise interviewees' integration into British society. As noted in Chapters Seven and Eight, most interviewees manifest some social interaction with wider society, and did participate in political life and civil society organisations. Most of our respondents had formed social networks of integration. This is strong evidence of integration, rather than an assimilative abandonment of the culture of the homeland.

Youth identity and cultures

Policy makers have recently started to focus on the acculturation of minority and migrant youth. Young people are seen as more receptive to acculturation – with advocates of segmented assimilation theory suggesting that this may affect their life chances. Some writing also indicates that living in a bicultural world presents a major problem for a refugee child, citing much inter-generational conflict, essentially conflict between the cultural expectations of the home and the outside world (see, for example, Kahin, 1997; Gosling, 2000). In contrast, other authors suggest that migrant children usually do negotiate the cultural differences between home and larger community without difficulty (for a discussion see Eriksen, 2002).

We were, therefore, interested in the acculturation of the 11 interviewees who arrived as children, as well as accounts given by those interviewees who were parents. All but one of those who arrived as children appeared resistant to acculturation into the cultural forms of an underachieving underclass. However, S, from Somalia, told of how his behaviour at school and college led to him failing all the examinations that he sat.

"College was a joke, you know, it was just laughing, you know, laughing about, you know. I made a lot of friends... other stuff came into the picture, I was going after girls and all that, it was a different scenario now, I was going to house parties... I was still doing activities like playing football and going to the cinemas and stuff like that..."

but now I was like staying up late, I was smoking, I was smoking cigarettes... I was smoking weed, I was smoking cannabis and it was like, I was chilling... The problem was I was thinking about now... I was thinking about relaxing, chilling out, enjoying... I wasn't thinking about the future, and that's my mistake, once you stop thinking about the future, your life goes downhill.

“Me and my friend, we started doing something bad, we started doing like crime, not like big crimes, stuff like that, we became anti-social, started breaking into cars, you know, just for the fun of it. For us it was like fun. And now when I look back, it was like, I was stupid, why did I do that. But it was like, you were at that moment, you were in the moment. And everything was a moment thing.”

However, there were many differences between S's life experiences and the remaining ten interviewees who arrived as children. There were no male role models in S's life – his father had been killed in Somalia. S had never attended school before arriving in the UK aged 12. At school he was given very little additional help, either with his learning of English, or making up for the learning he had missed. Unsurprisingly, he was not interested in school, because he did not understand what his teachers or his peers were saying. He was also bullied, in a school noted for the poor behaviour of its pupils. In order to survive this experience, S decided to associate with peers who were perceived as 'tough'. S had arrived in the UK at 12, making him the youngest child arrival, and giving him the greatest time in a UK school and in contact with an anti-education peer group.

There is some research evidence of segmented assimilation trajectories among young refugees in the UK, with refugee children who have lived in the UK longest being the most vulnerable to acculturation into anti-education cultural forms. For example, children whose families came from northern Somalia in the period 1988–91 do less well at school than more recent arrivals, despite a complete education and having been in the UK for the longest time (Rutter, 2006). This acculturation is a survival strategy where children face bullying and isolation. It does not equate with positive cultural syncretism and the positive development of new ethnic identities. It also prompts public policy responses – what should schools do to ensure that new migrants are not acculturated into anti-educational cultural forms?

We also found some evidence of cultural conflict between the home and majority community cultures, mostly over sexual relations. Here M tells of her decision to marry.

“I got an office junior’s job at the end of 1995. Then I was an accounts junior as they promoted me. Then after one year I went to VAT staff, to do VAT returns. Then I got promoted to be a gold revenue member of staff. There I met a man, a boy really. He had been at school with me. He was from Sri Lanka, and he was from near my place. We spoke the same language as well. So I met him and because I didn’t have anyone here and he was kind to me, I met him and I asked my mum and dad ‘can I marry him?’ Then my mum came to Colombo and was talking to me on the phone. She didn’t really like it, but she couldn’t do anything, because I didn’t have anyone here, no support. In the end she said ‘if you really like him, do whatever you want.’”

K, from Eritrea, who herself came as an adolescent, sometimes had to tell her own daughter that she could not wear certain clothes, or go to parties with boys.

“My kids says ‘we’re from Eritrea but we’re born here, we’re British’ but their heart is Eritrean and I make sure that they don’t forget that. Their attitude’s becoming more like British people generally. Like my daughter wants to do certain things not allowed in our culture.”

Y, from Iran, had a teenage daughter.

“In my country, my daughter, she cannot have a boyfriend until she is married. She cannot be physical to anyone, not anybody, until she is married, and no make-up, not anything. But I think, the English people, they do everything. At first I said to my daughter, ‘you don’t get attracted to other people and you don’t speak to boys.’ But I think that’s not fair on my daughter. But now I say to my daughter you go and do everything like the English.”

However, interviewees were mostly able to resolve these conflicts and were comfortable shifting between the cultures of home and the majority community. Here O, from Afghanistan, told of how he happily accommodates both cultures.

“Of course, obviously just the, there are certain cultural traits that will always be a part of me, even if I try to get away from it – certain mannerisms and I think, behaviours... I’ve been brought up here and to be honest with you we don’t have a lot of contact with a lot of Afghan families or so, it’s yeah, to be honest I’m quite happy about that because I’m also, I’ve experienced this culture, British culture, and Afghan culture and I can mix and match and take from both cultures – take positives from both.”

Multiple identities

All of those we interviewed described the multiple components of their identities, which we discuss below.

1) National identity and Britishness.

Eleven interviewees felt British, one felt herself to be English and one respondent stated that he felt both British and English. A further 13 interviewees held diasporic or dual identities that incorporated Britishness (see Table Two, above). For most of this group, a British identity had emerged over a period of time. F, from Vietnam, noted:

“I have been living here longer than I ever lived in Vietnam where I was born. That is why I feel British.”

Respondents acknowledged that their identity would continue to change. J, from Somalia, stated:

“I am a British Somali... I am proud when I pass through the airport that I have a British passport, that it is a security, but not an identity... Do I feel British? I think through the passport, but at the moment I don’t think I feel just British. I am struggling to say that now. But I am

British when it comes to football, because I have supported Manchester United since I was very young. When England plays with other countries I support them.”

Overseas travel often increased feelings of Britishness among respondents, with P, from Afghanistan, noting:

“When I’m out of UK, I feel more British than when I’m inside, because when I’m inside people would notice that I’m not.”

E, from Chile, felt British when he returned to Chile after his homeland returned to democracy.

“I noticed that I started to feel British when I returned to Chile the second time. My younger brother told me ‘you are British in every aspect of your life’ ... When we allowed to go back we started building our house, with the help of the family, a beautiful place, but then we realised we were making the wrong decision, because I had to work for the rest of my life and there were no jobs. But in building the house, I started dealing with bureaucracy, I realised that I could not cope with the conception of management, the ethnic of work, the time keeping, the little things, I dealt with the bureaucracy in a very British way.”

G, from Vietnam, stated:

“I feel British... I am still Vietnamese, in a way. You can’t be both but I am. I do hang out with the Vietnamese a lot. But when I go to Vietnam I miss home here. So in that way I feel very much British. After four weeks in Vietnam I miss England... there’s no other way to describe it.”

2) Diasporic and dual identity.

Some 14 interviewees held diasporic or dual identities that were distinct from single identities. For example, E stated he was British and Chilean and two interviewees felt themselves to be British Somalis. I and J, both from Somalia, said:

“I feel I belong here in the UK when I see my community, if I go where there are a lot of Somalilanders, here in London, I feel part of that, that is my neighbourhood. I feel secure among my community, does that make sense? If I go down Wembley High Road, there are a lot of shops, there is a Somali restaurant, I feel nice and secure and I belong there.”

“I am a British Somali... I can't say I am more close to one or the other, but I just feel dual – both.”

R, from Turkey, felt he held a dual identity as Turkish and British:

“My parents are Turkish, and I'm Turkish as well, but because I live in England I categorise myself as in the middle, being half Turkish and half British, or Turkish and British. Even if there's a football match I don't know which one to support so I just want to go for a nil-nil draw. Probably I am 50-50 (Turkish-British). Because my parents are Turkish and I born in Turkey, and I can say I'm Turkish but I can say I'm British as well because I live in Britain, I study in Britain, and I'm really happy to be here because, mainly for my studies...”

Some commentators have associated diasporic communities and the transnational links that they maintain with decreased integration (Vertovec, 2006). We saw no evidence of this. Those who professed diasporic identities were among the best integrated. Diaspora was associated with cultural renewal. In every case forging a diasporic or dual identity meant acknowledging both cultures of the home country and of the UK.

3) A rejection of Britishness.

Four interviewees stated forcefully that they did not feel British in any respect. One interviewee had only recently arrived in the UK and another respondent had spent a protracted period as an irregular migrant. But for two women, their lack of identification with Britishness was because they were rejected by 'British' society. L, from Afghanistan, had lived in the UK for 15 years and stated:

“I say I am British, but only in name, the problem is I am not fitting in, because I face a lot of problems, there is all the time problems.”

K, from Eritrea, had lived in the UK for 18 years and said:

“I don’t feel British. If you’re a foreigner, you’re always a foreigner here even if you have your ID.”

Q, from Kenya, had lived in the UK for 12 years, but did not feel British because he disliked aspects of life in the UK. His house and car had been damaged on repeated occasions since he moved to Essex and this may explain the strength of his response.

“Am I British? Document wise, yes. Having the passport I am British. But for me to qualify to be British, someone has to be identified with this culture, race or tribe. You need their culture. But what is the British culture? What are the British values? That is where the struggle comes in. For me the British values are sluggishness, drunkenness, violence, swearing 24/7. What else? Materialism, family breakdown. Judging by those points, I don’t call myself British. Even though I have a British passport, I still call myself Kenyan.”

All three interviewees held strong feelings about life in Britain: either a sense of rejection or revulsion. It is those who hold such strong feelings of rejection that should form the focus of public policy interventions, rather than those who have diasporic or dual identities.

4) A refugee identity.

Some 20 of our interviewees held British passports or had started the process of naturalisation. Some of those we interviewed had held British passports for many years, having long ceased to have a UN refugee travel document. We were, therefore, surprised that 11 respondents stated that they still felt themselves to be a refugee. For all of them, there was a strong association between a refugee identity and suffering and rejection in British society. E, from Chile, who had lived in the UK for 31 years and had held a British passport for 15 years, stated:

“I still feel a refugee, it’s an issue of scale and emphasis though. I still suffer from the same kind of issues as the newly arrived. I think the language still plays a very crucial role. I open my mouth and it’s my accent. Immediately I feel very unconfident. I am still seeing their reactions. I am telling you, I go to particular shops and there are some people who prepare themselves not to understand me. I say ‘can I have bread?’ They say ‘pardon?’ ‘Can I have bread?’ ‘Pardon? Ah, bread.’ That’s the kind of situation I am in, although the scale is different for the newly-arrived.”

S felt like a refugee when other people referred to him as a refugee. He had been told many times to go back to his country, at school or in the street and felt that other people did not consider him to be British. As long as this continues he will not feel British.

“Some of the people do make me feel like a refugee, I mean it was like one of these days, I was walking by and some woman shouted from her window and said ‘go back to your country you fucking refugee’ ... and it made me feel like one. Some people do see me as a refugee, so as long as they see me as a refugee, I am a refugee and I’ll always be a refugee.”

Q, from Kenya, had lived in the UK for 12 years:

“Would I call myself a refugee? Yes, I would. I am, even today I am still struggling with the problems I experienced when I was a refugee. I am sorry to say this, my experience of this country, of applying for jobs, what we go through every day, it is one thing to be black, but it is even worse being black and African with an accent and to cap it all a refugee.”

G, from Vietnam, felt that his career success had stopped him from feeling himself to be a refugee:

“I don’t feel like a refugee at all... When I became a doctor I felt I contribute to the society and I feel that I’m actually quite useful to society.”

We felt that holding a refugee identity for protracted periods was evidence of a lack of integration – because its association with rejection, racism and social exclusion in the UK.

5) UK regional and local identities

A number of recent researchers have examined alternative geographical identities held by UK residents. Stone and Muir (2007) argue that while other territorial identities (such as a European identity) have declined in the UK, identification with one's locality increased between 1990 and 2000. Some 56 per cent of the UK population identified primarily with their locality, compared with 25 per cent who identify with the nation in the first instance. Among ethnic minority communities, this local identification is higher (Fenton, 2007; Stone and Muir, 2007). They and others argue that government should place greater emphasis on encouraging a strong local identity based on belonging to a town or neighbourhood. Indeed, a shared sense of local identity, rather than a national identity, could bind diverse communities together (Fenton, 2007; Pearce, 2007; Stone and Muir, 2007).

Seven interviewees professed a regional or local identity, although none of them prioritised this aspect of their identity. Only two interviewees espoused truly local identities – stating attachments to a village and to a particular part of Sheffield. For the remainder, it was attachment to a region rather than a locality that was important. (Indeed, as discussed in Chapter Seven, the majority of interviewees felt their immediate neighbourhood to be rather unwelcoming). All four respondents who felt themselves to be Londoners, identified with the capital's multiculturalism. They felt that they belonged in such a multicultural city, with P, from Afghanistan, stating:

“(I am a) Londoner because there are people from so many different parts of the world that they, not many people would say, ‘OK so you’re from there and you’re different.’ I just don’t feel different. That kind of mix makes it home, you can just do whatever, I mean in terms of clothing, in terms of religious beliefs, you can do many things that you couldn’t do in maybe other parts of the world.”

6) Religious identity.

Changes to religious identity are difficult to research, as religious practices are manifested in many different ways. For example, if a person attends a mosque

a couple of times in a year, what does that mean? Despite these research difficulties there do appear to be some clear trends in religious identity in the UK. For example, fewer people profess religious belief or are affiliated to particular religious institutions. This decline in religious belief and practice has taken place across all ethnic groups, although religion is more important to people from black and minority ethnic communities (Crockett and Voas, 2006; Pew Research Center, 2006; Stone and Muir, 2007). Commentators have focused on Muslims in the UK, prompted by concerns about the growth of religious extremism. In recent polls by the Pew Research Center (2006), British Muslims placed more importance on their religious identity than their national identity, although there is little evidence to show a growth in support for religious extremism. Recent UK research concluded that most British Muslims felt that Islam and Britishness were not mutually exclusive and resented what they perceived to be constant implicit or explicit requests to choose between the two identities. British Muslims expressed feelings of frustration and victimisation and believed that they were subject to disproportionate pressure to display their loyalty to Britain and Britishness (ETHNOS, 2005).

Some 20 interviewees professed a religious identity, although for two of them it was secularism that they wished to highlight. Of the 18 who stated a religion, all but two attended church, mosque, temple or synagogue on a regular basis. This is a higher level of religious observance than the UK population – in 2005 some 31 per cent of the UK public stated they had a religion and attended religious services (Heath *et al.*, 2007).

AA had been forced to flee Eritrea because of his religion and now attended a Pentecostalist church that worshipped in Tigrinya and Amharic. He was one of two African interviewees who were active members of Pentecostalist churches – a Christian movement that seeks a direct relationship with God through the work of the Holy Spirit. Speaking in tongues, exorcism and healing are common practices. Pentecostalism is the fastest growing religious movement in the UK, attracting converts from other Christian denominations. In the UK many of its adherents are migrants from Africa and Latin America (Crockett and Voas, 2006). A number of writers argue that the growth in Pentecostalism has been caused by the increased marginalisation of migrant groups in the UK, for example, a belief in evil spirits offers an explanation to the misfortunes of life and at the same time spirit possession can confer status (Harris, 2006).

Three interviewees talked of how their religious identity had changed. I, from Somalia had started to wear the *hijab* in the UK; she wanted to assert her

Muslim identity in the face of increased Islamophobia. H, also from Somalia, stated that Islamophobia and the ‘problematisation’ of Muslims had made him want to assert his religious identity to a greater degree. Eggs had been thrown at him when he left the mosque. For A, from Hungary, religious change was a personal journey.

“I feel that I am in a minority of one. If we are talking about ethnicity then every bit of my blood is Jewish but in terms of religion, there has been a family and personal journey of Judaism to reformed Christianity and in my case to Quakerism which is a non-dogmatic and inclusive religion – you can be a Jew and Quaker, Catholic and Quaker, Buddhist and a Quaker and so on. So it suited me.”

Religious observance had many different meanings for our interviewees. For some, it provided a moral framework. S, from Somalia, stated:

“Being Muslim is important, because it’s my belief system, and it guides me on my life, on how to live my life, so it’s important. Being Somali, I don’t think it’s really important, I wouldn’t care if I was from another country, it doesn’t really matter where I’m from. But I mean, I know I’m Somali but I wouldn’t really care if I was from another country or anything like that.”

For others, religious observance had a social function, as a place to meet others, from their own community and outside it. The mosque, church or temple had the function of ethnic associations similar to the role of a refugee community association.

7) Class and occupational identity.

Just two interviewees professed a class identity, perceiving themselves to be middle class. Both were university graduates who had lived in the UK for 40 years. The absence of a class descriptor contrasts with the UK population, who still see themselves in terms of social class (Stone and Muir, 2007). Class identity is culturally specific and many refugees may not identify with the cultural practices associated with particular classes. Additionally, the migratory experience of many of the more recent arrivals was, in part, characterised by downward social mobility. They were from the elites or middle classes of their own countries, but now found themselves in working class jobs, attending

working class schools and living on council estates. This may account for a lack of class identification among those we interviewed.

In contrast, many of those we interviewed – 28 of 30 – professed strong occupational identities, a trend found in other studies about migrant identity (Griffiths, 2002; McIlwaine *et al.*, 2006). J, from Somalia, stated:

“I see myself as an educator and also a leader and mentor for the young. This is very important to me.”

T was employed in a small pizza restaurant, in a job that was badly paid and of low status. Nevertheless he took great pride in his work and his job and that he saw himself as a hard worker which formed part of his identity.

“My boss, he saw that I could be trusted and that I was hard-working, that’s why he gave me the job. Soon I was promoted, and when my boss goes away he leaves me in charge.”

All the recently arrived women cited motherhood as a key component of their identity – both a gendered and an occupational identity. For five of them it was the most important aspect of their identity, as M, from Sri Lanka, stated:

“First of all I am a mother, a great mum.”

Motherhood appeared to be an important occupational identity to some women because it affirmed worth and success having faced many challenges in entering the labour market. F, from Vietnam, had not worked for 24 years and at one point described herself as a ‘nobody’. She also stated:

“I am so proud, my children come out good children, I am so proud. My son is so good, my daughter is so good. My children both they will be good citizens.”

We also saw strongly-held occupational identities as a substitute for culturally alien class identities. Occupational identities were particularly important to those who had finally achieved career success after many years working in low-skilled jobs. E, from Chile, spent 12 years working as a cinema usher, hospital porter, cleaner and minicab driver, before getting a job with a housing association. When asked about identity he replied:

“I see myself as a professional and a practitioner – someone who is a housing professional.”

‘Othering’ among refugees

Othering is a way of defining one’s identity through the stigmatisation of others – self-affirmation that depends on the vilification of another group. A person is not defined by who they are, but who they are not. There has been writing on how English identity has been affirmed by negative attitudes towards ‘others’ such as the French, asylum seekers and Muslims (Colley, 1992a, b; Finney and Peach, 2004). However, there has been limited research about othering among refugees in the UK (see Wong, 1991).

We found substantial evidence of othering among some of the refugees we interviewed. This manifested itself in relation to ‘race’, religion, sexuality and identification with British values. Here, S is othering, in his definition of himself as ‘not white.’

“I went to this town outside London and there wasn’t a lot of black people there, actually there was none, it was a little small town and I was actually passing through, I was in my friend’s car... we stopped to rent this hotel and everybody keep looking at us, and I don’t blame them, I don’t think they’d ever seen a black person in their town, they don’t see it every day, and it’s like, if you don’t see someone, it’s like when I came to this country I was staring at the people because I didn’t see a lot of white people. So I don’t think it’s racist or anything like that but I felt uncomfortable when people, like, look at you, give you bad eye. And being black, when you’re black you being stereotyped, stereotyped a lot, people will stereotype you, and it’s no good, I mean, it’s not really good.”

We saw othering as an essentially unhealthy process – interviewees were defining themselves as other, after an experience of rejection.

Home and belonging

We felt it was important to examine notions of home as part of refugees’ identities. Home has many meanings, including current accommodation,

a national home, the region, town or village of origin, or the place where parents lived. It can also be a non-material concept, such as a collection of memories or the place of belonging (for a discussion about the significance of home for minority and refugee communities, see Brah, 1996; Al-Ali and Koser, 2002; Taylor, 2004).

Ideas about home and belonging have been debated by those concerned with migrant integration and social cohesion. Narratives of home and belonging influence career choices in the country of asylum and the decision to participate in education, training and community life. The idea that home is 'over there' coupled with the perception that life in the UK is seen as a temporary sojourn, it is argued, may mean that a refugee does not invest in social networks in the UK (Kunz, 1981; Al-Rasheed, 1993; Bloch, 2004). Indeed, a number of social commentators, from Norman Tebbit onwards, have argued that multiple or transnational belongings or 'homes' threaten national cohesion. We asked what home meant to our interviewees, where it was located and how ideas about home related to their integration in the UK.

Some respondents found it hard to express what home comprised or where it was located, including T and his wife. There was dualism in their response, as they remembered the good things they had in Afghanistan, with T saying:

“At the moment I would like to live here, because I’ve got used to it. She (his wife) would like to go back, we talk about it a lot. But I say, we cannot go back because of the political problems. When the security situation is good for me, I will decide. So she says, ‘we will stay with you.’ If someone has left their home recently, they will still have in their mind the place there, until they have lived here for one or two years. Then it will be all right...

“When I first came, I thought home was not here, but over there. Now I know that home is over here. But in some situations, when you have problems, when you have sadness, then home is over there.”

Of those we interviewed, half stated that their home was primarily in the UK, with another seven respondents stating that home comprised both the home country and the UK.

Home as being primarily the UK

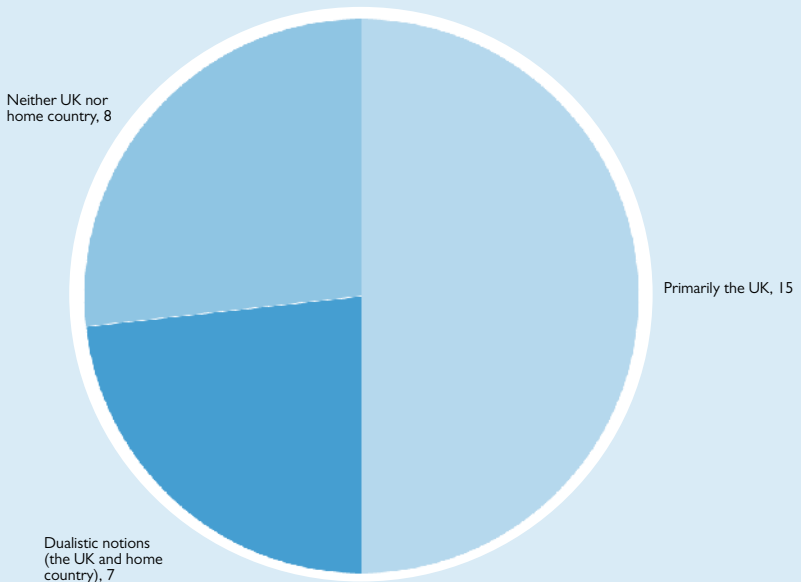
The location of home emerged for many different reasons. For some refugees, the UK was the only home they had, because their previous homes had been destroyed. M, from Sri Lanka, and J, from Somalia stated:

“All of the house has gone now because of the bombs and the shooting. The house is completely broken, only the walls are there.”

“When I hear the word home, ‘Hargeisa, Somaliland’ comes into my mind. If I go there for a short holiday I feel I belong, but in the long-term, no... Somaliland isn’t home, all our land, everything is destroyed and different.”

For many of those interviewed the notion that home comprised the UK emerged out of familiarity and was related to the length of time a person had resided in the UK. P, from Afghanistan, felt that after 13 years of residence, her only home was the UK.

Figure Six: Locations of ‘home’



Source: Author interviews

N=30

“Wherever I am, when I say I am going home, that means I’m going to Ealing – there is no other home for me... I can go to Afghanistan to work but I think my life would be in Britain. I would live in Britain.”

Happiness about living here prompted a sense of belonging and thus the notion that the UK was home among some interviewees. O, from Afghanistan, stated:

“Home is London! I mean even when sometimes when London becomes too much, as I’m sure you know – it just gets so hectic so I’ll leave, say I’ll go for holiday – one week and I miss it, I miss it like crazy and I can’t wait to come back so definitely it’s London... I’ve got friends now from all over the world and you get a taste of all cultures, all practices, different people and tolerance. I don’t know if it’s the right word but – I mean I’ve seen the rest of Europe and to be honest with you racism is still a big issue here. But people live side by side. You just feel comfortable here, just the lifestyle and for the stuff you can do. Just for me this is, this is what I believe, the principles I follow, you know: freedom of speech, and democracy, and it’s just these things that make it for me a very good place compared to other places.”

K, from Eritrea, felt the UK to be her home because she enjoyed the safety and comfort of her life, but conversely did not feel British. She stated:

“(Eritrea) It’s not where I grew up, got educated and work. My husband is opposite; he wants to go and live there, that’s what he calls ‘home’. He’s trying to build a house there and he doesn’t mind going to live there but I don’t think I have any intention. I feel at home here. I don’t feel at home there. I don’t know it much. Just we once went since I was little. My house, my work, my children, I’m comfortable and I am adapted to the British system – British food, clothes and everything. You have to work hard here but I am comfortable here.”

M’s incorporation into a large Tamil diaspora led her to feel at home in the UK.

“We have everything like Sri Lanka here, the temples, all the shops, Indian shops, the vegetables, all those kind of things, nothing you can’t get. Everything is like the same as our country.”

The realisation that home was located in the UK, like Britishness, also developed after an overseas visit. H, from Iran, stated:

“I’ve lived here for some time now and have established myself here so I feel more homely here. I went home not too long ago. It was like feeling like a stranger and when I went, I didn’t feel I was home. So I feel homely here now – perhaps because my children are all out here.”

For some, the idea that home was primarily located in the UK emerged after political transformation in interviewees’ home countries and the choice between returning or remaining in the UK. In his daily life A felt less like a refugee once he had gone through school and university. As human rights improved in Hungary and he was able to go back and visit, he realised that his home was in the UK.

“Then it became very clear that we were staying by choice; it was very clear that I was here because my family and my roots were here, because this was home.”

For others, the decision that the UK was home often came as a result of having children who were born in the UK. C, from Czechslovakia, and M, from Sri Lanka remarked:

“She (her daughter) is much more rooted in British soil and she wants to live here... We couldn’t really decide (about living in Czechoslovakia) because in the meantime we produced a British kid. Her identity is very much rooted here...”

“They (her children) don’t know anything about Sri Lanka because they have never been. They want to see the country, but I can’t take them because there is trouble. The children want to live here for ever. They are like the English people, only their colour is different.”

Only one interviewee felt that his notions of home had developed as a result of neighbourhood attachments. This was A, who lived in a village. For a few months, after his first wife died, he did pose the question of whether he could go back and live in Budapest, but stated:

“It was very easy to realise that my home was Budapest but I’ve really come to value rural life and Budapest was interesting for a couple of weeks at a time, hectic, exciting, fun but I was pretty pleased to get back on the plane and end up in the village... If the question had been do I want to live in Budapest or London, that might have been a meaningful question, but the answer was ‘No – I want to live in rural North Somerset – that’s home.’”

Home as a dualistic notion

Just under a quarter of interviewees had dualistic notions of home as being ‘here’ *and* ‘there’. Below L, from Afghanistan, and I, from Somalia, talk of their notions of home.

“I have two homes, there and here. My home is my house here and my home is Afghanistan, both of them. I have my life here, and at the same time I miss there as well, because I was born there. I wouldn’t go back there though, because of the children. At the beginning we thought we might go back if things changed, because we had everything there and we didn’t have anything in this country. But things do not change in 15 years, so we stayed here.”

“Home is the places that you live in your childhood, you are more attached to... Because I have left home so young, I don’t know where home is. But I know where I will feel happy most of all – that is in Britain, but not just Britain, London actually. I don’t know where I would most like to live, because I would really like to go back to Somaliland and help. I do go back every year as a volunteer and teach women arts and crafts. I definitely feel happy to live in England, but at the same token, I would definitely feel happy to live in Somaliland, because at the end of the day, it is the two places I know most.”

B, from Czechoslovakia, has a home in London, but also owns a small flat in Prague.

“I’ve been in the same house for 40 years and it’s the longest I’ve ever been anywhere... I like having a safe and quiet neighbourhood and it is relatively safe... I feel most relaxed in my house here, but I also have a small flat in Prague now. I feel quite at home when I’m there but I don’t know whether it is because I have been in this house here the longest but that seems to me to be the home. Although I don’t feel in anyway not at home when I’m in Prague, I quite slide into things there and I do things other people do. But I think I fit in more now with general things here than I do there because I didn’t live there for so many years, I don’t listen to the daily news and in that respect I don’t have their problems therefore I probably feel more at home here.

All of those who had dualistic notions of home had nevertheless formed strong attachments in the UK, usually through their work. We should not feel, therefore, that multiple homes and these multiple attachments threaten integration and social cohesion.

Homelessness

Over a quarter of the interviewees felt they had no home – they had lost their home in their country of origin, but did not yet feel that they had a home in the UK. Four of the interviewees lacked any sense of a permanent home – they were hostel residents or in short-term foster care. Z, from Ethiopia, lived in a foyer run by Refugee Support.

“Home! At the moment I am homeless, I live here in the foyer. I am on the waiting list for my home, when I get my flat that will be my home. Then my home will be England.”

DD, came from Afghanistan by himself and was living with foster carers.

“Home? Home. I don’t know, I haven’t got any home now. In my country I used to live with my uncle, I didn’t have my own home, and here I still don’t have my own home. I’m living with a foster family so maybe one month, maybe one year later I’ll have to leave.”

Apart from those in hostel accommodation or foster care, it was those who had the greatest sense of institutional discrimination, or had experienced the greatest social hostility in their neighbourhood who did not feel they belonged either 'here' or 'there'.

Conclusions: identity, belonging and integration

Our findings on identity paint a rather complex picture in relation to integration. The research given in previous chapters largely emerged as experiencing some degree of integration, albeit not always in their localities and in the labour market. Multiple identities and belongings did not preclude interviewees' integration into British society. Indeed, interviewees who expressed the most diverse range of identifiers were often the most integrated. Perhaps the answer is to include both difference *and* rights and equality into a progressive construct of Britishness.

We felt, however, that some aspects of identity articulated by interviewees were evidence of a lack of integration. For example, many of our interviewees still felt themselves to be refugees, with the strong association between refugee identity and suffering and rejection in British society.

However, most of our interviewees felt British, albeit with many qualifications. Their British identity was mediated by identification with other collectives: political, social, ethnic, regional and supranational, as well as transnational. Multiple identities and belongings did not preclude a sense of Britishness.

Very few of those we interviewed professed strong local identities, perhaps as a result of the lack of neighbourliness discussed in Chapter Seven. This lack of local attachment prompts many public policy challenges if Britishness is to be renewed through local belongings.



Chapter Ten

The Britishness debate

This chapter examines interviewees' ideas about Britain and Britishness, set in the context of current debates about identity and national cohesion. It should be noted that British national identity is a relatively recent social construct and can be attributed to the industrial, military and political developments of the last 300 years. Traditionally, people's allegiances and sense of belonging lay with their local communities and centred on local institutions such as the church or public house. A nascent British identity can be traced through a number of key historical events, including the Petition of Rights (1628), the Civil War, the 'Glorious Revolution' (1688) and the 1707 Act of Union of England and Scotland in 1707. However, a genuine sense of Britishness only really began to develop in direct relation to the state of conflict with neighbouring France during the 18th and 19th centuries. For the first time, the four separate parts of the United Kingdom were brought together in opposition to a hostile Catholic 'other' (Colley, 1992a, b).

At the same time as conflict with France, industrialisation prompted further changes in collective views of identity. A largely rural British population became a largely urban population. Anxiety over the changing face of Britain led to a reassertion of traditional Britishness: the beneficent feudal relationship between lord and peasant farmer and nostalgia for the alleged social solidarity of the village. Industrialisation and the growth of the labour movement also increased class awareness as a constituent part of Britishness.

It has been argued that Britain's imperial expansion prompted a racialisation of Britishness and Englishness. An alleged racial superiority was used by European elites to justify colonisation. Significantly, too, British national identity was established as an inclusive allegiance to the crown and not as residence in the land, so that it would encompass all subjects of the Empire (McCrone, 1997). Loss of Empire, too, changed British identity, as the nation could no longer be united by pride in its imperial history. British nationalism, now associated with oppression and colonialism, was shunned and ignored, becoming a niche for right-wing extremists.

The two world wars forged the modern British state. State nationalism promoted the economic and political interests of the modern state and demanded loyalty from its citizens, often to the point of fighting for king and country. National consciousness, as bestowed by the state, became a powerful tool in exacting this obedience (McCrone, 1997).

The 20th century also saw a resurgence of Welsh and Scottish nationalisms and a strengthening of Welsh and Scottish identity, sometimes at the expense of Britishness. As the British Empire declined, the constituent nations began to stir, with the formation of Plaid Cymru and the Scottish National Party in 1925 and 1934, respectively. Stone and Muir (2007) argue that Britishness has been nothing more than secondary identity for the Scottish and Welsh from as far back as the 1970s, and has been consistently decreasing in significance since. The publicity given to the new Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly may also have increased articulation of Scottish and Welsh identities. The popularity of alternative forms of national identity may also be the result of a fading sense of Britishness (McCrone, 1997).

From the mid-1990s, concerns about the threat posed by the far-right were expressed by a number of politicians, partly prompted by a growth in the far-right vote in continental Europe. An alleged crisis in Britishness among white working class men was cited as a risk factor in the growth of right-wing extremism (Blunkett, 2005). The call for a renewal of national identity grew after the 11 September atrocities and the Oldham and Bradford disturbances of 2001: government argued that a shared sense of Britishness and attachments to the UK would act to prevent the growth of religious extremism (Khan, 2007).

Much of the debate around the renewal of Britishness distinguishes between two very different forms of national allegiance: ethnic and civic. Ethnic nationalism promotes an idea of biological ancestry that links an individual to the nation and its customs and traditions. Obviously immigration threatens a model of Britishness based on ethnicity and common ancestry.

Civic nationalism stresses a belonging to the nation on the basis of citizenship rights, shared political values, common civic institutions and a shared language (Fenton, 2007). Gordon Brown, among others, has called for a civic Britishness, not based on 'blood, race and territory' but based on specific values such as individual liberty anchored in a sense of duty and an intrinsic commitment to tolerance and social justice.

“... the question is essentially whether our national identity is defined by values we share in common or just by race and ethnicity – a definition that would leave our country at risk of relapsing into a wrongheaded ‘cricket test’ of loyalty” (Brown, 2006).

Other political figures have supported the call for a values-based national identity. Michael Wills MP has argued that Britishness should be seen as creativity built on tolerance, openness and adaptability, work and self-improvement, strong communities and an outward-looking approach (Wills, 2002).

More recently, a number of Labour politicians have adopted the rhetoric of ‘contractual citizenship’. This contract establishes citizenship based not only on individual rights but also on mutual obligations to the nation and community. Government moved to ensure that the process of British naturalisation involved an obligation to learn English. The Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 provided the legal basis for a citizenship test, to be taken by applicants for British citizenship, and a citizenship ceremony involving an oath of allegiance to queen and country. The first citizenship ceremonies were held in 2004. There has been no research on people’s experiences of the citizenship ceremony and the effects of the new citizens’ sense of belonging. Nevertheless, they appear to be popular ceremonies. Since 2005, applicants for British nationality have had to pass a 45-minute test that examines their knowledge of British society, or attend an ESOL course that uses citizenship education materials. In 2007, this requirement was extended to applications for indefinite leave to remain.

Goodhart (2006) also writes about contractual citizenship. He argues that a sense of shared British identity should be underpinned by a contract of national citizenship formed both by ‘horizontal’ solidarity between citizens (social contract) and a ‘vertical’ relationship between the citizen and the state (political contract). Liam Byrne MP, Home Office Minister of State for Borders and Immigration, has suggested that applicants for British naturalisation should undertake a period of community service (Kelly and Byrne, 2007).

Others have called for the debate around Britishness to move away from the abstract notions of identity and focus more on its practical application. They have referred to Britishness as an active, participatory identity, rather than simply an emotional bond. Trevor Phillips has also spoken of a form of Britishness rooted in the practical application of shared values, which should

act as a guide to our behaviour, enabling us to develop the civic skills we need to live in an increasingly diverse society^{xxx}. Other writers have stressed that a renewed Britishness needs to focus on political and community engagement (Breslin, 2007).

Debates about Britishness have attracted many critics – when referring to *British* values, one implies that only the British hold these values (Winder, 2007). Cohen (2000), among others, argues that there is no ‘essential Britishness’ and that any attempt to define it in terms of characteristics or values resorts to irrelevant mythologies and imagined communities. Despite statements stressing inclusive interpretations of Britishness, the reality of everyday life presents a different picture – the widespread belief that Britishness is the prerogative of white English people, with the ‘*subtle and everyday ‘policing’ of the boundaries of Britishness by white people*’ (ETHNOS, 2006: 5).

Key findings

As noted in the previous chapter, the majority of our interviewees felt British in some way. Some 26 interviewees stated that they felt British or English, or held diasporic or dual identities which incorporated Britishness. However, three interviewees who held British passports stated that they did not feel British in any respect. Other findings are given below.

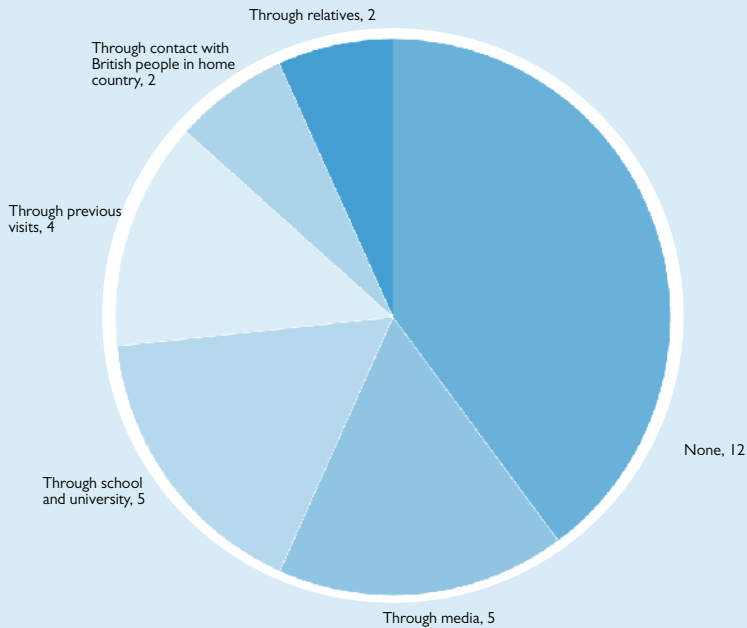
- Just over half of those we interviewed had some prior knowledge of the UK. That it was peaceful and secure was a view held by most interviewees. Other prior knowledge concerned human rights, the welfare safety net, the climate, standard of living, culture and customs.
- Interviewees’ ideas about Britishness were personal and often idiosyncratic. However four ideas about Britishness predominated: values and the possession of rights, the formal possession of documents, English ethnicity and, conversely, multiculturalism.
- Questions about Britishness sometimes provoked a sense of not belonging among interviewees.

Refugees’ prior knowledge of UK

We asked interviewees what they knew of the UK before they came, and how life in the UK was different from what they expected. As mentioned just 18 of our sample of 30 interviewees had some prior knowledge of the UK before

arrival. This knowledge was gained in a number of ways – through previous visits, contact with relatives or other British persons, formal teaching in school or university or through the media (see Figure Seven). The knowledge that the UK was safe and peaceful was a view held by many interviewees. Other prior knowledge concerned information about human rights, the welfare safety net, the climate, standard of living, culture and customs. For three interviewees, their main knowledge of the UK comprised information about Premiership football.

Figure Seven: Knowledge of Britain prior to migration



Source: Author interviews

N=30

Here V, from Uganda, tells of his prior knowledge of the UK.

“I had a lot of theories... knowledge from people who had travelled here and we had a number of Europeans from Britain coming to Uganda and they were telling us a lot. I was really admiring the type of country it is, because

compared to my country, the way I was hearing it was a nice place. Also when I would look at the photos in the newspapers or books the picture I've got of Britain was very, very good.

“What I knew about Britain was mostly about the education, because the university I went to is one of the British-founded universities, it's called the Makerere University and there we had some of the British we were studying with and they would tell us about the education here. We were all, us students, we were all wondering whether one day we could come to see the education in the UK. Also the style of life, the facilities, the transport, we are hearing about the transport, about the tubes, the planes, I had never been in a plane myself. And also about the weather, they were telling us about the weather, you have summer, you have winter. And back in Uganda we have only one (season), almost one or two types of weather, it is either shining as it is now, or raining. We never, never had any, any winter, never. So when we heard about the winter and we would see the snow on the internet, I say 'my goodness, I wish I could even see the snow, or touch it' and when I came here it was different.”

O, from Afghanistan, was a child when he arrived in the UK, having previously lived in Austria.

“The only ideas I had about England was actually from going to school in Austria, where studying English was a major subject and we had, for example we had the English textbooks, where you have all the central London sights – Big Ben. And you sort of get this, you get this feeling or you imagine that it will be quite different to anywhere else, I mean I've seen most of Europe and I've travelled quite a bit, but I still expected England to be quite different.”

The information that BB, from Afghanistan, received about life in the UK turned out to be incorrect.

“A lot of extremists say propaganda about England. You

cannot perform your religion, you cannot wear a scarf, but that is not true. Other people, they say, if you go to England, everything is available, but also that is not true.”

Most interviewees expected peace and security, but were surprised at the hostile reception they received, as well as the level of violence in their neighbourhoods. Here Q, who experienced much racial harassment, tells of how the UK did not meet his expectations.

“The British people are presented as being very hospitable people in the news, but in reality this is different. These people normally come as tourists in Kenya and you see how they are (laughter), but the people that come as tourists in Kenya are not the people I face in Thurrock. So it was a big, big shock the contrast of the people coming from the same country but being very different.”

Y from Iran stated:

“I used to think the UK is the same as America because in my country the people think that the English, England and the USA is the same. But when I came to here, sorry about that, it’s not same as America, it’s the same as my country because everywhere is very dirty and the people is not very close to refugees, same as my country. Because the Afghan people came to my country, the Iranian people are not happy to them, same as you to us. We come to here and lots of the people is not happy to refugees.”

Most research about refugees’ prior knowledge of their countries of asylum has been in the context of research about social networks in the choice of country of asylum, and in success in the asylum determination process (Koser, 1997; Koser and Pinkerton, 2002). It has not examined the impact of prior knowledge on the integration of refugees in countries of first asylum. Our interviews led us to conclude that interviewees had little realistic information about the UK that would be useful on an everyday basis. However, the prior knowledge held by refugees reinforced their understanding of British values, which we explore later.

Understandings of Britishness

As noted above, Britishness and what constitutes it has inspired endless debate. Our interviewees also had a great deal to say about Britishness, both when directly questioned about it, as well as in responses to other questions.

For some, questions about Britishness were resented – asking about home and Britishness implied that they did not belong. A, from Hungary, had lived in the UK for 50 years.

“People ask me ‘Do you like it here?’ and ‘Do you think of going back?’ and I say ‘I’ve lived here half a century!’. But those well meant questions still sometimes remind you that you’re regarded as a foreigner.”

The resentment felt by some interviewees when debating Britishness begs caution. Ministers and social commentators, whose aim is to promote progressive and inclusive notions of Britishness might, in some cases, have the opposite effect. Newcomers may feel excluded by these deliberations. If the government wishes to renew Britishness, it needs to consider how it communicates its ideas.

Britishness was a personal and multi-faceted condition for most interviewees. Here we reproduce part of the account given by S, from Somalia, where he debates what Britishness means and how he fits into ideas about Britishness.

“I know that I’m not British... I can get a passport, I can be accepted in this country but I’m still not British. It’s like, I don’t know what makes people British, coming here, or being born here or being raised here or I don’t really know. Basically if you look at British history everybody at one time came to this country. I mean everyone came to, migrated from some other country... It’s like America, everybody in America is from different countries and became Americans, so I’m British like that. But even if I was born here, I don’t think I would feel, like, British... because, I don’t know what makes people British. Is it speaking the language? I don’t know.

“Fighting wars, does that make you British? Joining or fighting for the government does that make you British? I don’t know.

“Everybody has the freedom to believe what they want, so if I can believe what I want, so then I believe I’m not British. I’m from Somalia. In order to be Somalian, you know, or what makes us Somalians is a sense of nationalism, you know, you love your country. This is your country, you were born here, your family were born here, you’ve been here for a few hundred years, you’re proud of what your people your ancestors accomplished.

“My ancestors never lived here so I can’t say I’m proud of what they’ve done or the wars being fought, how they fought for me, they died for me... But OK, I’m half British because my grandfather fought for them and... so for the sacrifice he made I feel like I’m part of this system, you can call British.

“To some point I think I am British because a lot of my life experiences are based on being here. So, and being around British people, or people who call themselves British or think they’re British, to some point, yes, I am British. I’m not saying I’m not British at all, I am British, I mean I’ve got a British passport and that make me some part of British, because if I go to another countries and I show the passport, they can see me and say, you’re not British because a British person is defined in some way. But I don’t know, even other people they are surprised, they’re like British? British?

“I don’t really know what is being British, I wish I knew... and I think a lot of people are like that, I mean even the people who call themselves British, you know, who got to the Olympics and who take the flag up and say we’re British, you know, they’re just a group of people and that makes them British you know, because they call themselves British. But there’s nothing that defines them, you know. Maybe it’s the history, you know, that defines who they are

you know, and I don't have any history here, only about seven years I've been here."

S started to feel a bit British when he studied British history at school.

"What makes me more British is I know about British history, not all of it but a little bit, you know, about World War I and World War II... I am British somehow, somehow, but not fully... When I feel more British is when someone came to this country and I'm like helping them... If I'm helping some refugee and I feel more British, you know, I'm British. So yeah, there's some part of me that says I'm British but there's a large part of me that says, no way."

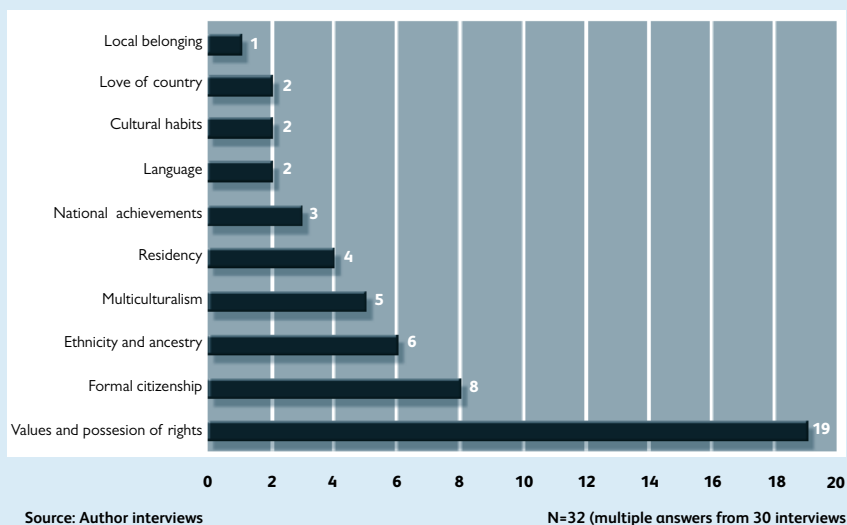
He concluded his interview by stating:

"Is it really important if I'm British or not, or if I become British or if they accept me as British? I mean, is it really like, do I have to be British?... I think that it doesn't matter whether I'm British or not, all that matters is that I'm a human being... and I think that human beings, and that's all human beings, you're all supposed to be treated right, so and I think that that's what supposed to be what defines Britishness. Then when that is defined as Britishness, as a people who treat each other good, who share their experiences and their differences, make it one, and that become Britishness."

We analysed our interviewees' ideas about what constituted Britishness, with their responses given below. Four ideas about Britishness predominated: values and the possession of rights, the formal possession of documents, ancestry and, conversely, multiculturalism. Our results are represented in Figure Eight, overleaf.

Our results can be compared with a research study undertaken in 2005 for the Commission for Racial Equality, now part of the Commission for Equality and Human Rights (ETHNOS, 2005). This study interviewed a large sample of British residents and identified eight dimensions to their understandings of Britishness, namely:

Figure Eight: Reasons for choice of UK as a destination



- geography and landscape – some articulations of Britishness have been marked by an experience that is both traditional and rural, for example, John Major’s paraphrasing of Orwell: *“long shadows on county grounds, warm beer, invincible green suburbs, dog lovers and pools fillers... old maids bicycling to holy communion through the morning mist.”*^{xxxi}
- people – although the research identified contradictory views. As with our research, notions of Britishness comprised identification with the monocultural English or the multicultural nation
- national symbols such as the Union Flag and the monarchy
- shared values – for example the protection of human rights and freedoms, respect for the rule of law, fairness, tolerance and respect for others
- cultural habits – for example queuing, cricket, food and drink
- formal citizenship
- the English language

- achievements—including technological, cultural and sporting achievements (ETHNOS, 2005).

Our interviewees placed greater emphasis on values and rights and less emphasis on national symbols, land and landscape as components of Britishness. In particular, many respondents stressed rights. Pre-migration experiences of persecution and armed conflict may have given interviewees a greater appreciation of progressive values and rights, thus accounting for the dominance in their notions of Britishness. With one exception, interviewees resided in cities and many recent arrivals also had little opportunity for travel in the UK. Their urban abode and lack of travel may account for the lack of emphasis placed on land and landscape as components of Britishness.

Values and rights

Those who identified values and rights as a component of Britishness used terms such as security, tolerance, freedom, freedom of expression, human rights, equal opportunities, absence of discrimination, honesty, absence of corruption, liberal values, the rule of law and the welfare state. Below we reproduce a selection of replies to our question ‘what is Britishness?’

“The first thing is freedom, and they treat people on the same level; there’s no discrimination... the way the country is run is good.”

“To me, being British is also for knowing and having your rights.”

“I am happy and proud of the country that allowed me to stay, supported me and gave me part of my education.”

“I like the equality, everyone has rights and everyone can go out of the house.”

“In this country you’ve got a lot of freedom and education and a lot of activities – it’s different from my country.”

“I like your peace, your rights, your right to say anything you want, and no-one can tell you to do things you don’t want to do. There is peace and you always feel you have freedom. That is Britishness.”

“Freedom... we have the Islamic republic and we have to put some clothes on, but in the UK people are free.”

“Ah, like I said before, equal rights. For me this is crucial, equal rights, just giving opportunity to everyone, being able to progress in your career for example, without any discrimination due to age, gender, race, whatever... So for me I think that’s a very, it’s a very important part of the culture here, or Britishness, so I think that should be maintained as well.”

Others have researched ‘British’ values, ‘the stiff upper lip type thing’, with a report for the Commission for Racial Equality (ETHNOS, 2005) identifying ‘politeness’, ‘manners’ and ‘a sense of ambition’ as core British values. Notions of values held by our interviewees were generally much more progressive than those identified in the ETHNOS study.

Others have criticised the emphasis placed on values in debates about social cohesion and the renewal of citizenship. As noted, talk of *British* values can imply that others do not possess them. Freedom of speech and equality before the law, for example, are not unique to the UK. A number of writers, too, have suggested that values are simply too abstract to inspire a sense of common belonging between citizens (Muir, 2007).

Britishness as the possession of documents

Another dominant view about Britishness held by the interviewees comprised formal citizenship and the formal possession of documents. J, from Somalia, stated:

“Do I feel British? I think through the passport.”

That Britishness was coterminous with the formal possession of documents challenges attempts to make it a more active, participatory condition (Breslin, 2007). But for refugees, naturalisation assumes particular importance and the association of Britishness with documentation may be understandable. With recent experiences of fear and fear of return, a British passport represents security. As L, from Afghanistan, stated:

“I applied for the passport for freedom and security. When you are a refugee you cannot go anywhere, but when I

have my passport, I can see my family (in Austria). When we were refugees we were scared they might send us back, so we decided to apply for a British passport.”

Ethnic ancestry versus multiculturalism

Our research, as with other recent research, identified contradictory views about ethnicity and Britishness (ETHNOS, 2005). Notions of Britishness comprised an identification with monocultural Englishness **or** with a multicultural nation. C, from Czechoslovakia, held the former view and stated:

“I am European – I am British but I find it difficult to take it... I still think that to be British you actually have to be Scottish, English or Welsh or Irish. I was naturalised so I was given a gift to be British. It’s a gift that maybe you can’t take from me... I’m very grateful for the European Union it gives me a better sense of belonging.”

Conversely, K, from Eritrea, and Z, from Ethiopia, saw Britishness as comprising a multicultural condition, stating:

“I like that it is a multicultural system. You don’t feel left out. People who have visited other places say Britain is the best multicultural place. When I go to Italy I feel foreign but when I am in England I feel part of it because there are people like me black, white, Indian, everything is there so you don’t feel left out. That is what I like about Britain and Britishness.”

“What I like about it is the multiculturalism, so many people from all over the world, they come here. They live together. I never feel I am a refugee or a foreigner sometimes. I find so many different people, that is what I like about this country. And also people they have a right to work, a right to education. Education is free, that is very nice. Yes, I like the education system in this country and also multi-religion. I never feel I am out of my country in Sheffield.”

The persistent identification of Britishness by some as comprising solely English, Scottish or Welsh ancestry presents challenges to those who wish to renew notions of Britishness. Arguably, government needs to consider how it might communicate more progressive notions of Britishness and build on commitments to multiculturalism.

The ‘discongruity of belonging’

Our research showed us that most of those we interviewed felt British to some extent. Interviewees’ ideas about Britishness were personal and often idiosyncratic. Most of our interviewees felt British, usually because they appreciated the freedom and security afforded to them in the UK. Britishness was not fostered by local integration, particularly in the labour market, nor a sense of neighbourhood belonging. However, refugees appeared to understand Britishness at a national level, through their appreciation of freedom, peace and human rights, caused by their pre-migration experiences of war and persecution. We termed this contradictory state a ‘*discongruity of belonging*’.

This ‘discongruity of belonging’ was obvious when interviewees talked about their likes and dislikes about Britain. When asked what she liked about life in the UK, F said she appreciated freedom, peace, the welfare safety net for the poor and educational opportunities for young people. Soon afterwards she talked about poor parenting, teenage violence and materialism, all of which she had experienced in her locality. She had been attacked twice in her neighbourhood.

“You need to talk more to young people. Seems that they don’t talk enough to the young people. They just leave them alone to do what they like, far away from parents. The far away they get from parents, the more they want to do something bad. Parents need to get to know their children. Here people don’t get to know their children, people always think other things more important.

Children have too much material. But I don’t think they give them love. You have to love them from the day they are born. But people always chasing something, often they don’t know what they are chasing. Material things they come and go, but your children are there all the time. Today

you can have big things, tomorrow you have nothing, but your children are always with you.

“... In Vietnam people die in wars, but here people die for nothing, stabbings, gun crime. There are no wars, why die unnecessary?”

Our findings contrast with those of Fenton (2007) and Stone and Muir (2007) which suggest that black and ethnic minority people tend to identify more strongly with their local area than the general public and a sense of local belonging is stronger than identification with the UK. However, refugees are a population whose life experiences are different from UK-born black and minority ethnic populations. Some of them have been political activists in their home countries and, as noted, many have been deprived of their human rights. This means that refugees may well have stronger national attachments to the human rights that have been afforded to them.

Among our interviewees, we witnessed a strong sense of shared national values, but little sense of local belonging. We have argued that one component of integration is the achievement of contentment and happiness. Negative local social interactions and workplace discrimination can only lead to feelings of betrayal, alienation and unhappiness – a lack of integration. We, therefore, argue for public policy interventions that promote positive local social interactions, and challenge workplace discrimination.

Additionally, it is in our localities that belonging and Britishness are articulated and negotiated. Local integration takes place in the workplace. Furthermore, it is relationships made at the local level that bind diverse communities. If Britishness is to be a meaningful and progressive condition, it needs to be fostered both at the grass roots and at the national level. Our research showed that public policy interventions need to focus on workplace integration and on nurturing a sense of local belonging.

Chapter Eleven

Conclusions and recommendations

We interviewed 30 very different people, at different stages in the process of integration in the UK. Interviewees had arrived between 1956 and 2006 and came from 15 different countries. Eleven of our interviewees arrived in the UK as children.

These lengthy interviews furnished us with very detailed information about refugee integration – data that generally does not come out of questionnaire research. The interviewees present their own ideas about their integration and journey to citizenship – voices which are missing from most writing about integration.

There are, of course, limits to what can be said based on such a small sample of refugees. However, by drawing out common themes from interviews, triangulating our findings with other quantitative and qualitative research about refugees, we are confident that the findings presented in this research are indicative of the experiences of many more refugees than the 30 interviewed by us.

We set out to answer a number of questions that relate to refugees' integration and their Britishness, namely:

- how did interviewees understand their own integration?
- what factors, pre-arrival and after arrival in the UK, aided or hindered interviewees' integration?
- where did interviewees feel that they 'belonged' and where did they feel home was located?
- how did interviewees define Britishness and what factors influenced their understanding of Britishness?

Interviewees defined their integration in terms of their labour market success, their social interactions and their personal happiness. Many interviewees also felt that the responsibility for social integration was placed on refugees, but the problem lay with the majority community who were unwelcoming.

Using the feedback of interviewees, as well as literature on refugee integration, we have come up with a definition of integration that comprises six facets, namely:

- psycho-social **contentment**: happiness, fulfilment, a sense of security, the absence of anxiety and feelings of welcome and belonging
- **interaction** between members of a household and the wider society
- **participation** in civil society institutions, in public institutions, the workplace and in political life
- **equality** of access, for example to the labour market, housing, education, healthcare and social welfare. Equality of treatment within the workplace and public institutions, as well as progress towards equality of outcome within education and employment
- **respect** for the rule of law and the liberal values that underpin society
- the possession of civil, political and social **rights**.

We believe that integration enshrines the relationship between the individual and their household **and** wider society. It is a process and condition that applies to every member of society, not just migrant or minority households.

Although our definition of integration has many similarities to those advanced by the Home Office *inter alia*, there are some key differences. Our research findings suggest that integration needs to be conceptualised as occurring at a household as well as individual level. Secondly, we believe that social contentment should comprise a facet of the process and outcome of integration.

Using our definition of integration outlined in Chapter One, all but two of our interviewees emerged as experiencing some degree of integration. However, many of our respondents did not experience local social interactions in their neighbourhood. Indeed some interviewees experienced outright hostility. Neither did many interviewees experience equality in their labour market or educational experiences. Almost all recent arrivals were underemployed, working in jobs where their qualifications were not fully utilised. Many of those who had successful careers had also spent long periods of time in low-skilled jobs.

A number of diverse factors impeded refugees' integration, including:

- an interrupted prior education in the home country or in transit to the UK
- initial housing mobility in the UK
- difficulties accessing English language support
- inappropriate careers advice.

More positively, we were able to identify a number of factors that aided refugees' integration, including:

- rapid asylum decisions
- English language fluency
- secure housing
- tolerance
- the long-term support of a professional, such as a lecturer or teacher
- opportunities to volunteer.

The built environment—housing design—and the existence of soft infrastructure such as parks, sports and community facilities influenced neighbourhood social integration.

We found rather contradictory evidence in relation to the role that social networks played in refugees' integration. In most cases, family and friends made the initial weeks less stressful for refugees. However, in a few cases the actions of some family members or friends impeded the eventual integration of refugees.

Home and Britishness

Half of all respondents considered the UK to be their primary home. Length of residence in the UK and having UK-born children were factors that promoted a primary attachment to the UK. Although most interviewees felt that they 'belonged' in the UK, this feeling did not extend to interviewees' neighbourhoods. Few interviewees professed local identities, although some did articulate regional identities such as being a 'Londoner.' We concluded that this absence of local identity was evidence of a lack of local social integration.

The unfriendliness of neighbours and hostile social interactions in their neighbourhood prevented most interviewees feeling that they 'belonged' in their locality. Some 26 interviewees said that they felt British or English, or held diasporic or dual identities which incorporated Britishness, for example, as a British Somali.

While ideas of what it meant to be British varied from individual to individual, the most frequently valued element of being British was the freedom and security afforded to them in the UK. One of the most important conclusions from our research is that refugees experienced what we term a '*discongruity of belonging*'. Britishness was not fostered by local integration in the workplace and immediate neighbourhood, but was experienced nationally, through refugees' appreciation of freedom and peace.

Yet interactions in our localities are critical for developing a sense of belonging and Britishness. Furthermore, it is relationships made at the local level that bind diverse communities. If Britishness is to be a meaningful and progressive condition, it needs to be fostered both at the grass roots and at the national level. Our research points to a range of public policy interventions that could promote integration and nurture a sense of local belonging among Britain's refugees. Some of these recommendations below are specific and relate, for example, to aspects of education or employment policy. Other recommendations are more general.

Asylum policy

Our research showed that rapid determination of asylum applications promoted early integration. Conversely, the time-limited settlement afforded to those who have gained refugee status since 2005 impacted on career choices and acted as a barrier to integration. We recommend:

- **the Home Office should reconsider the present five year time limit placed on refugee status – giving people permanent residency in the UK might promote earlier integration**
- **the Home Office should implement a regularisation programme for asylum legacy cases from zones of conflict such as southern Somalia. This group of people should be given leave to remain in the UK, to facilitate their integration.**

Integration policy

Our research showed that integration takes place at household and individual level and that decisions taken by one member of a household may affect the integration of other members. Many interviewees also felt that the responsibility for social integration was placed on refugees, but the problem lay with the majority community who were unfriendly and did not integrate. We recommend:

- **government and refugee organisations should acknowledge the familial and inter-generational aspects of integration. This could be achieved by measures such as including all members of a refugee's family in the SUNRISE interview and integration plan**
- **central and local government, as well as refugee organisations, need to better communicate the two-way nature of integration to the whole UK population.**

Adult education and training

Our research shows that most refugees arrive in the UK speaking little or no English. We recommend:

- **there should be a cross-departmental government review on current adult ESOL provision and future ESOL needs. This review should consider levels of funding for ESOL, as well as funding mechanisms**
- **government should maintain some contingency funds for ESOL to ensure that students who arrive outside funding allocation cycles can access English language support at the soonest opportunity.**

Employment

Our research shows that many refugees face unemployment and underemployment. Interviewees felt they faced much discrimination in job-seeking. We recommend:

- **government, the new Commission for Equality and Human Rights, trade unions, employers, and migrant and equality organisations should collaborate on public relations campaigns to tackle widespread prejudice about the employability of refugees (and other migrants). This should build on and extend existing work undertaken by the Employability Forum, as well as sector-based initiatives**
- **government, regional development agencies, refugee organisations and employers should work together to increase the number of work experience placements for refugees.**

Children's services

Our research showed that those who arrived as children experienced much less educational success than adult arrivals – few of them passed GCSE examinations or other Level Two qualifications on their first attempt. Many of the child arrivals had to retake courses in further education colleges. We recommend:

- **central government should recognise that increased international migration to the UK means that increased funding for English as an Additional Language teaching is needed**
- **the funding formula for English as an Additional Language teaching should recognise the educational needs of older and more vulnerable refugee children, such as those who have received little or no prior education**
- **central government should encourage local authorities to develop intensive induction programmes for young refugees and migrants who have received little or no prior education before arrival in the UK**
- **the funding mechanism for English as an Additional Language teaching needs to better respond to the unpredictable nature of refugee migration, as well as high levels of pupil mobility in the UK**

- **government should review the current qualifications system from the perspective of young refugees, especially those who arrive in the UK late in their educational careers, or with little prior education. Such a review should aim to ensure that young refugees leave school with qualifications and clear progression pathways**
- **government should issue practice guidance on post-16 education of young refugees and commission research on the post-16 educational experiences of young refugees**
- **tackling the causes and consequences of pupil mobility among disadvantaged children should become a priority of central government.**

Housing

Our research showed that secure housing promoted early integration and protracted homelessness limited integration. Additionally, factors such as building design and soft infrastructure such as parks and leisure centres affected refugees' social integration. We recommend:

- **government and other research funders should commission an examination of hidden homelessness among refugee communities**
- **central government should provide guidance so that local authorities, commercial developers, the Housing Corporation and Registered Social Landlords ensure that building design promotes social cohesion**
- **central and local government should give greater consideration to the role of public space in promoting social cohesion. Local authority planning departments and relevant Registered Social Landlords should always be included in discussion about social cohesion strategies**
- **local authorities should ensure that where their housing is transferred out of the public sector, new management organisations have clear responsibility for social cohesion and**

community development

- **central government must provide a lead and ensure that the new housing development in Growth Areas makes provision for soft infrastructure, such as parks and sports and leisure centres.**

Local social cohesion and community safety

Our research showed that two thirds of our interviewees had experienced racial harassment in their neighbourhoods. Most of those we interviewed did not know or had never spoken to their neighbours and did not feel any attachment to their locality. We recommend:

- **refugees need to be better able to seek redress for racially aggravated crime. Police authorities should set up third party reporting mechanisms, as well as conducting outreach work with refugee communities where conventional reporting mechanisms do not work**
- **local authorities, supported by other experts, should organise in-service professional development for teachers, youth workers, arts educators and other key personnel, in order to develop their skills in teaching controversial issues such as migration, and in conflict resolution**
- **arts, cultural and sports funding, such as monies administered by the Arts Council, should be better directed towards initiatives that bring communities together, particularly in areas experiencing conflict**
- **refugee organisations and other relevant agencies need to consider how they can better communicate pro-refugee and pro-diversity messages. Grant-making trusts might consider funding some of the larger local refugee groups, to enable them to carry out public education and media work in their locality.**

Volunteering and active citizenship

Our research showed high levels of volunteering among refugees. This activity was a tool for integration as it helped develop language skills, as well as knowledge of UK society. We recommend:

- **government and refugee organisations should work together to develop national volunteering strategies for refugees. Such a strategy would:**
 - 1) **communicate to UK society the high level of active citizenship among refugees**
 - 2) **promote a wider range of organisations to include refugees and asylum seekers as volunteers**
 - 3) **raise awareness about the aspirations of refugee volunteers to ensure that volunteering can contribute to meeting these aspirations**
 - 4) **disseminate good practice in relation to refugee volunteering and volunteer management, such as practices adopted by Refugee Support**

- **more research on volunteering activity among refugees should be undertaken, drawing from a larger and perhaps random sample of refugees.**

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- i. See 'The future of Britishness', Gordon Brown's keynote address to the Fabian Society, 14 January 2006 (Brown, 2006) and *A Common Place* by Ruth Kelly and Liam Byrne (Kelly and Byrne, 2007).
- ii. ILR – Indefinite Leave to Remain, an immigration status that confers the right of permanent residency in UK.
- iii. BCAR was renamed the British Refugee Council in 1981, after it merged with the Standing Conference on Refugees.
- iv. The Bosnia Programme was announced on the same day as the UK imposed a visa requirement on Bosnian nationals. While the Programme enabled some vulnerable people to reach safety, the visa requirement prevented many more from reaching the UK.
- v. Local Government Association press release 11.03.97
- vi. Home Office press release 25.03.04.
- vii. Three programmes are in operation: the Gateway Protection Programme, the Mandate Refugee Programme and the Ten or More Plan.
- viii. In January 2003 Government enacted Section 55 of Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002, rendering asylum applicants who failed to lodge an application within a three-day period ineligible for NASS support. Hundreds of people were left destitute and more were obliged to work illegally (Greater London Authority, 2004). After an extensive campaign, the Courts reversed this decision in June 2004 under Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights, (*Court of Appeal SSHD vs. Limbuela* 21 May 2004).
- ix. An example of this approach is shown in *Shoah*, Claude Lanzmann's 1985 film of testimonies of Holocaust survivors.
- x. Post-traumatic stress disorder is a diagnosis encompassing:
 - symptoms of intrusion, such as nightmares, flashbacks and intrusive thoughts
 - symptoms of constriction and avoidance, such as efforts to avoid places or activities that are reminiscent of the trauma, and
 - symptoms of increased arousal such as poor concentration or insomnia (American Psychiatric Association, 1994; Bracken, 1998).

Increasingly, however, psychological treatments for PTSD, as well as the construction of PTSD itself, have become contested (see, for example, Young, 1995; Bracken, 1998; Richman, 1998; Summerfield,

- 1998, 2000).
- xi. There are a small number of studies that suggest that refugee children *do not* experience increased long-term psychiatric morbidity compared with other urban child populations (Allodi, 1989; Munroe-Blum *et al*, 1989; Rousseau and Drapeau, 2003).
 - xii. See definitions in the glossary at the end of the book.
 - xiii. IOM helps migrants return to their home countries.
 - xiv. Based on Home Office asylum statistics.
 - xv. Asylum seekers who were not allowed to work received a welfare benefit called Income Support until 1996, when in-country applicants and appellants lost their right to this benefit. All asylum seekers lost their right to income support in 2000, when the National Asylum Support Service became responsible for their support and accommodation.
 - xvi. This is equivalent of a GCSE grade A*-C standard.
 - xvii. Section 4 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 provides support for refused asylum seekers who cannot be returned to their home country – a group known as ‘hard cases’.
 - xviii. Letter by the National Association of Teachers of Adult and Community Languages to the *Times Education Supplement*, 13 April 2007.
 - xix. English as an Additional Language (EAL) is the accepted terminology use in schools in the UK, whereas in post-16 settings, such as colleges of further education, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) is the accepted term.
 - xx. This fund is set to end in April 2008, with no successor fund announced by the Department for Education and Skills.
 - xxi. Levels refer to the National Qualifications Framework. Level Two courses are the equivalents of GCSE passes at grades A*-C. Level Three courses are the equivalent of A levels.
 - xxii. See Department for Education and Skills (2004).
 - xxiii. From Census data.
 - xxiv. See, for example, Berry *et al* (1987), Harrell-Bond and Voutira (1992), Weiner (1996), Bourhis *et al* (1997), Zetter *et al* (2002), Ager and Strang (2004), Crisp (2004), Atfield and O’Toole (2006) and Spencer (2006).
 - xxv. Forum theatre methodology was used – see Augusto Boal’s *Theatre of the Oppressed* (Boal, 1979).
 - xxvi. See Brown (2006) and Kelly and Byrne (2007).
 - xxvii. *Ibid*.
 - xxviii. Oxford House is a community centre where many Somali organisations have offices.
 - xxix. Now part of the Commission for Equality and Human Rights.
 - xxx. See interview on *Jonathan Dimbleby Programme*, ITV, 1 March 2006.

Please note
the identities of all the interviewees in this
document have been withheld and all images
of people are generic.

www.refugeesupport.org.uk

If you would like any more information regarding
this report, please email Nura Venet, Research
Assistant at nura.venet@mst-online.org.uk



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