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Managing the Transition to a New Life: A Longitudinal Study
of Learning Processes and Identity (Re)formation among
Refugees in the UK.

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October 2010

Thesis submitted as final part of the Doctor of Education, University of Sussex.

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been, and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another university for the award of any other degree.

Signed

Summary of Thesis

University of Sussex

Linda Morrice, Doctor of Education

Managing the Transition to a New Life: A Longitudinal Study of Learning Processes and Identity (Re) formation Among Refugees in the UK

Over the last two decades there have been dramatic increases in the movement of people around the globe. The UK, like other wealthy countries in the global north, has become the recipient of increasing numbers of refugees, many of whom are highly qualified and have professional backgrounds (Kirk 2004; Houghton and Morrice 2008). This thesis captures the experiences of refugees with professional and higher level qualifications as they seek to rebuild their lives in the UK. Rather than look at migration through more traditional lenses of assimilation and acculturation it instead links the experience of refugees with theories and processes of learning and identity formation. This offers a more nuanced and fine grain understanding and analysis of refugee experience.

The study is guided by two broad questions: firstly, how might individual biography shape and inform the strategies adopted by refugees in the UK, and secondly, what insight does learning (both informal and formal) offer to our understanding of the processes involved in transition to the UK. To address this I have adopted a longitudinal approach which follows five refugees over a four year period as they

move through the asylum system, negotiate a new social space and enter higher education. The narratives presented illuminate the hybridity of experience and indicate how each refugee has his or her own personal story which is linked to their unique biographical, cultural and social background. However, each narrative is lived within the broader social template of what it means to be a refugee in the UK in the first decade of the twenty first century, and how this template is negotiated, managed and sometimes subverted in different ways. These experiences cross cut and intersect with differences of ethnicity, of gender, of country of origin, faith and age.

I draw on Bourdieu's framework of capital, field and habitus as tools to apprehend and explore the processes underlying the narratives (1977; 1998; 1999). Becoming a refugee in the UK firmly placed participants into symbolic structures of inequality and disadvantage. They are structured and positioned through mechanisms of capital transformation and trading which mean that they rarely have opportunities to convert and trade up the capitals they possessed into symbolic capital, and educational and employment reward. The narratives presented depict the struggles of refugees to accrue and convert capital in order to claim a positive identity. It is also about the struggle to be recognised as having moral worth, to be respected and seen to be respectable (Skeggs 1997; Sayer 2005).

A broad range of learning processes are involved in managing transition. To capture the profundity and complexity of subjective construction and identity formation I suggest conceptualising learning as processes of 'becoming' and 'unbecoming'

(Biesta 2006; Hodkinson et al. 2007). From the disintegration and deconstruction of self which accompanies migration this research illuminates how participants learn to 'become', which in its broadest sense is learning how to rethink themselves in order to live with integrity and dignity in a new social space.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

...know that many personal troubles cannot be solved merely as troubles, but must be understood in terms of public issues...Know that the problems of social science, when adequately formulated, must include both troubles and issues, both biography and history, and the range of their intricate relations. Within that range the life of the individual and the making of society occur; and that within that range the sociological imagination has its chance to make a difference in the quality of human life in our times (Wright Mills 1959: 226).

This thesis aims to capture the experiences of refugees with professional or higher level qualifications as they seek to rebuild their lives in the UK. The dominant discourses around asylum issues, including the UK policy context and the widespread suspicion and hostility in the media, has been explored and documented in my Critical Analytical Study (CAS), a synopsis of which is included as Appendix 1. These narratives will not be reiterated in depth here. Instead this study places the life stories and experiences of refugees at the centre, and attempts to construct an alternative story, or stories, of what it means to become a refugee and to be compelled to re-establish ones life in a new and alien context. Rather than look at migration through the more traditional lenses of assimilation and acculturation, this study attempts to link the experience of refugees with theories and processes of learning and identity (re)formation. This will enable a more textured and fine grained understanding and analysis of the refugee experience than more traditional approaches.

The research is located in a particular historical moment. There have been dramatic

increases in the movement of people around the globe, both labour migration and refugees. The UK and other wealthy countries in the global north have become the recipients of increasing numbers of migrants, and controlling national borders has become a major preoccupation (Flynn 2005; Sales 2007; Somerville 2007). At the same time we have witnessed major terrorist attacks in Western cities and the ensuing rhetoric of a 'war on terror', which has given added momentum to ongoing debates around citizenship, social cohesion and multiculturalism (Somerville 2007; Wetherell et al. 2007; Zetter 2007). It is within this historical context that public perception, social discourses and policy responses to refugees are being shaped and determined, and which in turn shape and construct the experiences of those seeking asylum in the UK and their subjectivities.

It was noted that the label refugee is extremely powerful and emotive. It is not only a bureaucratic status used to define a category of people, their rights, entitlements and experience, but also defines the identity and subjectivity of those people (O'Neil and Spybey 2003). Overwhelmingly, the label is tied up with notions of victims, dependency, displacement, loss of homeland, loss of identity and lack of status. Uprooted from their former communities, culture, work and language, refugees are stripped of aspects of their previous identity. Bauman (2004) argues that refugees are the 'wasted lives' of globalization, stripped of all identities but one – that of being stateless, status less and functionless. He suggests that:

Refugees are human waste, with no useful function to play in the land of their arrival...and no intention or realistic prospect of being assimilated and incorporated into the new social body... (2004: 77).

Much of this negative association is reinforced and amplified by political and popular discourses which represent refugees as a 'burden' on an overstretched welfare system, as a security threat, and as a feared 'other', threatening national identity and social cohesion (Castles 2003; Lynn and Lea 2003; Yuval-Davis et al. 2005; Bloch and Schuster 2005).

The stories here are not those of passive victims, rather they are the stories of creative, resourceful people who are actively adapting to the new circumstances in which they are living. These are people managing to provide for themselves and their families both in the UK, and more often than not, family members left behind in the country they have come from. They show how refugees resist the limiting social positioning imposed by the asylum process, and how they struggle to negotiate the harsh conditions which the UK offers, to establish a legitimate and valued way of being and being seen. The stories illuminate some of the learning processes, the choices and pathways taken as they negotiate sustainable identities for themselves in a new social space.

I will briefly review the theoretical insights which were explored in my CAS and which will be used as a framework for exploring these narratives, before setting out the questions which have guided the research and the structure of this thesis.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Although the focus of this thesis is on individual lives and experiences, these cannot be understood without reference to wider social conditions or what Wright Mills refers to as ‘public issues’. How to conceptualise this interplay between structure and agency, between subjective experience and objective conditions, was explored in my CAS. I suggested that Bourdieu’s concepts of capital, field and habitus provide useful hermeneutic tools for apprehending the relationship between the social world and the individual (Bourdieu 1977; 1998; 1999). They enable us to conceptualise the individual and the social as being in a dialectical relationship so that social structures and cultures impinge on individual agency and are in turn reproduced through the social action of individuals.

Bourdieu identifies three types of capital – economic, social, cultural – which, given the right context and institutional conditions, can accumulate value and confer power on their holder, and in doing so reproduce relations of domination and dependence. In order for the different capitals to be used and to bring advantage to their possessor, they have to be perceived and recognised as legitimate. Only when they have been recognised can the different capitals be converted into symbolic capital, which brings with it symbolic power. The conversion of capital into symbolic capital is a collective undertaking and ‘cannot succeed without the complicity of the whole group: the work of denial which is the source of social alchemy is, like magic, a collective undertaking’ (Bourdieu 1977: 195). The collective denial, or misrecognition, of the

arbitrary nature of whatever symbolic capital is at stake, masks the vested interests of the most powerful in maintaining relations of inequality. Direct violence or overt discrimination can be dispensed with, the subordinate positioning of marginalised groups such as refugees is reproduced through structures of perception and appreciation which are presented as natural. The inferior positioning of refugees becomes obscured and instead distinction is legitimated under the guise of individual ability or virtue. Linguistic, cultural, ethnic and other forms of symbolic dominance are presented as natural, and their social origins - the fact that they are the product of the objective structure of society - remain hidden and go unrecognised. In this way inequalities and systematic disempowerment are engendered. The correspondence between the objective order and the subjective principles of organisation, the natural and the social world, appear as self-evident (Bourdieu 1977: 164). Bourdieu describes this consent of both dominating and dominated as constituting symbolic violence, 'the gentle, invisible form of violence, which is never recognised as such...' (1977: 192).

Bourdieu argues that there is an ontological collaboration between habitus and field; that is, they work together and inform each other and as such need to be conceptualised and analysed in tandem. In order to fully comprehend individual agency and the phenomenologies of individuals, they have to be located within an analysis of field. For refugees, an analysis of field would include an understanding of the extent to which refugees' social and cultural capital is valued and can be converted to bring economic or educational reward. An individual's ability to draw

upon these resources, and crucially to have them recognised as valuable, significantly impacts on the way in which they respond to and cope with migration and conditions in the UK. An analysis of field would also include an understanding of how policy and social discourses construct the category of refugee and assign particular social roles and identities, while denying others; and how these institutionalised mechanisms construct and curtail opportunities for the conversion and transformation of capitals.

In my CAS, I drew attention to the resonance between Bourdieu's notion of habitus formation and Alheit and Dausien's (2002) conceptualisation of education as a biographical process. According to Bourdieu (1977; 1998) habitus derives from our social background and upbringing so that when we are in a social world, or field, of which we are a product we do not feel or notice the tacit rules, norms and traditions which govern activity. There is an ontological collaboration between habitus and field, between the individual and the social world: not only is the body in the social world, but the social world is also in the body (Bourdieu 1977). For Bourdieu, habitus operates at an unconscious level until it encounters a new field of which it is not a product. At this point it becomes:

...a habitus divided against itself, in constant negotiation with itself and its ambivalence, and therefore doomed to a kind of duplication, to a double perception of self, to successive allegiances and multiple identities (1999: 511).

The embodied dispositions, expressed through ways of speaking, gesturing, standing, thinking and feeling, are no longer experienced in an unthinking or taken for granted

way. In a similar way, Alheit and Dausien suggest that throughout the life course we acquire a 'biographical stock of knowledge' which consists not only of experience and dispositions but also systems for appropriating the social world (Alheit and Dausien 2002). Much of this knowledge is pre-reflexive and is acquired implicitly or tacitly, it is taken for granted so that:

...we 'move' within our biographically acquired landscape of knowledge, without consciously reflecting on every step we take... In many cases, we do not turn to such elements in our biographical 'background knowledge' until we find ourselves stumbling, or at a crossroads... (Alheit and Dausien 2002: 15, cited in CAS: 53).

It is at these points that Alheit and Dausien suggest we explicitly process this pre-reflexive knowledge and that self education occurs. For both Alheit and Dausien and Bourdieu there are then moments of non-continuity with the familiar and taken for granted. It is these moments of dislocation from the past that suggest the possibility for learning and the generation of change. They also suggest periods of disorientation, great uncertainty, and a questioning of self.

One of the weaknesses of Bourdieu's concept of habitus is that it operates at an unconscious level, unless there is disjuncture between field and habitus and the individual is forced into self questioning and new identity formation. Reay (2004) argues that resistance and/or new awareness can occur during the formation of habitus and can be constitutive of the habitus. She summarises Sayer's (2005a) argument that Bourdieu's focus on the pre-reflexive does not allow for any ethical dimensions of the habitus, and Crossley's (2000) argument that habitus needs to

include 'dialogues with oneself'. She suggests that a broader conceptualisation of habitus, which incorporates conscious deliberation and concerns, will enable greater analytical purchase on aspects of identity such as personal and political commitments. I will return to these arguments later in the chapter in relation to subjective formation and establishing oneself as having moral worth.

For Alheit and Dausien life itself is a field of learning and they have developed the notion of biographical learning, which is:

...a self-willed, 'autopoetic' accomplishment on the part of active subjects in which they reflectively 'organise' their experience in such a way that they also generate personal coherence, identity, a meaning to their life history and a communicable, socially viable life world perspective for guiding their actions (Alheit 2005: 209).

In my CAS I argued that the growing field of biographical learning:

... not only offers the subjective perspective of refugees, but also offers a temporal dimension to understanding learning processes and identity formation. Drawing on life history it recognises the skills, education, jobs, culture, identity and social roles which refugees occupied prior to migration; and how these pre-migration characteristics influence and shape learning processes and identity construction in a new context (Appendix 1: 179).

Biographical research is particularly suited to exploring how people actively learn their world and their place within it. It enables us to capture changes in how individuals conceptualise not only their present, but also how their past is interpreted in new and often conflicting ways in the light of present circumstances (Merrill and West 2009).

The study is based on the premise of ‘a multi-faceted and fluid conception of identity, where identities are forms of relationships and are constantly in the making’ (Appendix 1: 180-181). In my CAS I argue for an understanding of identity as narrative and emphasise the power of discourse in identity formation (Chappell et al. 2003). I suggest that understanding the operation of discursive practices and power in identity formation enables us to explore identity not as a process through which individuals choose and select particular identities for themselves depending on particular times and circumstances, rather it shifts the focus to the wider discourses of power and how these shape and constrain the available ‘ontological narratives’ (Chappell et al. 2003) or ‘social scripts’ (Goodson 2006). It draws attention to the processes by which identities are either privileged or marginalised and how different practices work to legitimise particular identities and not others.

It is a post-structuralist position which recognises that the self is an ongoing project in which human subjects are in a continual process of ‘becoming’ or what Davies (2006) refers to as ‘selving’. As human subjects we are always circumscribed by particular situations and the discourses at work, these both constitute subjectivities in particular ways and position individuals within particular discourses. Davies (2006) emphasises the ‘doubleness’ of the process and how individuals are both subjected and become agentic subjects in the process:

The subject is both dominated and shaped and, at the same time and through the same practices, actively takes up the possibilities of the self that are available in recognised / recognisable discourses and

practices (Davies 2006: 79).

In terms of subjective construction and availability of social positions, the process of migration to a new social space is double edged. To varying degrees it severs the subject from the social practices, discourses and structures of the culture in which they had grown up, and through which their habitus had enabled them to move in a fairly smooth and perhaps largely unreflective way. On one hand, movement to a new social space opens up possibilities for reflection on the discourses through which the self has been constituted. It creates opportunities for change and possibilities for exploring and taking up new subject positions, for deconstructing and reconstructing identities. The predictable and culturally familiar identities associated with, for example class, gender, ethnicity and sexuality are no longer certain in the new social space and the self is exposed to new and alternative discursive practices. In particular, migration offers a loosening of traditional gender identities and the inherited ascriptions associated with gender enabling a different kind of gender performance and practice. On the other hand, however, the new social space has its own discourses, subject positions and scripts. Which social positions are available and which are denied is central to subject formation and to this study. Essentialised social scripts and positions are imposed upon refugees which have to be managed and negotiated. While wider discourses shape the identity strategies available, each individual will respond differently, in biographically informed ways. Understanding identity through the narratives which individuals tell, chronicles the way that identity is constantly changing in response to events and experiences in the life history and

also how the way that these experiences are represented constitute their current way of being.

Policy and the Symbolic Deligitimation of Refugees

Policy and social discourses attempt to construct refugees and asylum seekers as marginalised, dependent and transient in the UK. In my CAS (pp. 14-23) I suggested that the major theme running through legislation has been a tightening of immigration controls and the swifter removal of unsuccessful asylum applicants. A clear distinction is made between asylum seekers, who have generally been portrayed as being more numerous and 'undeserving', and 'genuine' refugees who need a 'fairer' system. The 1999 Act (Home Office 1999) introduced the policy of dispersal which removed asylum applicants from the benefit system and created the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) to support and disperse destitute asylum seekers around the country. The Government policy of dispersal was driven by the wish to avoid refugees being concentrated in a few places, such as London, where they might be perceived as putting pressure on housing stocks, community resources and the labour market. Other measures have excluded asylum seekers from welfare services such as social housing and non-emergency healthcare, reduced asylum appeal rights and increased the detention estate (Bloch and Schuster 2005). In 2005, during a general election campaign, the UK Government introduced a Five Year Strategy for Asylum and Immigration (Home Office 2005) which gives only temporary status for those granted refugee status rather than permanent status, effectively removing longer term

security for refugees. At the end of the five-year period, a review of conditions in the refugee's country of origin will determine whether or not they can remain in the UK. In July 2002, asylum seekers were prevented from working and excluded from the labour market and their education opportunities were restricted to English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). In 2007, the UK's Learning and Skills Council (LSC) withdrew the right of asylum seekers to attend English language courses for their first six months in the UK (LSC 2006). The net result of these policies is to promote the perception of refugees as a burden on the community, dependent on welfare rather than as a potential asset to the community.

Alongside more restrictive measures to control migration and limit the entitlements of asylum seekers, the UK Government has introduced a number of key policy documents setting out the refugee integration strategy.¹ However, asylum seekers are excluded from the strategy, which takes the starting point of the integration process as the time when refugee status is confirmed by the Home Office. This leads to a 'waiting period' for asylum seekers which, despite efforts to speed up the system, can last for many months. The exclusion of asylum seekers from integration strategies has been criticised by both the Refugee Council and NIACE (e.g. NIACE 2004; Refugee

¹ The strategy for refugee integration is set out in the following documents: *Full and Equal Citizens* (Home Office 2000), *Integration Matters* (Home Office 2005b), *Working to Rebuild Lives* (DWP 2006), and the consultation paper *A New Model for Refugee Integration Services in England* (Home Office 2006). For a discussion of the integration strategy generally see Somerville 2007, Griffiths et al. 2005. For a focus on employment issues in the strategy see Bloch 2007.

Council 2004). It gives rise to a period of time where asylum seekers are left in limbo, unable to access training and employment opportunities and to begin the process of resettlement. This delay can result in loss of skills, confidence and self esteem; the longer the period of inactivity and exclusion from mainstream activities, the more difficult the process of integration becomes (Waddington 2005; Bloch 2007). As Griffiths et al. (2007) point out the integration strategy also marks a shift in language of official policy discourse from 'refugee settlement', the term used in the 1980s and 90s to 'refugee integration'. In my CAS (pp. 19-23) I suggest that recent policy shifts and debates around multi-culturalism indicate that the UK is adopting a more assimilationist approach to integration which involves constructing a sense of national identity around a set of core values (Lewis 2005; Lewis and Neale 2005; Zetter 2007).

The UK policy around refugees and asylum seekers serves as a mechanism by which the different forms of capital which refugees bring with them are immediately curtailed and denied space for further capitalisation. This occurs most obviously during the 'waiting period' while their claim is being processed but also once their status is confirmed the learning opportunities for refugees consist of a narrow curriculum of English language, IT and citizenship classes. I have suggested elsewhere (Morrice 2007) that these programmes are more concerned with social control and moral regulation than providing opportunities for refugees to build on the skills and experiences they have brought with them. They also reflect the shift in lifelong learning policy towards more assimilationist integration approaches and

concerns with social cohesion (Morrice 2009b). In Bourdieu's framework, policy can be seen as an institutionalised mechanism producing symbolic violence towards refugees. Through policy, refugees are symbolically represented as a 'burden', 'too numerous' and as requiring citizenship education in order to legitimate the practices of detention, exclusion from the labour market, limited educational opportunities and other blocking mechanisms. The social positions available to them are limited which both curtails their access to capitals and knowledge, and to the means by which they might convert and exchange capitals. Policy then, is a tool through which cultural and social capital becomes delegitimated, and the ability of refugees to trade and capitalise on their resources becomes blocked. The failure of policy to recognise the forms of capital possessed by refugees, and to facilitate their conversion to symbolic capital, institutionalises positions of inequality and serves as a mechanism to perpetuate disadvantage simply by enacting its role in the 'natural order' of the social world.

The ability to convert forms of capital enables the production and enactment of different, usually positive identities. However, at this discursive level the value of capitals is set and judged by others, and as Skeggs (1997) notes, the least powerful have little or no say over how this operates. She builds on Bourdieu's framework in relation to gender and social class to explore the intersections and contradictions in subjective production. The working class women in her study are aware of how they are positioned, classified and evaluated by real or imaginary 'others'. What she terms the 'dialogic judgemental other' is central to the production of subjectivities

(1997: 13).

The importance of moral judgement in everyday life is also addressed by Sayer (2005b). As noted earlier, he argues for a modified concept of habitus that includes ethical dispositions and which recognises the normative character of life and experience. He suggests that greater emphasis needs to be given to the moral deliberations of subjects if we are to fully apprehend experience and social action. He argues that the struggles across social sites are not just about power and advantage, but are also struggles about judgements of worth. Moral shame, which is the failure of individuals to live in ways which are considered appropriate or proper, has a profound impact on both subjective and objective well-being:

To experience shame is to feel inadequate, lacking in worth, and perhaps lacking in dignity and integrity. Self-respect derives from a feeling that one is living a worthwhile life and a confidence in one's ability to do what one considers worthwhile (Sayer 2005b: 954).

This study depicts the struggles of refugees to accrue and convert capital in order to claim a positive identity in a social space which positions and evaluates them as having little, if anything, to offer or contribute. It is also about the struggle to be recognised as having moral worth, to be respected and seen to be respectable (Skeggs 1997; Sayer 2005b). Refugee identity has no basis for respect, not only because it is associated with disdain and denigration, but also because it is a social position which denies access to the social practices that enable the accrual of recognition and respect.

These theoretical insights underpin and inform my approach to this thesis, and with

these considerations in mind, my quest to understand how refugees negotiate and manage the transition to living in the UK is guided by the following broad questions:

- How individual biography shapes and informs the strategies adopted by refugees in the UK
- What insight does learning (both informal and formal) offer to our understanding of the processes involved in transition to the UK

My own academic and professional interests in this area can be traced back to my first degree in Social Anthropology which gave me an abiding interest in ‘the other’ and how some social groups become marginalised and disadvantaged. I am interested in how ‘otherness’ is socially constructed and maintained, but at the same time how the identity of otherness is resisted and subverted. Professionally I have worked with refugees as an adult education tutor and community learning manager for almost twenty years. As an adult educator I believe in the power of education to transform lives and communities. This not only involves transforming identities and aspiration, but for refugees it can enable them to re-establish their lives and support the transition to living in the UK. My more recent move to the Higher Education sector has given me the opportunity to bring together these interests and to explore some of the barriers which refugees face in accessing employment and education (Houghton and Morrice 2008), the role of social capital and informal learning in supporting integration (Morrice 2007) and the part that higher education can play in supporting refugees re-establish their lives and professional identities (Morrice 2009a).

In chapter two, I consider the methodological approach taken in this research and the ethical issues which research with refugees raises. In order to capture as much of the participants' lives and stories as possible I have devoted the subsequent five chapters to an analysis of individual life stories. These chapters illustrate how each refugee has his or her own personal story which is individual to them and linked to their unique biographical, cultural and social background. Each of these chapters falls into two parts: life prior to migration and life in the UK. However, they vary in the space devoted to each part of the story, and which aspects of the migration and transition process are foregrounded. The narratives presented illuminate the hybridity of experience and indicate how the migration process itself frames responses and adaptations to life in the UK. Each narrative is lived within the broader social template of what it means to be a refugee in the UK in the first decade of the twenty first century, and how this template is negotiated, managed and sometimes subverted in different ways. These experiences cross cut and intersect with differences of ethnicity, of gender, of country of origin, faith and age.

One feature shared by all the participants in this research is their professional and social class background; this has formed one of the main sources of their identity formation. All of them had enjoyed class privilege, and in some cases gender privilege in their country of origin. They had been accustomed to the respect and respectability associated with high status employment and social position, and one of the universal concerns of all participants is an attempt to re-establish their

respectability and professional identity. The stories of refugees from the poorest strata of society are missing from this study.

In chapters eight and nine I will draw out some of the common themes in the narratives. Chapter eight considers how refugees' experiences and subjectivities are constructed and shaped by broader social structures and practices. These symbolic systems impose identities and curtail the position-taking available to refugees. It explores the strategies adopted and the dynamic interplay between externally imposed narratives and the identities harboured by refugees themselves. Unable to articulate being a refugee as a positive identity, participants draw on alternative discourses in order to present themselves as having moral value and respectability.

Chapter nine considers more explicitly the learning processes at work in the transition to life in the UK. I suggest there is a subterranean, hidden curriculum of beliefs, norms and expectations which are largely accessed through informal and non-formal learning. I draw on Mezirow's theory of transformative learning (1990; 2000) and suggest that this provides a useful framework for examining the meaning making which occurs in non-formal learning situations, and how individuals transform and adapt their perspectives to meet the expectations of new social situations. However, this captures only part of the learning involved. In seeking to understand the depth and complexity of subjective construction and identity formation, I suggest conceptualising learning as processes of 'becoming' and 'unbecoming' (Biesta 2006; Hodkinson et al. 2007) has greater purchase. Lastly, I consider how participants use

higher education as a route to re-establishing a professional identity and career in the UK, and also to construct a morally acceptable identity for themselves.

The final chapter revisits some of the migration literature and some of the broader debates in lifelong learning discussed in my CAS. The discussions draws together the strands running through the thesis and suggests some of the patterns and differences in the experiences of participants and what we can claim to know about the lives of refugees in the UK in the first decade of the century. In conclusion I highlight some of the policy implications and possible research agendas arising from this study.

Chapter 2. Methodology and Ethical Considerations

Background and Context

The rebuilding of fractured lives is a long and complex process, particularly as refugees in the UK face multiple exclusionary processes. In order to apprehend the process of negotiating and managing the transition to life in the UK over time, I have adopted a longitudinal approach: interviewing a group of refugees over a period of between three and five years (2004 – 2009). Participants for the research were identified from their participation in a University of Sussex course called *Ways into Learning and Work* (WILAW). This accredited higher education (HE) course was the outcome of an action research project at the University of Sussex in 2003 - 2004. The course was specifically designed and developed to support refugees with higher level and professional qualifications to access either HE or employment. The WILAW course was sixty hours long and consisted of four broad, overlapping components: the first was the core accredited part and included CV writing, applications, career research and interview skills; there was also an emphasis on UK systems and the culture of education and work. Secondly, higher level English language support and preparation for the International English Language Test System (IELTS), which is usually required for university entry, was provided. The third and more unusual and innovative aspect of the course was the significant amount of time allocated to non-formal and non-accredited learning activities. These mainly consist of networking opportunities using a system of mentoring and visiting speakers. Underpinning these three areas of activity was individual support and guidance in the form of one to one

tutorials (Morrice 2005). An evaluation of the programme was carried out for Module three of my Doctorate and was subsequently published (Morrice 2009a).

Since 2004, the course has been delivered five times and a total of forty one refugees have participated (twenty five men and sixteen women). The gender and country of origin of the students who have participated in the five courses is given in Appendix 2. A letter was sent to all the students on these courses explaining what the research was about and inviting them to participate (Appendix 3). The research is ongoing and over the four year period a total of twelve students have agreed to take part. For the purposes of this thesis only five stories have been selected; these are the stories of the students on the earlier courses whose experiences in the UK I have been able to follow for the longest. I have selected two men, both from Iran, and three women one each from Iraq, Iran and Zimbabwe. The dominance of participants from Iran and Iraq reflects the greater number of participants on the course from these countries. Appendix 2 shows that Iranian participants were in the majority with thirteen, followed by four participants from Iraq. In 2006, seventy nine refugees, originally from Ethiopia, arrived in Brighton and Hove under the Home Office sponsored Gateway Protection Program (GPP)². The seven participants from Ethiopia are all from this group; however, I have not been able to follow any of their stories long enough to include them here. I have selected a participant from Zimbabwe as her

² Under this resettlement programme refugee status is confirmed by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) before refugees come to the UK. The UK Government sets an annual quota for the number of refugees it will accept on this programme and refugees are resettled in groups of between sixty and eighty individuals (Collyer and de Guerre 2007).

story highlights how habitus and the ability to have capital which is recognised and has exchange value, shapes experiences in the UK.

Methodology

Once participants had indicated that they would be interested in taking part in the research they were invited to meet with me to find out more about the project and what their participation would involve. They were given guidance notes and a condition of use form, which they were asked to sign and return (Appendix 4). Initially, I had intended that the research would cover a two year period. However, it quickly became apparent that two years was not sufficient time to capture the progress towards, and outcomes of, the strategies that individuals were adopting. For example, if they had been successful at gaining a place in higher education I wanted to know what that experience would be like and whether it would have the desired outcome. As they, and their children, put down roots here and became more established did it change their sense of belonging and feelings of return? Would they eventually apply to become British citizens, and if so what would that mean to them? These and other questions could not be addressed in a two year timescale and I therefore extended the research period from two years to four years.

In adopting a longitudinal approach, I have aimed to provide a more holistic understanding of the transition process, one which can incorporate the interplay of diverse factors over time and illuminate how the experience of living in the UK

changes over time. The process of transition is long and on-going; it often involves constant adjustments and readjustments in response to changing circumstances and situations. The longitudinal method recognises the temporal unfolding of opportunities, of setbacks and revisions to life plans and changes in aspirations. The temporal aspect provides opportunity to identify coherence and consistency in narratives, and at the same time can capture moments in time when the cohesive narrative presentations and theorizations of self might become disrupted or challenged. Plumridge and Thomson (2003) suggest that longitudinal studies foreground the 'subject in process' and the 'provisionality of identity work'. As a method, it is particularly relevant where the process of change is continuous over a period of time (Thomson and Holland 2003).

On a practical level there are advantages to interviewing participants four or more times. There are opportunities to check accounts, to pick up and explore threads and ideas which might have been missed during the interview. After each interview, and as part of the narrative analysis, I recorded my personal reflections. Each interview was tape recorded and transcribed in full. Once the interviews were transcribed I was able to identify and code the emerging themes following oral history conventions (Plummer 2001). A provisional analysis of data was carried out and themes for the following interview identified. One of the issues raised by Plumridge and Thomson (2003) is the inherent lack of analytical closure in longitudinal work. There is always scope for contradictions and changes in accounts which have to be made sense of, so that what appears clear in one interview may be contradicted in a subsequent

interview. The temporal aspect of this project highlights the contingent and partial nature of knowledge: knowledge construction is an ongoing process of production and reproduction by social actors. It also draws attention to the difficulties of making a complete exit from the research and the participants. Jacobsen and Landau (2003) suggest that how to exit from research having been befriended by participants might be a more general ethical dilemma associated with research with refugees. As the four year period comes to an end, I have ended formal interviews, however, I am remaining in informal contact with participants.

There are inevitable limitations to the narrative mode of enquiry. By asking participants to reflect back and recall events and activities which took place in the past we are creating what Hammerton and Thomson (2006) call 'memory stories'. That is, stories told from, and possibly reinterpreted by, the present life circumstances and identity of the narrator. Issues of what a narrator chooses to recall and relate, and the reliability of memory are all pertinent to narrative enquiry and need to be subject to scrutiny and questioning throughout the research process (Hammerton and Thomson, 2006). The stories presented here have been selected and constructed in a complex and multi-layered process. The process starts at the level of the individual, what they choose to remember and how they choose to story themselves. Interviews themselves are 'inherently social encounters' in which 'interviewees and interviewers work to construct themselves as certain types of people in relation to the topic of the interview and reflexively the interview itself.' (Rapley 2001: 303). So the stories are re-told and co-constructed with me, a white, female academic, they are social

constructs, products of a particular moment and encounter. Finally I have reinterpreted and repackaged the stories for this study and an academic audience. As Merrill and West (2009) highlight the term 'auto/biographical' research is often used to draw attention to the inter-relationship between the biography of the researcher and the researched:

...those constructions we make of others in writing their life histories contain and reflect our own histories and social and cultural locations as well as psychologies (Merrill and West 2009).

Trahar (2006) suggests that narrative research with its concern for representation and voice and its underpinning philosophy of supporting 'other' voices is ideally suited to cross cultural research. However, in examining transcripts and interpreting stories, the researcher needs to be particularly sensitive to their own cultural expectations and how these might be implicated in the creation and construction of narratives (Cortazzi and Jin 2006: 35). Cortazzi and Jin argue that issues of culture, ideology and identity of both researcher, participant and audience need to be considered and suggest that a 'double vision' is required:

... that of the insider, with the participants' perceptions of educational meanings, and that of the outsider, with the academic community's conventions and the ability to interpret the research to audiences of readers in other cultural communities (2006: 33).

In undertaking this research, I have tried to remain mindful of my own social and cultural location and to the dangers of imposing my own cultural forms of reference. Through such reflexivity, I have tried to ensure that my own voice does not become

the most authoritative (hooks 1994).

I viewed the interview process as an interactive and fluid process, rather than a process of merely eliciting information and listening. I engaged in discussion, sometimes offering personal information about myself and my family, or responding to requests for advice or opinion. A nagging question at the back of my mind was always ‘What’s in it for them?’ and ‘How can I provide participants with something useful in return?’ It meant that on occasion a large part of an interview might be taken up with, for example, discussing sources of funding for higher education, or volunteering opportunities for a spouse. Over the four year period my relationship with participants developed from the bounded research relationship of interviewee and interviewer and spilled over into friendship. The research became a more personal, reciprocal and dialogical process. Between formal interviews I met up with participants socially for a cup of tea or coffee, sometimes having meals at each other’s houses. Sometimes these meetings were prompted by a request for me to sign a passport or citizenship application, or to look over a job application or CV. At other times, they were simply to have a chat and catch up on recent events, or to celebrate achievement, for example at university graduation ceremonies.

I don’t believe it is ever possible to divorce oneself completely from one’s research interests and the spilling over of the research process into more personal territory raises a further set of ethical issues. The informality increases the possibility of ‘unthinking disclosure’, particularly around more personal issues, such as

relationships or mental health. I was acutely aware that what was told to me during these informal meetings could not be used as part of my research. When information relevant to my research questions emerged, I asked directly whether they would be willing to recount the story when we next met for a taped interview. In most instances participants were willing to retell the story; where they weren't their privacy and integrity has been respected and none of the information, or exchange has been used.

It is considered good practice in life history research to return transcripts to participants and invite them to make any amendments or deletions to their story. Not only is returning transcripts considered good practice on ethical grounds, but it also serves as a useful method for checking meaning and for testing hypotheses (Plummer 2001; West 1996). All participants were given transcripts for checking, although I received very few comments back. Most of the comments made concerned the participant's embarrassment at seeing the grammatical errors in their spoken English, rather than the content of what was said.

Ethical Considerations

In considering the ethical issues around working with refugees I have been particularly guided by Plummer's work in life history (Plummer 2001). Refugees are likely to have experienced interviewing, questioning and possible interrogation both in the country they have fled from, and on arrival in UK. On arrival in the UK they have had to present and 'story' their experiences for Home Office officials, who have

then judged whether they believe the story is credible and whether it fits within their guidelines for granting refugee status. Particular sensitivity and reflexivity is required to ensure that participants are clear about the purposes and possible uses of the research. Previous research with refugees has drawn attention to the need to ensure that participation in research does not cause harm to their current situation or harm to their family remaining in the country of origin (Jacobsen and Landau 2003; Yu and Liu 1986).

Issues of confidentiality, anonymity and consent were explained to all participants both at the point of inviting them to participate in the research and at the start of the first interview. As noted earlier, all participants were asked to sign a conditions of use and consent form. From the outset I have been guided by the ethical principles of attempting to avoid potential negative consequences for participants, or for the broader refugee community. However, ethical considerations are complex, on-going and dynamic requiring constant re-thinking and re-negotiation. Al Thomson, an oral historian and former colleague, used to talk of a 'parallelogram of ethical responsibilities'³. Each corner of the parallelogram represents a different responsibility: to the narrator, to significant others, to history (and research) and to the researcher. The corners are often in tension and require constant negotiation. I have found this a useful metaphor for conceptualizing and thinking through some of the ethical dilemmas and tensions raised during this research. In the significant others

³ Personal correspondence with Al Thomson 2009.

corner I include responsibilities to the refugee community, so for example how do you handle narratives that reproduce negative stereotypes around refugees and asylum seekers, for example, engagement in illegal or semi-legal activities? Or the narrative which tells of issues which in their own community might be considered taboo, for example issues of sexuality? As a researcher, I have a duty to be mindful of the context in which I am producing my research. Working in a city which has a relatively small refugee community, and working with an even smaller sub-set of that community, it is difficult to guarantee complete anonymity for any of the participants. While I have tried to change, or 'blur' possible identifying elements in their stories, I have also chosen to omit some aspects of some stories to avoid causing potential harm or distress to participants or their families. Similarly, I have taken particular care to ensure that my research cannot be used to reproduce or contribute to the negative discourses around refugees and asylum seekers.

In order to understand the strategies that refugees adopt in the UK and why they negotiate their new environment in the way they do, it is necessary to understand their past. In my discussion of the advantages of a life history approach in my CAS I suggested that:

In order to understand an individual's life we need to take account of their inheritance from the past; the cultural, social and economic structures in which they grew up. There is also the assumption that an individual's biography is sequential, and that no one point can be understood without looking at what preceded it. The approach also enables us to see individuals with a future, with hopes and fears and dreams (CAS: 50).

Refugees in this study have experienced degrees of fear, persecution, loss, separation and trauma that is unimaginable to most of us. For this reason I avoided a traditional life history approach of asking participants to recount their life story at the first interview. Rather the initial interviews were 'real time' interviews and concerned life and experiences in the UK; only once I felt a level of trust had been established did we move to the in-depth interviews about life prior to the UK. In reality of course, many of the interviews did not fall neatly into either only being about the past, or only being in real time. Instead, most involved some interweaving of past stories and memories with the present, but in the initial interviews this was participant initiated and led, rather than the purpose of the interview.

I was also aware that there are aspects of the refugee story which are likely to be particularly sensitive, upsetting or traumatic; these include details of their reason for fleeing their country, their experiences immediately prior to flight, and their journey to the UK. I decided not to ask participants directly about these issues, but instead left it up to the participants themselves to decide how much they told me. Some participants were quite willing to talk about their experiences of persecution and flight; others have never revealed this part of their narrative or have only hinted at aspects of it. One participant talked about their experiences, but requested that this part of their story not be included in this research.

Unlike much other life history work my questions focussed on the practical aspects of their stories, rather than the emotional aspects. In part this was because my research

questions were primarily concerned with the practical aspects of the transition process, and in part it was to try and avoid putting participants in a position where they were asked to explore and relive potentially painful experiences. As Plummer (2001) reminds us, there is always an asymmetrical power relation between researcher and researched, and that by asking about people's lives we might be asking them to speak of 'traumas hitherto unnamed' and in so doing 'to solidify and consolidate in words a kind of life. And for this ... the researcher becomes responsible' (Plummer 2001: 225). Although not explicitly addressed in the research, the emotional distress generated by the doubts and insecurities of living and being a refugee are present, in varying degrees in the narratives. A further consideration here is the paucity of specialised counselling and support services for refugees. There are a number of organisations locally which offer practical advice and support to refugees and information about these sources of support were made available where appropriate. However, there are few specialist mental health services with expertise in working with refugees and clearly it is not appropriate to embark on research which does not have adequate referral and support services.

These ethical considerations have meant that there are silences and gaps in the narratives presented here. Despite some issues being 'the elephant in the room' during the research process, these are areas I have chosen either not to probe or not to write about. The silences are apparent and important in the narratives and should be read as just that: what is present but not spoken. With these methodological and ethical considerations in mind the next five chapters document the stories of five

refugees as they learn to live and negotiate their lives in the UK.

Chapter 3. Maryam: The Iraqi Teacher's Story

Maryam joined the very first pilot WILAW course in 2004. Her narrative emphasises the enormous amount of identity work that can occur prior to migration and the length of time it can take to even start to re-establish a professional identity. The first interview took place almost four years after she arrived in the UK. The struggle to be reunited with her children and her husband had dominated her first years here, and it was only when the family was finally reunited that she turned her thoughts to the possibility of re-training in the UK and doing anything other than unskilled work.

I have interviewed Maryam five times over a four year period. During this time she has taken a number of courses to prepare herself for entry into higher education and teacher training. She has also had to renegotiate her role and identity as a mother. One of the things that had always struck me about Maryam was her positive approach to life in the UK, she was unstintingly cheerful and happy with her life, no matter what difficulties and problems she and her family faced. Her narrative illustrates her determination to fit in and become a part of UK society and culture. It was only in the third interview when I asked her to describe in depth her life in Iraq that I could make sense of her approach and disposition. Her life story prior to coming to the UK is explored in some detail here as it is pertinent to her narrative in the UK. Perhaps more than any of the other stories, Maryam's underlines the importance and value of a life history approach, as without the biographical and cultural understanding of her life in Iraq we cannot understand her present.

Life in Iraq

Maryam was born in Iraq in 1960, the youngest of seven children. She describes education as being very important in her family; her father and five of her siblings were teachers. Her father ensured that she attended the best primary and secondary schools and growing up she received extra tuition and support at home, so that when she was at school she felt 'better than the others'. She easily completed primary and secondary school, and moved to university where she studied mechanical engineering and education.

The Ba'thist coup in 1968 initially brought very little change for Maryam and her family; indeed Maryam probably initially benefited from the Ba'ath Party's gender ideology and policies. In the early days of the party's rule, the emancipation of women was key to their plans to transform Iraq into a modern and productive state (Al-Ali 2007: 131). Women were encouraged to enrol in universities and professional schools, and to enter the labour market alongside men (Rassam 1992). The result was that Iraqi women became among the most educated and professional in the whole region (Al-Ali 2007: 138). By 1980, women accounted for 46 percent of all teachers, 29 percent of physicians, 46 percent of dentists, and 70 percent of pharmacists (Al-Khalil 1989: 88).

During her four year degree course Maryam was approached by the Ministry of Education who offered her financial support during the degree in return for working for them on graduation. She took up their offer and worked as a teacher of

mechanical engineering for fifteen years. She married and had three children. She describes how it was easy to combine parenting with working as the teaching day was short (8am to 12 noon), and they had long holidays. It was also a time when the Iraqi Government was actively encouraging and supporting women in the labour market. The oil boom in 1973 had led to great economic expansion during the 1970s; faced with labour shortages, the Iraqi Government needed educated women to fill the gaps. This was the 'golden age' of a flourishing economy, expanding middle class and state-led development (Al Ali 2007). For women like Maryam, it translated into generous state provision and support which included free nursery provision and transportation to and from schools and workplaces. Alongside this, Maryam lived with her mother-in law who also helped with childcare. She returned to work just forty days after the birth of her sons and six months after the birth of her daughter.

Maryam describes the teaching profession as having been one of the best jobs in Iraq. As a teacher she and her family were well respected and well paid. She felt passionate about education and derived great satisfaction from her work. However, alongside the prospering socio-economic conditions in Iraq, Davis (2005) describes how the Ba'ath Party promoted feelings of paranoia, xenophobia and distrust, not only towards external enemies, but also towards internal ethnic and religious groups. The process of marginalisation of social groups and sectarianism deepened and accelerated during the 1970s. In order to create and maintain cultural and political boundaries, the regime became more concerned with 'cultural authenticity' (*asil*) and who could be part of the Iraqi political community. Those who were deemed to reside outside of it

included Shi'i Arabs, Kurds, Jews and those with real, or alleged, Iranian nationality, faced brutal repression, deportation, and exclusion from national political and cultural discourse (2005: 6 and 171). Al Ali (2007) suggests that during the 'time of deportation' (*zamn-al tasfirat*) hundreds of thousands of Shi'i were forced to leave Iraq because of their alleged Iranian nationality (*tabaiya iraniya*) (Al Ali 2007: 54; Al Khalil 1989).

The cause of Maryam's family's difficulties stemmed from her father's Iranian heritage. He had been born in Iran and had moved to Iraq aged three. She describes the process of persecution:

They started with the common people, I mean with the merchants and they deported them from Iraq. But with the teachers, with the others, they didn't start until, my brother he was a teacher at medical school, they told him to move from teaching. I don't remember which year ...1980. And then little by little my other brother, he was a maths teacher they told him he had to leave and my sister she was a teacher of English. She said I am not going to stay as a teacher, I don't want to work with them, so she already had 25 years so she took retire[ment]. It affected us all, but my father he was already retired, it doesn't affect him. In 1982 they said it is not allowed for you to stay in Iraq, they tried to deport him but I don't know, they took him for 1 month with my mother and my brother....

Maryam's elderly father was eventually left alone, but for the rest of the family things got progressively more difficult, particularly after 1979 when Saddam Hussein became president. Within a year Iraq was at war with its neighbour Iran (1980 – 1988). In 1982, the Ba'ath Party passed a law offering financial reward to Iraqi men who divorced their Iranian wives (Abdullah 2003, cited in Ali Ali 2007: 157).

Maryam's husband, who was an engineer in the Iraqi airforce, refused to divorce her and was subsequently dismissed from the airforce and lost all the privileges it had afforded him and his family.

Control of the education system was a specific focus of the regime as schools and colleges were seen as key sites for the indoctrination of the young, and teachers were under particular pressure (Al-Ali 2007; Al-Khalil 1989). Not only was the content of education and who could teach the subject of scrutiny and rapid change, but also who could be admitted to educational institutions. In 1978 it was decreed that all personnel of the armed forces, internal security and public intelligence forces, should be admitted to universities, colleges and schools regardless of 'academic achievement, period of enrolment, and attendance' (Al-Khalil 1989: 103). Pressure was placed on teachers to allow students to cheat in exams, to accept bribes and give higher marks to particular students. Maryam describes the degradation of the education system and with it the teaching profession:

'Till 1980 it was very perfect, but when the war started and the people they didn't care about the education because of the war. Their children they were going to go to war and you hear everyone everyday: someone died, he studied, he worked very hard in studying and then the Government send him to the war and he didn't come back. So the people gradually they didn't care about education and especially Saddam, he didn't like educated people so he didn't care. ... He said the mother who give birth [to] more [than] four children she will get more support [than] the mother if she had 2 or 3 children. They respect family that have 4 children and above, 4, 5, 6 than the family who have 1, 2 or 3 they are not respectable, so they didn't get support because they want the woman to give birth, they want people for war. So he didn't care about education and he started to make the salary less... Even at University if you work with Ba'ath Party you will get a lot of support from the Government with your degree, with your mark,

you will get a high mark. If you want to go to better University you will get higher mark if your father or your family from Ba'ath Party. Everything he does made education lower and lower and lower...The student gets more money than the teacher, so the teacher had to respect the student, the students don't respect the teacher, no.

For Maryam, fairness and integrity were at the heart of teaching and her self-respect as a teacher. She felt herself in an intolerable position when she knew that colleagues were allowing students to cheat, or when the head teacher ordered her to falsify class registers to ensure that certain students were always marked as present. This gradual erosion of her professional status and identity as a teacher was accompanied, as she suggests in the quote above, by a shift in gender ideology. During the 1980s the ideology and rhetoric around women began to change as more young men were needed to fight the numerically superior Iranian army. Al-Ali describes how women's roles became redefined from 'producers to reproducers' and gender ideology shifted to the 'glorification of the Iraqi mother'. Towards the mid to late 1980s the regime launched a fertility campaign encouraging women to have five or more children (2007). For Maryam this meant that the school caretaker who had ten children and could neither read or write, had a higher salary and commanded more respect than the teachers at the school.

After fifteen years teaching Maryam, like her older brothers and sisters, was finally forced to leave her teaching job in 1993. She describes teaching as the only job she ever wanted to do and rather than take an alternative more menial job she chose to

stay at home with her children and do private or 'contract' teaching work. So many teachers had been 'retired' from teaching that there was a shortage and she was allowed back on short term contracts to cover the shortages.

The Ba'ath Party regime had reconfigured the policy, discursive and ideological framework in Iraq such that mechanisms of valuation and objective conditions were changed dramatically over a very short space of time. Changes in the field meant that social positions such as teacher, which had appeared secure and valued were downgraded and denigrated. New classifying practices such as 'pure' and 'impure' were used to mark habitus and subsequently functioned as markers of exclusion and inclusion. Across different fields of interaction Maryam's capital and habitus now held different meaning: they were ill adapted and had little purchase in the new conditions and demands of the social field.

Maryam describes how they waited, hoping that their situation in Iraq would improve, but why they eventually took the decision that they had to leave:

[It was] becoming worse and worse. ... Even in 1991 we were very happy, I mean we thought Saddam will be ruined and be finished and he came back again. So gradually it start[ed] to effect our children...if you want to go education it is not allowed, College of Education, College of Sport not allowed, and if you want to be as their father in the army it is not allowed. I thought, oh it means they will get in the same situation as me, they never forget that his mum, even his father is pure [Iraqi]...I don't want one day [that] they will take them and we will never see them. Because it is very easy; they know we hate Saddam in house and if they by mistake say it we will never see them [again]. And we put them in very good schools which they have most of the Government sons with them and I was very frightened every day. I think if they make...in front of them we try our best not to show anything that we hate them but they

know the situation: I've been retired, their father retired because of the Government and we were very frightened. In 1999 my son he got to A-Level and after that he had to go to University and I told them nothing at all [will] change they will be in the same situation getting worse and worse, I don't want to lose them and we decided to go, 1999.

By the time Maryam finally left Iraq she had lived through years of insidious persecution, during which time she and her family had been gradually excluded from social, political and economic life. Only her three older siblings who are now in their sixties and seventies remain in Iraq; the three younger ones, like her, have sought refuge in other countries. Her identity and that of her family had been gradually eroded and transformed from respectable middle class teachers to a 'culturally impure' family because of their Iranian heritage. Unlike mass migration caused by a specific humanitarian emergency, the onset of migration was for her a gradual process, eventually triggered by fear for the safety and future of her children. It illustrates the complexity of present day migration and how minority groups can suffer human rights abuses and persecution over a protracted period of time before finally leaving (Zetter 2007).

Maryam's journey out of Iraq was traumatic and deeply stressful. She left Iraq and went to Jordan with her sons aged seventeen and fifteen, and her daughter aged seven. Her husband's military background made it more difficult and dangerous for him to leave, so he stayed behind, planning to try and join them once they were safe. Originally she had intended to try and find work in a neighbouring Arab country as a

teacher, but was told that it would be too hard for a woman without a husband to settle and find work. In the end she decided to try and join her brother in the UK. However, the British Embassy in Jordan would only grant a visa for her and not her children. At that time she had no idea of how the immigration system worked, or that she could apply for asylum in the UK, and then apply for her children to join her.

I didn't know anything about that, because when you are in Iraq everything is a block, you don't know anything about the other world.

Even her brother who had been granted refugee status in the UK six years previously had not been able to tell his family back in Iraq how the asylum system worked for fear that it would further endanger their lives. In the end her husband sold the family house to raise enough money to pay for the illegal documents for Maryam and their daughter to get to the UK.

You have to wait, you give the money, this is the first thing. They took the money, and you have to wait until they told you, 'Prepare yourself tomorrow'...I was waiting for eight months in Jordan, another country, not in my country. And you don't know until they tell you this is your passport...and I recognise and think it is not a real passport. I thought he will give me a real passport, but he gave me a false one, I didn't know.

The false travel documents were discovered in Qatar where Maryam and her daughter were held in custody for three days before the Qatari security forces eventually decided to let them continue to the UK. Once in the UK Maryam received her refugee status quickly and immediately applied for her sons, who were now back in Iraq, to

join her. It took six months before the younger son travelled to Jordan and from there could join his mother in the UK. But the older son was by this time eighteen and his movements from Iraq were more restricted. It took a year, which included stays in Dubai and Yemen, and a legal battle with the Home Office to prove that he had been seventeen when his mother was granted refugee status, before he was able to come to the UK. Once her children were all safely in the UK, her husband left Iraq to join them. Although Maryam had obtained all of the necessary paperwork for him to join her in the UK as a refugee, it took three years battling with the bureaucracy of the British Embassies in the region to find an embassy that would provide him with a visa. For Maryam, this was a further trial of her strength and energy as she emailed and petitioned the embassies, and even made a trip to Syria in the hope of persuading the embassy there to accept his case.

Learning and Living in the UK

Maryam had already experienced profound changes in her identity and working life while still in Iraq. Her experience of having to travel illegally with false documents, and the long struggle to be reunited with her sons and husband were deeply stressful experiences. These life events have framed her attitude and approach to settling in the UK. In our earlier interviews when I asked Maryam about her life in the UK she always emphasized the positive aspects of her experience, the safety, the human rights and the respect that the UK offered. When asked what her expectations had

been when she arrived she replied:

The first thing it was just peace and all the family together. Just peace and all the family together, to enjoy. This was the main thing, then I started thinking about myself.

She knew when she left Iraq that she would never go back, and that whichever country she ended up in she would adapt to that culture and make it her home.

So when I arrived here I didn't think about UK, any European country I will reach I will be melted with them, I will grow, I will try my best to grow my children and to live like them in peace, this is what I think. So when I reached England I think I need to know everything about this culture, I need to be a good person as I was and continue to work hard in the other country. This is I feel, this is my home, this is. I never thought that I am going to go back.

On some level she knew what to expect because she had been to Europe and USA as a tourist in the 1970s, but it was different on a practical level when you have to engage with and find your way around the system.

It is different when you live in a country and you go as a tourist. As a tourist you see all the nice things, you go to watch, to see different life but you don't need to be melted with their culture ... but when you want to live you have to know everything about their culture, about their system, about everything in the life. So it was everything new. Although my brother had been here...it is still much different than when you hear something and when you do it practically.

Everything was so new and different that Maryam felt it was impossible to compare with Iraq. She describes Iraq as being 'very, very strict, we didn't know anything

about outside. Politics, culture are forbidden'. Despite the emphasis on the education and employment of women, conservative and patriarchal values prevailed, particularly in relation to traditional gender ideology and relations within the family (Al Ali 2007). However, movement to a new social space opened up possibilities for reflection on the social practices and discourses through which the self had been constituted. For Maryam, migration led to the exposing of established gendered ways of thinking and being, to critical scrutiny and examination. She found it strange that in the UK women could express opinions and make choices about how you wished to live without fear.

You cannot say anything in Iraq it is all for the man, everything...Here you feel you are free, you can say if you don't like this one or you like that, but in Iraq it is not allowed, especially for the woman...There you have especially the woman to sacrifice herself for the family. ... But here it is much easier, you can say: 'This is my life'. Nobody blames her, even if she has kids they say this is her life...

In Maryam's narrative, a recurrent theme was having the right sort of social and cultural capital to navigate around an unfamiliar and very different system of education. In our earlier interviews she talked of the difficulties and frustrations of trying to engage with the school system, firstly with her daughter and then later with her son. She found it a particularly difficult system to understand after the rigid and compulsory school curriculum and system of Iraq. The idea that from the age of fourteen children choose which subjects they wish to study struck her as particularly strange and confusing. Having recently arrived, Maryam didn't have the social networks and contacts with either the education system or other parents to help her.

The idea that social capital and links with wider society are a resource which can bring advantage to those that possess them has been well rehearsed (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Bourdieu 2004; Putnam 2000; Field 2005). I have argued elsewhere (Morrice 2007) that while refugee communities may be rich in what Putnam refers to as ‘bonding’ social capital, they can often be excluded from the ‘bridging’ social capital and the learning within them. This social capital is vital for accessing wider social resources. By virtue of having recently arrived in a new culture, refugees, like other marginalised groups, do not tend to have access to the social and cultural capital which can help ensure educational success, either for themselves or their children.

For Maryam, not knowing the system resulted in her son taking options at sixteen which were inappropriate to his needs and her aspirations for him. She explained how on arrival her son went straight into year eleven of school and six months later took his GCSE exams. He got E and F grades in his exams, but because he had received a letter informing him that he had passed all his GCSEs Maryam assumed that he would automatically pass on to the next stage of the academic elevator and eventually to university. She didn’t know that four passes at A-C grade were required to pass to ‘A’ levels. When the school suggested a GNVQ in leisure and tourism she assumed it was the next step towards university and agreed. Maryam describes this as a wasted year for her son; he had no interest in or aptitude for the subject and subsequently left school to find employment.

In the field of the UK education system, Maryam’s social and cultural capital had no

purchase and could not be employed. The habitus which had been advantageous to her in Iraq, by for example enabling her to ensure that her children went to the best schools, did not equip her for the system here. The disjuncture as she realised that the forms of social and cultural capital that she possessed did not enable her to ‘...wield the power, and influence, and thus to exist, in the field under consideration’ (Bourdieu 1992: 98) forced her to renegotiate her identity in relation to her children’s education. From being teacher and ‘expert’ with a clear parental role she became ‘novice’, dependent upon them to interpret the system and make decisions for themselves. It meant rethinking family roles and had been hard, but it was a shift which she felt was part of the process of adapting to her new role and their new life in the UK.

I mean in Iraq we used to, I mean the family it is their responsibility to make the child, to support them to graduate from University and to work or to study hard. But here he had to depend on himself. So the first six [months] or 1 year I thought: ‘Oh I have to support him, I have to push him to study’, and I tried my best. It didn’t work, he said: ‘I don’t like it’, and when you melt in the culture you feel that it is his life, he has to live the life as he wants it, not as I want. And he said: ‘I want to leave [school]’, I said: ‘I don’t like it but it is up to you’. But before if I was in Iraq I would have never have allowed him and he said: ‘I want to work’, and he started work.

Her daughter’s experience was different because she arrived in the UK and completed several years of primary school before moving to secondary school. Maryam felt that she was constantly learning from her daughter who knew more about the school system and which subjects she should study than she did. Candappa and Egharevba (2002) talk of the shifts in the ‘inter-generational contract’ which can occur in refugee

families. In the case of Maryam's family the children did not appear to take on caring and domestic responsibilities within the family which can occur where parents are working long hours and with no support from extended family. They did, however, assume the role of cultural and linguistic translators and brokers. For Maryam, it was a disruption in traditional family roles and gave rise to new learning processes. Most of her daughter's homework was done on computers and involved skills and knowledge which Maryam did not possess. It was a far cry from Iraq where she would spend several hours a night helping and supporting her children with their school work. The habitus which in Iraq equipped her for decoding the social world and managing the fields that she encountered did not have value in the UK and this disjuncture engendered an underlying sense of powerlessness in her story.

Once her children were all safely in the UK, Maryam started to look for employment. She had assumed that she would work in a similar profession, however, her Iraqi qualifications in teaching and engineering were not recognised in the UK and she was advised that she would have to start from scratch as if she had no previous qualifications or experience.

I didn't know the system, what to do, where to go. I wanted to teach. I asked many people; one person told me to start again; that would take four years: three years undergraduate degree and one year teaching qualification. My degree from Iraq is equivalent to HND here, because it is engineering I would need to start at year one of an undergraduate course. That's not very good for me to start over again at university, particularly with the family and at my age. It's humiliating for me, what would my family say? They wouldn't understand why I had to start over again.

Maryam's quote above highlights the bitter disappointment of realising that the habitus and cultural capital that had enabled her to achieve professional, economic and social success in Iraq was not valued in the UK. It also points to the links with social capital and the difficulties which refugees have in navigating around unfamiliar and very different systems of education.

Every two weeks for six months Maryam went to the Job Centre hoping to find a job either as an engineer or a teacher. In the end the advisor suggested that she look at other jobs.

There were other jobs there. She said many people like me work in homes looking after people or there are many jobs cleaning. I didn't want to work looking after people. I got a job in a dry cleaners. ... It's a family run business; they've been very good to me...they're very nice people.

Although Maryam regarded the job as fairly menial because it didn't require any education or qualifications, she enjoyed it. Unlike her experience of teaching in Iraq, she felt she was treated with respect.

Here [the UK] you are in a place where everybody respects you. I was a mechanical engineer, I was a teacher in a secondary school, but I never felt as much respect as I get here. Even my work now, my job, which is without education, anyone can do it. But still, the respect, I get it from my boss and the others, more than I got it from where I was a teacher. Because here human rights are important, and they're respected. There, they don't have any respect. Here you can feel human, you have rights, and everybody respects the rights.

Maryam continued to work at the dry cleaners although she never gave up the dream of returning to teaching. On occasions during our interviews when we discussed teaching she joked that she would eventually do it ‘When I am seventy maybe!’

Maryam did eventually identify a route into teaching which did not entail starting at year one of an undergraduate degree. She applied for and was offered a place on the mathematics education with a qualified teaching status undergraduate degree course, as long as she passed English GCSE. After a delay of a year while Maryam put her own study plans on hold to support her daughter who was experiencing difficulties at secondary school, she successfully completed her English GCSE and took her International English Language Test System exam (IELTS). In 2007, seven years after arriving in the UK she started the two year undergraduate degree. The first year of the degree in mathematics education focussed on developing the fundamental principles and structures of mathematics, an area which she was relatively comfortable with and which enabled her to draw upon her previous experience. The second year was much harder as it involved placements at secondary schools and focused more on educational practices in the UK. Despite the very different educational systems and professional practices Maryam seemed undaunted by the challenges of teaching in the UK. Issues of discipline or difficulties engaging students in the subject were brushed over; her main concern, she said, was to make her lessons enjoyable.

At the time of writing she has successfully completed her degree and is applying for

teaching posts. Her journey into higher education was long as she had to improve her English language and meet the course requirement of GCSE English. Like many other adult and non-traditional learners her journey was also interrupted by external factors, in her case the needs of her family (McGivney 2003).

Maryam's biography enables us to better understand the identity strategies that she has adopted in the UK. Persecution in Iraq, a traumatic flight to the UK and a three year struggle to be reunited with her husband interlace and help to explain her apparent contentment at working at a fairly menial occupation and her positive disposition and attitude to life in the UK. Having lived with fear for so long and having experienced the denigration of the teaching profession, and ultimately her exclusion from it, her narrative emphasises the freedom from persecution, equality and respect she experiences in the UK. Battling to find a way for her husband to leave the Middle East and join her, living in safety with her family and supporting her children as best she could, took precedence and priority over re-establishing her career and identity as teacher. Interestingly the label and identity of refugee did not feature strongly in her narrative. Instead the emphasis was on the UK having offered her and her family safety and sanctuary. Maryam had no intention of ever returning to Iraq and it was not something she could ever imagine changing. Her life and those of her family (both of her sons had married and settled in the UK) were firmly established here. Her narrative illustrates how individuals may feel displaced before their eventual flight and challenges the binary of 'home' and 'exile' (Castles 2003).

Chapter 4. Patricia: The Zimbabwean Teacher's Story

Patricia and I first met in 2004 when she joined the WILAW course. Although she never completed the course and left to take up a place on a mental health nurse training course, we kept in touch and she agreed to take part in this research. The story here has been constructed from five interviews, undertaken over a four year period. This chapter explores narratives around working and learning in the UK. It also charts her struggle with motherhood: firstly being separated from her children and feeling the identity of being a mother slipping away, and then being reunited and negotiating the differences between what it means to be a mother as a member of the middle classes in Zimbabwe, and what it means to be a mother in the UK.

Some aspects of Patricia's 'biographically acquired landscape of knowledge' (Alheit and Dausien 2002: 15) have transferred and are relevant to the UK context; for example her educational capital and consequent confidence around formal learning, which as we shall see has been an important source of self. In other ways the process of migration marks a rupture in biographicity, precipitating profound new learning and identity changes, for example around motherhood and paid employment. Her story illuminates how gender, race, class, educational background and other concerns such as worker and economic provider intersect and collaborate to provide the sources for identity construction and self-narration.

Life in Zimbabwe

Patricia was brought up in Zimbabwe, the eldest of eight children. Her mother was a primary school teacher and her father was a head teacher. She describes the high value attached to education and the high standards of discipline expected in school.

Education was very, very important. You had to be educated to be somebody. So they [parents] obviously didn't want you to obtain education which is equal to them, they want you to do much better. So expectation was always high.

After primary school she attended a 'Group A' boarding school which prior to independence had been a 'White only' school. She was one of the first Blacks to attend the school and was very much in the minority. Patricia loved boarding school and being away from home, she also enjoyed the sense of being better than the children who attended the former 'Group B' schools and who spoke *Shona* rather than English at school.

Yeah, so I also had that experience of speaking English all the time, all the time. So it was nice, it was a good experience...It kind of made a difference between us and the former Group B schools who didn't speak as much English as we did. Of course they understood it, they read it, everything, but they just weren't as good as we were so we wanted that, we liked that.

At eighteen Patricia started a three year teacher training course. She compared both the material and non-material benefits and advantages of the teaching profession:

It is very respected as a job because everybody knows you have to go through training...We had two homes, one provided by school

where we would be most of the term, then we had our own house where we would go to in the holiday. So it was almost a luxury which some professions didn't have. We didn't need transport because we lived at school. Break time, teatime, lunchtime we would go home and have tea. ... I could always go home and feed the baby and come back, so the convenience was there for teachers, and we had these five-week holidays.

Patricia worked as a primary school teacher in Zimbabwe for eleven years. She married and had three children. As was usual among professional classes in Zimbabwe, Patricia returned to work after the birth of her babies, employing one and at times two maids to care for the children and the home. She describes her life style as being 'luxurious'; she could dedicate herself to her teaching work while leaving all the domestic work to the maids.

Of course the maids would have two or three weeks off during the holidays to go away. So that was the two or three weeks that I was alone with my children. But otherwise I never had the chance to actually run the home myself or run the house myself and make sure the children had eaten. And sometimes I would do the washing may be three days before the maid came back because I didn't want her to find loads and loads of washing [laughing]. What impression do you give if you are always saying 'Oh do this, do that' and then you don't do it yourself!

Her life history in Zimbabwe with its emphasis on education achievement and her positive disposition to learning were an important source of self which she later draws upon when confronted with racial prejudice in the UK.

Learning and Living in the UK

Patricia came to the UK in August 2002, part of the latest of three waves of migration from Zimbabwe since independence in 1980 (Bloch 2008). The latest migrants have come to the UK in the context of the ever deepening political and economic crisis and are part of the exodus of professional and middle classes from the country (McGregor 2007). Patricia arrived on her own leaving her husband and three children who were then aged twelve, seven and five in Zimbabwe.

When she first arrived in the UK she had assumed that she would continue her profession as a teacher. She had looked at teaching salaries and compared to what she was earning in Zimbabwe thought that she'd 'be very rich in a very short time!' However, her Zimbabwean teaching qualifications were not recognised in the UK and she was required to do further training and a placement in a school. Having observed in a school she decided against re-training.

...initially when I came I was actually excited about doing the teaching because, because I didn't have any other skills. So I thought well teaching is going to be it. So, and then I realised that although I had a diploma I couldn't really use it here, I had to do two years I think or a year in a school and it wasn't easy to get in a school. I did try, I did try, somebody was helping me and I just went to observe one school but they didn't really need anybody to come in and do any kind of placement there, or they didn't want anybody really. ... And, and then I, well maybe I didn't try hard enough really, and after my observation, unfortunately I went to a school that was not very, the discipline wasn't so good, so it wasn't really motivating, it didn't really, say, make me want to do it. So I thought well, I did a bit of catering through an agency, weddings and all that. I did a bit of care, it was just both really, catering and care, catering and care.

It took two years for her children and husband to get permission to join her in the UK. Her strategy during these first two years on her own was to work extraordinarily hard. She not only wanted to earn as much money as she could, but working long hours helped her to deal with the pain of separation from her family. She describes how, because she was living on her own there was nothing to do at home, she could have three jobs, sometimes four jobs at one time. During those first two years she managed to save £6000 from her low paid jobs. This was on top of sending regular economic remittances back to her mother, her husband and children, and sometimes her in-laws in Zimbabwe.

I was getting a lot of money but I was putting every God given hour into it, into work. Because this full time job that I had, I actually went onto nights after a year I think, I went over to nights because you did three nights in succession and then you were off for six nights because there were three of us... So those six days I would maybe sleep the first day and the next five days I would be working different places. Yeah, so I almost like had another full time job outside that other full time job...I did a bit of cleaning. Like if I was doing my nights I would come back at about half past 8 to do cleaning from 9am to 1pm, then take another shift 8pm to 2am and then go back to my night. ... I mean the fact that you knew that you were saving for your children to come and, you know, not want for anything and all that. The thing was the motivator I think.

You almost felt guilty if you went home to sleep. What am I doing sleeping? I could be out there making some money! It's a good thing I never really fell ill; somehow my body can manage to sustain all that stress for some reason....And catering was very stressful because we did weddings, they are very social functions and we are so far away from home and some family enjoying themselves and you are on your feet for like 10 hours. So yeah that was the main reason why I gave that up...They were very social gatherings, for the people it was OK because it was a bit of money because you were doing like 12 or 13 hours, but for me the stress of being there and watching other people enjoying themselves, really families, and I was just on my own. It was just too much...I was really alone, yeah in the literal sense of being on my own.

On the other hand Patricia enjoyed care work, and in particular working with elderly patients. It gave her an opportunity to take responsibility and care for other people and went some way to filling the void left by the separation from her own children. Caring appears in her narrative as a central feature in her identity work. Her narrative did not reflect on any stigma attached to care work found in other studies of the Zimbabwean community in Britain (McGregor 2007). Instead it seemed to reinforce her Zimbabwean cultural values of families caring for their own elderly rather than placing them in a home, and it confirmed her sense of herself as a carer and someone who has moral worth.

Q: What is it that you like about the care work?

A: The care work? I think maybe having been a teacher you want people to kind of appreciate what you are doing or maybe kind of be needed in a way. If you are a parent as well you are used to being needed, you are used to caring. So that need, that kind of deficit that you are, kind of, you know, feeling, you know, you just feel, well you go home and think 'well I think I did a good job today'. It was kind of really the fulfilling bit really.

Skeggs (1997) notes how the 'caring self' is closely linked with discourses of femininity and motherhood. It is both a performance and a technique which enables women to prove themselves as responsible and respectable (1997: 69). For Patricia, working in care homes was a means of constructing a caring self and gaining external validation and respectability. By continuing her caring identity across space she is able to assert some moral authority and claim legitimation for her caring capital despite the denigrated positions associated with being a refugee.

As agency staff her position was precarious and she was dependent on her ability to do the tasks she was asked to do. However, this was difficult as she had no previous experience of domestic or care work. She felt vulnerable because she knew that if she made mistakes or asked too many questions this would be fed back to the agency and she wouldn't get further work. She felt she had to present a confident image that suggested that she knew what she was doing. She dreaded being asked about where she'd worked previously as she had to lie. There was no formal training provided at any of the care homes or catering venues she was employed at. Learning was very much 'on the job' and through social interaction with other staff and patients.

[S]o you just look at other people and do what they're doing. That is how, because, I had absolutely no idea, like, when these agencies sent me to places I had never been before, I had never been to a place like that and I didn't even know where the wheelchair brakes were [laughing]. Oh my goodness, yeah but because you are not employed there that was actually the way I learnt because you just went there maybe once and, you know, make a few mistakes here and there but you learn and then the next shift you are more confident. I had no, absolutely no idea. [I had] never seen a pad in my life, never seen anything, a commode, in my life and this agency, they didn't ask about your experience, they needed people so much that they just took you. You say I want to try and well they just send you there and then you do whatever.

So it was just like learning from, I mean even the catering jobs, I had never done that but it is something that you just hold a tray and just follow the next person in front of you and...But I think with the catering, the lady that I used to share a flat with kind of explained to me, you know, the way that you put your plates or which side you are approaching the table and all that. So I had a bit of coaching before I went for that job because...but it is not like something that you practise at home, you just, when you go you don't want to be the first person out. You want to be the last person so that you can observe the others [laughing]. Yeah, oh yeah, it was a sort of learning curve really. You would have fun sometimes, giggling about a few things here and there and maybe go home and cry about

what you would do. Cry 'Oh my God what am I doing with myself?

Now, now I am a senior carer... Well not officially but I am senior enough to know what I am doing. There are very few things that I don't know, that I haven't met before and because you know it can be a new thing and you are confident enough to ask now, you don't just want to look or maybe make a mistake so you can always ask: Oh I have never done this before, you know, how do I do that? ... Yeah, it is OK [now] not to know, it is OK to say you don't know, you know? You can't know everything. But when you are starting you think: 'Oh, I don't know this'. There is too much that you don't know so you don't want people to know that you don't know that much. Yeah. I mean your life depends on it, that is where your rent is going to come from so if you make a mistake and you lose your job so then what? You try a bit too hard I suppose.

Patricia's identity in the workplace was not singular or static. She was both worker and learner, what Chappell et al. (2003) refer to as a hybrid worker-learner identity, with learning embedded in the relations either with her fellow workers or in some cases with the patients themselves. It was a risky and insecure identity which she constantly feared would be exposed. Her description of learning on the job underlines the essentially social character of learning and how learning occurs through participating in communities of practice (Lave and Wenger 1991). As newcomers become more skilled and knowledgeable they move centripetally towards full participation and become old timers, or what Patricia refers to as becoming a 'senior care worker'. The centripetal movement in the community of practice to full membership and competency involves a shift in identity (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998). For Patricia, her identity becomes one of competent care worker, capable and confident enough to ask questions where necessary rather than having to lie to cover up her lack of experience and knowledge. To paraphrase Wenger, and

viewing identity as a form of competency, she has moved into 'familiar territory' where what was 'foreign', 'opaque', 'unwieldy' and 'unproductive', becomes 'familiar', 'understandable', 'usable' and 'negotiable' (1998: 153).

A consequence of this shift is that Patricia's sense of self is transformed, not only in relation to her ability to do the job, but also in relation to her fellow workers. As we shall later see this new sense of social confidence meant that she was no longer prepared to endure the low expectations and racial prejudices of some of her fellow care workers. She was able to start negotiating a new identity, which ultimately would lead her back into formal education. First I want to pick up the story of Patricia as a mother.

It took much longer than expected for her children to get permission to come to the UK and being separated from her children for such a long time was difficult and painful for Patricia. As noted, caring is a significant and constant theme in her identity and being separated conflicted with this identity.

I mean initially they said it was going to be a year. I thought well a year is reasonable, you know, you miss one Christmas, you miss one birthday, its reasonable; and then you miss a second birthday, you miss a second Christmas, you know it wasn't.

Festivals and holidays were particularly difficult times and underlined her sense of isolation and loneliness. Even in care work she would be reminded of her family.

Christmases, even these care jobs, Christmases and like families would come in and be with their residents and you know, it was still

difficult for me because I was one person who didn't have anything to do on such days like Christmas and all that. So I was one person who was available to work on such days, you know, you are there, you know, and it is double time as well, you know. Yeah, so and sometimes I would, like, one of the places that I worked was run by this couple so I had to ask for the phone and go upstairs and phone my children, wish them a happy Christmas from there. Oh yeah and then go downstairs and see other families together and all that. Yeah, it was quite difficult, it was very difficult. You never really, it was difficult for me to get used to it, you know? I mean, like we are a very social culture, very sociable. So you don't really spend a Christmas by, just you and your children, your husband, your children, it's like maybe three families together. So after all that time and, you just sort of want to go home.

As time went on she found it more and more difficult to explain to the children why they weren't able to join her or why she couldn't come back to them. She began to fear that they were beginning to see her less as a mother, with a maternal, caring role and more as someone who just provided them with material goods.

...after about a year, 18 months I think, they would then start asking for things. That is why I wanted them to come here before their dad because they were asking for things, you almost feel like you are not, that maternal thing is not there anymore, you are just providing things that they want and they just look at you as somebody who provides things that they want, you know? ... So it was really, you feel like you are losing that connection that maternal bond. I deliberately kind of wanted him [her husband] to stay behind for a couple of months because the children, I wanted some kind of bond with the children on my own kind of thing.

Patricia had saved up enough money so that she wouldn't have to work for the first three or four months after the children arrived. She wanted to be able to spend time with them re-establishing her relationship with them. Although obviously overjoyed

to be reunited with her children, being a parent in the UK brought new and unexpected challenges for her as she was forced into new and unfamiliar roles and the family had to adapt to their more reduced circumstances in the UK.

What was that like? Oh it was terrible! The first experience was really terrible because I was living in a bed sit and that was home for me and then there they were. 'Let's go upstairs, let's go home!' And it was just one room; it was one room with a bed there and a stove there. 'So is this where we are going to live?' I think that actually it was maybe terrible for me more than for them.

Eventually after spending a few weeks in bed and breakfast accommodation the family were re-housed in more appropriate accommodation.

Patricia's narrative (like Maryam's in chapter three) highlights the learning processes and role shifts involved in parenting in a new social space. She describes her biggest challenge and steepest learning curve in the UK as being when her children joined her and she was expected to run her own home and care for her children. Accustomed to domestic help and living within a school compound she struggled to manage the gendered tensions between her role as caretaker and mother, and the role of breadwinner. The parental involvement in children's lives in the UK was strange and having her children here highlighted aspects of UK culture that she had not been aware of before.

Taking the children to school it was almost like a job. First thing in the morning you take them to school and then before you know it you are going to pick them up. You think 'My goodness is this going to end at all?' It was really hard. In Zimbabwe the children don't have to walk any distances and there are no dangers really that you expect them to encounter on the way home. They never

experienced living away from school; it was always within the school fence. So you never really worried about children travelling....Here you don't know your neighbour well enough to trust them to let your child just go in and out of someone else's house. You can't do that. When I was on my own I didn't really notice how people socialised, because it was just me. I'd met my friends at the places where I worked and I didn't realise it was different when you had children.

[In Zimbabwe] someone washes for them and somebody does everything for them. You're just there as a mum, you know, to sort out this and this problem... it is much harder work much, much harder. There is so much that you have to do, so much, and so little space. I feel I'm confined here and I'm not used to that very small space. I'm not used to having my children within 10 metres of me all the time. In houses, even outdoors... I feel I'm becoming a bit controlling of them because they're there on the computer and you say 'I think you've been there too long', they're watching TV and you say 'I think you've been...' they're playing on the X-box and you say 'Do your homework'. I feel like I'm controlling the kids now because that's all they do, either they're on the X-box, or the Play station or the TV that's how they play and I think 'Oh no, stop this, stop this'. You feel like really, really controlling...[In Zimbabwe] they'd be playing outdoors, with some neighbours that you know, maybe the next-door neighbours.

Her husband arrived four months later. This did not make things easier as it took him longer than expected to get a job, putting an additional strain on family relations.

So it wasn't what we expected because in terms of, er, even the quality of living. You can imagine I had two maids at some stage. You don't do any washing up; you don't do any mopping, washing or ironing. You just go to school, you just tell your maid what you want for lunch, you go to school, you come home, have your lunch, you go back, leave her to do the dishes. You come home, have your supper and you go to bed. So, here you are thinking that you are making a lot of money and then you see that you are doing everything yourself...It was okay when I was on my own, I mean I didn't really need to do that much of ironing or washing-up or cooking. Because if you eat at work you don't really need to come in and prepare something. You just have a sandwich and go to bed. But then when my children came I thought 'My goodness, I am the maid and I am the breadwinner. I am the maid, I am doing

everything!' It was a shock, because I've never done it in all my life.

Patricia's sense of the poor discipline in UK schools compared to Zimbabwe had persuaded her not to re-train as a teacher. Instead she decided that once her family was reunited and settled that she would return to study and qualify as a mental health nurse. She felt that mental health nurse training would provide a route into caring in a professional capacity with more remuneration and higher status. Assuming the identity of learner was also a way of overcoming racial prejudice and the low expectations that other care workers had of her. She describes agency work as an environment where people 'tend to take advantage of other people'. She felt that it was not necessarily, or always, on grounds of race, but also by virtue of being new in a place compared to permanent staff. As agency staff you were treated with less respect and given the worst jobs to do. This echoes McGregor's findings of the 'friction' between temporary staff who are predominantly African or other migrants and the predominantly white permanent staff (McGregor 2007). However, institutionalised racism and the low expectations that other care workers had of her as a Black African was a significant motivating factor in her decision to return to study. Race was one of the pivotal markers of her habitus in the field of care work and clearly signalled her inferior position in that field. To negotiate her way out of this denigrated position Patricia was able to mobilise the educational capital accumulated in the predominantly white and middle class boarding school in Zimbabwe. Returning to education was a way of transforming her identity, proving her abilities and respectability.

[W]hen you go into workplaces because not only are you African, but you are also Black, people don't expect you to, to have any kind of education. So you are always out to prove yourself which is really what motivated me into [mental health nursing]. There was a time when I was comfortable with my care jobs, earning enough to send home and look after myself. But then I thought every place you go you have to prove yourself and you can always take out your certificates and say 'Well, I've got O-levels, I've got a teaching diploma, I've got A-levels'. You can always do that. It's really stressful to always try to say 'I'm not what you expect or what you think', so the only way was to be in education yourself to be professional and then people don't question you. They don't question your ability because they know you're going through the education process. Because it's really difficult out there when you go to places and even the basic things people think you don't know that or they ask 'Are there things like this in Zimbabwe?' Or 'Can you write the simple reports for what happened to the residents?' and you think 'Yes: I can write! I can spell!' It is that you have to prove yourself. If you're doing a care job where you don't need any qualifications how are you proving yourself? That is one thing I realised.

She describes how when her fellow care workers treated her as if she didn't know anything, she would 'pull out that nurse training course card'. Being a student and returning to education, even though in a different country, was an enjoyable and straight forward process for her. The ability to convert her educational capital to symbolic capital brought with it a sense of confidence, security and entitlement enabling the production and reformation of identity:

I didn't really doubt my academic ability because that is what I am, I am an academic, I like the reading, the essays, the exams, all that. ... I like the enrichment of being on the receiving end ...

Patricia managed to pay her course fees and combine her full time study with

working and supporting her family. Her experiences in higher education are picked up in chapter nine. She graduated in summer 2008 and at the time of writing is continuing care work while looking for employment as a mental health nurse.

In both Patricia's and Maryam's narratives we see how the central axis in their lives shifts in response to their caring responsibilities. In Patricia's case, we see how her focus and main identity shifts from worker and money earner, to caring for her children and struggling to re-establishing her identity as a mother in a culture with very different norms and expectations. Once her children were settled she draws on the capital of her bourgeoisie and, importantly, British education to return to a viable and confident identity of her past: that of student and a person working towards qualifications. Eventually, she achieves the professional identity of mental health nurse.

Chapter 5. Farideh: The Iranian Nutritionist's Story

Farideh came for an interview and to find out more about the WILAW programme in 2004. At that time she had been in the UK for four years. I have interviewed her five times since our initial meeting and kept regular email and informal contact between interviews. During the time that I have known Farideh she has experienced some significant personal upheavals and difficulties, including divorcing her husband and subsequent isolation from the Iranian community in which she was living. Weaving through Farideh's story is an unhappiness with, and resistance to, the traditional gender identities and ascriptions of the Iranian Islamic Republic. The curtailment of her dress, her choice of study and employment, and especially the pressure of heterosexuality and marriage are underlying threads throughout her narrative. Migration offered a new social space which opened up alternative possibilities and gender positions, including living on her own as an independent woman.

Farideh is an intensely private person, preferring not to discuss her personal life in the context of this research. Much of our interview time is taken up with her formal learning experiences and is reflected in the narrative presented here. She is happy to talk and share pictures and memories of her family and life in Iran, but not of her marriage. Her narrative highlights the struggle to adapt to the very different expectations of the UK higher education system and to establish a positive learner identity for herself when the value of her capital has been measured and fixed as being of very little worth.

Life in Iran

Farideh was born in Shiraz in southern Iran in 1959. Her father was a lawyer until he was prevented from practising under the Shah's regime. Amidst growing discontent and opposition to the Shah's regime in the 1970s he set up a newspaper, but that too was shut down as it was perceived to be anti-establishment. She describes herself as having been a studious child who loved school. She worked hard and achieved high grades throughout her primary and high school. Towards the end of high school she became increasingly politicized and was particularly moved by the plight of the Palestinian people. She began to read books about Islam and politics written in Persian by Marxist and Iranian oppositionists, books which under the Shah's regime were banned. In her final year of high school she didn't achieve good grades which she ascribes to her growing political activity.

The Iranian Revolution occurred in 1979, the year she left high school. Almost immediately the regime introduced a series of restrictive measures against women. These included changes in family law which clearly disadvantaged women, forced *hejab* (long dress and headscarf), and restrictions on women's choice of work (Sanasarian 1992). Farideh laughs as she tells me about the Western-style clothing and very short skirts she used to wear at high school. During the early days of the revolution she had to wear a black *chador*, the outer garment worn in public covering from the head to the ankles, but later this was relaxed to the *hejab*. She describes how she felt suffocated in the headscarf and how she couldn't hear or think well when she wore it; even when in the fresh air she felt stifled. The long dress didn't bother

her too much but she would remove the headscarf at every opportunity. Institutional cleansing or '*paak saazi*' barred women from entering Government institutions if they were wearing make-up, had a manicure or any hair showing (Honarbin-Holliday 2008: 53).

Farideh applied to university and started a degree in the north of Iran in veterinary science. However, a year and a half into the degree the Islamic Cultural Revolution took place and all the universities were shut for three years while a new academic cadre and national curriculum was put in place. One of the changes was that some subjects were not considered suitable for girls and women. For example, agriculture or geology which required exposure to the outside / public sphere were not suitable. Laboratory sciences, midwifery and nursing were considered better suited to women's nature as they were confined to the inside / private arena, and in the case of midwifery and nursing placed women in largely all female environments (Sanasarian 1992). For this reason Farideh was unable to continue with veterinary science and three years later started a second degree in nutritional science. So in the space of just a few years Farideh had to negotiate her way through the changed religious and cultural norms brought about by the Cultural Revolution. This was most visibly represented in the prohibition of Western clothing and the introduction of an Islamic dress code, but also in the behaviour, areas of study and employment assigned to women. A dramatically changed gender ideology began to map out and impose constraints on women's agency.

It was also a very difficult time for her as her brother, who was a doctor, and her younger sister who was just fourteen were arrested. Both had been accused of supporting the *Mojahedin*, a left wing political group, who were prominent in the movement against the Shah. Her brother was imprisoned in Shiraz, and her sister in Tehran. Although the *Mojahedin* had played an important role in bringing the Ayatollah Khomeini to power they subsequently became the main opposition to his Islamic Republic and faced brutal persecution. Between 1981 and 1988 over six thousand *Mojahedin* were executed (Abrahamian 1992).

Farideh describes how her parents were both distressed and unwell, so much of the prison visiting fell to her; she would make the long journey by bus back to Shiraz twice a week with a small torch and her books so that she could study on the journey. Despite these emotional upheavals in her family life she graduated with good grades and did a one-year mandatory placement for the government overseeing quality control in a food science laboratory. She describes this as the best time in her life; it was her first taste of paid employment and of real independence. She had three proposals of marriage in one year, all of which she refused. Once she had finished her placement she returned to live with her parents, but found it difficult to find work. At interviews she describes how she wasn't asked about her experience for the job, or why she was applying, rather she was asked questions about Islam and her observation and understanding of religious practices. When she failed these questions she was told to go away and study religious texts.

She eventually got a job managing a residential unit for female students, but quickly found the requirement to give preferential treatment to certain groups at odds with her own sense of fairness. She describes the system of allocating accommodation to students as corrupt, with priority being given to the families of martyrs, i.e. those who had fathers or brothers who had been killed in the Iran-Iraq war, rather than according to need. When Farideh wrote a letter to her manager expressing concern at the unfairness she was transferred to a mail sorting office.

Farideh did finally get a job in her own subject area, working as a nutritionist in a children's hospital. The job was not easy as it involved supervising seventeen male kitchen staff who did not want a female manager. The first year was characterised by deliberate campaigns to undermine and stymie her attempts to do the job, but eventually she managed to get the workers to accept her and she did the job for eight years.

During this time Farideh got married to a man who also worked at the hospital. Her marriage was not a subject she was keen to talk about in our interviews; she describes not having wanted to get married and even not liking her husband, but how in Iran it was impossible for a woman in her early thirties not to be married. She 'just wanted to be independent, but I couldn't do that in my country'. Sanasarian (1992) describes how at this time '[m]arriage was relentlessly advocated by the state' (1992: 61). The official marriage age was reduced to thirteen for girls, polygamous and 'temporary' marriages were encouraged, and women's rights to divorce were severely limited.

Sanasarian suggests this pressure to marry corresponded to the state's need to reduce the number of unmarried females (and hence control female sexuality), and to increase the birth-rate at a time of huge loss of life during the war with Iraq (1980-1988). Despite the Islamic Republic's gender ideology that the natural and main responsibility for women was motherhood, women were still required in the workforce. The war had devastated the economy, reduced the male workforce and increased the number of female headed households. However, contradictory gender ideology meant that, as in Farideh's experience above, women's experience in the workforce was often fraught with conflict and struggle (Sanasarian 1992).

Life in Iran had become unbearably difficult for her and for her family as the persecution of any opposition to the regime intensified. Her older brother had been executed by the government, as had her younger sister who had been just sixteen years old. Her other sister had fled to the USA. Farideh and her husband's flight from Iran was terrifying and sudden. She has never told me what had finally happened to make them leave, just that:

I was doing my job very happily, but something happened and we did something wrong and we had to come here.

Learning and Living in UK

Farideh and her husband arrived in the UK in 2000. Farideh describes being in a very distressed state when she arrived and had no idea even which country she was in; she

is still not sure which town they first arrived in. Social services immediately referred her for medical treatment and she was given permission to delay her application for asylum while she underwent treatment for her mental health. Farideh and her husband eventually applied for, and were granted, refugee status within a year of arriving in the UK. Over the next few years Farideh attended college to improve her English language. She did a number of jobs to support herself including working as a cleaner, as a care assistant, a community worker and for the past four years as a hospitality assistant preparing and setting out food for meetings and conferences in a local hospital.

When I first met Farideh she was part-way through a Masters degree in clinical nutrition at a higher education institute in London. She was keen to practice as a nutritionalist in the UK and believed that the Masters degree in clinical nutrition could provide her with a route into that profession. The first interview took place after the first year of a two year Masters. She was living on the south coast and had been commuting to London two days a week. It was hugely expensive, not only in course fees, but also in travelling costs. This distance also contributed to her sense of isolation. This what she said about the course:

It's very interesting and I like it, but I wasn't looking for something interesting I was looking for something to guide me into work. It's a taught course and I enjoy it a lot and I'm learning new things. But up to now I haven't seen a hospital and really I don't know what a nutritionalist does in the UK. I don't know...It's a 2 year course and I've finished the first year but I'm not sure about the second year because if I can't gain any experience of work...I mean I don't need a new certificate ... well I need one but the most important thing for me is to find some way of finding a job. I think there is a high demand for this job and it's very competitive and I'm not optimistic

about finding a job.

Entering university in the UK was a confusing and disturbing experience for Farideh as she struggled to decipher the unfamiliar academic writing conventions, the learning styles, technicalities of referencing and the expectations of tutors regarding academic assignments.

It was very difficult for me really and for the first term because it was the first time that I wanted to study scientific material in English and I didn't know how to start. For the first month or two I used to translate from English to my language and then I read it in my language but then I couldn't express it in English so I couldn't work. I have learnt a lot. It has been a lot of work, a lot, a lot. ... Especially in the first term I didn't know how to write essays. It was the first time. I didn't know I had to reference any of my writing so I had to re-write it...I had a letter attached to the essay saying there are no references...They didn't show me how to write them. They also said that the paragraphs are not friendly [sic]. I didn't know I could use sub-titles in my essay because in the English course I learnt that when I write an article or something I don't have to use sub-titles. But I do need sub-titles in an essay to make the parts separate. Then I read essays from different journals and I compared it with myself and my essay. I used to write at university in Iran, but it was very different. I didn't have to reference everything, I used to write references at the end only, not for all the sentences in the middle of the essay, not in the text.

Also, presentations were very, very, very difficult. The first presentation I didn't know what is a presentation. 18 years ago we had presentations in Iran, but we didn't have PowerPoint or overheads. It was very embarrassing the first time. When I wanted to do my presentation I didn't have PowerPoint on my computer I used overhead slides. I was very nervous, I couldn't finish it because I was shaking ...[laughs]...Yes, I was shaking, my voice was shaking and I couldn't remember where the overhead was, it was on the ceiling and people couldn't see it, but I was very embarrassed. I couldn't look. I couldn't look behind and control it and see where it was, on the board or on the wall. I couldn't finish that first one. But the second one I had experience. I asked my tutor to attend presentation of other students in other subjects and courses and it was very helpful. I took notes and then I understood that I had

to have introduction and this and this and this. And then the second time I used PowerPoint. It was better; I think I got ...59% [laughs]. I'd never done presentations like this before! At the same time it was a very difficult time in my life and then I had to study so hard and this added to it.

I felt isolated on the course because I didn't know anyone. I tried to make good communication with other students, [pause] but I wasn't successful and I felt completely isolated. Yes, it was very difficult. I lost 8 kilos. Yes, it was from everything. I studied from 6am to 10pm. I had to write, for example, 4,000 words; it was the first time I wrote a review. There was an option course in Health Science which I wanted to do. When I read the paper it was written that it was in Autumn and Spring; so I thought I'd do it in the Spring. When I went to start the course it had started in September and I didn't have chance to go to the class to learn how to write a review. I had to do the whole course in just 2 months. I had two 15 minute meetings with my tutor and then I used the computer to try and find out how to write a review. I had almost written 4000 words when I showed it to my tutor; she took away 3000 words. She said that you don't have to write a lot of information about the topic that you want to present, that they already know, for example, about 'free radicals' so you don't need to write it. So I started to write it again. I started again. It was very difficult, but I finished it. I'm waiting for the result now.

Lillis (2001) refers to an 'institutional practice of mystery' to describe how higher education fails to make explicit, or to teach the conventions of the literacy practice it demands. Far from being monolithic or transparent Lea and Street (1998) argue that literacy practices vary across disciplines, courses and tutors, and that such variations were at the level of 'epistemology, authority and contestation over knowledge', rather than skills or competencies (1998: 160). They argue that it is not valid to suggest that such concepts are generic or transferable or represent 'common sense ways of knowing'. Lillis (2001) goes on to argue that 'essayist' literacy practices represent a particular way of knowing and being which: 'privileges the discursive routines of

particular social groups whilst dismissing those of people who, culturally and communally, have access to and engage in a range of other practices' (Lillis 2001: 39).

Farideh's habitus and social background rendered her confused and an outsider in the UK higher education field. She did not have access to the cultural and social capital which could help her make informed choices as to whether the Masters programme was appropriate for her employment goals, instead she relied on the 'cold knowledge' provided by the college rather than the 'hot knowledge' available through social networks or inherited knowledge (Ball et al. 2000). She didn't have the cultural capital to help her to read and understand the academic timetable or to decipher the expectations and conventions of academic practices. To use Bourdieu's (1992) analogy of the game, she didn't know the written and unwritten rules and what the most effective strategies might be to ensure academic success. The cultural capital that had taken her so long to acquire in Iran was fixed as being inferior and lacking in value. Aware of this evaluation, Farideh had a sense of herself as an inferior student, contributing to the insecurity and anxiety she felt in higher education. She didn't have the confidence or cultural understanding that it was acceptable to ask questions, or establish a dialogue with her tutors at an early stage, which could have rendered her experience less difficult and traumatic.

Despite her high levels of English language, making mistakes in her written work and being able to understand everything that went on in the classroom was also a concern

for Farideh. She'd been unable to locate any support services at the university which might have been able to help her.

When I finished my essays I didn't know how to correct my English mistakes and I couldn't find anything in the university because as I said I used to go just 2 days. I found someone to help me at the college. I paid £80. I gave her £80 to look at two essays and correct my English. However, when I had my results it said that I mixed UK and American English [laughs].

I had a bit of difficulty in that course and the other people had a very high level of English so I had to listen very, very carefully to understand and sometimes I couldn't. I wanted to buy a tape recorder but you know the course was very expensive and I had to pay for everything. My travel was expensive, sometimes I had to pay £40 for the train because I had to be there at 9am. It was very, very expensive. I had a little bit of savings but I spent them all this first year. If I can find a job and if I can save until September [it was June at the time of the interview] I can continue with my studies. I applied for a loan from the bank, but who trusts a refugee who doesn't have any job and any money in their account?

Farideh never did return after the first year to complete her Masters degree and exited with a diploma. It was a difficult time in her personal life as she was in the process of separating from and divorcing her husband. This involved her moving away, both physically and emotionally, from the Iranian community in which she'd been living. It was at this point that she started the WILAW course with the aim of finding a new and different direction which would provide greater opportunities for employment in the UK. She decided to study pharmacy as she felt this was most likely to lead to employment in the UK and also would enable her to work in hospitals in the UK. She was accepted on an undergraduate degree course as long as she brushed up her knowledge of chemistry, which she did by taking an A Level in chemistry.

Farideh is enjoying the pharmacy course although she still struggles with the different education systems, learning styles and expectations. She describes how in Iran lecturers used to give them all they needed to learn, so that when they left the lecture they knew what they needed to know on what they had to do:

In my country, lecturers, they work much harder than students to give the students what they need to know. I don't want to say it's good, but it's easy for students because they have everything ready, just they read and they learn it. But here they just show the way, give you one sentence and you have to go and find from the books and you can't find it in one book. So it's very time consuming and I'm very slow in reading, so it took me a lot of time...

Lacking explicit guidance on what texts to read was a new and challenging experience for Farideh. She went on to describe the length of time it took her to search for information and then to identify what was relevant to her purposes. She described the time spent looking for books and information as 'wasted time' which could have been spent studying. When we met during her second year of studies she talked of the lack of books and how she felt she was not getting the feedback that she needed in order to improve her work. She was also finding the volume of work difficult to manage with her paid employment. Despite all of these difficulties she talked of 'loving' studying and how lucky she was to have that opportunity.

Since Farideh had been in the UK her father had died and just her mother and a younger sister are left in Iran. She phones her mother every Tuesday and her sister in the USA every Saturday. She talks in a matter of fact manner about her parents'

generation, many of whom are left in Iran and have lost their children either in the wars, from executions or through migration.

She likes living in the UK but feels there is 'always something missing'. Although she has been here for eight years she still feels she doesn't belong here:

As a refugee I felt you are living somewhere that you don't belong to. Especially English people; they are not very interested with communicating with...I can't say foreign people, it's asylum seekers. What can I say...there is not a good perception of refugees, the view is not good of refugees. May be there is a definition of refugees as people who come to this country for benefits and unfortunately the very, very little cases it's true, but we can't expand it to everyone. When I speak to English people the first question they ask me is 'When do you intend to go back?' What can I say? I think English people trust the media. It affects people.

However, she doesn't believe the situation for women is getting any better in Iran and believes it would be very difficult for a woman on her own to live and work there.

She says she would love to go back to live, and believes that one day she will, perhaps '...after I'm 65, when I'm an old woman and can just live'.

The political situation in Iran took an unexpected and quite sudden turn in June 2009 with the announcement of the Iranian presidential election results. When President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was returned with a large majority, supporters of the opposition leader Mir Hussein Mousavi and his 'Green Revolution' took to the streets. The mass demonstrations which occurred in major cities across the country had not been seen since the overthrow of the Shah's regime in 1979. Farideh and I

met while the demonstrations were ongoing and she described herself as being excited and scared in equal measure. She was excited at the possibility of change, but scared for the young people demonstrating and what the regime could do to them; she recalled the loss of her brother and sister and what this had meant to her family. Despite her caution, the events had clearly changed how she felt about Iran and the possibilities for her future. For the first time she could imagine the possibility of returning, either for a visit or perhaps to live. She was 'not brave enough' yet, but would wait and see what happened.

Chapter 6. Savalan: The Iranian Entrepreneur's Story

Savalan completed the WILAW course in 2006. He is the participant who I've known for the shortest period of time and is also the youngest, being just twenty-four when he arrived in the UK in 2004. The narrative presented here describes his first five years in the UK and his determined efforts to learn to speak English perfectly and to understand the new culture in which he found himself. He demonstrates a strategic approach to the transition process: consciously making decisions that will enhance his language learning, support the development of networks with non-refugees and enable him to re-gain the status and economic position he enjoyed in Iran. This sense of agency is also illustrated in his decision to change his name to something which more accurately reflected his cultural and ethnic background. His narrative draws attention to the significance of transnational relationships with family members left behind, and the complexities involved in trying to reconcile different aspects of his identity. It also highlights the vulnerability and anxiety created by the impact of giving refugees temporary right to remain in the UK for just five years (Home Office 2005).

The last time I met Savalan was in the summer of 2009, in a café on Brighton seafront. I was struck not only by his excellent English vocabulary and pronunciation, given that he has lived in the UK for less than five years, but also at how relaxed and at ease he was in his cultural surroundings. He chatted with café staff, and apart from a slight accent would almost pass as an indigenous English man.

Life in Iran

Savalan was born in Ardabil in Azerbaijan in north-west Iran in 1980 and grew up during the first decade of the Iranian Cultural Revolution. Under the Shah's regime his father had worked in personal security in Iran, but after the revolution in 1979 the family had fled to Azerbaijan to escape the reprisals against people who had worked for the Shah's regime. Once in Azerbaijan his father set up his own business. Savalan describes Azerbaijan as being completely separate from Iran with its own language and culture.

His parents had five daughters before finally having a son, which he says meant that he was considered the most important and lived a 'protected life'. He was indulged by his parents and received preferential treatment in terms of their affections and attention. He didn't particularly enjoy school and described the teachers as being too strict. It was during the war with Iraq and he explained how the government's encouragement for families to have more children meant that classrooms were often overcrowded and some schools had two or three shifts a day to accommodate all of the children; there was also pressure from his parents to study hard and do well at school, and any failure was punished. His happiest memories were of the summer holidays when he would go to stay with his grandparents on a small farm in the countryside. Later on it was of memories of being a teenager with his three best friends and having no responsibilities. He expressed alienation from the Iranian regime and was very critical of the restrictions on behaviour, clothing and hairstyles imposed upon teenagers at that time. He'd always been interested in politics and

discussing and debating political issues was part of his family life. There was no access to the internet when he was growing up, but they would listen to BBC Farsi which was broadcast from abroad. The Government would try to disrupt the frequency and they would constantly have to re-tune the radio to try and pick it up again.

He left secondary education with a diploma in maths and physics. He began studying to take the entrance exam for university but felt that in Iran at that time there was no guarantee of a well-paid job after university. He describes university in Iran as being 'a waste of time'. Keddie (2006) describes how in the late 1990s, even as relations with some foreign Governments began to thaw, the economy still suffered from low investment and high unemployment. The Cultural Revolution had greatly weakened Iran's science and technology and the economy was overwhelmingly dependent on oil. Both male and female graduates were (and still are) facing high levels of unemployment and finding suitable employment remains a major problem. When an opportunity arose for him to train in ICT he took it, believing that as this was a relatively new and growing field in Iran he would fare better as an entrepreneur in commerce than studying for four years and then facing poor employment prospects. His mother sold some of the jewellery to buy him a computer and he went to Tehran to study. After training Savalan worked for a year in a company assembling, repairing and selling computers, before setting up his own business. In just four years he had a profitable business, his own flat and a very comfortable life in Iran.

Savalan did not wish the reason for his flight from Iran to be part of this research. He explained how he had broken a law in Iran, but that it was ‘a fundamental freedom and not against the law in other countries’. When he discovered that his life was in danger he sold some of the business to raise money for his escape. He describes how he paid a lot of money which made the journey relatively short, just two weeks as opposed to the months it can take people who come overland. He had only confided in one sister that he was leaving, the rest of his family and friends he contacted by phone once he was safely out of Iran. Savalan was fairly matter of fact about leaving the business he had built up:

I lost what I had done for five years. And then in one go [clicks his fingers] you lose everything. But I am happy here, and I am safe.

It was his family, and in particular his mother who he felt most sad about leaving.

Learning and Living in the UK

Savalan arrived in London in December 2004 and was sent to a hotel in Dover where he stayed for forty-five days with two hundred other Iranians. Staying in Dover was an unpleasant experience. He describes how the high concentration of asylum seekers in the town had fostered hostile feelings towards refugees and asylum seekers among the local population. It was Christmas time and they were curious to see how English people celebrated the festive season, but after one incident of being physically attacked they didn't go out much, especially in the evenings. Instead they watched the

Christmas celebrations on television. He made friends with the manager of the hotel who taught him basic rules of etiquette and how to greet people. She also taught him the importance of saying 'thank you' and 'please' at the appropriate times, and he frequently went to her for help in understanding and deciphering the new culture.

His expectations of the UK had been shaped by television in Iran and he relates how he had expected everyone to be walking the streets with lap tops and carrying guns. It was not as he had expected it to be and he talked at length about the differences between the two cultures: food, tea drinking, the political openness in the UK, pubs and bars, the focus on the nuclear family rather than extended family and friends, and the 'English reserve'. He talks of the culture shock he experienced on arrival:

Everything was numb. For forty-five days I was numb in Dover, I didn't fear because I was like shocked. I couldn't see properly what was going on and the first three months in Brighton as well... You see the boxers they box, one of them punch and they can't see. You are shocked. I was like that... coming here and, you know, facing gay people! We haven't got gay people, we haven't got lesbians. Like I saw two men kissing each other and I was like, 'What's going on here?' But it was very interesting, you go somewhere and you face something that you never experienced so, yeh.

Q: So what did you think about that, when you saw these shocking things?

A: Just, first it was interesting, then second I was happy that I am seeing a new thing ... I have a chance to see what's going on in Western country, and how people think in the West. And another thing I always respect them. ... If I don't respect you, you won't respect me. So respect any new ideas, however I found them, they may be silly or stupid in my mind first time but I said 'Okay it is their belief, I need to respect them'.

He feels people are lonelier and more depressed here in the UK. He was shocked at how many people he sees sitting watching television by themselves when he walks home at night. He found this sad and felt that both cultures had something to offer, you just had to try and pick the best bits from each.

After forty-five days he, and nine other Iranians, were dispersed to Brighton while his case was processed by the Home Office. He talks of his life at this point as being in three sections: his case with the Home Office, learning English and his private life. It was a time of considerable vulnerability and anxiety: letters from the Home Office and from his solicitor were all in English and he didn't know anyone who spoke English well enough to translate for him. He would take the letters to Migrant Helpline⁴ and hope that a translator could be found quickly, otherwise there were delays in finding out what was happening with his case. He feels that the difficulty and delays that language posed was an issue in many of the rejected cases for asylum: people didn't always know what was going on in their cases and didn't have time to respond.

He enrolled on an English language course at a local college and worked very hard to learn and to improve his English (until 2007 asylum seekers were entitled to attend government funded ESOL classes). He was scornful of the English language teaching he had received in Iran; the teachers had never been to the UK so much of the

⁴ Migrant Helpline is a charity providing assistance and support for asylum seekers and refugees entering and living in the UK. It is partly funded by the UK Home Office.

pronunciation and expressions he had learnt were incorrect. He describes having very little English language when he arrived and having to mime to express himself.

Learning English was a priority for him, not only in the functional sense of wanting to be able to communicate and express himself, but also because becoming a competent speaker was closely linked to his sense of identity and self-esteem.

And I remember that I didn't go out at night or whatever, I just stayed home, watching telly and any single new word that I came across, I checked it in the dictionary. How they say it, how they speak, because I realised that speaking English language is essential for me even much more than getting refugee status. ... There were some circumstances that I couldn't say what I wanted, and people thought that I am stupid, because I can't talk. So I wanted to prove to them, No, I am not able to speak English language doesn't mean that I don't know or I am stupid.

He moved to a different college the following autumn in order to be with a broader range of students and where he was the only refugee in the class.

You mix up with other students who are not refugees, so you can learn with them more, and socialise with them. So I went to register my name at [name] College, I took an exam and it was September 2005 I was still an asylum seeker and I went and I was very, very lucky that I had a very, very kind teacher, she is a friend now.

He told the teacher that he was an asylum seeker because he had to sometimes miss classes to go to the Home Office, but he didn't tell any of the other students. Even when he received the phone call from his solicitor confirming that he had been granted refugee status during one of his English classes he still didn't reveal his identity to his fellow students. He had been in the UK for almost a year when he

received his status and he describes how he stood weeping with relief outside the classroom as he tried to phone his mother in Iran to tell her.

However, Savalan had only been granted refugee status for five years. In our early interviews he was not too concerned about this temporary status; he was just concerned to start his life here in the UK without the fear that he could face imminent deportation back to Iran. For Savalan, getting refugee status meant that he was now able to plan what he was going to do with his life. He knew that competition in the ICT field would make it impossible for him to establish and succeed in business in the way that he had done in Iran, and that the best chance he had of working in business was to go to university and study for a degree. He applied for the WILAW course and was advised to do a one year Access to Business course before joining the course and then to apply for a degree. This gave him the opportunity to continue improving his English language and to develop the academic language, skills and conventions needed to succeed in HE.

On the Access course he was studying with English students for the first time. He found this frightening at first because he still felt embarrassed by his English language. However, the practical experience, ideas and understanding that he'd built up in Iran through running his own business gave him confidence. He was able to make links with some of the theoretical ideas and realised that in many ways he had an edge on the other students. The frustration of not being able to express his ideas further encouraged him to work harder at his English language. He continued to make

lists of new vocabulary 'then I practise, practise, practise them'. Again he didn't tell any of the other students that he was a refugee.

I think it was a big worry if people asked me 'what are you doing here?'. What can I say because, like I am a refugee but I have got respect for myself, I don't want to be down in front of people. Okay so you know, all of them are free here they can, you know, but I am a refugee. So I didn't like this idea of telling people I am a refugee. First, I thought it was so personal, that to tell them I was a refugee was my personal life. And the other thing is I thought this may affect me badly, if I tell them it would put me down, like bring my morale down, you know, and I don't like people being sympathetic to me all the time. 'Yeh, you know, he's a refugee,' or something, I don't like that and the other thing is that it is embarrassing really. Embarrassing that I come from, I don't know, come from a bad country you know. So I prefer not telling them why I am here and what for. I just always say at the beginning that I am a student.

Savalan went on to explain that just as in Iran, British people are affected by what the Government says. He finds this surprising given the freedom of the press and widespread access to the internet. He blames the British Government and the media for the negative and hostile perception of refugees.

They never say this refugee did something good. Everything what they say about refugees is bad. Okay, but they don't want to say Savalan came here three years ago he hasn't got a criminal record, he has never fought, he's in education and you know he hasn't got any problems and he is refugee so we can have a refugee without any problem, and if we keep them in the future they will be very good for our society you know. They never say, you know what I mean?

During this time Savalan decided to change his name. He had been named Abdullah, after his great grandfather. It was a name he hadn't liked too much in Iran, but he'd

put up with it as it was a very common name and he felt it was somehow normal. It is also not possible to change your name in Iran so he had not thought of it as an option. However, in the UK he began to question why he had an Arabic name rather than an Azari or Farsi name which he felt would indicate his ethnicity, his background and culture.

When I arrived here I realised it more and more that the name that I have I don't like it. It has nothing to do with my culture and my background.

He resented people making the wrong assumptions about his identity and assuming that he was Arabic. He chose the name Savalan after an Azerbaijani political singer songwriter who sings about an autonomous, independent Azerbaijan, it is also the name of a landmark near his hometown, Ardabil. As such, it was a name which signified his minority identity in both the UK and Iran.

Savalan successfully completed the Access course and after the WILAW course progressed straight onto a Bachelor's degree in international business in 2007. It's a four-year sandwich course with the opportunity to spend one year in another country, and he'd already applied to go to the USA for a year. He was concerned because his five years leave to remain expires the year before he is due to complete a degree. Although he says he is trying not to think about it, it became a recurrent topic in our later interviews. We frequently discussed what made a 'good British citizen' and what criteria the Home Office might draw upon when assessing whether he could stay in

the UK or be returned to Iran.

I was one of the first group of refugees to get five years. We don't know what will happen, we have to wait and then apply for British citizenship and see what happens. I believe they are going to look at what we've done during this time, any criminal records or did we pay tax? What have we done during this four or five years, can we speak English? I think they will look at these things. There are some refugees who've been here a long time, but they don't speak English and they need translators and I think the government doesn't want such citizens and I think that's fair enough. I think the government is going to look at our performance, what we've done.

He went on to talk about the cost of educating him and how 'stupid' it would be to send him back, just when society could begin to reap the benefits of his education. In our last formal interview Savalan told me that because of his fear that he might be deported he'd decided against going to the USA for a year and instead planned to complete his degree in three years. At least that way he will have completed his degree and have a UK qualification before his visa expires. His plan is to try and find employment immediately on completion, but if that doesn't work he will study for a Master's degree, which he hopes will give him the same labour market advantage of having studied for a year in the USA.

Savalan enjoys being a university student. He's met a lot of new people but still mainly socialises with his refugee friends, some of whom he met in Dover and some in Brighton. He describes them as being really good friends who he can count on, but feels he needs to move away from them because they are not helping him with his academic studies. They come home from work and want to just 'chill out', whereas

he feels he needs to devote more time to his academic studies and have friends who also study in the evening. He's identified who the good students are on his course and wants to spend more time with them next year.

Being a full-time student is not without its sacrifices. He works for a security company twenty hours a week but financially is finding it hard to meet his commitments and feels he could do more. He describes the difference between himself and some of his fellow students:

For them it is a different story. They phone daddy or mummy and they give them money. In my turn my mummy or daddy phone me, and they ask me for money, so it's slightly different!

He describes his responsibility for his family as 'quite a lot of pressure', but it is a responsibility that he has carried since he set up his own business, although in Iran it was much easier. As the only son it is his responsibility to make the decisions and support his parents financially. He talks of perhaps selling some of their land to relieve the financial pressure because he is concerned that his studies will suffer.

I'll sort it out, I'm a fighter! I'm really happy that I'm helping my family, I don't want my parents to have a hard time because of money. Money is nothing, I will find money later and I can't find my parents later. You can't find a British person like that and I don't think they can understand because they don't understand my country. People there have to sort out their own problems, the government doesn't help.

In more recent interviews his two younger sisters have started at university and he

also takes on financial responsibility for them. He has become increasingly concerned that working as a security guard in night clubs could lead him into a violent confrontation, which in turn could bring him into contact with the Police. Desperately concerned about his perceived vulnerable status he has started working twenty hours a week at a restaurant, and only two nights a week as a security guard. He has also moved from his one-bedroom flat to smaller and cheaper accommodation.

Savalan frequently talks of feeling homesick during our interviews. His mother has suffered with poor mental health since he left and has had to be hospitalised several times. He describes the culture of sons getting married and bringing the new wife to live with or near their parents, supporting and caring for them in their old age. For his mother, Savalan's leaving was a terrible shock from which she has never fully recovered.

For her it was like her son died. Her son left and he won't be there again and I think it is very strong. You gave birth to lots of children to have a son, you got one and you lost him, yes?

He is particularly close to one of his sisters to whom he can talk and turn to for support. But his parents have been too distressed and too worried about him to offer any kind of support and he describes how on some telephone calls his mother just weeps. For Savalan, life in exile involves managing and reconciling different aspects of his identity: being an only son and brother, a worker and financial provider, a student and, increasingly, a possible identity as a temporary sojourner here. His habitus is marked by both his Iranian culture and his refugee identity. He admits that

sometimes trying to manage his feelings gets too much for him and he needs to withdraw and spend time on his own away from everyone and everything.

When I asked Savalan whether he felt a sense of belonging in the UK he said that it 'depends'.

I didn't have any problems in Brighton because it's such a lovely place, cosmopolitan, people are really open-minded. I didn't have any problem that I'm from a different country, that I shouldn't be here.

He then went on to recount an incident which had happened three weeks earlier in the early hours of the morning while he was waiting for his bus home. He was approached by a group of young white men who asked him where he was from; when he refused to tell them they physically assaulted him and threw drink over him. It was only the arrival of the bus and the quick thinking of the driver who opened the door just long enough for him to jump on which saved him from a serious attack.

When something like that happens I definitely, I definitely feel that you are not belonging to this country, this land, this nation.

He concluded by explaining that belonging depended on who he was with and 'whether they see differences of nationality, or whether I'm with shallow minded people'. Despite describing what was a blatantly racist attack Savalan is keen to try and explain and justify what had happened. Perhaps the three men had been beaten by a foreigner in the past and now by punching one of them he had made it worse. He

also speculated that it might not have been because he was a foreigner, but English people just like to pick fights late at night.

Savalan had to think carefully about whether or not he would ever go back to Iran. In the end he concluded that even if he were able to go back at some point in the future he wouldn't want to live there again. He could go back for two weeks or a month to see his family but that is all. He says he couldn't stand the ideas and the way people think 'the way they talk to you, the way they treat you, the way they think of you and the way they socialize'. He was not optimistic about the Iranian uprisings in June 2009 and described it as being more about a power struggle between members of the Government than any real change. He talked of how much he has changed in the last four years, 'a 180 degree change', which he puts down to education and lecturers encouraging them to 'go away and find things out and to question things'. He feels that he is 'a different person now' and because of that could never imagine returning to Iran, although equally, he is not sure whether he wants to stay in the UK and would quite like to go to China or to USA, but it will depend on what happens when his visa expires.

Chapter 7. Alan: The Iranian Civil Engineer's Story

In our first interview in early 2005 Alan was a student on the WILAW course. His central concern and priority in our early interviews was to be able to work as a civil engineer in the UK. Initially, he was confident about his ability to work in his profession, the problem he identified was with his English language. He felt he needed to focus on learning English and finding out what qualifications he needed to work as a civil engineer. He had only relatively recently been granted refugee status and the experience of his journey to the UK, and of being an asylum seeker, still dominated our early interviews. His narrative foregrounds the horror of sudden flight and his fear at finding himself in an unfamiliar environment in which he could not begin to imagine a future. From his experience of being a dispersed asylum seeker to becoming a student in higher education, Alan's narrative illuminates the anguish which can underlie and impact upon the process of transition and reorientation to life in exile. Dealing with the consequences of trauma have limited his opportunities for accruing and converting capital across different social sites.

Life in Iran

Alan was born in 1976. His father was a businessman who owned a small cake factory and shops; he was also involved in construction and property development. His mother devoted her life to running the home and raising five children; he describes her as being an artist and talented dressmaker, able to paint and to design

and create clothes. Alan talks of his parents as being able to read and write, but as having had little formal education. He was born and grew up in Mahabad, a small city in north-west Iran close to the border with Iraq which in the 1940s developed into the headquarters of the movement for Kurdish autonomy. Alan is proud of coming from the city which in 1945 became the capital of the autonomous Republic of Kurdistan; the republic was short lived however, lasting just one year before the Shah's regime arrested and executed the leaders. Alan explains that the Kurds' problem is not just a recent one with the Islamic Republic, but stretches back to the Shah's regime and beyond. The Kurdish people '...have always been in conflict with the main government because they want their land back and they want their rights as well'.

Alan's childhood was dominated by wars. His earliest memory is of the civil war between the Iranian government and Kurdish opposition groups. Several Kurdish groups had been involved in armed struggle against the Government since 1979 and in 1982 the Iranian Government launched a major attack recapturing virtually all rebel held territory by the end of 1983 (Keddie 2003). Government forces bombed his city and he recalls the sandbags at the windows and how the family would hide in the cellar when the bombs fell. His family house had a large cellar and he describes how once neighbours and people on the street had run to his cellar for cover when the bombing started and had ended up staying for three or four nights. There was no electricity and people were packed so tightly together it was impossible to move. Although he was too young to fight in the Iran-Iraq war, Alan witnessed the war first hand as Mahabad was attacked three times by Iraqi forces.

Compared to the political conflict and wars surrounding his childhood, Alan's school life passed uneventfully and he went to university to study civil engineering. His interest in civil engineering stemmed from visits to construction sites he made with his father as a boy. Although his father had no formal training or education Alan describes him as being a good engineer, who could draw up plans and do the calculations for buildings. It was his father's dream that his children would be well educated and go to university. His father was so keen for him to start school as soon as possible that he got Alan's documents one year early so that he could start school a year early. Alan proudly recounts how all of his siblings are well educated: his brother is a civil engineer, one sister is an accountant, one has just graduated and his youngest sister is studying psychology at University. He combined studying with working part-time as an engineering assistant at the local council; it was a job he got through his father's friends.

On completion of university Alan immediately went to Tehran to do his military service. Twenty-one months of military service was compulsory for all Iranian men no matter what their ethnic background. Alan describes how Kurds in the military were treated differently, for example after basic training they weren't allowed to choose which city they served their military service in, and there were restrictions about where they could work. After four months of basic training, Alan was sent to work in a civil engineering department in a city nine hours from his home town. Despite the discrimination faced by Kurds, he describes his experience in the military

as being 'a good experience for life'. He was responsible for organising the work of seventy-five soldiers in the construction field and recounts how he not only got experience of working on a variety of civil engineering projects, but also of managing people.

Once he had completed his military service Alan returned to his home town and got a job as a civil engineer working long hours on a large construction site. He describes how he had to be there before the workers and builders and leave after them in the evening. It was a private company where most of the other employees were Baha'is, a religious minority group, which like the Kurds, experienced economic and social discrimination. He enjoyed the job and gained broad experience of the construction industry, from surveying and setting up the site, to dealing with inspectors and designing parts which didn't match the plans. He did this job for three years, up until he had to leave to come to the UK.

Living and Learning in the UK

Alan arrived in the UK in May 2003. His journey had been on foot and in a box under a lorry.

It was really dangerous; it was horrible. Even if I think about it now my body is shaking. It was a really horrible experience in my life.

Both the journey and the leaving were traumatic experiences. He had never planned

to leave Iran; it was just something that had happened, and it had happened very suddenly:

It was sudden, 100% sudden ... there was no plan, no decision, nothing really... If you make a plan and make a decision it is much easier for a person. For example, if you decide you want to go and live in Spain, you see it you relax. Where in Spain? Looking on Internet, search accommodation, if you can afford it, if you happy there or not. It all goes smoothly if you decide to go somewhere, if you plan to leave somewhere because you are mentally ready for the things that are going to happen to you. But when things happen suddenly you go from one part of the world psht straight to another part of the world. It's like a dream, you wake up 'Oh, another world'. It is very difficult, especially when you don't know the language, it is difficult to communicate, people can hardly understand you; it's a bit hard.

Reflecting back to the time before his flight from Iran, he found the idea that he might one day end up living in another country strange and almost amusing:

I couldn't really imagine living in another country. No way, no never, really. When I was, okay when I was talking to someone in some other country I would feel sorry for them, I don't know why. Believe me, ha ha! May be, somehow I had a good life there, that's why I was okay, I was comfortable. I had my family next to me, I had my job, I had my fun. Everything, it was good, lots of adventures. Yeah.

Alan arrived in Dover in 2003 and after a month was dispersed to Birmingham where he remained for a year and a half while his asylum claim was looked into by the Home Office. He didn't know anybody in Birmingham, but in line with National Asylum Support System (NASS) policy of trying to 'cluster' language and ethnic groups together he was moved to several different hostels or houses, usually with

Kurds from Iraq.

The people around me, nobody thought about studying, just working. I tried to find my own way to learn English – talking, speaking. It's difficult when you are in a society and you cannot speak and can't say anything. You can't solve your problems. It's very difficult also when you ask interpreters, it takes a long time and may be impossible. I tried to go to college at that time by myself. The other problem is that the cultures are completely different, and the personality is different. I was in a home in Birmingham so the people around me were Kurdish from Iraq. Their personality and culture was not very interesting to me and I was annoyed by them. The difference between people: they came from another culture. Every time I was studying they...I was from a culture of university and literate people at that time I was with people who didn't know anything about these things. They weren't educated. So, I wanted to be with people who can understand each other. It was very difficult at that time to live with those people. They were drinking, shouting and things like that. It was very difficult to stay there but I had to stay there, I didn't have any choice. It was very difficult to study. As soon as I had my decision [Home Office decision to grant refugee status] I moved to get away to somewhere where I thought there would be people like me.

Alan had arrived in the UK with what he described as 'kind of basic English'. As indicated by the quote above he had worked hard while in Birmingham to try and learn English from the television and from the internet. He describes how he 'learnt a lot, but still couldn't communicate because there was no one to talk to'. Although asylum seekers aren't entitled to Government funded ESOL courses, somehow Alan did manage to attend a course at a local college:

I went to [name] College it was a full time course, I did an exam and they put me in the upper intermediate class. It was very difficult for me because the exam was just written. I am quite good at guessing words probably because of that they put me in the upper intermediate. It was difficult for me, I was quite shy and I wouldn't communicate very well even if I didn't understand I wouldn't ask. I don't know somehow I was new, new people, new students I don't

know it was a busy class. I was afraid if I said anything it would be a mess! But step-by-step I got better and I was going to college five days a week. It was a very good college...and the teachers were really good as well, very helpful. But unfortunately during this time, moving here, go there, go there I couldn't finish the course, but it was very useful.

Alan had no expectations of the UK and his memory of the first year as an asylum seeker is of a frightening and dark time:

[I]t was really scary for me at the beginning. Very scary and I don't know why but at the beginning I was thinking that I could never live here. It was a very difficult time... when I started university here I felt I am living now somehow, but before that it wasn't really a life. It wasn't really a good life. Worrying, stress. I couldn't like open my mind to see around me because it was very difficult, and depressing. But okay when I started the University I joined your [WILAW] group and things I gradually felt better and better.

Q. What worried and stressed you when you first arrived here?

A. When I go back to when I first arrived here, okay I don't know how to say how I feel. I didn't know what was going to happen. I didn't know what was going to happen really because already I like we say, I washed my hands of my life in Iran. And when I arrived here I had the same feeling and that feeling was with me because I didn't know, somehow I was thinking okay I can never see my family again and that was always in my mind. I won't be able to see them again and that is it. It's a horrible feeling. When I think about it, it is a bit strange now [shuffles in chair]. I was thinking that I was going to die every day. I don't know why. Because it was a lot of pressure on me, a lot of stress. And okay every hour I was expecting that something would happen to me. It was like a shock to be honest, like a big shock. When I go back and think about those times I don't know. Some days it is hard and it is funny, both [laughs].

Q. It sounds terrifying.

A. It was really. It was and that's why I think this is still the side effects from that particular time that sometimes is still annoying me,

do you know what I mean?

Alan's fragility and fear is palpable in his narrative; he'd turned his back on his past and yet cannot imagine a future. As an asylum seeker, only the most basic, subsistence level of support is available, and as noted in chapter one, the process of integration does not start until refugee status is confirmed. The transition from asylum seeker to refugee was also difficult and Alan's story highlights the need for better support during this period of transition from support by NASS to either independent living or welfare benefits. As soon as refugee status was granted he was given twenty-eight days to leave the accommodation provided by NASS and find his own accommodation. He describes not knowing what to do and where to go as he didn't know anyone in Birmingham, apart from the people he was sharing a house with. He ended up staying on in the house beyond the twenty-eight days, which he considered to have been 'illegal'. Unfortunately, most of the other people living in the house were refused asylum and had to leave both the house and the country. These people then just 'disappeared' to become part of the unknown number of undocumented 'illegal' migrants. Alan was left with no one he knew in Birmingham and nowhere to stay.

While waiting for his claim for asylum to be processed he'd looked into the possibility of working as a civil engineer in the UK. He discovered that his cultural capital could not be exchanged for employment reward and that he would have to study further to practise as an engineer.

I didn't really want to do any other job. I've seen other people who had qualifications from their country and they do other jobs like making a business or working in a pizza shop or factory rather than their own specialism, and I didn't want to be like that. I want to work as an engineer. The only thing I could do was think about going to university and getting an engineering qualification and getting a job.

He had already looked at higher education courses and decided that as soon as he received his status he would study at university. He had been attracted to Brighton because it had two universities, and through his family in Iran he discovered that there was a family friend living in Brighton. Alan moved to Brighton, but unable to pay the deposit and rent in advance for private accommodation, he spent seven months staying firstly at this friend's house and then living in his car. It was at this point that he joined the WILAW course and I met him. He had already identified a Masters programme and had made a direct approach to the course leader to study for a Masters degree in civil engineering. Through his direct approach, and probably his enthusiasm and determination, he was offered a place on the Masters, providing he improved his English.

He continued to study English at a local college and took an advanced course which gave him a certificate equivalent to the IELTS he needed for entry to the MSc. Alan was also eventually housed by the Local Authority in Autumn 2005 just before he started his degree. He was aware of the cultural capital which having a UK university qualification provided and gaining a qualification was cited as the major motivating factor in going to university in the UK.

I thought the course would be very, very difficult for me because of the language. I thought I might need a lot of time translating and learning at the same time but it wasn't like that really. The first semester I was worried that I might not be able to pass the modules, but I studied and I really didn't need to translate much. So the first semester I had two modules and I passed them so I got a big confidence inside myself.

During the course I asked him whether the experience of being a student had changed him; his response was immediate and confident:

Yes! I'm really ready to do another course [laughs]. Really I'm enjoying it. I wasn't so confident when I started university, at the first point, but now I can apply for any course that I like and I can do it. Yeah, yeah. It's a big change for me....I really enjoyed the feeling of being a student again. You know? [laughs] After a long time and I'd still like to be a student and I'm worried about when I finish my degree and lose the university. I'd like to be there all the time. It's a nice feeling. It's a nice environment.

When asked what made it such a special experience he expressed the sense of common purpose and being part of something:

When you are all in a place that you [pause] everyone is coming for a reason to get the knowledge, to get the qualifications, to know more about things ... Somehow being a student makes you ...er, it makes you feel younger [laugh].

For Alan being a student at university represented more than a means to a qualification. It gave him an alternative positive identity, that of being a full time student, and had significance on a personal and emotional level. It gave him a sense of personal agency and meaning at a time when forced migration had led to the

disintegration of any biographical certainties he may have felt as a young person in Iran. Giddens (1991) describes how late modernity constantly precipitates crises of self, but at the same time also creates opportunities for individuals to construct their own meanings and biographies, what he refers to as the 'reflexive project of the self'. Similarly, West (1996) in his biographical study of adults in higher education describes how education can be an emotional and intellectual resource in helping participants move beyond the fragments of their past lives.

Higher Education is potentially a space in which to manage and transcend feelings of marginalisation, meaninglessness and inauthenticity in interaction with others; in which it is possible... to compose a new life, a different story and a more cohesive self (1996:10).

Although being a student gave Alan a sense of worth and source of respect, he was very different from his fellow students. Although only in his late twenties he was older than most, and the majority were from other European countries or the far East. Unlike them, he was having to support himself through delivering fast food and working as an interpreter. While the formal, taught aspect of being a university student had a levelling effect: 'everyone is the same so it's fine', the broader experience of being a student was marked by differences in habitus and differentials in financial resources and in motivations. He felt some of his fellow students had 'come here just for the fun and not for studying'; they had parties and went out most nights. It was a life style that he couldn't afford to be part of:

When I was in that situation sometimes I would say that I can't drink, or I can't go out, I feel sick or I'm doing things. I know that

they spend a lot of money and I can't afford it.

Alan successfully completed his MSC in two years (July 2007). At one point he'd hoped to complete the degree in one year, but health issues had intervened and he had 'had some other problems to sort out'. He joined the Graduate Institute of Civil Engineering and wanted 'to be a proper civil engineer in the practical world'. On paper he had re-established his identity as a civil engineer, but on an affective and practical level, that identity remained fragile and insecure.

Alan has spent the two years since completing his degree applying for 'hundreds' of jobs as a civil engineer, and not being short listed or invited for interview for any. Although he would prefer to remain in Brighton he has also been applying for jobs in other parts of the UK. We met several times informally during this period to look at his CV and covering letter, and to discuss possible strategies for gaining employment. He was concerned that prejudice towards his Iranian nationality and ethnic identity could be a factor and this was the prime motivation for applying for and gaining British citizenship in April 2009. Despite formally gaining a new national identity to put on his CV, he was keenly aware that he could not hide or disguise the fact that the first twenty-seven years of his life had been spent in Iran.

Bourdieu describes how codes of distinction are used to perpetuate and reinforce systematic patterns of domination and subordination. In Alan's case we see how race and ethnicity work as markers of habitus and serve to generate distinction,

functioning as negative symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1998: 104). Despite his UK academic credentials and formal membership of a professional group, his habitus marks him off as different and other, and the distance between professional employment and his racialised identity cannot be bridged. He recognises these classifying practices and how in the field of professional employment they position him in an inferior and unequal position. The symbolic power of 'Whiteness' and of the cultural practices associated with having a habitus indigenous to the field in question are recognised as legitimate and natural. Through such symbolic violence Alan's subordination is perpetuated and institutionalised.

During his five years in the UK Alan has struggled with periods of depression and nightmares which he feels are connected to his past. This trauma has disrupted his ability to accrue and convert capital across different sites and at times he feels that he has been here for five years and 'achieved nothing'. He misses his family, particularly his youngest sister. His parents have been to the UK once to visit him, but he has missed three of his siblings getting married and has nephews and nieces in Iran that he's never seen. In our penultimate interview his goal was to try and establish better contact with his family which he hoped would help him to 'get his energy back'. He had applied for a British passport, which would make it easier to travel than using his Home Office documents and his plan was to travel and meet his family in a third country.

Earlier on in our interviews Alan found it hard to imagine going back to Iran. He

found it difficult to remember what his life there had been like and didn't trust the image of the life that he had had. He was also concerned that if he went back that he would have to have to 'start from the beginning again'. I last met Alan in summer 2009. He felt excited and optimistic about the uprisings in Iran and hopes that there will be changes in the country which might enable him to return. The interview was tinged with nostalgia, possibly influenced by his present feelings of powerlessness as he explained that he would 'love to go back'. Although in Iran he worked longer hours, he felt that it was an easier place to live and he didn't feel so alone. But he would only go back if it is safe. At the moment he feels that there is additional security on refugees who have left which makes him feel more vulnerable. He has now become a British citizen which makes him feel 'freer' as he can now travel abroad more easily and he is hopeful that it might bring him advantages in the labour market. He expressed huge disappointment that, despite his MSc he has been unable to secure work as a civil engineer. He is thinking about studying again and asked me what course I thought would be most likely to lead to a job. His priorities are now changing as his desperation to find any professional employment grows:

Maybe petrochemical engineering, computer engineering, mechanical engineering? Anything to get a job, any job...

At the moment he doesn't feel settled here in the UK because he doesn't have a job and 'a pattern to his life'. He has a girlfriend here in the UK who he has been seeing for just over a year. He describes their relationship as being 'very serious', but he couldn't contemplate marriage until he has a job.

In Alan's story we see how the processes of transition and self-reconstruction are far from linear or straightforward. Rather it is characterised by flux and uncertainty, and an interweaving of feelings of impotency and agency, marginality and belonging. His position and experience as a student gave him the opportunity to exercise personal agency and to compose a positive identity and subjectivity. During this period his narrative is optimistic and he can begin to imagine a future and a life in the UK working as a civil engineer. Sadly, the UK qualification by which he had set so much store has not opened doors to professional employment as he hasn't the power to capitalise on it. Either side of being a university student, his narrative is characterised by a sense of powerlessness, and in our last interview, despite having acquired British citizenship and a British passport, he was less certain of his future in the UK. His later narrative reflected nostalgia for Iran and a desire to be able to return: past memories of Iran were being re-conceptualised in the light of an uncertain and structureless present.

Chapter 8. Symbolic Systems: Representations and Symbolic Struggles

In this chapter I want to link the individual narratives in the preceding chapters to the broader social structures and practices, and to bring to the surface the social and political processes at work in the construction and re-construction of refugee identities and subjectivities. As the quote by C. Wright Mills at the beginning of chapter one suggests ‘personal troubles’ must be understood as ‘public issues’. He highlights the value of personal narrative as a source of knowledge and understanding of the world, and stresses the interplay between the personal and the social levels, the self and the world, biography and history. Neither the individual nor the social world can be understood without understanding both. The task of the sociological imagination is to range from the most intimate features of human lives to the most remote and abstract.

The narratives have described and documented the experiences of five people as they learnt to live as asylum seekers and refugees in the UK. This chapter considers how symbolic representations of refugees impact on subjective production. Drawing on Bourdieu’s (1977; 1998) framework it is suggested that policy and social discourses are schemes of perception and classification which symbolically construct refugees as inferior and ensure that relations of subordination and domination are reproduced. These systems ensure that refugees are constructed as lacking in qualities necessary to generate valuations of self respect, dignity or moral worth. Faced with such

symbolic denigration, participants drew on alternative discourses and education strategies as a means of articulating positive and meaningful subjectivities and identities for themselves.

Symbolic Representations: Moving through the Asylum System

Given the social and political discourses around asylum issues, it is not surprising that for the majority of participants in the research the identity of both asylum seeker and refugee was an identity to be hidden and kept secret. Only Maryam found the identity of refugee unproblematic; she appeared happy to 'own' this identity. For her the onset of migration had been a gradual process which took place in the context of years of persecution and human rights abuses in Iraq. Once in the UK, the granting of refugee status had been a swift and uncomplicated process; unlike some of the other participants she had not been left in the limbo of being an asylum seeker. Although she misses members of her extended kinship group Maryam is part of a family unit in the UK and has close family bonds. These bonds not only represent cultural resources which provide mutual support and purpose, but they are also a means of constructing herself as having value and worth: she is a good mother and wife, doing her best to reunite and support her family. Her fear for the future of her children in Iraq was the final trigger in her decision to leave, and although she has never mentioned the greater opportunities that are available to her children in the UK, and the greater capital that accompanies a UK education, this is also likely to influence how she feels about the status of being a refugee.

In contrast, Patricia arrived in the UK on her own and had to negotiate a series of imposed identities which significantly impacted on her subjectivity. As we see below her arrival narrative describes the fluidity of immigration statuses and labels that she moves through in her first year here, and how she negotiated the identities imposed upon her. Coming from Zimbabwe she was initially granted a visitor's visa as she couldn't bring herself to declare that she was seeking asylum.

I just couldn't do it at the airport. I thought 'Oh my goodness, no I can't do this!' So the person at the counter actually asked 'You're from Zimbabwe, things there are not very good'. I said 'Yeah things are not very good'. 'Are you visiting somebody?' I don't know why, but I just said 'yes'. I remember I was given one month. I came out and I didn't even have anywhere to go. I had a one month visa.

Patricia had one telephone number, that of someone her sister had met when she was in the UK eleven years before. Through this contact she ended up sharing a room with a Zimbabwean woman in Brighton. But even then it took her four months to summon the courage to apply. Her reluctance was compounded by the horror stories told by her flat mate who advised her against it:

She was just like 'But what if you are denied? And what if you are detained? And maybe you won't be able to call your family from one of those centres. And people don't know when people have been detained and people are held in circumstances which are not very human'. And I thought that 'Oh my goodness I'm going to go to jail now'. She was describing it like she had been there and she had some, someone who had been. So it took me some time.

In the period before applying for asylum, Patricia found paid employment with care

agencies and care homes. The area of work is not surprising as it is the largest single occupational categories for Zimbabweans in the UK (Bloch 2005 cited in McGregor 2007). Privatisation and contracting out have created unstable and insecure employment conditions and low wages which have increased the importance of migrants in this area of work. It is an industry where 'informal recruitment practices' have flourished, enabling newly arrived migrants to work, but also allowing for their exploitation (McGregor 2007).

She was aware that with an expired visitor's visa it was illegal to work but felt she had no choice. She had arrived in the UK with £375 and had to pay rent, bills and buy food. Each time she applied for a job she would tell the employer that she had sent her passport to the Home Office and was waiting for it to be returned. Every week her employer would ask for her passport and every week Patricia would say that it was with the Home Office. After a few months she would leave that agency and start the process again with a new employer.

Yes it was illegal, it was illegal. That's what I'm saying I'm not sure whether they didn't know that this was illegal because obviously they didn't even see my passport, but they still gave me a job.

Patricia finally did apply for asylum and that was a relief as it made her feel slightly 'more legal'. However, as an asylum seeker she was still legally excluded from the labour market and had to continue her precarious and illegal employment.

I think I was more anxious before I had I filed for asylum, I was more anxious because you are an illegal somebody. It is worse than being an asylum seeker who was waiting a decision, you are, you know it is illegal and the employer possibly knows it is illegal, and

the pay rates were very low as well. Very low as well....And people back home, I mean 6 or 7 months down the line and you're still not sending any money. It doesn't go down well, you know? ... Every day you thank God after every shift because you know because you've worked you're going to be paid for it. After every shift you thank God because that's something at the end of the month. I didn't even have a bank account, I was using this lady, who I used to live with, I was using her bank account. She gave me her card, so I was using her card at the ATM...Not even anybody back home can ever imagine me or anyone doing that. ... There's no way you can actually make anyone understand what you went through. There's no way. The lies that you tell, the anxiety, oh goodness, it was really... its funny looking back now and you think 'My goodness, how did I do all that, how did I get away with that?' It is a very long time to wait. You don't want to go back there to being an illegal and having your boss there asking for your passport every other week or every other day. Oh my goodness, how long can it take?

As she moved through the sequence of imposed identities of undocumented migrant, asylum seeker and eventually refugee Patricia's choices and activities were differentially constrained and identities were transformed. As firstly a 'visitor', then an undocumented migrant and then an asylum seeker she subverted these identities by working illegally.

Although none of the participants drew attention in their narrative to having taken paid employment while waiting for their asylum claim to be processed, four of the five participants in this research had done so. For example, Farideh describes how the social services were 'very nice', how they found them somewhere safe and quiet to stay, arranged medical treatment for her and gave them vouchers for food. But that they forgot about clothes and the other personal items she might need. Farideh had arrived with just the clothes she was wearing and had to stay in bed while these were

washed and dried. She very apologetically admitted that she had taken a job, as a cleaner in a hotel, despite knowing that it was illegal. Effectively she, like a great many migrants, had become a circumstantial law breaker; identities and behaviour which were very far from anything she could have imagined prior to coming to the UK. It is an example of state policy effectively criminalising refugees seeking asylum (Zetter 2007). It also reinforces the morally problematic associations with refugee identity, making it virtually impossible to generate valuations of being a moral subject.

For all of the four the identity of asylum seeker was associated with vulnerability, shame and waiting. Patricia sums up the feelings expressed by other participants:

It's funny, British people are not very friendly to asylum seekers so it's not something that you just lay on the table and say 'Oh I'm an asylum seeker, I've got problems at home'. You don't. Like I said I never got any [state] benefit I don't even know why. But people have the impression that asylum seekers get all these benefits and they don't go to work and they get all this free housing...it is embarrassing, I still feel that. I don't tell anybody.

Her depiction of the negative and stereotyped images surrounding the asylum seeker identity echoes Zetter's point that the asylum seeker label transforms an identity into a politicised image; it is not a neutral way of describing the world, but has the covert intention to '... convey an image of marginality, dishonesty, a threat, unwelcomed...' (2007: 184). Despite these symbolic representations the attempt to define and secure identities is resisted in various ways by the participants as they struggle to be recognised as having moral worth. For example, we saw how Patricia constructs

herself in opposition to the dominant script; her presentation of self, was one of a strong and resilient self and her narrative emphasised agency, determination and extraordinary hard work, as she manages to provide for herself and her family both in the UK and at home. Through claiming an identity as hard working, caring and respectable, she is able to legitimate her distinction from symbolic representations and is able to claim moral authority.

Both Savalan and Alan had experienced dispersal. For Savalan it had been a relief to leave Dover and the hostilities he had experienced there; he was also moved with some of the Iranians friends he'd made in the hostel so he had support in finding his way in a new city. Almost five years later he was still friends with some of those people so they were clearly significant relationships for him. This was in stark contrast to Alan's experience of dispersal. Although he had been housed with other Kurds from Iran they were very different from him 'they weren't educated', and had different aspirations 'it was very difficult to study [living with them]'. For him being an asylum seeker was a lonely and very frightening time. He wasn't able to build any close or supportive relationships with the other Kurds around him and his English was not good enough to enable him to easily establish other relationships. He felt that he had 'washed [his] hands of [his] life in Iran', but the ascribed identity of asylum seeker and exclusion from capital trading sites did not enable him to start building a new life or imagining a new identity for himself here in the UK. Fortunately, at that time asylum seekers were still able to access Government funded ESOL classes, so he was able to attend classes and accrue capital, although his learning was disrupted by

having to move hostels. It was a deeply stressful time for Alan and compounded the trauma surrounding his sudden flight and journey to the UK. Alan continues to struggle with mental health issues and partly attributes the panic attacks and periods of depression that he still suffers from to this time.

Becoming a Refugee: Gaining Status?

For those who had spent the longest as asylum seekers - Alan, Savalan, Farideh and Patricia it was an enormous relief when their refugee status was confirmed and they could finally start making plans for their futures. Alan moved to Brighton, attracted by the two universities and the hope of being with people who he might have more in common with. For Patricia it meant an end to her identity as 'illegal worker', she finally had legal access to the labour market and better rates of pay. However, despite the changed label and entitlements which becoming a refugee conferred, the new identity, like that of asylum seeker was still associated with embarrassment and subject to dissimulation. Becoming a refugee was not a more morally acceptable identity; the affective dimension did not change, just the legal identity.

We saw how Savalan blamed the British media and Government for only ever highlighting the problems associated with refugees and the rare incidences of law breaking or alleged terrorist activities, rather than the positive contribution that the vast majority made (p. 98). He was concerned that people would either look down on him or pity him if they knew he was a refugee, and only ever described himself as a

'student', even after being at university for over two years he had not confided in any of his fellow students that he was a refugee. Similarly Alan describes being cautious about making new friends. He describes how he had learnt to be careful about how he chose his friends and that 'you cannot trust a person at the first point'. Eventually he had told some of his student friends that he was a refugee, but only once they had got to know who he was and what sort of person he was.

Farideh describes her humiliation when she went to register for an advanced English language course and the secretary of the English for Foreign Languages (EFL) department announced loudly in front of all the others in the queue behind her:

We haven't got anywhere for refugees and asylum seekers. You have to wait, come back in two weeks, but I don't promise anything.

She explains how the other students in the queue were all from other European countries and would be paying high fees for the course. She was being told to come back once enrolments had finished to see if there was a place left on the course which she could take up at a reduced cost. She left the college and promised herself never to go back to the EFL department. She clearly felt the problem lie in the asylum seeker/refugee label rather than to do with merely being foreign or different. As the quote on page 88 indicates, like Savalan, she blamed the media.

Patricia was also concerned with how she would be perceived if she identified herself as a refugee. Like Farideh she also attributed blame to the popular discourses which

associate refugees with being dependent on state benefits and not contributing to the community:

On official forms, when they ask for immigration status, that's the only place you tick the 'refugee', because obviously they need to know that you can work. Everywhere else, no, no. I never tell anyone unless I have to do because otherwise people start to look at you differently. They start looking at you as if you are someone who is benefiting from the state and not giving anything, you know? So you wouldn't want people to look at you like that cos you're not benefiting anything as such, you are also contributing to whatever you are doing. It's not like you're getting weekly or monthly benefits or living in a house for free.

Symbolic Struggles and the Generation of Moral Worth

These narratives indicate how participants were painfully aware that to be an asylum seeker or a refugee was morally problematic and a source of stigma. They were concerned about refugee identity in terms of what it said about their worth and value. Much of the struggles they were concerned with were around wanting to be seen as respectable and generating distance from representations of themselves as pathological. As noted in my CAS (p. 25), Castles and Davidson (2000) use the term 'other-definition' to describe the social definitions imposed on subordinate groups by more powerful dominant groups, in contrast to 'self-definition'. They suggest that other-definition includes mechanisms of marginalisation based on discriminatory structures and practices. Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence is based on such 'socially inculcated beliefs' or 'collective expectations' (1998: 103) of the inferiority of refugees. Policy and public discourses are inscribed with schemes of perception

and classification. These serve to legitimate and reproduce the social order and the relations of subordination and domination embedded in it. In the case of asylum seekers and refugees these mechanisms include their exclusion from the labour market and the education system and the discursive practices of stereotyping refugees as 'benefit scroungers', criminals and potential terrorist threats. Such social markers form part of the symbolic order and are used to marginalise and justify the differential treatment of minorities.

These discursive and material practices create the Other and then take the ascribed Otherness as a justification for the differential treatment (Castles and Davidson 2000: 82, cited in CAS: 26).

This otherness has been fuelled and reinforced by the UK media which has paid a great deal of attention to refugee issues, both before and after 9/11. Much of the media attention has generated negativity and panic about refugees, and as Kundani (2001) argues has created a climate where racism against refugees can pass unrecognized as racism and therefore remain unchallenged. Refugees are stigmatised and disadvantaged by the symbolic order; through devaluing and denigrating refugees the media contributes to delegitimizing their capital, further stymying conversion into symbolic capital and limiting capacity to accrue other capitals. Both policy and the media serve as institutional mechanisms which work to establish and maintain inequality producing symbolic violence against refugees.

Despite this policy context, and against these wider social, political and public discourses and concerns, the participants here demonstrate remarkable resilience in

the way they have attempted to resist the limited and limiting subject positions and forge their own 'self-definition' and write their own identity scripts. The socially available ontological narratives or scripts were, in various ways, rejected by participants who tended to highlight values and beliefs in direct opposition to these discourses. In the absence of discourses which might enable them to articulate being a refugee as a positive identity, the values of agency, education, responsibility, hard work, the wish to contribute and give back, weave through these narratives as they strive to reposition themselves. This accords with Skegg's (1997) study of white working class women who, when faced with the denigration and judgement associated with their class position, turn to discourses of respectability and responsibility as a means of establishing a valued and legitimate way of being and being seen.

All of the participants were united by their concern to be seen as respectable. The privileged habitus and class position in their country of origin had ensured that they were used to being accorded respect and respectability. The loss of this habituated respect was keenly felt. In Patricia's narrative we see how she rejects the stereotype that refugees are in the UK to claim benefits. She makes clear that she has never claimed benefits and her story emphasises the long hours worked to support her family, both during her journey through the asylum system and later as a full time student. Savalan is concerned to define himself in contrast to asylum seekers and refugees who come to the UK and don't learn English. He uses his proactive and committed approach to learning English to set boundaries between himself and other

refugees, and to establish his identity as a good citizen, worthy of the right to remain in the UK. We also see this ‘boundary work’ in his strategic decision to move to a different college where he would be mixing with non-refugees. This was presented as an opportunity to learn more and socialise, but also implies a distancing from his other refugee friends who didn’t aspire to higher education and the level of integration he wanted to achieve. This issue re-emerged in an interview several years later when he was coming to the end of his first year as a university student and he expresses the wish to spend more time with ‘good students’ rather than his refugee friends who didn’t necessarily understand his need to come home from work and study rather than ‘chill out’ with them. Alan was similarly keen to distance himself from the ‘uneducated’ asylum seekers with whom he had been dispersed to Birmingham. Although when he talks of coming from ‘...a culture of university and literate people...’ (p.106) he is also referring to his social class position, and his difference from Kurds who come from a lower social class. He took the bold step of moving to a city he’d never been to before, despite the homelessness that this entailed, in the hope of being able to find a community with whom he could identify.

This chapter has highlighted the conflict between the externally imposed identities of the symbolic order and the identities harboured and nurtured by the participants as they struggled to generate positive valuations for themselves and in relation to others. Despite the social positioning of asylum seekers being fixed and limiting, the participants here were all able to exercise agency in different ways. While dominant ideologies and symbolic systems have a damaging and constraining influence on

participants' subjectivities, they represent a counterpoint against which to construct and define themselves. By creating alternative self-definitions with positive valuations the imposition of negative representations is resisted. We have seen how participants recognise the legitimacy of classifying and positioning refugees as uneducated and lacking in aspiration to integrate or contribute to society. Through this misrecognition, the relations of dominance are internalised and perpetuated and the system's '...naturalisation of its own arbitrariness' (Bourdieu 1977: 164) is secured. The narratives indicate what Sayer (2005b) calls complex 'moral boundary work' as participants seek to establish themselves as different from these 'undeserving' or 'unacceptable' refugees.

The narratives also indicate how the struggle over identities and learning what it means to be an asylum seeker or refugee are part of a hidden curriculum. Participants learnt how to enter the labour market without appropriate documentation and before they had a legal entitlement to work. We also saw how negative stereotypes are assimilated and learnt informally from the media, from encounters with others and their expectations and assumptions. In the case of asylum seekers it is also learnt through policy which constructs them as bogus and undeserving until their claim for asylum is proven and accepted. In the next chapter I will consider in more depth the informal learning processes at work, and the role of formal learning in strategies to re-establish professional identities and gain greater control over their lives.

Chapter 9. Learning to Live: Informal and Formal Experiences

The individual narratives indicate the enormous amount of learning which accompanies the transition to living in the UK. Much of this learning is not necessarily positive and most of it occurs outside of formal education structures. In the first part of this chapter I will explore the informal or incidental learning processes involved in transition to the UK which occur outside of formal learning settings. I will suggest that there is a subterranean or hidden curriculum of beliefs, expectations, norms, tacit assumptions and behaviours to be explored and learnt as part of the transition process. This hidden curriculum is largely accessed through informal and non-formal learning, which is recognized as often being of much greater significance than formal, planned learning activities (Coffield 2000; Field 2000). Coffield for example uses the metaphor of an iceberg to describe informal learning as the 'submerged and neglected world' which is of much greater importance than the smaller visible section representing formal learning (Coffield 2000: 1).

It is what Dominice refers to as social learning or adult socialisation (Dominice 2000), and recognizes that for adults their major frame of reference when it comes to learning is from what they have experienced and practised in social groups, from watching others, from television, from work and so on. Some of the strongest learning experiences in the narratives here occurred across a range of social sites, and in the case of Maryam and Patricia through having to re-think and re-negotiate the

gendered role of mother in a new space. Learning is conceptualised in its widest sense as an inevitable part of life and as intimately linked to processes of becoming and identity formation (Alheit and Dausien 2002; Hodkinson et al. 2007). In the second part of this chapter, I will go on to look at the role of more formal, planned learning in the transition process and how participants have attempted to use higher education as a strategy to re-brand themselves and accrue exchangeable education capital.

Learning and Transformation: the Hidden Curriculum

Mezirow's work on transformative learning is relevant to understanding some of the learning processes in non-formal learning situations, particularly as he focuses on situations of disjuncture in individual's lives (Mezirow 1990; 2000). Mezirow defines transformative learning as:

...the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mind-sets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action...Transformative Theory's focus is on how we learn to negotiate and act on our own purposes, values, feelings, and meanings rather than those we have uncritically assimilated from others ...(Mezirow 2000: 8).

A central proposition is that when an individual's 'frame of reference' or 'meaning perspective' is discordant with their experience, a 'disorientating dilemma occurs', individuals begin to critically reflect on and question the validity of their inherited

meaning perspective and transformation of perspective can occur. He suggests that learning occurs in one of four ways: by elaborating existing frames of reference, by learning new frames of reference, by transforming points of view, or by transforming habits of mind (2000: 19). The learning processes involve different degrees of comprehension and 'mindfulness'; they may be the result of deliberate enquiry, incidental or 'mindlessly assimilative'. Such transformations can also be sudden or incremental.

Mezirow's theory of transformative learning includes the cognitive and affective dimensions of learning and also the conative, that is the sense of agency or '...power to control and determine our actions...' (2000: 25). An individual's sense of personal efficacy and their confidence to take action on reflective insights crucially depends on the role of supportive relations and a supportive environment (2000: 25).

One of the major themes in participants' stories was the different cultural, social and political values and assumptions which they encountered in the UK. The theme of adapting to new cultural beliefs and expectations was particularly pronounced where participants were from a culture which was very different from the UK culture. To use Mezirow's framework, the historically and culturally constructed meaning schemes which participants brought with them did not sit comfortably in UK society and culture. This dissonance or 'disequilibrium' was sufficient to cause them to critically reflect on their tacit assumptions and beliefs and to explore and alter their perspectives. This idea of disequilibrium echoes Bourdieu's notion of habitus

becoming 'divided against itself' or Alheit and Dausien's metaphor of 'stumbling' or arriving at a 'crossroads' in our 'biographically acquired landscape' (p.17). For all of these writers these moments of discontinuity and disorientation suggest learning and transformation. I want to explore this notion of learning and transformation in relation to how individuals adapt to the cultural expectations of everyday life.

However, I will also suggest that this represents only part of the picture and that there are perhaps more profound and contradictory learning processes concerned with identity and subject construction, which aren't captured by the notion of transformative learning.

Maryam describes the country they came from as being a 'closed culture' where the political, cultural and religious context was tightly circumscribed by the Government. There was very little geographical movement of people within the country and knowledge of what was going on outside of the country was very limited, so much so that she was unaware that her brother had successfully applied for refugee status.

Maryam describes how the political and religious ideas put forward by the Government of her country 'grow in your mind' and how difficult it is to comprehend and adapt to the ideas and culture of a more open and permissive society.

Similarly Savalan describes Iran as 'a prison and all the people are prisoners'. His narrative vividly portrays the shock and numbness, or 'disorientating dilemma' he experienced on arriving in the UK and was confronted with challenges to his tacit assumptions and expectations. He singles out seeing openly gay and lesbian couples for the first time and seeing people sitting on their own at home watching television

in the evenings, as being particularly unexpected and disconcerting. Both narratives emphasise the enormous amount of informal and incidental learning involved in living in a new and different culture.

For some participants this type of learning had occurred through the planned construction of spaces for informal learning. For example, Farideh participated in a 'Time Together' project funded by the UK Refugee Council which matches refugees in one-to-one mentoring relationships with local volunteers⁵. For Farideh it provided an opportunity to talk about and explore aspects of British culture which she'd always been curious about. She described, for example, how she'd always wanted to go into a pub and had always 'looked inside from the outside, and I wanted to know what's happening inside'. Her mentor chose a very old pub with a real fire, and on the second attempt Farideh plucked up the courage to go inside. Together they went to the library and museums and a boat trip; none of which she'd done in the five years since she'd been here. In my evaluation of the WILAW programme (Morrice 2009a) I drew attention to the importance of informal and unstructured spaces in courses which allow for recognition of the affective and social dimensions of adapting to a new culture. The evaluation of the course highlighted the unanticipated outcomes which resulted from providing a forum for the exploration of different cultural, social and political values. Opportunities to discuss and explore different world views and

⁵ For further details see the Time Together website at www.timetogether.org.uk

cultural expectations with other students from diverse backgrounds supported the sense making necessary for learning to live in a very different culture.

King (1999) found similar transformations in learner's understanding of culture and self in her study with ethnically and culturally mixed groups of English as Second Language (ESL) students in North America. Drawing on the work of Mezirow she describes how, alongside the language learning, participants reported significant cultural and personal transformation. This included greater cultural awareness, and in particular how preconceived ideas and beliefs about cultures were transformed. Her participants also reported how they gained greater self-esteem and sense of empowerment as they learnt to cope with learning a new language and culture. She suggests that such transformations are linked to particular activities which encourage critical thinking and discussion in a supportive environment. Magro (2007) also draws on the work of Mezirow to explore the experiences of adult learners from war affected countries now living in Canada. She argues that learning opportunities for refugees need to go beyond the functional skills of language learning and recognise the personal, social and cultural transformations which accompany adaptation to a new country.

For Maryam, the shock of a new culture was not as great as she had previously travelled in Europe and USA. She describes the differences between being a tourist, where you 'watch' and 'see' a different life, and actually living in new culture, which her description suggests is a more active process where you have to 'be melted with

their culture’, ‘know everything about their culture, about their system, about everything in the life’ (p. 53). She was determined to fit into UK society and her narrative suggests that she actively engages in boundary work to identify herself with the community she has entered. She purposefully transforms her frame of reference: adopting new roles and ways of acting both in her relationship with her children and her husband, in her professional practice as a teacher and also to blend into wider UK society; there is no sense of loss expressed in her narrative. Savalan and Alan both adopted an eclectic approach to UK culture – selecting aspects that they liked and rejecting others.

A strong theme in Savalan’s narrative was his self-directed learning and his single mindedness in wanting to learn all he could about British culture and English language. From the point at which he arrived in Dover and his curiosity to learn how Christmas was celebrated in the UK, to his determination to learn English through watching television and making lists of new vocabulary. He was also quite strategic in his approach to learning. He befriended the manager of the hotel in Dover who taught him about British culture and where, for example he could buy the hard lumps of sugar he needed to make Iranian tea. Once settled in Brighton, he took the strategic decision to move to an English language course where he wouldn’t be with other refugees. His suggestion that you can ‘learn with them more’ (p. 96) clearly recognises the importance of building diverse social networks and the informal learning that occurs within them (Morrice 2007).

Learning and (Un)becoming

Implicit in all of these writings about learning and transformation is the suggestion that learning is generally a positive and a benefit, and that it either builds on previous learning or offers a new (and more suitable) frame of reference. The transformations which accompany learning are assumed to enable the individual to understand and function more effectively and better adapt to the new context. Above I have suggested that some learning in these narratives can be understood in this way, however, much of it cannot. In particular it doesn't capture or elucidate the ongoing process of identity formation accompanying movement across social sites. There is a complexity and depth to the learning which refugees experience which is not always a linear process of building on previous learning, neither is it necessarily a positive or beneficial process. Rather it is a contradictory and largely deconstructive process. Much learning is concerned with recognising that their previous learning counts for very little, and involves having to 'unlearn' and let go of much of who, and what they were; it is concerned with subjectivity and with identity (de)construction.

A more recent and less benign concept of learning is suggested by Biesta (2006). He argues that rather than seeing learning as the acquisition of something 'external', be that '...an attempt to acquire, to master, to internalize...we might see learning as an attempt to reorganise and reintegrate as a result of disintegration...' (2006: 27).

Conceptualising learning as a response rather than as an acquisition, acknowledges that learning can have a more disturbing impact and can entail a 'violation of the sovereignty of the student' (2006: 29). Similarly, Hodkinson et al. (2007) draw on a

Deweyan notion of embodied construction to argue for a view of learning as a process of 'becoming' or 'being'. They conceptualise this as an ongoing construction of the self through participation. In order to avoid the implicit assumption that learning is an entirely positive or constructive process, they suggest that learning is also about 'unbecoming' or ceasing to be something (CAS: 53).

The refugee narratives here suggest that much learning is about 'unbecoming'; it is about learning what they are not, learning what is not legitimate and exchangeable, and about learning that, as refugees, they have little or no moral worth or value. They learn that from the stigmatised social position of refugee there are no socially available scripts or ontological narratives upon which they can draw to construct and present themselves as worthy or moral beings. Instead they are engaged in a constant process of learning how to resist negative evaluations and generate distance from representations of themselves as pathological. Drawing on alternative discourses of caring, hardwork, education and the good citizen, they learn how to feel and to present themselves as having value and moral worth in relation to others. From the disintegration and deconstruction of self which accompanies migration the narratives illuminate how participants learn to 'become', which in its broadest sense is learning how to rethink themselves and live with integrity and dignity in a new social space.

For all the participants in this research, higher education in the UK was perceived as a means of constructing themselves as morally desirable and beginning to re-build their professional identities.

Higher Education as a Strategy for Accruing Capital and Worth

Once refugee status is confirmed, refugees can participate in educational opportunities on the same basis as their British counterparts. For the purposes of higher education they are treated as 'home students'; they pay home student fees and can apply for student loans. They are not tracked in higher education so we have very little research on their experiences within university. We do know that there are significant barriers to refugees getting their previous qualifications recognized and gaining access to university (Aldridge and Waddington 2001; World University Service 2002; Jonker 2004; Waddington 2005; Houghton and Morrice 2008). It is probably the most significant example of the cultural capital which refugees bring with them not being valued or recognised in the fields of UK higher education and employment. We know that the journey into HE can be long and often complicated (Morrice, 2009a). We also know that refugees, as we saw with Farideh in chapter five, often struggle with the unfamiliar expectations and practices of higher education, and can find the experience isolating and distressing (Houghton and Morrice 2008; Stevenson 2008).

The experience of higher education was different for each participant and this reflected the recognition of capital and the adherence between habitus and the field of higher education. Patricia felt confident about her ability to cope with the academic demands of her mental health nurse training course, but was slightly concerned about the practical aspects as she hadn't had any experience of working in mental health. In contrast to her experience of teacher training where both of her parents were teachers

and where there were books and educational literature readily available, she didn't know anyone who had done mental health nursing.

She enjoyed the taught part of the course, particularly having been a teacher for eleven years she enjoyed the 'enrichment of being on the receiving end'. The one aspect she did find difficult was the isolation of studying alone. She contrasts this with her experience of boarding school and residential teacher training college in Zimbabwe, where she'd had group discussions and shared literature and ideas with her fellow students. However, the quote below indicates her understanding of the personal tutor role and the importance of asking for help if needed, an understanding which is not present in Farideh's story.

Really, just taking your books from the library and going to sit home with your essay and maybe just do it wrongly or anything like that you know....So it was really, really like, kind of a shock: you get an essay topic, you just go home and do it on your own. It was like, ... can I do this? But anyway I did, but yeah, that was really difficult. Of course you have your personal tutor who can support you if you need them, but you don't always want to use your personal tutor. They are available, they want you to use them because at the end of the day you might fail that essay and have to re-write so it is better to see your personal tutor than to have to re-write a new thing.

She was pleasantly surprised that there were a number of other mature students on the course. They tried to establish a discussion group, but it never got up and running.

The practical aspect of the course and the work placements were not as daunting as Patricia had imagined. She felt that her experience of care work had prepared her for joining a team as a novice and outsider and gradually becoming more confident. As a

student mental health nurse on placement, race was still sometimes an issue:

...although you are a student and obviously had the requirements to be on the course they still maybe treat you differently to another student that is on the same placement, or even a year behind you. They expect you to know a bit less ... so you are always proving yourself which makes your load double the normal load. And yet it wasn't the same with the lecturers; they interviewed you, they gave you that place on the course. They know you deserve to be there so lecturers were never a problem, but fellow students always were a bit like that, always.

In chapter four we saw how she described herself as 'an academic'; she had come to the UK with a strong learner identity and sense of her academic abilities. The adherence between the field and her habitus and her cultural capital meant that this identity was transferable and viable in the UK and gave her narrative a sense of coherence. Similarities between the two educational systems in terms of the learning culture and expectations, and the absence of a language barrier smoothed her transition to learning in the UK. Patricia's experience of higher education was similar to her formal learning experiences in Zimbabwe, and she was able to confidently draw upon the knowledge, experience and practices she had accumulated and apply them to learning in the UK. The symbolic power she achieved meant that when she had been confronted with a difference in the systems, the more individualized nature of learning in the UK, she had the confidence and security to address them by trying to set up a discussion group. Bourdieu (1977) uses the term *doxa* to describe the immediate adherence or 'taken for granted' sense between a habitus and the field to which it is attuned (1977: 164).

In contrast, we saw how Farideh, who came from a very different education system had struggled to construct her identity as a learner in the UK. She was recognised and recognised herself as not having much cultural value: institutional mechanisms had fixed the value of her capital and inculcated a belief in that value to the extent to which she was unable to occupy the social space with any degree of entitlement or belonging. She was constantly aware that she didn't have the 'right' knowledge and this was experienced as feeling out of place, and a constant doubt and insecurity about her ability to succeed in higher education. What Bourdieu referred to as the 'feel for the game' or the 'almost miraculous encounter between the habitus and a field, between incorporated history and an objectified history...' (1990: 66) was absent. After three years in higher education (one year at Masters level and two at Undergraduate level) she would still refer to differences in the teaching and learning styles and expectations. At one of our last meetings she said she felt that learning 'was becoming easier', although, despite never having failed a course, she still worries that she might fail and have to re-sit exams. She describes how she finds it harder to concentrate when studying and harder to revise for exams than she used to when in Iran, although she puts this down to her increasing age rather than to the trauma or stress associated with migration or the ongoing struggle of being in a social field in which her capital and habitus is not recognised.

Farideh had not established meaningful relationships during her time as a student. While studying in London the daily commute meant that she had very little opportunity to establish friendships and we saw that it was an isolating and lonely

experience. While studying locally she describes having made friends with other refugees on the WILAW course, and in particular one of the other students from the course who went on to do a degree at the same university:

Sometimes we go to library together, the silent area. I like it when he's sitting and writing all the time so I don't talk to him and he doesn't talk to me...he studies, I study and then we go for a cup of tea. It's good to know somebody in the uni, because I don't know many people there, so when I see him it's something familiar.

In contrast she did not feel she had made friends during the first two years of her degree course:

At the moment there is just one lady, originally from Sri Lanka... We haven't got anything in common but just age. So sometimes we talk together but not with other students. The younger students like to be together... I tried to say hello to them but the day after they didn't know me.

Her cultural habitus distanced and differentiated her from other students. There was no sense of shared everyday practices with other students as, for example, she didn't go to bars or drink alcohol. There was no sign of ease or belonging which comes from occupying a social space with others who have a similar habitus.

Both Alan's and Savalan's narratives emphasise the alternative positive identities and sense of moral worth provided by being a student. However, like Farideh, neither have the sense of ease and 'fish in water' quality that characterises the interactions of students (or indeed any group) with similar habitus. They had very different understandings and expectations of family and economic realities in which they live

and which constrain and shape their lives generated distinction. Their past, their history and experience of being a refugee created distance from fellow students. In short their habitus was indelibly marked by their refugee background, creating boundaries of belonging.

Both Alan and Savalan were studying degrees which linked to their roles before they came to the UK: Alan as a civil engineer and Savalan in business. Importantly, they were both able to draw upon their previous experiences and the knowledge they'd accumulated and use it in their new identity as student. Despite differences in habitus, their cultural capital was perceived as legitimate and tradeable. Savalan believed that on both his Access to business course and his University degree his experience of working in business in Iran had helped him and given him confidence:

Like, at first I was frightened a bit, you know. I didn't talk much because I felt because of my English language, you know? I knew that I knew more than them, but the way that I wanted to say and the way that they said was completely different. I mean the use of language. So I knew the idea but I could not say it ... It was like all the time, during my lectures, ...I was remembering marketing in my country or my business, you know just helping me a lot. You know because of that I knew all ideas, you know, things in business and stuff.

Similarly, Alan found that although he initially struggled with the language, to his relief studying at university was easier than he'd anticipated and he could draw upon the calculations and the methods he'd used in Iran on his MSc. We saw in chapter three how the first year of Maryam's degree in mathematics education enabled her to draw upon and utilise her previous experience, whereas the second year was much

harder as it involved very different educational and professional practices in the UK. In each of these cases the ability to draw upon their experiences and cultural capital seems to have been a significant factor in easing their transition through the structures and expectations of higher education. The use and acknowledgement of life experiences has also been shown to be an important factor for working class students as they negotiate higher education (Merrill 2007).

Using higher education as an education strategy to establish a positive identity and to accrue tradeable capital had mixed outcomes for participants. Although studying gave Alan a sense of subjective well-being he was not able to capitalise on the qualifications achieved for employment reward. For the others, the tradeability of the education capital they accrue is not yet known. Significant for all participants was their refugee identity; this had marked their habitus and clearly identified them as different from other students. This is further complicated when refracted through the lenses of ethnicity and gender. Whether the higher education field enabled students to establish a positive learner identity depended on the extent to which it conferred legitimacy and value on their habitus and capital, and consequently the degree of entitlement and belonging they experienced.

Chapter 10. Conclusions

Becoming a refugee involves managing unexpected changes in one's life trajectory and embarking on a journey to construct a viable identity and positive subjectivity in a new context. This thesis has attempted to provide a fine grained analysis of the migration process using five case studies. It has recognised migrants as social beings with particular attributes: gender, social class, ethnicity, parental status, age, religion, culture and stage in the life cycle. Each individual has their own unique biography which shapes and informs how they construct themselves. At the same time the processes of learning, which involve both deconstruction and reconstruction, draw upon, and are shaped by, broader discourses. In this way, the narratives presented here illuminate the interplay of structural forces, identity and agency.

I have argued that powerful ideologies and discourses essentialise the characteristics of refugees positioning them as lacking any of the qualities necessary to be good or successful citizens. Participants' early narratives as asylum seekers illuminate the conflict between the ideal or imagined identities which the participants hoped to create, and the reality of an identity which positions them as excluded from economic and educational resources. This conflict produces coping strategies: in order to provide for themselves and not be dependent on welfare they are forced to work in informal and semi-legal employment in the UK. Asylum seeking and refugee communities have developed relevant stores of knowledge and social capital which can be drawn upon to access such employment. Although this was a source of shame

for all who had taken this route, it was also a source of agency, enabling participants to resist the negative social positioning imposed by social policy and the powerful discourses surrounding asylum seekers and refugees.

Despite the differences in entitlements and security between the statuses of asylum seeker and refugee, the status of being a refugee was a humiliating identity to be kept hidden. I've suggested that while symbolic representations and negative stereotypes have a limiting and damaging influence on refugees' subjectivities and prevent them from generating positive valuations of themselves, they also provide a point of resistance against which participants struggled to construct positive identities and opportunities for self definition. Alternative discourses of working hard, being a good citizen, caring, studying and contributing to society are echoed to varying degrees in all of the narratives. Identities in this instance are constructed and presented in relation to difference from other refugees and in opposition to dominant discursive practices. A considerable amount of moral boundary work is employed as participants strive to construct and present themselves as having value and moral worth. We saw, for example, how Patricia converts demeaning care work into a positive and respectable caring identity. Also, how Alan marks space between himself and others who share the same Kurdish and refugee identity, but who were not from a 'university culture', by which we could understand social class.

While on the one hand migration subjected participants to loaded discourses and limiting social positioning, at the same time it opened up opportunities for exploring

alternative social practices, particularly in relation to gender. For both Farideh and Maryam in particular, migration offered a loosening of traditional gender and the possibility of a different kind of gender performance.

We saw a broad range of learning processes and practices at work in the lives of participants, much of which occurred informally without formal educational intervention. Activities that would not normally be defined as learning, and were not part of any formal learning structures, provided valuable learning opportunities. For example, learning English through television and the internet, and learning through observing, absorbing and interacting with the social life around them. I suggested that Mezirow's (1990; 2000) work on transformative learning provides insight into some of the learning processes involved in adapting to life in the UK.

All participants had a strong desire to socialise and learn; they recognised the importance of learning in informal contexts and through mixing with non-refugees. Through social activity and interaction, refugees constructed meaning and learnt the social identity of refugee. They had all faced varying degrees of hostility and racism in their daily lives which had impacted on subjectivities and feelings of belonging. Learning what it means to be a refugee and their place in UK society was not always positive. I have suggested that much learning is profoundly disturbing involving the unlearning of self, or learning what you can no longer be. Conceptualising learning as a response to life events and involving the ongoing de- and re- construction of self better illuminates these processes of subjective reconstruction. In Bourdieu's (1977;

1998) framework, this learning is concerned with ongoing symbolic struggles to prove and gain acceptance for capitals. It is also an attempt to be recognised as having moral worth (Sayer 2005b; Skeggs 1997).

Patricia and Alan had taken the British citizenship test and applied for a British passport; under the five year rule Savalan was not entitled to apply for British citizenship. For both, adopting the identity of British citizen was for instrumental and pragmatic purposes, rather than affective reasons of wishing to belong or feelings of inclusion. For Patricia, it was primarily to facilitate her mother's visit to the UK. For Alan, it was to make it easier to travel outside of the UK and to improve his employment prospects. Becoming a British citizen was therefore about the perceived membership rights and benefits it would entail. Notions of belonging and feelings of return to a home country fluctuated over time, as conceptualisations of the past changed in the light of present circumstances. Participants had family all over the world and these transnational links also complicated feelings of home and belonging. As was noted in my CAS (p. 23), globalisation and in particular, electronic communication, mean that the refugee diaspora are no longer atomised and disconnected either from 'home' or from co-ethnics and co-nationals in their place of origin and elsewhere in the world (Castles 2003; Zetter 2007). This gives rise to what Zetter calls a 'here and there belonging' of refugees where belonging / home are complex notions decoupled from locality and physical entity. He describes the way which refugees manage multiple identities:

...belonging to but also excluded from their host society and, because they are refugees, belonging to but also excluded from their

country/society of origin. Simultaneously cohering to different social worlds and communities... (Zetter 2007: 187).

These multiple affiliations blur the boundaries of national societies and call into question the dominance of the nation state as the focus of social belonging (Castles and Davidson 2000; Castles 2003).

Becoming a refugee in the UK firmly placed participants into symbolic structures of inequality, determining what economic and educational opportunities were available to them and limiting their access to different forms of capital. They were also structured and positioned through mechanisms of capital transformation and trading which meant that they rarely had opportunities to convert and trade up the capitals they possessed into symbolic capital, and educational and employment reward. Each participant was from a habitus which brought particular dispositions, and which framed expectations and behaviours in the new social space. For most of them the process of reconstructing themselves in the UK involved trying to re-establish a professional identity and finding employment in the same or similar profession. Alongside this was the struggle to be seen as worthy of respect. The store of social and cultural capital which had enabled them to achieve educational and professional status in their own country was not generally recognised and valued in the UK and could not be converted into symbolic capital.

For all of them higher education was seen as a route to re-establishing a professional

identity; how this occurred and the ease with which educational success could be achieved largely depended on the extent to which their capital could be deployed, and the degree of adherence between their habitus and the field in question. This was illuminated in Patricia's case: the English colonial education system of Zimbabwe had not only equipped her with the English language skills, which even in Zimbabwe were recognised as being an advantageous capital, but also the 'essayist literacy practices' required for success in the UK higher education system (Lillis 2001). In higher education she was able to operate with security and confidence which having the right kind of knowledge and capital instils. She had a sense of entitlement and belonging to social space which enabled her to effectively trade up through education into symbolic capital and educational reward. For the others, whose capitals were not as mobile and were not accepted, access to higher education meant not only improving and developing their English language skills, but also adapting to the new and unfamiliar expectations of the field. Farideh was acutely aware that her forms of capital were judged to be lacking and to have little value. Her cultural habitus as an Iranian woman placed her in a subordinate position because it marked her out as a student of inferior quality, unprepared for the expectations of higher education. Higher education was experienced as anxiety, insecurity and feeling out of place. Denied opportunities for capital transformation and trading, the transition and the construction of a confident learner identity was more difficult and has occurred over a longer period of time.

Attempts to rebuild their lives through the UK education and qualification system did

not necessarily succeed because of their lack of power to convert the cultural capital achieved into symbolic capital. We witnessed Alan's disappointment when he realised that his Masters in civil engineering did not have exchange value and could not be traded up for employment reward. His social positioning as a refugee and the ethnic markers of his habitus acted as codes of distinction classifying him as different and inferior. Excluded from the formal labour market he was prevented from capitalising upon his newly acquired cultural capital.

Implications for Policy, Practice and Research.

As described in my CAS, contemporary society is characterised by ever increasing movements of people around the globe – including the movement of refugees. This process is evidenced by rapid and visible social and cultural change in communities. Many communities in the UK are now 'super-diverse' characterised by a plethora of different minority groups living side by side (Vertovec 2006). Globalisation of the economy inevitably involves the globalisation and the interdependence of people, and yet, this challenge of diversity is not reflected in current lifelong learning policy priorities. Indeed current constructions of lifelong learning focus ever more tightly on the perceived needs of the economy, that is, with individual skills development, and less and less with opportunities to gain greater cultural awareness and understanding, to explore critically what it means to be a citizen in a global world (e.g. Biesta 2006; Field 2000/2006; Burke and Jackson 2007; Jarvis 2006). The essentially humanistic concerns set out in earlier seminal reports such as the Faure Report (1972), or the four

pillars of learning set out by Delors and colleagues: learning to be, to do, to live together and to know (UNESCO 1996), have increasingly become occluded in current discourses (Biesta 2006; Field 2000/2006). Yet the narratives here indicate that these broader learning agendas are perhaps more relevant than ever before. Learning to live with different cultural or social world views and values are collective challenges requiring collective learning responses, learning which brings people together, rather than the individualised and instrumental approach currently dominating policy.

In its *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning* (2000) the European Commission recognizes that European societies are ‘turning into intercultural mosaics’ and that in this complex social and political world we need to ‘learn to live positively with cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity’ (2000: 5). For this reason the report suggests that the joint aims of lifelong learning in Europe are to promote employability and active citizenship. However, a closer look at what is meant by active citizen reveals not only a focus on participation in the social life of the country and the extent to which individuals feel they belong, but also a further reiteration of ‘employability’ which is defined as ‘a core dimension of active citizenship’ (2000: 3). Yet the research here indicates that employability generally was not the issue; participants had little difficulty finding employment working in care homes, the security industry, catering, cleaning and other low paid, low status areas of work. The twin concerns for participants was rebuilding and re-establishing their professional lives and identities, and closely allied to this, re-generating a sense of respectability and value in

themselves as moral subjects. In this respect policy does little to support refugees, in fact as we have seen it has more often worked to stymie opportunities for capital trading and served to reinforce their symbolic denigration.

Brine (2006) argues that European policies around lifelong learning are underpinned by a structural hierarchy of learners. She suggests that different learners are constructed within two discernable discourses: a discourse of the knowledge economy, which consistently relates to higher level graduate learners; and a discourse of the knowledge society, linked to discourses of social cohesion and political stability, which is concerned with learners who have low skills or who are unemployed. The latter are the gendered, classed and 'raced' learners needing basic and social skills training. Education and training initiatives for this latter group are more concerned with ensuring social and political stability than enabling them to develop high level skills for the knowledge economy. Despite the high level of skills and aspiration expressed by participants in this research they have not been included in the discourse of the knowledge economy. Rather than highlight the forms of capital, experience and skills that could contribute and enrich society, policy has instead positioned them firmly in the social cohesion and stability discourses: a problem to be contained and managed, rather than an asset or resource to be developed beyond a Level two qualification.

At the same time, and in recognition of the needs of modern developed economies, the UK Government has introduced a points-based system to manage migration and

ensure that business and employers have access to the skills that the economy needs (Somerville 2007; Sales 2007). As Yuval Davis et al. (2005) point out, such policies enable Governments in the global north to cherry pick the most skilled and educated workforce from the global south. Here we have a clear opportunity for policy with a more globally sensitive vision. The opportunity for policy which acknowledges the damage to low income countries by the continual harvesting of sections of its workforce, and which instead shifts its gaze to the potential of the workforce on its own doorstep. The question then becomes how can we create the conditions to develop the human potential that is here and willing to be mobilised?

Including refugees in the discourses of the knowledge economy would entail ensuring access to the mechanisms and social sites for the trading of capital so that they can develop assets and apply them within the new context. Some of the practical measures have been identified in previous research, for example, the need for individualised and specialised advice and guidance on how to top-up and build upon qualifications gained overseas, or the need for specialised, advanced language provision, such as English for academic or vocational purposes (see Houghton and Morrice 2008; Morrice 2009a). In this current research one of the key sites for capitalisation was higher education, and yet access and meaningful participation was difficult and could be problematic. Qualifications, knowledge and professional expertise were often not recognised or given space for development. Institutional practices and processes, such as the privileged place of academic writing, and the essay as a form of assessment, marginalised those from a habitus and cultural

background who did not possess this privileged form of knowledge. Despite the increasing internationalisation and diversity of students in higher education, those without the 'right kinds of knowledge' still tend to be seen as being in deficit, and this is reflected in both pedagogy and practice (Gorard et al. 2006). This study suggests the need for greater openness to different ways of knowing, and recognition of the way that refugees, and others from diverse social backgrounds, can contribute to the development of new knowledge and new ways of seeing the world. Key to this is a re-thinking of higher education at the level of epistemology: what counts as knowledge and who has authority over it (Morrice 2009b). There has been little other, if any, research into the experiences of refugees in higher education and the employment outcomes when they graduate; this suggests an interesting area for further research.

Previous research has also identified the debilitating impact of the asylum system on individuals, for example, the period left in limbo while asylum applications are being considered (Waddington 2005; Bloch 2007). The impact of more recent policy initiatives: removing the right of asylum seekers to attend English language classes (LSC 2006) and granting only temporary refugee status (Home Office 2005), are highlighted by the narratives of Alan and Savalan. Isolated, lonely and suffering from depression, English language classes were a lifeline for Alan while he was dispersed to Birmingham, and yet this sanctuary would not be available to others in a similar position today. In Savalan's case, we saw how his temporary status was increasingly influencing his decision making. Both of these policies are disempowering, making it

more difficult for individuals to imagine a future for themselves here. We know the benefits of learning for health and emotional well-being (Schuller et al. 2004; Field 2009). However, further research might usefully explore the effect of participation in English language classes (and broader learning opportunities when they are available) on the emotional well-being of asylum seekers and refugees. Similarly, the first refugees to be granted temporary refugee status will start having their cases reviewed during 2010. So far the Government has not given explicit or detailed criteria that will be applied in the decision making. Research into the review process would indicate how effective the policy has been at controlling those seeking asylum in the UK, i.e. how many refugees are returned and why; it would also indicate how this policy has impacted on the individual integration strategies adopted by refugees and on integration more generally.

This research has also drawn attention to the limitations of learning: successful completion of a university degree programme is no guarantee of employment reward. Schemes of perception and classification are deeply embedded in public discourses and are constantly reaffirmed in the media. There are very few opportunities for refugees and non-refugee communities to mix and to begin to dispel some of the prejudices and myths which have become so firmly entrenched. This social backdrop is a sobering reminder that learning alone is not enough to solve intractable social issues such as racism, inequality and poverty. Despite this caveat, the recent Inquiry into the Future for Lifelong Learning highlights the role that learning can have in helping citizens to deal creatively and constructively with situations of social

diversity and uncertainty (Schuller and Watson 2009). The authors make two recommendations which are pertinent to this study and to how lifelong learning can contribute to social cohesion. Drawing on Raymond Williams' three roles of lifelong learning in times of rapid change: to make sense of change, to adapt to change and to shape change, and Amartya Sen's notion of capabilities, they propose a citizens' curriculum. The recommendation is that all citizens should have access to opportunities to develop their capabilities in four areas: digital, health, financial and civic. While steering clear of specifying the content, or mode of learning, they propose a framework within which local initiatives and variants could be developed. The relevant point for my argument is that the suggestion is for a minimum local adult education offer which would guarantee access to learning in relation to each of the four capabilities. Such an initiative, as long as it was kept broad enough to respond to diverse local needs, has the potential to draw learners from different social backgrounds, refugee and non-refugee, which could provide a space in which understanding of culture and self could be explored and developed, both formally and informally.

Related to this, the inquiry proposes a 'welcome entitlement' to anyone moving into a new locality, be they internal migrants or from overseas. The idea is that it would give the incomer a chance to make social contact with the community, contribute to social capital and social cohesion. Both of these initiatives are to be welcomed because they have the potential to move beyond the current learning silos, which serve to keep refugees in a narrow range of prescribed learning, and instead to bring

people together across traditional boundaries. Schuller and Watson also point out that educational venues are one of the main surviving public spaces where people from diverse backgrounds come together as active participants in a joint venture (Schuller and Watson 2009).

This research aimed to provide more than just a snap shot of the experiences of refugees, rather it sought to explore the interplay of different factors and the unfolding of opportunities over time. What has become clear is that transition, and the identity and learning processes which accompany it, are ongoing and iterative processes. There is constant flux and a sense of ongoing journeying, rather than arrival in these stories. The process is not linear and does not have clearly identifiable start and end points. Despite being conducted over a four year period, this research still only represents a snap shot, albeit it with a wider angled lens, in the lives of these refugees. It has whetted curiosity, but we're left wondering what happens next. Further social enquiry, perhaps in the form of a follow-up study in five or ten years time would be needed to explore the continuing transition process, and to discover how and whether accrued education capital can be traded in the labour market and lead to career and professional identities being successfully established.

Final Reflections

This research journey has been a humbling one for me. Oftentimes I have reflected on how I would survive, and how I would present myself if stripped of all that I hold

dear in my life: family, friends, home, work, status and all the material and non-material trappings to which I have become habituated. The idea of such nakedness is uncomfortable and even frightening. I prefer instead to reflect on the greater surefootedness and confidence which I have developed over the last four years as I have move through the academic landscape of this Doctorate. I also like to hope that through inviting participants to talk to me that I have perhaps provided a positive space for them; a space in which they have been recognised and legitimated as fellow human beings. A place where they have been invited to reflect upon un / becoming, and in some small way been given the opportunity to become.

Finally, the journeys depicted in this thesis are those of refugees who come from particular social and economic class backgrounds, and their values, beliefs and goals reflect these backgrounds. They are subjects who had enjoyed, and assumed, class privilege (and in the case of Savalan and Alan) gender privilege. To varying degrees, all of them had enjoyed the respect associated with high status employment, although of course in Maryam's case she had lost her privileged social status prior to migration. Their privileged habitus and position in their country of origin ensured that they were unthinkingly accustomed to being accorded respect and being considered respectable. The loss of this habituated respect was keenly felt.

The stories of refugees from poor and socially disadvantaged backgrounds, who have not had the privileges of education or training in their own country, are missing from this study. They will come to the UK with different capitals, from different

backgrounds which will frame their expectations and behaviours in different ways. The lives of this group, how they manage the processes of learning to live and establish meaningful identities in the UK, would provide a rich seam for further research and comparison.

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

A Level	Advanced Level
BA	Batchelor of Arts
CAS	Critical Analytical Study
CV	Curriculum Vitae
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
GPP	Gateway Protection Programme
HE	Higher Education
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
LSC	Learning and Skills Council
MA	Master of Arts
MSc	Master of Science
NIACE	National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education
NASS	National Asylum Support Service
O Level	Ordinary Level (replaced by GCSE)
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
WILAW	Ways Into Learning And Work

Appendix 1. Summary of Critical Analytical Study

Theoretical Exploration of How the Experience of Migration might be Understood as Processes of Learning and Identity (Re)formation.

This critical analytical study (CAS) has sought to establish an analytical framework which would illuminate how refugees negotiate the process of learning to live and rebuild their lives in the UK. Rather than look at migration through the more traditional lenses of assimilation and acculturation it has explored how we might understand the experience of migration through theories and processes of learning and identity (re)formation. The theoretical review is summarised here as it is intended to underpin and inform my doctoral thesis.

The CAS set the context for the study of migration by outlining the global processes and dramatic increases in population movements, in particular the flow of migrants from the global 'south' to the 'north'. It summarised developments in the theorisation of migration and located forced migration in a wider understanding of contemporary migration processes and Government responses. The response of European Governments has been to recognise the economic benefits of migration and therefore the need to manage migration, while at the same time introducing ever stricter controls on those seeking refugee status in Europe. A brief overview of UK policy shows how refugees and asylum seekers have been constructed in convenient images which seek to impose a marginalised and dependent identity.

It was noted that the label refugee is extremely powerful and emotive. It is not only a bureaucratic status used to define a category of people, their rights, entitlements and experience, but also defines the identity and subjectivity of those people (O'Neil and Spybey 2003). Overwhelmingly the label is tied up with notions of victims, dependency, displacement, loss of homeland, loss of identity and lack of status. Much of this negative association is reinforced and amplified by political and popular discourses which represent refugees as a 'burden' on an overstretched welfare system, as a security threat, and as a feared 'other', threatening national identity and social cohesion (Castles 2003; Lynn and Lea 2003; Yuval-Davis et al. 2005, Bloch and Schuster 2005). This fear is reflected in increasing racial intolerance shown against migrants and refugees across Europe (Zetter 2007), and I have argued increasingly assimilationist approaches to social integration.

The conventional definition of a refugee, set out over half a century ago in the 1951 UN Convention on the Status of Refugees, is based on individuals fleeing persecution. However, it is a definition which is less able to capture the more complex forms of persecution and human rights abuses in the contemporary global context. Castles (2003) draws attention to the fact that: '[f]ailed economies generally also mean weak states, predatory ruling cliques and human rights abuse' (2003:17). The notion of the 'asylum-migration nexus' encapsulates this tangled connection between the breakdown of state structures, the economic and political causes of migration (UNHCR 2006). To try and capture more complex forms of persecution and causes of migration 'forced migrant' is increasingly being used in research

literature, however, as Zetter (2007) points out it reduces the focus on protection as a fundamental right of a refugee enshrined in the Geneva Convention. The complex mix of reasons which might cause migration, are coupled with an understanding that migrants are social beings, whose migratory experiences are shaped and conditioned by ethnicity, race, gender, social class and position in the life cycle. These social differences cross-cut and interact effecting migratory strategies, life chances, lifestyle etc.

I have sought to explore how we might connect refugees' struggle to establish themselves in a new context with processes of learning. I noted that there is a duality in contemporary constructions of lifelong learning: on the one hand there is an instrumentalising view of learning driven by economic and political imperatives; on the other hand current discourses have encouraged a focus on informal and non-formal learning and has led to a blurring of boundaries between learning and personal experience (e.g. Alheit and Dausien 2002; West 2001; West et al. 2007; Hodkinson et al. 2007a). In my review of learning theories I rejected de-contextualised views of individual learners and learning theories which emphasise cognitive processes and the acquisition of skills and facts.

I drew upon post-modern perspectives (Usher et al. 1997; 2002) and feminist perspectives (Scott 1992; Lazreg 1994) to critique the notion that experience is unproblematic, that it exists as a raw material waiting for the individual to recollect and turn into learning. I questioned the philosophical assumption of a unified, self-

knowing self, and the construction of experience as offering unmediated or privileged access to the 'truth' about the world. Instead I argued for a theory of learning which situates the individual within a social, historical and cultural context. Also for an analysis of power and how it operates to produce and shape our accounts and understanding of the world.

Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of learning as participation in social practices provides the potential to understand and analyse the social positions and roles which individuals occupy as they move through the lifespan. It broadens the concept of learning to incorporate participation in a wide variety of activities and social milieu. Their contribution recognises the construction and transformation of identities through learning, and usefully conceptualises learning with a temporal aspect (Guile and Young 2002). However, it does not offer an understanding of what the individual learner brings to the learning context; how individual dispositions and sense of identity might impact on the learning process and in turn how learning impacts on identity formation and lives. Although for Lave and Wenger learning involves an explicit focus on the person and on the construction of identities (1996: 52-53) there is no definition or theorisation of the concept of the individual or of identity, rather it is taken as self evident (Sfard and Prusack 2005). Also absent from Lave and Wenger's analysis is an explicit view of power and how it might manifest itself in social practices and access to the resources of a community of practice.

Biographical or life course approaches to learning can be seen as an attempt to

transcend the dichotomy between the wider social forces which shape and interact with individual lives and the issue of individual agency and the way individual responses and actions can vary considerably from person to person (West et al. 2007). I suggest that the growing field of biographical learning (e.g. Alheit and Dausien 2002; 2007; Dominice 2000; Goodson 2006; Hodkinson et al. 2007) not only offers the subjective perspective of refugees, but also offers a temporal dimension to understanding learning processes and identity formation. Drawing on life history it recognises the skills, education, jobs, culture, identity and social roles which refugees occupied prior to migration; and how these pre-migration characteristics influence and shape learning processes and identity construction in a new context.

The theories of learning considered in the CAS also implied theories of identity and the degree to which individuals are free to shape their own destiny and identity. In my examination of the ontological and epistemological issues which underpin theories of learning and identity formation I drew on the work of Bourdieu (1977; 1992; 1998; 1999; 2004) to explore how we might conceptualise the individual and the social world. Bourdieu's concepts of capital, field and habitus provide useful hermeneutic devices, which taken together enable us to move beyond conceptualisations of the social world and the individual as being in binary opposition. I drew particular attention to the ontological collaboration between habitus and field and the importance of conceptualising and analysing them in tandem. Warren and Webb (2007) point out that contextualising learners' stories in educational research has tended to focus on habitus, and the notion of dispositions towards learning have been

deployed to signal constraints on individual agency. The relational notion of field has tended to be overlooked resulting in an attenuated analysis of social structure and the social discourses which are constitutive of social structure. Unless we move beyond the phenomenologies of learners, they warn that agency becomes conceptualised as little more than a voluntary act.

For an understanding of agency and identity formation among refugees I suggested that an analysis of field would include an understanding of the extent to which refugees' human, social and cultural capital is valued and recognised. How policy and social discourses construct the category of refugee and assign particular social roles and identities, while denying others. Attention was drawn to the resonance between Bourdieu's notion of habitus formation and Alheit and Dausien's conceptualisation of education as a biographical process (2002). While rejecting criticisms that Bourdieu's notion of habitus invokes structuralism or determinism, I noted his assumption that habitus operates at an unconscious level unless there is a disjuncture between field and habitus. This effectively denies the possibility of moral or emotional dimensions of the habitus (see Reay 2004).

In looking for how we might conceptualise and elucidate the identity processes at work I drew on the work of Hall (1992; 2000) to summarise the different identity models associated with modernity. The work of Wetherell (2007), Brah (2007) and Parekh (2007) among others was used to argue for a multi-faceted and fluid conception of identity, where identities are forms of relationships and are constantly

in the making. Wetherell for example, draws attention to the range of potential identities individuals may draw upon and suggests that '[a]lliances of shorter and longer duration can form and dissolve around all the possible bases on which people might be united and divided' (2007: 11).

Chappell et al. (2003) draw on the work of Foucault (1980; 1983) to add an important power dimension to identity formation. Like other writers (e.g. Goodson 2006; Sfard and Prusack 2005) they propose an understanding of identity as narrative.

'Ontological narratives' (Chappell et al. 2003) or 'scripts' (Goodson 2006) are the narrative resources which are available in the wider society for individuals to construct their own identity story. However, Chappell et al. (2003) make the point that narratives and the identities they conjure can only exist in socially constituted discourses that embody 'regimes of truth' (Foucault 1980). It is these discourses which determine which kinds of narratives will socially predominate and which will be considered unacceptable, subordinate or unavailable to certain groups or individuals.

Bringing an understanding of the power of discourse to identity formation is crucial. It enables us to explore identity not as a process through which individuals choose and select particular identities for themselves depending on particular times and circumstances, rather it enables the focus on the wider discourses of power and how these shape and constrain the available ontological narratives or scripts. It draws attention to the processes by which identities are either privileged or marginalised and

how different practices work to legitimise particular identities and not others. For refugees understanding identity as narrative enables us to explore how identity is reconstructed from social scripts which are imposed upon them, such as the label of refugee; also what other scripts and identity positions are perceived to be available and how they are negotiated. At the same time the identity strategies adopted need to consider the social and cultural context which constrain the 'choice' of script.

Through out the CAS I attempted to highlight the diversity of refugee experiences and the broad range of variables which work together in the process of identity or self-construction. I have also been mindful of the tendency to conceptualise refugees as passive victims who have things 'done to them'. While it is clear that refugees are enmeshed within structures of power and domination, and as a social category they are constructed as marginalised and dependent. Perhaps more than any other social group they have identities and labels imposed upon them which circumscribe agency, and shape and constrain the narratives and identity strategies available to them. However, within these discourses there is human agency, resourcefulness, non-compliance and sometimes subversion of the dominant scripts. The life history or biographical approach is suggested as a methodology which would illuminate the subjective experience of refugees and their sense of agency as they manage the transition to living in the UK.

In conclusion I suggest that there has been little research which has followed a group of refugees over a period of time, and in addition which looks at refugees with high

levels of skills and qualifications. This gap in the literature indicates that a study which takes a temporal perspective and explores how refugees experience and negotiate social structures and social relations over a period of three to four years would be opportune.

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Appendix 2. Students on WILAW Courses (2004-2008)

Country	Male	Female	Total
Asia		1	1
Chad	1		1
Democratic Republic of Congo	1		1
Eritrea	2		2
Ethiopia	6	1	7
Iran	9	4	13
Iraq	2	2	4
Kurdish (Syria)	1		1
Libya	1		1
Palestine		1	1
Somalia	1	1	2
Turkey	1		1
Ukraine		1	1
Unknown		2	2
Zimbabwe		3	3
Total	25	16	41

Appendix 3. Letter to Participants

[University letterhead]

Dear

I am writing to you as an ex- student on the Ways into Learning and Work course which you studied here at the University of Sussex with Diana.

For my Professional Doctorate in Education I am researching the experiences of people who come to the UK with higher level and professional qualifications. I am particularly interested in:

- how the transition to education and work in a new country and culture is experienced
- how the experience of life in the UK might change over time
- how might experiences of education and work in your own country affect your experiences here

I am looking for people who might be interested in taking part in this research. Initially this would involve meeting with me for about an hour to talk about your experiences here. I can then explain more about my research and what your involvement might be.

Ideally I am looking for participants who would be willing to meet up with me for about an hour every 6 months over the next two years to share their experiences of living, working and studying in the UK.

The confidentiality of all participants taking part in the research is guaranteed. You might be interested to know that previous research I conducted was used to develop the Ways into Learning and Work course, and also to set up the REMAS HE project. I remain closely involved with both the course and project.

I do hope you will be interested in meeting with me to find out more about this research, and perhaps taking part. I have attached a reply slip and pre-paid envelope which I would be grateful if you could return to me. Alternatively you can ring me on my mobile: 07813 930837

I look forward to hearing from you.

With kind regards,

Linda Morrice

Appendix 4. Guidance Notes and Conditions of Use Form

Notes of Guidance for Interviewees

- This research is concerned with the experiences of highly qualified migrants who settle in the UK. It forms part of the Professional Education Doctorate programme being followed by Linda Morrice.
- The research is trying to understand how migrants manage the transition to living in the UK. It is concerned with the transition into appropriate education and employment and also the wider processes of learning to live in the UK.
- I am interested in hearing your story, about your life, both before and after coming to the UK. I would like to meet with you regularly over the next two years to hear how your experiences and your life here change over time. This would involve meeting each other two or three times each year.
- Each interview will last for about an hour. If you would rather not explore any of the questions or issues raised in the interview you have an absolute right to refuse to answer any questions. You may, if you wish, withdraw from the research at any stage.
- You also have the right to withdraw retrospectively any consent given and to require that your data, including the recordings, be destroyed. It would, of

course, be important that I know this as soon as possible and before the analysis and reporting of the data had proceeded too far. Withdrawal of consent would therefore normally have to be within two weeks of the interview.

- Confidentiality is a key issue. You will be provided with a Conditions of Use form describing how anonymity is to be preserved.
- The material is to be used for research purposes only. Transcripts and tapes will be kept by the researcher (Linda Morrice) at the University of Sussex. Apart from Linda Morrice any other access will be with your permission only.

Thank you for all your help in and contribution to this research

Conditions of Use Form

1. I agree to the material on tape and transcript being used for research purposes as part of the above project, subject to the conditions specified in the Notes for Guidance attached to this form. I understand that access to it is restricted to Linda Morrice, unless additional agreement is obtained.

2. I understand that my anonymity will be preserved in the use of the material via the use of pseudonyms etc.

3. I understand that any direct quotations used in the writing up of the research will be anonymised (as above).

4. Any other comments

Signed

Name (please print)

Contact details

Date

Guidance Notes for Interviewees and Conditions of Use Form adapted from West (2007)