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Talking Torture: Asylum seekers and the public commodification of personal trauma

By

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ABSTRACT

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The aim of this thesis is to analyse the discourses created and shaped by pro-immigration asylum-seeker advocates who were working in the Greater Southampton Area between 2006 and 2009. Through this analysis, I assess the factors shaping these discourses and seek to understand who benefits from these discourses and, ultimately, whom they harm.

Adopting the approaches of both critical discourse analysis and linguistic ethnography to situate these discourses within the wider historical contexts of immigration to Southampton, I examine the socio-economic and political conditions in Britain as a country of destination, paying particular attention to British policies of immigration and refugee settlement and integration. I then concentrate on three themes that are dominant throughout these discourses and demonstrate how these themes – and the identities that they describe and go some way to shape – are created and shaped by the language in these discourses. These three themes are liminality, helplessness and mistrust.

I engage in this analysis by conducting linguistic ethnography: living and working alongside the individuals I describe herein and conducting interviews with them in order to fully understand their discursive practice. I use a triangulation method that contrasts data emerging from ethnographic interviews with the critical discourse analysis of texts produced by these discourse communities.

I argue that the discourses created and shaped by these discourse communities have fostered a condition in which asylum-seekers are portrayed as being helpless, preternaturally encumbered and, at the end of the day, as being a burden on the State.

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DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, Theodore M. Way

declare that the thesis entitled

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and the work presented in the thesis are both my own, and have been generated by me as the result of my own original research. I confirm that:

- this work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
- where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
- where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
- where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
- I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
- where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
- none of this work has been published before submission, or [delete as appropriate] parts of this work have been published as: [please list references]

Date: 11 September 2011

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1. Introduction

This thesis analyses, from a sociolinguistic perspective, the discursive means used to represent survivors of torture who are seeking political asylum in the United Kingdom. It aims to describe these modes of representation and to examine the underlying motivations behind their choice. It also aims to show how these modes of representation both reflect and define more general attitudes toward immigration in a medium-sized city in the south of England during the beginning of the 21st century. Furthermore, it aims to show how these modes of representation have incorporated – and have been shaped by – contemporary discourses on transnationalism (c.f., Appadurai, 1997; De Fina, 2007; Mar, 2005). I will define transnationalism in the chapter that follows. This analysis is intended to answer the following three questions, which have structured the research and writing of this thesis:

- How are survivors of torture represented in discourses on immigration to the United Kingdom in general and to Southampton in particular?
- To what extent does this representation commodify their personal trauma experiences?
- How does this representation affect the way that they are perceived by the individuals who are engaged in their cause?

In the United Kingdom, discourses on immigration throughout this era have engaged with two distinct dynamics that compel individuals to leave their homelands and to come to the United Kingdom. Where these two dynamics overlap has tended to cause some dissonance within the discourses that I have analysed and has provided some of the most compelling data for

analysis for this thesis. The first dynamic is the demand in Western Europe – including the United Kingdom – for low-cost unskilled foreign labour and the growth of this labour market due to the inclusion in the European Union of Eastern European countries such as Poland. The second dynamic is the social imaginary – present, in particular, in left-wing neoliberal discourses – that, as a relatively prosperous country with a relatively good record on human rights, the United Kingdom has an obligation to respect the United Nations' *Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*[1] and to accept (and, indeed, welcome) refugees and asylum-seekers. From the perspective of the countries that produce asylum-seekers, emigration is related to conditions of persecution that have been defined by this United Nations Convention. However, there is a great deal of concern in conservative, *anti*-immigration discourses in the United Kingdom, that emigration from these countries is actually driven more by socio-economic factors rather than by the conditions outlined in the *Convention* (Southampton City Council, 2007c, 2007d, 2007e).

Increased mobility within and from the countries that produce asylum-seekers, coupled with the facilitation of international communication through the Internet, has led to new levels of transnationalism and has fostered the image of the United Kingdom as a premier 'destination' for asylum-seekers. In addition, the strength of the pound sterling on international currency markets while I was conducting my research has made immigration to the United Kingdom even more attractive[2], as more and more asylum-seekers choose their destination based not only on promises of safety and security, but on the promise of economic prosperity as well.

[1] For a further definition of this and for a description of its role in defining contemporary discourses on immigration to the United Kingdom, see Chapter Three.

[2] This situation has changed dramatically in the past 18 months, which have seen the decline of the value of the pound sterling. However, this was the case when I was conducting the bulk of my research between 2006 and

Despite the perception of a transnational society in Britain suggested by the above socio-economic changes during this period, from a linguistic perspective, much of British discourse on immigration continues to be marked by xenophobia and isolationism. Discourses on immigration have intrinsic significance in the overall definition of British national identity[3]. With its analysis, this thesis problematises the co-opting of the 'personal' – in this case, in terms of personal trauma narratives – with regards to a migratory phenomenon that, like the historical period in which it is occurring, has traditionally been explained in 'public', 'economic' or 'humanitarian' terms.

1.1 Research Methodologies

In this thesis, I adopt a linguistic ethnography approach and draw on the review of secondary literature on immigration to the United Kingdom to situate discourses of this particular population within the wider historical contexts of immigration to the south of England, and to Southampton in particular. I examine, at governmental, legal and institutional (or *macro-structural*) levels, the socio-economic, political and humanitarian conditions prevailing in the United Kingdom, as a point of destination, focussing in particular on British migration and resettlement policies and contemporary British notions of nation and state. I then focus on the individual (or *micro-structural*) level to examine the issues, processes and events that have shaped – and are shaped by – the discursive representations of survivors of torture who are seeking asylum in the United Kingdom and on the ways in which these representations shape and are shaped by individual attitudes toward migration.

2009.

[3] 'Identity' will be discussed at some length in Chapter Two. See also, Blommaert, J. (1995). *Discourse*. London: Sage.

To achieve this, I concentrate on the close analysis of a particular discourse community: Britons who define themselves as being pro-immigration, and on this community's interactions with – and discourses on – asylum-seekers in general and survivors of torture in particular. I have analysed these discourses using a triangulation method that contrasts data emerging from oral interviews with members of refugee relief and support organisations, alongside participant-observations of the local practices of these organisations, and an analysis of the written (both in print and online) fundraising and public-education materials produced by these discourse communities.

1.2 Limits on the Collection and Analysis of Data

I have consciously limited the scope of my research in two fundamental ways. I have not included the voices of the survivors of torture themselves. Although this may, at first glance, seem like a glaring oversight, I have done so for two reasons: First, there are significant ethical considerations that would have needed to have been made had I interviewed and interacted with this vulnerable population. In discussing the torture or trauma experience – or even in discussing arrival in the United Kingdom and resettlement, for that matter – there is the real risk of re-traumatising the research subject. As I am not a trained psychologist and am in no way capable of dealing with this re-traumatisation, I felt that to interview these subjects would be both irresponsible and unethical.

Second, the questions that shaped the research for this thesis focus exclusively on the 'representation' of survivors of torture and not on their 'performance'. As such, it was not necessary to include their voices. Although this has limited the scope of my research, I firmly believe that the exclusion of these voices was not only necessary, for the reasons that I have

outlined above, but that it in no way hindered my ability to answer the questions that I hoped to answer with my research.

Furthermore, I have limited my scope by choosing to analyse only neoliberal, *pro*-immigration discourses. I have done so because I felt, after an initial assessment of existing research[4], that a great deal had already been written and said about conservative, *anti*-immigration discourses[5]. For this reason, I was interested in analysing discourses that purported to be *pro*-immigration and *pro*-asylum-seeker. What I found, in the discourse communities I analysed, at least, was that conservative, anti-immigration discourses have coloured the discourses of individuals who define themselves as being *pro*-asylum-seeker and who devote their time and effort to the causes of refugee relief and support. The conscious decision to exclude tacitly *anti*-immigration discourses has further limited the scope of my research, and I recognise that limitation and acknowledge, in the conclusion of this thesis, that further research should be conducted to include and further analyse these discourses. However, I again argue that this exclusion in no way encumbers my ability to answer the questions that are central to this thesis.

1.3 Structure

The thesis is structured in seven chapters. The second chapter presents a synthesis and evaluation of the main theoretical frameworks on migration and transnationalism that inform my analysis of the representation of survivors of torture who are seeking asylum in the United Kingdom. It also outlines the methodology used to gather data, justifying the choice of multiple methodologies. The third chapter provides a critical overview of existing

[4] See Chapter Three.
[5] For a further analysis of some of these discourses, see Chapters four, five and six

historiography on immigration to the United Kingdom in the 20th century followed by a presentation of the main legislative reactions to current trends in migration, particularly in terms of economic migrants from Eastern Europe and in terms of asylum-seekers emigrating from the so-called 'Developing World'. Shifting the focus towards the *micro-structural* level, the fourth chapter analyses the discourses of liminality that are present in the oral and written discourses of the discourse communities that I have analysed. The fifth chapter looks at discourses of helplessness that are present in these discourse communities, while the sixth chapter examines how the nexus of these two previous discourses – of liminality and helplessness – lead to an overarching discourse of mistrust of asylum-seekers. The final chapter summarizes the chief findings of the thesis and the scope of further research with potential and alternative lines of enquiry.

2. Theoretical and Methodological Background

This chapter will describe the theoretical frameworks and research methodologies that have been used to answer the research questions that are central to my thesis. These questions are outlined in the introduction to this thesis.

2.1 Transnational Studies

Transnationalism was a term that was first coined by Randolph Bourne (1916) to describe a new way of thinking about relationships between cultures. Later authors such as Appadurai (1997) adopted this construct to critique the paradigm of the nation-state and to attempt to promulgate a greater use of transnational thought. This thesis looks at the discourses surrounding survivors of torture who are applying for or have been granted asylum in the United Kingdom. As such, much of the research will be based in the theories of sociolinguistics and refugee and migration studies. Transnational Studies provides a way of connecting the aspects of sociolinguistics that I have used with those of refugee and migration studies. Transnational Studies, which focuses on the socio-political, historical, cultural and linguistic aspects of migration, permits a sufficiently multidisciplinary examination of the topic of this thesis. The next section will introduce one aspect of migration studies: forced migration studies, which looks at the migration of individuals – such as asylum-seekers and refugees – who do not necessarily have a say in their own migration.

2.1.1 Forced Migration Studies

Forced migration studies is a particular field of migration studies that looks at the phenomenon of individuals who migrate for reasons that are beyond their control. The field is defined by the International Association for the Study of Forced Migration as the study of the movements of refugees and people displaced by conflict as well as people displaced by natural or environmental disasters, chemical or nuclear disasters, famine, or development projects (Forced Migration Online, 2006). Forced Migration Studies does not look at economic migrants, although the argument could be made that the migration of economic migrants is, in some ways, 'forced' by economic factors. In fact, those engaged in forced migration studies explain that the populations with which they engage differ from economic migrants. The differing way in which these populations are represented in the popular media has led to a clear distinction between these two populations of migrants. One of the focuses of this thesis is to examine the ways in which personal trauma narratives are used to draw a distinction between survivors of torture who have immigrated to the United Kingdom and individuals who have immigrated for economic gain.

For many years, forced migration has been one focus of the discourses on immigration to the United Kingdom. During some periods of recent history, including the refugee crises in East Timor and Kosovo in the 1990s, refugees and asylum-seekers were represented as 'acceptable' and 'worthy' (Pickering, 2000, p. 32). At the time, the British media had chosen to engage the language of humanitarianism and justice. This favourable representation is often in contrast with the representation of economic migrants at the same time, who were represented as being something less than 'acceptable', less than 'worthy'. However, the sympathetic representations of refugees from East Timor and Kosovo have been the exception that proved the rule. Refugees have often played the scapegoat when Britons have become irate about immigration. At times, it seemed as if the public believed, 'the admission of a single person whom there was any means of keeping out was an unparalleled disaster' (Dummett, 2001, p. 124).

During these periods, refugees (as a specific sub-type of migrant) have made a suitable substitute for immigrants (in general) in discourses on immigration to the United Kingdom. The British media tend to portray refugees and asylum seekers as arriving in 'floods, influxes, waves, torrents, streams' (Döveling & Hoffman, 1989). However, this representation is stereotypical and misleading. In any comparison, (e.g., with the number of refugees in the world as a whole, the number of asylum seekers arriving in other European countries, or even with the total population of the United Kingdom) the number of asylum-seekers in the United

Kingdom is very small (Nettleton & Simcock, 1987). The proportion of those asylum-seekers gaining refugee status is smaller still. Yet, the nationalistic response has historically been to seek controls on the immigration of refugees and asylum-seekers. Turner surmises that the government and the media may have deliberately attempted to confuse refugees with other migrants in an attempt to restrict the ways in which people can arrive in the United Kingdom (Turner, 1995). In the next section, I will explain why I have chosen Critical Discourse Analysis to answer the questions of this thesis. This study identifies and analyses a number of so-called 'big D' Discourses, in the sense of Gee (1990) and Foucault (1972).

2.2 Critical Discourse Analysis

In his work in sociolinguistics, Gee (1990) explores the concept of *Discourse* ('big D' Discourse). In contrast, 'little D' *discourse* refers to language in use. When discussing the combination of language with other social practices such as behaviour, values, ways of thinking, clothes, food, customs and perspectives within a specific group, Gee refers to that as 'big D' *Discourse*. Individuals may be part of many diverse Discourse communities, for example 'when you "pull-off" being a culturally specific sort of "everyday" person, a "regular" at the local bar… a teacher or a student of a certain sort, or any of a great many other "ways of being in the world"' (p. 7). To explore identity construction among survivors of torture it is necessary to attempt to locate their *positionality* in space, in time and in a moral array of persons (Berman, 2000; Harré, 1984; O'Connor, 1995). To do so, I will analyse the way in which Discourse constructs the way that people think and speak about survivors of torture. Through these Discourses, the identity of survivors of torture is constructed and reconstructed throughout the many different phases of emigrating, immigrating, seeking asylum and, if the asylum claim is successful, integrating into British culture (Minami, 2000).

While these ascriptive identities are primarily used by those in the discourse community – social workers, psychotherapists and attorneys, for example – survivors of torture may begin to adopt these identities as they compete for the limited resources of time and money that are available to individuals in their situation. While an individual arriving in the United Kingdom may describe herself as 'Congolese', she soon becomes aware that a more advantageous identity (in terms of access to resources) would be 'asylum-seeker' or 'survivor of torture'. Berman (2000) writes, 'People…formulate their own reality and actively cause things to happen through their use of language' (p. 150). This process is the focus of my research. Individuals who are engaged in working with survivors of torture and in championing their cause are also engaged in the construction of the Discourse that shapes their identity in the greater public sphere. The language that these discourse communities use – including the

language of identity – becomes the language that is used by those outside of the discourse community, and eventually, by the people being identified themselves.

Certain agents of representation such as the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture (The Medical Foundation), the Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group (SWVG), Time Together UK and the Southampton New Communities Team actively construct the neo-liberal, pro-immigration Discourse on survivors of torture. Together, these agents of representation form a discourse community. John Swales defines discourse communities using six essential characteristics (Swales, 1990):

> A discourse community:
>
> - Has a broadly agreed set of common public goals
> - Has mechanisms of intercommunication among its members
> - Uses its participatory mechanisms primarily to provide information and feedback
> - Utilizes and hence possesses one or more genres in the communicative furtherance of its aims
> - In addition to owning genres, it has acquired some specific lexis
> - Has a threshold level of members with a suitable degree of relevant content and discursive expertise

Organisations and government agencies that work with the population of asylum-seekers and refugees meet all of the criteria for a discourse community. Their goal is to assist this population, by providing psychological counselling and medical help, or by ameliorating their integration into the community. These organizations have 'mechanisms of intercommunication', including newsletters and websites that meet Swales' next two criteria. These organizations have a 'specific lexis', which will be defined and analysed below. Finally, these organizations are comprised, at least in part, by experts or volunteers with a certain level of expertise, which has been gained through years of experience. Using critical discourse analysis, which is outlined below, I aim to show that these discourse communities represent survivors of torture in a particular and agreed upon way.

Norman Fairclough is considered the founder of the school of Critical Discourse Analysis or CDA. Jan Blommaert (1995) writes,

> Fairclough's *Language and Power* (1989) is commonly considered to be the landmark publication for the 'start' of CDA. In this book, Fairclough engaged in an explicitly politicized analysis of 'powerful' discourses in Britain…and offered the synthesis of linguistic method, objects of analysis, and political commitment that have become the trademark of CDA (p. 24).

Fairclough describes discourses as different ways of representing aspects of the world (2003). Using CDA, I will examine texts that have been written by various organisations that assist survivors of torture with their resettlement in the United Kingdom. I will also analyse texts written by government agencies that promote the positive reception of political asylees and refugees – among them survivors of torture – by settled communities in greater Southampton. The basic understanding behind my analysis is that 'Host-country media constructions of migrants and refugees shape the way they are received' (Witthoft, 2007, p. 65).

Fairclough provides social researchers with a 'schematic picture of how CDA works as a form of language critique' (2003, p. 209). It is valuable to reproduce this 'picture' below and, immediately following, to tailor it to the individual needs of this thesis:

Focus upon a social problem which has a semiotic aspect

1. Identify obstacles to it being tackled, through analysis of
    a. The network of practices within which it is located
    b. The relationship of semiosis to other elements within the particular practice(s) concerned
    c. The discourse (the semiosis) itself
        i. Structural analysis: The order of discourse
        ii. Textual/interactional analysis – both inter-discursive analysis and linguistic (and semiotic) analysis

Fairclough further defines the goal of phase 2 of CDA: 'The objective here is to understand how the problem arises and how it is rooted in the way social life is organized, by focusing on the obstacles to its resolution – on what makes it more or less intractable' (2003, p. 209).

2. Consider whether the social order (network of practices) in a sense 'needs' the problem. The point here is to ask whether those who benefit most from the way social life is now organized have an interest in the problem not being resolved.
3. Identify possible ways past the obstacles. This stage in the framework is a crucial complement to stage two – it looks for hitherto unrealized possibilities for change in the way social life is currently organized.

4. Reflect critically on the analysis (1-4). This…requires the analyst to reflect of where s/he is coming from, how s/he himself/herself is socially positioned

Within my analysis, I will problematise the public representation of personal trauma narratives. As trauma scholars such as Felman and Laub (1991), Herman (1994) and others have shown, the telling of one's life story is 'a means to an end not the end itself' (Atencio, 2006, p. 52). Survivors of torture, who have suffered and survived great trauma, have become 'thoroughly disempowered actors' (Berman, p. 160). As such, they 'do not have the freedom to "create" meaning in their experiences, but often have certain meanings imposed on them by more powerful others' (*ibid.*). This notion of powerlessness describes a deterministic process that denies the agency of the individual. Using CDA, I aim to answer the following questions: How are trauma narratives co-opted during the processes of asylum and resettlement? As they are co-opted, to what extent are they commodified? Who benefits from this commodification? Who is damaged by it? How does the semiotic representation of personal trauma affect their representation as immigrants to Southampton?

One could argue here that the social order in the United Kingdom does, in fact, 'need' asylum seekers and survivors of torture. Fairclough asks us to 'Consider whether the social order (network of practices) in a sense 'needs' the problem' (2003, p. 209). He continues, 'The point here is to ask whether those who benefit most from the way social life is now organized have an interest in the problem not being resolved' (*ibid.*). By offering political asylum to survivors of torture, and by offering assistance to them in their processes of seeking asylum and resettlement, the British public fulfils a certain moral obligation. The representation of survivors of torture relies heavily on this moral obligation to offer assistance to those who are suffering while not necessarily intervening in this suffering. The discourse community comprised of organisations that provide assistance and support to survivors of torture in the United Kingdom asks that the British public see beyond public (mis)conceptions of immigration and, perhaps more importantly, of immigrants. They ask that the British public see the traumatised individual. A common thread in this discourse is that the individuals who are represented are 'just like you and I', yet they have suffered traumata that have made them unique. This phenomenon will be examined further below, under the heading of *Trauma Studies.*

The conclusion of this thesis will focus on positive and productive representations of survivors of torture in Discourses on immigration to the United Kingdom. How does one represent survivors of torture in a manner that raises public awareness while empowering

the very populations it aims to help? In the process of critical discourse analysis, Fairclough (2003) advises that the final step should be a critical reflection on the analysis that takes place in steps one through four. Fairclough advises, that this requires the analyst to reflect on 'where they are coming from and how they are socially positioned' (p. 209).

Here, Fairclough asks us to examine the reflexivity of the process of CDA. Mauthner and Doucet (1998) define reflexivity as reflecting upon and understanding one's own personal, political and intellectual autobiography as a researcher and making explicit where one is located in relation to one's research subjects. As such, reflexivity means acknowledging the critical role we play in creating, interpreting and theorizing data. There has been criticism of Fairclough's methods, which are often seen as being prone to a high rate of subjectivity. With insight into these critiques, and with proper reflexivity, it is possible to avoid some of the pitfalls of this method of analysis. The section on CDA below will engage with some of these critiques.

Using CDA, this thesis will show that the discourse on torture treatment has adopted and *recontextualised* a Freudian psychoanalytic discourse. The ego-wound suffered by survivors of torture is represented as being insuperable alone; survivors of torture must rely on the assistance of professionals at every step of healing and resettlement. There is a growing consensus today that the therapeutic value of psychoanalysis is limited (Barry, 1995, p. 96). Nevertheless, Freud remains a major cultural force, and his impact on the torture treatment movement is immeasurable.

Freudian psychoanalytic discourse is a central tenet of the torture treatment movement. From psychologists to medical doctors, lawyers to caseworkers, there is an army of professionals on whom the survivor must rely. This thesis problematises these relationships and types of representation. Authors such as Seligman and Maier (1967) have asserted that it is dangerous to promote learned helplessness in populations – such as refugees and survivors of torture – who are being assisted and represented in this manner. Learned helplessness, which was first defined by the psychologist Martin Seligman, is a condition in which an individual has been conditioned to believe that they are helpless in a given situation (1967). Survivors of torture often feel helpless following the traumatic events that they have experienced. They may come to believe that they do not have control over their situation and that whatever they do is done in vain. Representations that co-opt these traumatic events may prolong these feelings of helplessness.

Representations of refugees often promote the learned helplessness described above. Witthoft writes that newspaper and magazine articles and films about the asylum-seekers and refugees 'ignore their agency and portray them as helpless victims at the mercy of fate until they were "discovered" by the international community and eventually brought' to the West (2007, p. 66). Unfortunately, this tends to be a common theme in the discourses on refugees in the West. Rajaram (2002) presents a similar critique of the representation of refugees in the humanitarian discourse of organizations such as Oxfam. Oxfam defines itself as, 'a development, relief, and campaigning organization that works with others to find lasting solutions to poverty and suffering around the world' (Oxfam, 2007). Rajaram points out that humanitarian agencies represent refugees in terms of helplessness and loss. It is suggested that this representation consigns refugees to their bodies, 'to a mute and faceless physical mass' (p. 247)[6]. Refugees are often denied the right to present narratives that are of institutional and political consequence.

In *Forced Migration Review*, Pickering writes that, with few exceptions, reports on asylum seekers and refugees are not interested in listening to the voices of individual asylum seekers, nor of home country conditions or conditions of flight. 'When alternative views are offered, they are usually presented as "human interest" stories rather than "hard" news' (2000, p. 33). However, this is expressly not the case for survivors of torture, at least within the confines of the discourse analysed for this thesis. Within this discourse, survivors of torture are consistently represented in an individualised manner. Their personhood – their personal experience – makes them worthy of representation in the first place. Whether this representation is empowering or not is another matter entirely.

[6] This will be further discussed in the chapter: Discourses of Helplessness.

Fairclough writes, 'the most distinguishing features of a discourse are likely to be features of vocabulary – discourses "word" or "lexicalize" the world in particular ways' (2003, p. 129). In the worldwide torture treatment movement, there has been a conscious decision to 'lexicalize' individuals who have been tortured as either 'survivors' – the lexeme that is used in this thesis and the one with which I am most comfortable – or 'victims'. To define these words, I have purposely chosen the Oxford American English dictionary rather than a specialist dictionary. These two lexemes are used with some frequency in common public discourses on survivors of torture. Therefore, I feel that it is fitting to refer to a common lexicon to define them. A survivor is 'a person who survives, especially a person remaining alive after an event in which others have died', while a victim is defined as 'a person harmed, injured, or killed as a result of a crime, accident, or other event or action' (Oxford University Press, 2006). This lexicalisation is a component of a process that Blommaert (1995) calls 'ascriptive identification' or labelling. He defines an ascriptive identity as 'an identity attributed to someone by others (as opposed to 'inhabitable identity') and including that someone in a socially defined category' (Blommaert, 1995, p. 251).

It may seem finicky to focus on the difference between two lexemes, which, fundamentally, are used to denote the same population. However, Fairclough advises, 'rather than just focus atomistically on different ways of wording the same aspects of the world, it is more productive to focus on how different discourses structure the world differently' (Fairclough, 2003, p. 129). This thesis will demonstrate that discourses that use the lexeme 'survivor' are, at the most basic, lexical level, more empowering than discourses that use the lexeme 'victim'. While 'victims' have been *subjected* to unspeakable horrors, 'survivors' are active agents who have used a number of psychological, religious and spiritual coping mechanisms to overcome nearly insurmountable adversity.

In fact, Britta Jenkins (2001), a paraprofessional who works in a torture treatment centre, writes about the fundamental transition that occurs as her clients make the shift from being 'victims' to becoming 'survivors':

> In the work we do, trying to help people change from being victims of torture to becoming survivors, we have to be conscious of the speechlessness accompanying the subject of our work and learn to handle it. We must do this, on the one hand, in order to build bridges between the pain of the person who suffered the unspeakable and the society that shuts itself of from the unspeakable to avoid feeling any pain itself (p. 152).

However, a concurrent discourse in feminist theory literature has problematised the lexeme 'survivor'. This lexeme is used chiefly to write about rape and other forms of sexual violence. Alcoff (1996) writes,

> What is the political effect of this speech? What are its effects on the construction of…subjectivities? Is this proliferation and dissemination of survivor discourse having a subversive effect on patriarchal violence [or systematic violence of any kind]? Or, is it being co-opted, taken up and used but in a manner that diminishes its subversive impact? (p. 199).

Does the discourse on survivors of torture, including, but not limited to, the representation of their personal trauma narratives, serve to subvert a dominant paradigm in which states in the so-called 'Axis of Evil' torture their citizens while 'Allied' states provide refuge? Or, as Alcoff (*ibid*.) cautions, has this discourse been 'co-opted' or, to use the discourse of this thesis, 'commodified' in such a way that its 'subversive impact is ultimately diminished?' This remains to be seen.

Problems with the way that discourses have lexicalized the world do not end there, with the distinction between 'victims' and 'survivors'. In *Refugee Stories,* two of the refugees who are represented have problematised their being labelled as 'refugees'. Organisations such as the Refugee Communities History Project, who sponsored *Refugee Stories*, may benefit from this lexicalisation – by mobilising resources that have been earmarked for refugees, for example. However, does this lexicalisation harm the very population that these organisations are trying to help? Does this 'wording' hinder successful integration? The two refugees' quotations are reproduced below in their entirety; they provide an exceptional first-hand account of the problems of this lexicalisation.

The first is from Patrick Opendi, a Ugandan who came to the United Kingdom as an asylum-seeker in December 1989, when he was fleeing political persecution. The second is from Mentor Chico, who came to the United Kingdom from Ecuador in 1997. While reading these quotations, it would be useful to keep in mind the following caveat from Jaworski and Coupland (1999). These authors advise us to 'notice the reflexivity of the discourse and the analysis – how the participants are (or are not) 'doing' their identity, 'how they apparently enjoy [or fail to enjoy] the shared construction of discourse and, consequently, their shared…identity' (p. 393).

In addition, it is useful to note Blommaert's (1995) definition of 'inhabitable identity' here: A self-constructed and self-performed identity (as opposed to 'ascriptive identity') through which people 'claim allegiance to a group' (p. 253). Therefore, while Opendi and Chico may be

happy to identify as Ugandan or Ecuadorian – or as men, as fathers, or as brothers for that matter – they bristle at the ascribed identity of 'refugee':

> I asked myself and I asked the members of the management community: the word 'refugee', for how long shall we be refugees? Integration means you got [*sic*] to leave behind certain things, culture, language, customs and acquire new ones, more especially within the mainstream. Now, when you keep telling people, 'I'm a refugee. I'm a refugee', you are sort of distancing yourself away from the mainstream and you cannot integrate because this connotation of refugee keeps coming back in your mind 'I'm a refugee' (Opendi, 2006).

> …[S]ometimes you prefer not to say you are a refugee…between close friends we know who we are… but when I first meet someone I do not ask if you are a refugee…or how you got into the country, and all of that…and if they ask me, it depends on the person who is asking me, if he is trustworthy I could tell him about my situation. But normally I don't like to talk about status (Chico, 2006).

In the mid-1990s, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) came under a good deal of criticism. Authors such as Widdowson (1995, 1996) and Toolan (1997) maintain, 'the kinds of texts chosen for analysis tend to be easy targets; that interpretations are negatively monovalent, biased by the political views of the analyst, and based on prior political readings' (in Wales, 2001, p. 91). Furthermore, critics of CDA maintain that readers and consumers of media in general are often underestimated in CDA. They are portrayed as being 'compliant consumers of ideologically-biased texts' (*ibid*.). In this portrayal, their ability to construct 'their own representation' is often discounted (*ibid*.). It is important to be aware of these criticisms when engaging in CDA. It is myopic to believe that the consumers of texts produced by organizations such as the Medical Foundation are incapable of doing their *own* form of CDA. My goal in engaging in this research is to empower my subjects through critical analysis. This raises a fresh concern, as Blommaert (1995) warns that less than careful CDA may result, 'not in an empowered subject speaking with a more audible voice, but in a stentorian analyst's voice' (p. 33).

I have analysed texts that have been carefully crafted to raise awareness of the issue of torture (and, ultimately, to raise funds for the organisations working with survivors of torture). These texts are often read with a critical eye. In my research, I need to acknowledge that consumers of this discourse are 'free agents capable of diverse interpretative positions' (Wales, 2001, p. 91). I aim to explore this issue by triangulating my research. This process will allow me to corroborate my findings. By using key-informant interviews with volunteers who work with survivors of torture alongside the CDA of key texts, I aim to come to conclusions about the discourse surrounding and shaping this issue.

2.3 Narratology

To examine the extent to which personal trauma narratives have been commodified, it is helpful to use the theory of narratology, which looks at narrative as an object of analysis. Narrative, as defined by Onega and Landa (1996), is the semiotic representation of a series of events meaningfully connected temporally and causally. One theory in educational research, for example, holds that humans are storytelling organisms who, both individually and socially, lead storied lives (Connelly, 1990). Thus, the study of narrative is the study of the ways in which humans experience the world. Narratology, then, involves varieties of narrative theory that 'operate at a high level of abstraction and are primarily concerned with the general elements and structures of narrative that transcend individual texts, particular cultures, and historical periods' (Eder, 2003, p. 278). As with all aspects of this thesis, the use of personal trauma narratives must be critically analysed. Godin et al. (2006) warn, 'depictions [of refugees] show a concern for the complexities of "representation"; however, using testimony does not obviate the need to consciously consider the modes of production of these narratives' (p. 4).

Within the multidisciplinarity of this thesis lies the multidisciplinarity of narratology. 'The study of narrative does not fit neatly within the boundaries of any scholarly field' (Thornborrow & Coates, 2005, p. 2). There are many different ways to study narrative (c.f., De Fina, 2003; Minami, 2000; Schrauf, 2000; Tarulli, 2000). There are also many disciplines that engage in this study, including social psychology, sociolinguistics and CDA. For the purpose of this thesis, I will study narratives using the disciplines of sociolinguistics and CDA. I will focus specifically on narrative function or the 'Why?' of storytelling (Thornborrow & Coates, 2005). Why are survivors' stories told? Who benefits from their telling, and who suffers? De Fina (2008) writes that narrative both shapes – and is shaped by – the discourse community where it occurs. She goes on to write that narrative has a multiplicity of purposes related to the roles and relationships negotiated (and, in some cases, assigned) by individuals in the discourse community. De Fina (*ibid.*) argues that the local – or micro – 'meaning-making' that takes places in discourse communities (such as those as I have examined in Southampton) goes on to shape global – or macro – discourses on a particular topic. The roles and relationships that are negotiated and assigned within individual discourses become the identities by which the individual is then identified in a wider context. In this case, the identity of the survivor of torture that is negotiated or assigned at the micro level is then disseminated both formally, through a series of structured public education campaigns; and informally, when members of the discourse community talk with individuals outside of the community.

The notion of 'performance' is essential to any discussion of narrative discourse (Thornborrow & Coates, 2005). Analysts who study narrative have written about two distinct kinds of performance, which have been outlined by Thornborrow and Coates in their introduction to *The Sociolinguistics of Narrative.* First, the authors outline the performance of identity and the social self. This definition of 'performance' builds on the work of Goffman (1971), whose *The Performance of Self in Everyday Life* is cited by Thornborrow and Coates as being a seminal work (*ibid*.). I contend that survivors of torture perform survivorship (or, in some cases, victimhood). To borrow from the work of Judith Butler, survivorship is something that is 'done' and it is something that has to be 'done' repeatedly throughout the processes of asylum and resettlement (Butler, 1990).

This brings us to the second use of the term 'performance'. This definition of performance involves the telling of a story as a performance (Thornborrow & Coates, 2005). The linguistic acts that are central to the processes of asylum and resettlement are performances in the sense that they are a *focusing* of communicative events (*ibid*.). 'Life stories,' as defined by Linde (1993), 'touch on the widest of social constructions, since they make presuppositions about what can be taken as expected, what the norms are, and what common or special belief systems can be used to establish coherence' (p. 3). Survivors of torture, and the professionals who are working with them, are aware of the precepts of the process in which they are engaging. Trauma narratives, presented as oral histories, are, therefore, not objective.

In presenting an oral history, a survivor of torture tells the asylum officer what they believe the asylum officer wants to be told and thus reveals who they think the asylum officer is. Before the asylum interview, survivors of torture may have undergone professional torture treatment and may have had hours of 'training' at the hands of psychotherapists, lawyers and

other advocates[7]. This may include multiple rewritings of the trauma narrative and even mock asylum interviews. As such, they are prepared to understand that an asylum interview should focus on trauma and should not be a relating of the successes of one's life. A survivor knows what their audience – in this case, the asylum officer – expects to hear, and tailors their narrative accordingly. In particular, the narratives of survivors of torture 'with their underlying realities of brutality, rejection and deprivation' do not fit recognized prototypes of narrative because of this lack of choice or power (Berman, p. 159).

Gobodo-Madikizela (2003), in writing about her work with survivors of apartheid in South Africa, writes, 'I became especially concerned with how victims of politically motivated violence live with traumatic memory, and how this shapes their narratives about events' (p. 79). In contrast, in my work with refugees, political asylees and survivors of torture[8], I have become especially concerned with how these trauma narratives are used once they have been documented. What becomes of them once they are committed to paper? After they have served their purpose in the asylum process, do they become useless remnants of this process or does this merely mark the beginning of their utility? When these narratives are co-opted by organisations that work with survivors of torture, the narratives themselves are not necessarily changed, but the purpose for telling them does.

In order to be granted political asylum in the United Kingdom, survivors of torture must, in effect, 'sell' themselves to the Home Office. I use the word 'sell' self-consciously, acknowledging that I am adopting discourses of consumerism, advertising and, ultimately,

[7] This, in fact, represents a 'best-case' scenario. I am conscious that many asylum-seekers undergo the asylum process alone, without the assistance of any of the professionals listed here.

[8] I worked as the Resettlement Case Manager for Africa and the Middle East from 2000-2002 for the International Rescue Committee, a leading non-sectarian refugee relief organisation. I also worked as the case manager for Survivors International, a leading torture treatment agency in the San Francisco Bay Area.

commodification. To define 'commodification', I have adopted the discourses of bell hooks (1992). Hooks describes as commodification as 'eating the other'. By this, she implies that expressions of less dominant cultures can be 'sold' to the hegemonic culture. Throughout this thesis, I will show that, using carefully structured discourses, survivors of torture engage in a number of interactions that are similar to the selling of a product. In a critique of the publicity campaigns of Oxfam, Rajaram describes visual representations of the world's refugees: 'Corporeal, refugees are speechless and consigned to "visuality": to the pictorial representation of suffering and need. One of the central effects of this consignment is the 'commodification' of refugee experience' (Rajaram, 2002, p. 251). On the other hand, survivors of torture are seldom represented pictorially, as anonymity is often paramount in their representation. However, I argue that documented *trauma narratives* of survivors of torture are used in much the same way that *images* are used to represent refugees. Images consign refugees to representations of 'suffering and need' (*ibid.*). Trauma narratives serve a markedly similar purpose. These narratives are co-opted and used throughout the processes of asylum and resettlement. During the asylum process, survivors of torture are engaged in 'selling' themselves to the Home Office. Following this process, survivors of torture are 'sold' to the British public as model examples of 'worthy immigrants'.

During the asylum process, the Home Office is embodied by an individual asylum officer. The asylum officer plays the role of the 'narratee, the narrator's addressee' (Prince, 1996). The 'sales pitch' takes place during a highly structured asylum interview. During the asylum interview, a survivor of torture must relay their trauma narrative and must 'show a well-founded fear of persecution in a particular country for the following reasons: race, religion, nationality, political opinion [or] membership of a particular social group' (Border and Immigration Agency, 2007a). This particular autobiography is no simple telling of an immigration narrative. This particular representation must be 'packaged' in such a way that traumas are foregrounded while successes are diminished. The Home Office is unlikely to give asylum to an individual who has not suffered a great deal. As such, the trauma narrative, as it is represented during the asylum process, differs fundamentally from a 'typical' life story. It behoves the individual applying for asylum to represent themselves in such a way that focuses on suffering and on opportunities that have been lost or taken away. Essentially, a successful asylum applicant is one who is perceived to be powerless to better their life without the help of the nation that is granting asylum.

This type of narrative differs from the 'typical' narrative of an individual who is fleeing war or persecution, such as refugees. For these individuals, 'violence is understated because it is the

norm' (Berman, p. 160). The narratives of refugees who are brought to the United Kingdom under the auspices of an organised refugee resettlement program differ from those of survivors of torture who must make *individual* asylum claims. As Berman (2000) writes, refugees 'understate' the violence that they have survived. Many of them see this violence as an integral part of their identity. To say, for example, that you are a refugee from Sierra Leone implies that you have survived the violence that is inherent to civil war. However, to say that you are an asylee from Argentina provokes an onslaught of new questions: 'Argentina? But I thought Argentina was beautiful!' or, 'Why? What happened to you in Argentina?' As violence is not necessarily the 'norm' in countries such as Argentina, the survivor must focus on the trauma that they have survived to justify their presence in an asylum-granting country. For the survivor of torture who is seeking asylum in the United Kingdom, violence must be overstated. Violence is precisely the reason that this narrative is being told in the first place.

Some asylum-seekers receive maximum support from individuals and institutions during their asylum process, while others may undertake the process alone. In the ideal situation, where the asylum seeker is aided by a team of professionals, the trauma narrative is performed in a number of different spaces[9]: it is first 'performed' in the confines of a psychotherapist's office, where its very performance may have therapeutic value. As Elaine Scarry (1995) writes in *The Body In Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*: 'The act of verbally expressing pain is a necessary prelude to the collective task of diminishing pain' (p. 9).

Subsequently, the trauma narrative may be rehearsed and – to some extent – 'polished' by an attorney, who is retained to better the survivor's chances of being granted asylum. The value

[9] For further discussion on narrative, identity and space, see De Fina, A. (2008). Who tells which story and why? Micro and macro contexts in narrative. *Text and Talk, 28*(3), 421-442..

of the trauma narrative during this phase is its potential to sway Home Office asylum officers, who hold the key to legal residence in the United Kingdom. Malkki (1996), in her essay *Speechless Emissaries: Refugees, Humanitarianism, and Dehistoricisation*, writes extensively about the limitations of personal trauma narrative. Although personal trauma narratives are seen as central to the torture treatment process (cf., Agger and Jensen 1990; Merscham 2000; Gangsei and Deutsch 2000), because of their personal nature – and because they are being relayed by the survivor herself – they may be of limited value to the legal discourse of the asylum process (Maryns, 2005). Instead, physical and psychological sequelae are seen as the only true 'proof' of torture. During the first two stages of the asylum and resettlement process, refugees' and asylum-seekers' 'bodies [are] made to speak to doctors and other professionals, for the bodies [can] give a more reliable and relevant accounting than the refugees' 'stories'' (L. H. Malkki, 1996, p. 9). Malkki (*ibid.*) continues, that during the legal phase of the asylum process, 'it is necessary to cut through 'the stories' to get to 'the bare facts'. It is here that physical, non-narrative evidence assumes such astonishing power. It has all the authority of an 'immediately ascertainable fact' (p. 10). However, in the third phase, which I will describe below, the narrative regains its importance.

Finally, the trauma narrative enters its third phase of performance, when it is used by organisations or individuals who are interested in the welfare of survivors of torture. Its value during this phase is to raise public awareness or even to raise funds. Narratology, among other theoretical paradigms, allows me to examine the representation of the trauma narrative – and of the survivor of torture – during this third phase. How are survivors of torture 'marketed' to the public of the United Kingdom? How are their stories told? Who tells them and why? Using the theory of narratology, I will look at individual narratives seeking out the recurrent structures that are found within all narratives. I will also focus my critical attention away from the mere 'content' of the narratives, focusing instead on the teller and on the telling and the audience and their reception.

2.4 Oral History

As well as the theoretical framework of narratology, I will work within the framework of oral history. Oral history can be defined as the collection and study of historical information using interviews with people having personal knowledge of past events (Schmitt, 2002). The processes of seeking asylum and of resettlement rely heavily on oral history. A trauma narrative is an oral history with a focus on traumatic life events. This section of this chapter follows the section on narratology because one methodology builds on the other. Portelli

(1998) writes, 'The analysis of oral history materials must avail itself of some of the general categories developed by narrative theory' (p. 66).

During the process of seeking asylum, the veracity of the trauma narrative is most tested: 'How reliable is oral evidence? How does it compare with the modern historian's more familiar documentary sources?' (Thompson, 1978, p. ix). In fact, asylum officers often ask for documentary 'proof' of events related orally during the asylum interview. Portelli (1998) counters, 'Oral sources are credible but with a different credibility. The importance of oral testimony may lie not in its adherence to fact, but rather in its departure from it, as imagination, symbolism and desire emerge. Therefore, there are no 'false' oral histories' (p. 68). The Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture (the Medical Foundation) has written a document for asylum officers at the Home Office: *Interviewing Alleged Victims of Torture: Good Practice*. In this document, the Medical Foundation presupposes that asylum interviews are typically adversarial affairs and that eliciting oral histories of trauma is, at best, a highly sensitive undertaking: '[Asylum] Interviewers must remain alert and sensitive to the difficulties and barriers victims of torture may face in expressing highly traumatic experiences' (The Home Office, 2007, p. 1). Survivors of torture may have engaged in a number of coping mechanisms such as siding with their interrogators. Once the torture situation is completed, it may be difficult to acknowledge or accept these coping mechanisms. Portelli (1998) warns,

> Acts considered legitimate and even normal or necessary in the past may be… now viewed as unacceptable and literally cast out of the tradition. In these cases, the most precious information may lie [sic] in what the informants hide, and in the fact that they do hide it, rather than in what they tell (p. 69).

This is an important consideration and may colour the asylum process. The asylum interview becomes a necessarily intricate dance, in which the asylum officer struggles to get the 'facts' while trying not to re-traumatise the survivor of torture. Maryns (2005) demonstrates how the adversarial nature of the asylum interview can lead to the claim for asylum being denied. Because of the factors mentioned above – including the difficulty in relating highly traumatic experiences – the asylum seekers' narratives can routinely be found to be lacking in the face of the Home Office interviewer's persistent questioning. Furthermore, the normative constraints of the interview (limitations on time and a desire to keep the asylum seeker 'focussed', for example) and the expectations of the interviewers do not allow the asylum seeker to fully contextualise her or his experience. This contextualisation would allow the interlocutors – in this case, the Home Officer interviewer and the asylum seeker – to make sense of the narratives that are being told.

2.5 Theories of Marginalisation

Any examination of the public representation of personal trauma will involve many different theoretical paradigms; among these is a theory of marginalisation. As immigrants and survivors of torture have typically been marginalised, much can be learned from a theory that has attempted to explain the experience of other marginalised groups. Barry writes, 'The representation of women…was felt to be one of the most important forms of 'socialization', since it provided the role models which indicated to women, and men, what constituted acceptable versions of the 'feminine' and legitimate feminine goals and aspirations' (Barry, 1995, p. 122).

One can extend this description of representation to any marginalised group. Survivors of torture who are resettling in the United Kingdom as political asylees are undergoing a process of re-socialisation. Blommaert and Verschueren (1998) expand on these processes of representation and identification, which they label 'othering':

> … [I]n order for an identity to be established, it has to be *recognized* by others. That means that a lot of what happens in the field of identity is done by others, not by oneself…The fact is that, regardless of whether one wants to belong to a particular groups of not, one is often *grouped* by others in processes of – often institutionalized – social categorization called *othering* (p. 205).

Public discourses on refugees provide the very 'role models' that Barry (1995) describes. As I have shown above, survivors of torture are often faced with representations of the helpless immigrant who should be grateful for political asylum and grateful for any assistance offered to them during the resettlement process.

Pickering (2000) argues that, during the resettlement of Kosovar refugees in the United Kingdom, refugees were 'sold' to the British public as being needy, helpless and, above all, grateful. 'However, any deviation from the image of the passive, grateful, invited refugee was soon met with a swift return to devaluing representations of refugees as ungrateful, aggressive, demanding, draining and different' (p. 32). There is little space in the discourse for representations that do not hew to an accepted norm. For example, the representation of a refugee who is unappreciative or who demands better treatment than they are currently being given.

Representations of this type are rare in the discourse and, as such, may be jarring. In *Refugee Stories*, the majority of representations are of grateful asylees who are happy to have been given asylum in the United Kingdom. The exceptions are of particular interest to me: Asmeret

Tesfazghi (2006) was born in Eritrea in 1979. She came to the United Kingdom in 1989 with her mother and siblings, escaping the Eritrean war of independence. Upon receiving an official letter from the Home Office, which granted asylum, she balked at what the letter seemed to say: 'Oh, you know, you have been accepted in this country, congratulations'. Rather than being particularly grateful, Tesfazghi replied, 'What for? We don't need to be accepted, we are going to go back home'. Later, she concedes, '16 years later, we are still here'. She is grateful for the temporary reprieve that asylum provides but seems to understand that it is, in no way, a permanent solution. She has adopted the discourses of transnationalism that are discussed elsewhere in this thesis.

In keeping with the parallels that I have drawn between marginalised groups and survivors of torture – arguing that both are represented as marginalised groups – Atencio (2006) writes that victimhood has been 'feminized' in Western culture (p. 81). She continues, 'Victims of torture in particular are subjected to a process of feminization, even – or perhaps especially – when the prisoner is male' (*ibid*.). In particular, she draws attention to the use of forms of sexual torture, which are often highlighted in media representations of torture. For example, in *Céline's Story*, presented by the Medical Foundation for their *February E-Appeal* for funds, we are told that Céline's 'Mother was publicly raped', that 'Her brother [was] forced to rape her', and that she was 'Raped and sexually assaulted. Repeatedly' (Medical Foundation for Victims of Torture, 2007). Atencio contends that forms of sexual torture are, by their very nature, emasculating.

Similarly, Taylor (1997) suggests that forms of sexual torture are used primarily to change 'male and female-sexed bodies…into penetrable, 'feminine' ones that coincided with the…ideal of a docile social and political body' (p. 152). This is the type of socialisation that I describe above. Through torture, survivors are emasculated and socialised to become 'docile'. I contend that this socialisation process continues – perhaps to a lesser extent – throughout the asylum and resettlement processes. It would be interesting, in further research, to do a cross-section of representations of survivors of torture. What percentage of these representations is of women? What percentage is of men?

Finney and Peach (2004) write, 'anecdotal evidence suggests that generalised hostility towards asylum seekers and refugees may be compounded by other racial, religious and gender prejudices' (p. 24). They go on to report, 'Similarly, wider moral panics over young men in public spaces also affect public opinion of asylum seekers, and research has found that families are less likely to be perceived as threatening, devious or 'bogus' than young, single

male asylum seekers' (Finney 2004, D'Onofrio and Munk 2004 in (N. Finney & Peach, 2004). Similarly, I contend, women are less likely to be perceived as threatening or devious. To that end, male survivors of torture, who have somehow been emasculated by their trauma experience, are more likely to be well received by the country of asylum. Discourse producers engage with personal trauma narratives and they are represented throughout the asylum and resettlement processes despite the fact that the public representation of personal trauma is, at best, a sensitive enterprise. Atencio (2006) advises, 'The aesthetic representation of horrific acts such as torture is especially problematic because despite his or her best intentions, the artist risks unwittingly reproducing and reinforcing the logic of the perpetrator, not to mention re-enacting the exploitation of the victim, even when depicting lived experiences' (p. 55).

2.6 Trauma Studies

To examine the use of these narratives, I will rely, in part, on the burgeoning field of trauma studies. Trauma studies is a 'multi-disciplinary approach to the study, treatment, and prevention of trauma-related suffering' (International Trauma Studies Program, 2007). Academics who engage in the study of trauma analyse not only its individual effects – its psychological and physical sequelae – but its effect on societies as well. Kaplan (2005) states that the broader political and cultural contexts within which a catastrophe takes place are important to the experience of trauma. These contexts also affect how trauma is 'managed' by institutional forces, including the media.

One of the recurring themes in trauma studies literature is the unifying effect of trauma. Caruth underscores this unifying effect: 'In a catastrophic age…trauma itself may provide the very link between cultures: not as a simple understanding of the pasts of others but rather, within the traumas of contemporary history, as our ability to listen through the departures we have all taken from ourselves' (in Erikson, 1995, p. 11). Similarly, in *Refugee Stories*, Nidia Castro, a refugee who was born in Chile in 1932, writes, '…[T]hey [Britons] should be a conscious that things, that terrible things can happen to anyone…people should think that these refugees are human beings like anybody else, like their friends, their cousins, their sisters; just human beings, that's all' (Castro, 2007). I will discuss this at some length in Chapter Three.

In similar fashion, Martha Raddatz, an American journalist reporting from Iraq, spoke about military families, who have suffered great trauma during the war in Iraq, reports:

> They're like us, but they have experiences unlike those we will ever have. And it is important for us to connect with them, to somehow know what they are going through and not just say, 'Aren't they great?', as if they're our hometown football team, and go and do whatever we do (Raddatz, 2007).

Earlier, I discussed the discourse of helplessness. In that section, I mentioned that the discourse on refugees represents them as 'huddled masses'. A single refugee becomes a synecdoche for the entire refugee experience. In the thoroughly regimented refugee experience,

> [W]here blueprints for behaviour are offered and enforced by well-meaning caseworkers, a state of hyper redundancy is created. In keeping with such a hyper redundant context is the belief of refugee relief organizations and workers that all refugees, merely by being 'refugees,' are to be treated as 'equal' (read, 'identical') regardless of their vast variations in personal background, motives for leaving, reasons for escape, and plans for the future. That is, individual identities and continuities, sustained by unique biographies, are systematically neutralized, once again making for meaningless existence (Daniel & Knudsen, 1995, p. 3).

Conversely, the discourse on survivors of torture represents them as individuals who, while not similar to one another, are frighteningly similar to us.

'[T]rauma is un-representable yet must be represented' – this suggestion is central to the discourses on survivors of torture and torture treatment (Kaplan, 2005, p. 56). In *The Dark Side of Tellability*, Norrick (2005) discusses the tellability of narratives. He argues that certain narratives are more tellable than others, due, in part, to their content. The events that are related in a 'tellable' narrative are not typical quotidian events; they are exceptional. This exceptionality renders the performance of the narrative worthwhile. However, Norrick cautions, 'some stories, though eminently tellable in their extra-ordinary content, are not tellable for many tellers under most circumstances, because they are too personal, too embarrassing or obscene' (Norrick, 2005, p. 323). This is precisely the difficulty faced by one who is pressed to relate a trauma narrative. Trauma narratives go against many of our cultural mores about what makes a story 'tellable'. In fact, they are performed expressly because they *are* too personal, too embarrassing or obscene.

Another central tenet in the discourse on torture treatment is the significance of the role of the active listener in the process. Felman and Laub (1991) write that, by listening, the listener is as important as the person who is performing the trauma narrative: The listener comes to be a co-owner of the traumatic event and through listening, the listener comes to experience trauma. Since the beginning of the torture treatment movement, its pioneers have recognized the significance of this dialogue in the torture treatment paradigm. Helen Bamber, who began

London's Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture in 1985, is recognized by some as the mother of the torture treatment movement. Bamber learned through her experiences at Bergen-Belsen Concentration Camp that survivors of torture and trauma often yearn for little more than a venue in which to talk about the pain that they have suffered. 'Above all else, there was a need to tell you *everything*, over and over and over again. And this was the most significant thing for me, realizing that you need to take it all' (in Belton, 1998, p. 89). From the survivor's perspective, Elie Wiesel, a Holocaust survivor, writes of the frustration of not being heard: 'It is not because I cannot explain that you won't understand, it is because you won't understand that I can't explain' (in Schauer, Neuner, & Elbert, 2005, p. 2).

Graessner , Gurris et al. (1996) write, 'The torture survivor…falls into a deep silence because there is no one to tell; and the traumatic experience is muted, it has no voice except for recurrent nightmares, flashbacks, and unconscious re-enactments. It is the function of the therapist to bring back that lost voice' (p. xvi). By performing the trauma narrative, the survivor of torture begins an empowering dialogue. This dialogue often marks the beginning of the healing process. As bell hooks (1990) writes in her essay *Talking Back*, 'Moving from silence into speech is for the oppressed, the colonized, the exploited…a gesture of defiance that heals, that makes new life, and new growth possible' (p. 340).

The torture treatment professional plays a pivotal role in this dialogue: that of listener. 'According to Spivak the question of 'Who should speak?' is less crucial than 'Who will listen?' cited in (Hajdukowski-Ahmed, 2003, p. 221). Helen Bamber continues to provide important advice for the therapist who is working with survivors of torture:

> It took me a long time to realize that you couldn't really do anything but that you just had to hang onto them and that you had to listen and to receive this, as if it belonged partly to you, and in that act of taking and showing that you were available you were playing some useful role (Belton, 1998, p. 89).

By entering into a dialogue with a survivor of torture, the torture treatment professional assumes accountability for what is to follow. This is by no means an easy process. 'The testimonies were hard to take in, and one couldn't help wondering: if the experience was emotionally heavy for us, the listeners, how much more so must it be for the people for whom the trauma was embedded in their identity?' (Gobodo-Madikizela, 2003, p. 82). As Brinkly and Youra (1996) put forward, 'To receive the words of a witness is to find that one has also become a witness, that one's responses are there for others to witness as well. Once the transmission begins, one cannot stand outside its address' (in Simon & Eppert, 1997, p. 176). Simon and Eppert (1997) continue, 'This traumatisation is experienced not just by the

primary witness (the survivor or eye-witness) but by those who hear or read accounts of what others have experienced' (p. 177).

In addition, witnessing a survivor's trauma facilitates a process of 're-memory'. This is an empowering step in the healing process. Simon and Eppert (1997) describe it as follows: 'Practices that encourage people to affirm life in the face of death, to hold on to feelings of both connection and disconnection, and to stay wide enough awake to attend to the requirements of just recollection and the work of transforming the future' (p. 189). Perhaps this process of 're-memory' is precisely the moment when a 'victim' becomes a 'survivor'. By far, the most important performance (in terms of its ability to convince the asylum officer that the asylum-seeker is 'worthy' of being granted asylum) of the trauma narrative occurs during the survivor's asylum hearing. At this point, the trauma narrative becomes a concrete form of testimony. 'For victims of human rights violations, testimony has a special significance, because it becomes a documented accusation and a piece of evidence against the repressive system' (Agger, 1992, p. 9). This testimony is presented to the bureaucracy of the Home Office, embodied by the asylum officer. Asylum officers have an enormous impact on a survivor's life. They alone decide whether a survivor is to remain in the host-country or to be deported to the survivor's homeland, often to be tortured again.

In the next section, I will describe the methodologies that I have used to collect and analyse the data for this thesis.

3. Methodological Background

There have been a number of quantitative surveys documenting British attitudes toward asylum seekers (c.f., N. Finney & Peach, 2004; N. R. Finney, 2007; M. Lewis, 2005). Quantitative, experimental work is anathema to some social scientists because it fails to examine constructivist, relativist factors (c.f., M. Stroinska, 1994). Some of the concepts used in *qualitative* research may have the same rigorous controls that are used for concepts in quantitative research. For example, 'credibility' raises questions of the validity of qualitative research. The research must be credible for both the researcher and those being researched. The researcher must constantly be asking the question, 'is what I'm doing truly looking at what I want to be looking at?' In fact, one of the difficulties with ethnography (one of the qualitative research methods that I have used in writing in this thesis) is that it is recursive; the researcher is always changing their notion of what the theory is and is always going back to see if what they are interpreting coincides with what they are hoping to study (c.f., Davis, 1995; Mauthner & Doucet, 1998; Wodak & Meyer, 2001; Yon, 1999).

3.1 Qualitative Research Methods

One concern that was often voiced during the research-design phase of my thesis was transferability: How generalisable is the research that I am doing? Davis (1995) maintains that all qualitative research is interpretive. Typically, qualitative research does not have statistically inferential procedures. Therefore, it is nearly impossible to infer from a sample to a population. As such, most qualitative research does not make any claim to generalisability. In this case, I will be analysing a particular discourse at a particular time in a particular place. Validity in qualitative research is dependent on the amount of information that is provided. There is an attempt to provide a 'rich' description of what is occurring but there is never an attempt to say that what is taking place is the *only* thing transpiring. Finney and Peach (2004) raise some issues with qualitative research methods. They warn that because of small sample sizes, reliance on convenience sampling, and the problem of social desirability response bias, all qualitative research methods 'raise issues of validity, reliability, representativeness and generalisability that should be considered when examining research findings' (p. 21).

I would like to examine social desirability response bias in a bit more detail: Social desirability is the tendency of informants to give culturally sanctioned and approved responses and to provide socially desirable responses to statements in self-description (Craighead & Nemeroof, 2002). As I will explain in the next chapter on the context of my thesis research, immigration is a highly charged issue in the United Kingdom. I worked with key-informants who have, in

many cases, made a life's work out of working with and for immigrants. These individuals tend to be of an ideological position in which negative views of immigration have historically been frowned upon. As such, my key informants were unlikely to voice an opinion against immigration, as this is not a socially desirable response.

3.2 Ethnography

An ethnographic approach to social research is no longer purely the domain of the cultural anthropologist: ethnography is often used as a research method in sociolinguistics, for example. A more detailed description must be established in ethnography's disciplinary home of anthropology (c.f., Duranti, 1997; Ervin, 2005; L. Malkki, 1987; L. H. Malkki, 1996; Muecke, 1987; Ogbu, 1987; Pink, 2006). Hence, ethnography may be defined as both a qualitative research process or method (one 'conducts' an ethnography) and the outcome of this process: 'an ethnography'. The ethnographer goes beyond reporting events and details of experience; she or he attempts to elucidate how these epitomise what Geertz describes as 'webs of meaning' (Geertz, 1973). These 'webs of meaning' shape – and are shaped by – the cultural constructions in which we live.

The central precept of ethnography, as described by early ethnographers (c.f., Malinowski, 2008; Mead, 2001; Pritchard, 1969) is attempting to comprehend people's perspectives from the inside but also observing them and their behaviour more remotely. This understanding is exactly what I aim to achieve in my interactions with the community that surrounds survivors of torture in Southampton and in the United Kingdom in general. 'An ethnography,' ethnographer Armstrong-Coster (2007) promises, 'will give you great, thick, rich detail'. I think it behoves us to define one of these adjectives as it is used in the lexicon of anthropology in general and in ethnography in particular.

The term 'ethnography' has come to be associated with almost any qualitative research project where the intent is to deliver a comprehensive portrayal of everyday life and behaviour. This is sometimes referred to as 'thick description'. The adjective 'thick' was made famous by the American anthropologist Clifford Geertz in his 1973 collection of essays, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (Geertz, 1973). The usage of the term 'qualitative research', as described above, is intended to differentiate this kind of social science research from more 'quantitative research' or research based on statistics. These two approaches to social science research, while often complimentary, have different objectives.

In his essay, Geertz differentiates between 'thin' and 'thick' descriptions of social phenomena (Geertz, 1973). A thin description merely *describes* a social phenomena or behaviour.

Alternatively, a thick description describes the context of the behaviour and, more important to this thesis, the discourse surrounding the behaviour. Geertz assigns anthropologists with the task of giving thick descriptions. This is what I aim to do in my research with the community – and discourse – surrounding survivors of torture. I will not simply be describing the way that people work – and coexist – with survivors of torture. Instead, I aim to describe the context of these relationships and, furthermore, to describe – and analyse – the discourse that both describes and shapes these relationships.

Before discussing the ethnographic methodology that I intend to use for my thesis, I would like to discuss the ways in which I have chosen the data that I intend to use for the ethnography. I have chosen this data because of the status and authority of the selected discourse producers. These groups are the gatekeepers: they 'furnish the lexicon for talking about the issue, the major patterns of argumentation, the appropriate styles' (Blommaert & Verschueren, 1998, p. 27). As I have written above, I have selected texts and have selected key-informants from organizations that are central to the torture treatment and refugee resettlement movements in the United Kingdom and in Southampton, in particular. The Medical Foundation and the Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group (SWVG), two of the central groups in my research, are, indeed, responsible in part for shaping the collective discourse on these issues.

For example, a number of volunteers for the Southampton and Winchester Visitors' Group (SWVG) had never worked with refugees or asylum seekers before. Therefore, they enter the discourse bereft of the necessary lexicon to speak about this issue. Through training seminars and training materials with glossaries, these organisations lexicalise this new world. For example, during a SWVG training that I attended, great pains were taken to distinguish between 'refugees' and 'asylum-seekers'. This collective discourse about this group of people, created by power brokers such as the Home Office, 'is reproduced through an infinite series of echoes and reference in secondary sources: everyday talk, but also the rhetoric and jargon of social workers and institutional and semi-institutional centres for "migrant work"' (Blommaert & Verschueren, 1998, p. 27). As such, refugee relief organisations in Southampton adopt the lexicon created by the Home Office in London and communicate this lexicon to their members. This process structures the metadiscourse of the torture treatment movement. 'Metadiscourse' is the language that one uses to talk about language. A concept that was originally borrowed from the field of philosophy, 'metadiscourse' has been used by linguists to denote a discussion about a discussion, as opposed to a simple discussion about a given topic (Hyland, 2007).

In Starting Over: How, What, and for Whom Does One Write about Refugees? The Poetics and Politics of Refugee Film as Ethnographic Access in a Media-saturated World, Michael M. J. Fischer (1995) writes that films about refugees provide ethnographic access into the world of refugees. Fischer uses this access to describe the ways in which refugees are represented in modern western media. He aims to problematise 'the sentimental essentialising categories of romanticism that certain kinds of refugees become entrapped by and attempt to use to gain sympathy with little effect, especially those romantic tropes of essential and exclusive connection between soil and identity, the tropes of authenticity or autochthony' (p. 127). It is important to draw parallels between what Fischer, as an academic, writes and what is written by refugees such as Patrick Opendi (see above) who have similarly problematised the way in which refugees are typically represented.

Fischer (1995) continues, writing that terms such as 'authenticity' and 'autochthony' 'inevitably fall apart as soon as they are subjected to a historicizing gaze, and their mobilisation invariably are indexes of either receding agrarian pasts or nationalistic ideologies whose deployment in a fast-pluralising world is archaic and violence inducing' (p. 127). While Opendi may not write in the academic style available to Fischer, but the ideas are there nonetheless: 'Now, when you keep telling people, 'I'm a refugee. I'm a refugee', you are sort of distancing yourself away from the mainstream and you cannot integrate because this connotation of refugee keeps coming back in your mind 'I'm a refugee'' (Opendi, 2006).

Fischer uses films about refugees to provide the ethnographic access he requires to write about the representation and perception of refugees. I would argue that all media about refugees provide similar access into public perceptions of this issue. As such, throughout this thesis, I will make extensive use of television programs, websites on the Internet and information that has been created for public education campaigns. I will also make use of the time that I have spent with various organizations that work with survivors of torture both in Southampton and in the United Kingdom in general. As such, I will be able to engage in one of the crucial elements of ethnography: participant observation.

3.2.1 Participant observation

The American anthropologist, Franz Boas, originally described participant observation in the early 1900s. In his textbook, *Applied Anthropology: Tools and Perspectives for Contemporary Practice*, Ervin (2005) describes three types of observation that are available as tools to the contemporary anthropologist. These are unobtrusive observation, auxiliary participant

observation and 'full-fledged' participant observation. In my research, I have engaged in full participant observation. This has involved attending the training sessions, meetings and social gatherings of two of the organizations with which I have conducted my research.

Throughout the data-gathering phase of my research, I have engaged in key-informant interviews. In *The Ethnographic Interview,* Spradley (1979) provides five characteristics of a good informant. First, the informant should be fully accustomed to the area of activity that is being investigated. Second, they should be actively involved with this area of activity. Third, the anthropologist should be unfamiliar with the area of activity being investigated. Fourth, the informant must be able and willing to devote the necessary time to the interview process. Finally, the informant should attempt to be objective and should not engage in an analysis of the data; this is the job of the anthropologist.

The ethnography of communication was first described by linguist Dell Hymes (1962). It is primarily concerned with describing how particular people or cultures interact with and view the world. As an anthropologist, Hymes was interested in distinguishing between 'etic' and 'emic' approaches to the field. An 'etic' approach to anthropology leads to descriptions that are 'culture-independent' and simply provide 'a classification of behaviours on the basis of a set of features devised by the observer/researcher' (Duranti, 1997, p. 172). On the other hand, an 'emic' approach to the field leads to descriptions that favour 'the point of view of the members of the community under study' and thus try 'to describe how members assign meaning to a given act or to the difference between two different acts' (*ibid*.). An etic approach affords an outsider's objective point of view while an emic approach provides the opposite: an insider's subjective point of view.

I began my research with an etic perspective of my target discourse community. Using ethnography and participant observation, I have gained access to an emic perspective of this community. In order to do this, I have engaged with a great deal of qualitative data, including interviews and audio recordings. However, with ethnography, I have also been confronted by the so-called 'observer's paradox'. The observer's paradox was first described by the linguist William Labov (1970). He wrote, 'the aim of linguistic research in the community must be to find out how people talk when they are not being systematically observed; yet we can only obtain this data by systematic observation' (p. 32). This phenomenon refers to the challenge sociolinguists face while doing fieldwork, where the task of gathering data on natural discourses is undermined by the presence of the researcher. As an ethnographer attempts to observe – and record – the 'typical' discourse of an interlocutor in an interview, the

interlocutor, aware that their discourse will be analysed for scholarly research, is likely to subtly alter the way in which they discuss a topic.

Namely, I have constantly asked myself the question, 'Are my subjects going to be the same with me as they were without me?' (Crago, 1992). As such, am I *ever* going to get access to the emic perspective, especially using linguistic ethnography? One of the benefits of ethnography as a research method is that it facilitates these processes of retrospection and introspection. I attempted to overcome the observer's paradox by developing intimate relationships with most of my informants, and by conducting lengthy interviews (of nearly two hours), where early questions were of a very superficial nature ('For how long have you been volunteering with SWVG?') while questions later in the interview delved much deeper ('What do you think about immigrants in Southampton?').

In order to conduct my research, I analysed the discourses – both written and spoken – of refugee service providers in Southampton, Winchester and London. I began my fieldwork in 2006 by visiting an English as a Second Language (ESL) class for newcomers at City Life and Education for Asylum-Seekers and Refugees (CLEAR). I spoke with a number of informants there, both educators and administrators and they advised me to also visit a similar class at the Wheatsheaf Trust, an organisation assisting newcomers to the city. In December of that year, I joined an organisation called Time Together UK, which pairs British volunteers with asylum-seekers and refugees. I attended two of their training sessions for new volunteers and took copious notes on the ways in which they constructed discourses around these populations and on survivors of torture in particular. Throughout this early process of data collection, one name came up, time and again: the Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group (SWVG). I was told that they were doing important work with asylum-seekers and refugees in Southampton and that, perhaps more importantly, they would have opportunities for me to volunteer, contribute something to the cause, and engage in participant observation concurrently.

In February 2007, I attended both an informational session for the organisation, as well as a one-day training workshop for new volunteers. I was open and honest with both the members and volunteers of the Group, telling them that, while I hoped to volunteer with them, I also hoped to gather ethnographic data for my Ph.D. thesis. After a background check (which is necessary for working with vulnerable adults, including asylum-seekers and refugees), I was paired with a Kurdish asylum-seeker from Iraq, who was living and working in Southampton. On a weekly basis, I met with this young man for nearly one year. We would discuss his most pressing issues: education and his pending asylum case, and I would give him a small

subsistence allowance (provided by the Group) that was intended to cover his living expenses. His rent was also paid in part by the Group.

As an active member of SWVG, I was able to collect a great deal of linguistic data, both oral and written. I attended many meetings of the Group, including their Annual General Meeting, received innumerable e-mails regarding the Group and collected – and later analysed – all of their public education materials. Ultimately, I recorded interviews with three new volunteers with SWVG (we had attended the same one-day training session and joined the Group at the same time) and with the Group's former chairpersons, Ann and David Vinnell. At the same time, I also became aware of the Southampton New Communities Group, a governmental organisation established to facilitate the 'integration' of new communities (of both economic migrants and asylum-seekers and refugees) into more established communities in the city. Contact with this *governmental* organisation (as opposed to SWVG, which is *non-governmental*) gave me access to the government's position on – and discourse around – asylum-seekers and refugees. By seeing what issues they were addressing, I had a clearer picture of the concerns about immigration in Southampton.

Finally, in order to gain access to London-based discourses on asylum-seekers and refugees, I contacted the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture, and the offices of Refugee Week. I recorded interviews with Aliya Mughal, the Senior Press Officer of the Medical Foundation; and with Gerdy Rees, the coordinator of Refugee Week. I also contacted and interviewed Krista Armstrong, Refugee Services Coordinator of the British Red Cross, who provided me with one of the most telling anecdotes of my research. Throughout this period, I also collected myriad public education materials, published by pro-immigration groups in Southampton, Winchester and London. I also visited many organisational websites, as the electronic dissemination of information has surpassed printed material. They are referenced throughout. The following tables provide a more thorough explanation of the fieldwork I conducted.

Please see the following table for a more thorough description of the primary materials that were analysed.

Material analysed	Publisher	Dates of publication or approximate dates of visit to website
Public education materials (including fliers and pamphlets)	Southampton City Council	2005-2007
E-mail correspondence	Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group	2005-2009
Public education materials (including fliers and pamphlets)	Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group	2005-2007
Public education materials (including fliers and pamphlets)	The Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture	2007-2009
Organisational website	The Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture	2007-2009
Organisational website	Helen Bamber Foundation	2008
Organisational website	Redress	2006-2007

Please see the following table for a more thorough description of the primary sites that were visited.

Site	Number of visits	Type of visit	Approximate date of visit(s)
CLEAR (City Life and Education for Asylum-Seekers and Refugees)	One	English as a Second Language (ESL) Class for newcomers	31 October 2006
Southampton Wheatsheaf Trust	One	ESL Class for newcomers	09 November 2006
International Symposium on Torture	Three-day conference	International conference on torture	10-12 December 2006
Time Together UK	Two	Training session for new volunteers	25 January 2007; 01 February 2007
Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group	One	Training session for new volunteers	17 February 2007
Southampton New Communities Team	One	Celebrating Southampton's Diversity	28 February 2007
Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group	One	Annual organisation picnic	14 July 2007
Amnesty International, Southampton Chapter	Two	General meetings	23, 30 October 2007
Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group	>15	'Visiting' with a Kurdish asylum-seeker from Iraq	2007-2008
Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group	More than ten	General organisational meetings, including annual meetings	2007-2009

Please see the following table for a more thorough description of interviews that were recorded.

Interviewee(s)	Organisational affiliation	Date of interview
Wendy Dumper, Lisa Devine and Catheryn Hulme	Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group	15 May 2008
Ann and David Vinnell	Former chairpersons, Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group	30 June 2008
Gerdy Rees	Coordinator, Refugee Week	17 October 2008
Aliya Mughal	Public Affairs Director, The Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture	17 October 2008
Krista Armstrong	British Red Cross	08 November 2008

In the next chapter, I will discuss the context in which I have undertaken this research. As I mentioned, this thesis analyses particular discourses in a particular place, at a particular time. The context will provide the reader with both a background and a lens through which to view my findings.

4. Contextualisation

This chapter provides an explanation of the context in which I have conducted my research. It provides an overview of asylum and asylum-seekers in the United Kingdom – and, more specifically, in Southampton – and of the torture treatment movement in the United Kingdom. It finishes by examining the development and structure of organisations that provide support to, and educate the public about, this population in the Greater Southampton Area. Through contextualisation, I will say why I have chosen to do my research in the United Kingdom. In addition, I will say why I have chosen Southampton in particular.

The first part of this chapter provides an overview of public discourses on immigrants and asylum-seekers in the United Kingdom at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st centuries. In order to better understand these discourses in Southampton, where this research was conducted, it is essential to begin with a discussion of these discourses on a national level. The next section of this chapter examines the asylum process following the arrival of the individual asylum-seeker in the United Kingdom. It is at this point in the asylum process that the discourse community that I have analysed first becomes involved in the life of a survivor of torture. The section begins with an examination of the dispersal of asylum-seekers within the United Kingdom. Following a presentation of *Section 55* and the destitution of asylum-seekers, I then focus my discussion on the effect of dispersal policies on the population of asylum-seekers in Southampton. This discussion of destitute asylum-seekers is followed by a description of the *Right to Work* policy, which hopes to combat this state of destitution. A deliberation on these policies leads to a discussion of resettlement as a life-long process, rather than a process that ends upon arrival in the United Kingdom. I then consider the Government's response to issues of resettlement and integration: a document titled *Integration Matters*. This section finishes with an assessment of a situation of mis/distrust that permeates discourses on refugees and asylum-seekers in the United Kingdom.

From a general examination of the context in the United Kingdom, this chapter next focuses on the situation in Southampton. The section of this chapter on Southampton begins with an examination of the historical precedent of asylum in Southampton, including the arrival of refugees from Chile and Indo-China in the 1970s. It then describes public discourses on asylum-seekers in the city at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st centuries. This section on public discourses also presents the City's three largest and most influential immigrant groups: Kurds from Turkey, Iraq and Iran; Punjabi *Bhatra* Sikhs from South Asia; and economic migrants from Eastern Europe.

The next section of this chapter seeks to familiarise the reader with the torture treatment movement and begins by defining torture as the word is used in this thesis and discussing the definition of torture within discourses on immigration to the United Kingdom. A discussion of survivors of torture among the refugee population is followed by a presentation of the *Istanbul Protocol*, the document that standardised torture treatment worldwide. This section finishes with an introduction to the torture treatment paradigm, which includes an examination of the *somatisation* – or the expression of psychological distress as physical symptoms – of trauma throughout this process. This process of somatisation is evident in a description of the psychological and medical services available at the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture and is described below.

The final section of this chapter examines in some depth the asylum- and torture-related charities that are currently at work in, or shape the discourses of, Southampton. It also includes a presentation of the Home Office's UK Border Agency, the governmental gatekeeper that is responsible for the nation's asylum program and, as such, shapes all discourses on asylum in the United Kingdom.

Throughout this chapter, there are sections that will provide rationale for the way in which this research was conducted. These descriptions have been integrated into the relevant portions on contextualisation that are included in this chapter. Using these descriptions of research rationale, I aim to answer the following questions:

- Why explore discourse?
- At what discourses am I looking?
- In what ways does Southampton provide the context in which I am interested?
- Why does my thesis focus on the discourse of 'torture' specifically, and not on 'trauma' in general?
- Why am I not including the voices of survivors of torture as the focus of my research?

4.1 Public Discourses on Immigrants and Asylum-Seekers in the United Kingdom at the end of the 20th and the Beginning of the 21st Centuries

In order to fully understand discourses on survivors of torture in the United Kingdom, one must have a clear understanding of the context into which survivors as subjects have been integrated into general discourses on immigration to the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom has a long history of immigration and it is unrealistic to hope to examine this history in one chapter of a doctoral thesis. Consequently, this chapter will focus on discourses on immigration to the United Kingdom during the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st

centuries. Limiting the discussion to this period of twenty years will allow us to go into greater detail about a number of the ethnic groups that have shaped contemporary discourses on immigration to the country.

4.1.1 Rationale for conducting this research by analysing discourse

The subject of survivors of torture in the United Kingdom is extensive and could be investigated from many different angles using any number of different theories and methodologies. In order to gain new insight into this subject, I have chosen to engage in a study of the *discourses* on survivors of torture seeking asylum in the United Kingdom. In the course of my research, I am using critical discourse analysis (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Fairclough, 2003) but also reflecting critically on the deficits of this method of analysis. These shortfalls have been delineated by Wodak and Meyer (2001) among others. I will also be using research methods borrowed from the field of anthropology such as ethnography and participant observation (Bending & Rosendo, 2006; Duranti, 1997; Ervin, 2005; Hymes, 1972; D. Lewis & Mosse, 2006; L. Malkki, 1987; L. H. Malkki, 1996; Muecke, 1987; Pink, 2006).

Using these methodologies and theories, which have been described at some length in the previous chapter, I will show that survivors of torture enter into and help to shape a discourse community – and, to some extent, a discursive regime – when they seek asylum in the United Kingdom. I hope to produce insights into the ways in which these discourses reproduce – or subvert – dominant paradigms of social and political inequality. Using critical discourse analysis allows me not only to analyse specific structures of text or talk, but also to systematically relate these to structures of the socio-political context.

Writers (Graessner, et al., 1996; Jenkins, 2001) have argued that one of the primary and most enduring effects of torture is that it robs its victims – or 'survivors', as the case may be – of their voice, effectively rendering them mute. As a remedy for this state of *voicelessness*, many authors (Agger, 1992; Agger & Jensen, 1990; Chun, 2002; Cox, 2007; Felman & Laub, 1991; Godin, et al., 2006; Miller & Tougaw, 2002; Simon & Eppert, 1997; Strejilevich, 2006; Yaeger, 2002) contend that certain phases of the asylum-seeking process play an integral role in restoring a voice to survivors of torture who are seeking asylum. These phases of the process include the eliciting, structuring and publishing of the survivor's trauma narrative. This trauma narrative is produced for asylum officers at the Home Office and, in some cases, for members of the public. This process provides survivors of torture with a public forum for testifying against their torturers. The aforementioned authors cite that this process of testifying or giving testimony is central to a successful psychotherapeutic process of *re-*

identification and of linguistic *re-presentation*. While this may be the case, I will show that the current asylum system in the United Kingdom maintains this state of *voicelessness* by merely substituting the survivor's voice with a voice that has been skilfully crafted by the discourse community I will describe below.

4.1.2 Rationale for the selection of these particular discourses

The discourse community examined in my research is defined as the people in England – and in Southampton in particular – who are engaged in working with survivors of torture who are seeking asylum in the United Kingdom. This community includes psychotherapists, legal professionals, social workers and instructors employed by refugee service organisations and the wider public of Southampton with an interest in survivors of torture and their cause.

In order to help survivors of torture to obtain asylum in the United Kingdom and to access the services and personal and institutional munificence that may follow, the members of this discourse community (as described above) may instruct survivors to use particular language and, in doing so, may inadvertently deprive them of their own voices. For example, a psychotherapist who is providing therapy to a survivor may *pathologise* – or view behaviour as a disease – certain coping mechanisms employed by the survivor. Similarly, a legal professional may edit a survivor's personal trauma narrative, focusing on hardships rather than successes. As such, the members of this discourse community, despite the best of intentions, may run the risk of disempowering survivors of torture and of transforming them into particular subjects.

When seeking asylum in the United Kingdom, survivors of torture are expected to recount their experiences in a particular way and toward a particular aim. This recounting characteristically transpires across cultural and linguistic boundaries, and across significant boundaries of authority. These boundaries include a barrier between powerful *developed* nations that grant – or do not grant – asylum, and less powerful *developing* nations that produce asylum seekers; between legal, medical and psychological experts and non-experts; and between citizens and the stateless.

In the realm of critical discourse analysis, the word 'discourse' refers to 'discursive formation', which was first defined by Michel Foucault (1972). Foucault described discourse as communication that involves specialised knowledge of various kinds. Critical discourse analysis is conducted within a variety of academic traditions that investigate the relationships between language, structure and agency. Within these traditions, the notion of discourse is itself subject to discourse or *meta-discourse*. For the purposes of this thesis, I will be

employing the Foucauldian definition of discourse and will be creating a *meta-discourse* on the discourses of legislation, psychotherapy and charity where the image of survivors of torture is constructed. I will be using critical discourse analysis to examine how these discourses produce the power and knowledge paradigms within which survivors of torture are expected to function when they are seeking asylum in the United Kingdom. These paradigms become the negotiated spaces within which the realities of a survivor's experience are produced and *re-produced*.

4.1.3 Discourses of national identities

I begin this discussion on discourses on immigration in the United Kingdom by examining two notions that underlie these discourses: nationality and *nation-ness*. Nationality, which is seem by some scholars (Chadha, 1989) as an 'out-dated concept' is paramount to discourses on immigration to the United Kingdom. Other authors (Bourne, 1916; De Fina, 2007; Mar, 2005) argue that discourses should focus on *transnationality* rather *nationality*. Many such discourses are shaped by concrete ideas of *British-ness*. In these discourses, immigrants to the country are represented as distinctly *not* British, in contrast with those members of society who are described as 'British-born' or merely 'British'. These discourses do not reflect the reality of many modern, urbanised, transnational immigrants, who live in an imaginary that operates outside these suppositions of *nation-ness* and the nation state, on inter-cultural and outer-national social and political processes (Gilroy, 1996, p. 19). These immigrants find nationality limiting and, instead, create discourses in which 'associations with multiple places and transnational identities are commonplace' (Yon, 2000, p. 16), These individuals 'may well feel closer to family and friends in Latin America, Africa, Asia, or Europe than they do to the neighbours in the apartment above or those next door' (*ibid.*). One must keep in mind these changing discourses of nationality and *nation-ness* when discussing discourses of space, which I will define in some detail later in this thesis.

It is no longer possible, then, to think of people as 'Sri Lankan' or 'British'; identity is much more complicated than this. Any discourse on immigration, then, must address this complexity. The 'discourse producers' described below must address a population of increasingly *diasporic* individuals rather than focusing their resources on traditional immigrants. By 'traditional immigrants', I suggest immigrants such as the Irish who immigrated to the United States, remained there and have become an integral part of the country's ethnic fabric. 'Diasporic people', on the other hand, are in a nearly constant state of flux: moving to the United Kingdom from Poland, for example, but returning when economic conditions change. Yon (2000) is critical of traditional discourses on immigration, which he

portrays as being naïve. Rather than discourses on immigration, he recommends discourses on diaspora: 'Diaspora is used to critique the claims that fixed origins and identities are dependent on a centre to which one hopes to return' (p. 16). Transnationalism looks at the phenomenon of diaspora: arguing that, in a transnational world, people of means[10] have begun to define themselves not by where they are 'from', but where they have 'been' (Appadurai, 1997). In traditional discourses on migration, individuals were expected to leave their homeland (due to adverse conditions such as famine or war) to begin their lives in the so-called 'New World'. A transnational – or diasporic – view of migration, argues that national frames of reference (as well as traditional discourses on 'nation' and 'state') do not provide a satisfactory explanation of historical processes of migration, be they in in the past or in the present. However, much current governmental debate in the United Kingdom is rejecting discourses on 'diaspora' and experts are promoting discourses of 'migration' instead.

In the next section, I will discuss the groups of individuals – both 'traditional immigrants' and 'diasporic people' who have landed on the shores of the United Kingdom in the end of the last century and the beginning of this. Throughout the thesis, I make a distinction between people who have migrated for socioeconomic gain and people who have undergone 'enforced' migration, such as asylum-seekers and refugees. I have included these two contexts to demonstrate – and highlight – the differences between the discourses surrounding these two seemingly similar communities. The discourse communities with whom I have interacted go to great lengths to make the distinction between socioeconomic migrants (from Poland, for example) and so-called 'involuntary' migrants, such as asylum-seekers and refugees[11].

[10] By 'means' here, I would like the reader to understand that financial means may signify different things to different migrants. While a wealthy Briton with a passport may choose to live in many different countries throughout their lifetime, an asylum-seeker may spend her or his life's savings to finance a single flight from a country where she or he is being persecuted.

[11] For a further discussion of this, please refer to section 3.6, in particular the discussion on economic migrants

Although socioeconomic factors play some part in an asylum-seeker's 'choice' to immigrate to the United Kingdom, for the purpose of this discussion, I uphold the distinction between socioeconomic migrants and asylum-seekers and refugees.

4.1.4 The statistics

In 1951, the United Kingdom became a signatory to the United Nations' *Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*. As such, the country is obliged to provide refuge to asylum-seekers. Refugee advocates acknowledge that there are problems arising from the datedness of the Convention, notably its inadequacy from the perspective of protection. Despite this acknowledgement, there is growing concern that if the Convention were to be revisited – and perhaps revised – governments would call for the restriction of the protection of refugees rather than for its expansion. As it stands, the Convention provides the sole legal basis for the protection of refugees worldwide. It codifies as a fundamental human right the right to seek asylum (Millbank, 2000).

Over the last decade, the United Kingdom has continued to see a marked decrease in the number of refugees seeking asylum: From a high point of 84,000 in 2002, the number of asylum-seekers was just over 23,500 in 2006, and the fall continues (G. Barker, 2007). This is due, in part, to discourses of deterrence and policies of containment that have been pursued by recent British governments. Discourses of deterrence aim to present the asylum process as being both rigorous and personally taxing, therefore deterring people from seeking asylum in the United Kingdom. Policies of containment, on the other hand, aim to contain asylum-seekers in their countries of origin – or in other countries of asylum – and to prevent their arrival on the shores of the United Kingdom. I will introduce and analyse these discourses in the next section.

from Eastern Europe.

4.1.5 Media discourses on asylum-seekers in the United Kingdom

The complex trends in diaspora and migration referred to above are represented in many media discourses on asylum-seekers in the United Kingdom. For instance, the daily newspaper, The Sun is quoted as reporting in 2003, 'The most cautious estimate is 50,000 bogus asylum-seekers and illegals a year [are] slipping into Britain'. According to Southampton City Council literature, this is simply not the case: '48% or nearly half all asylum claimants in 2002 [84,130 asylum applicants] were recognised as having the legitimate right to remain in this country' (Southampton City Council, 2006a). The City Council also presents the headline, reported in The Express in 2005, that 'Britain is the asylum capital of the world'. This claim is disputed by Southampton City Council, which points out that the United Kingdom, one of the richest countries in the world, hosts only 3.5% of the world's total refugee population (Southampton City Council, 2006a). This is in direct contrast with poorer countries such as Pakistan, which host much larger populations of refugees.

This media discourse not only reflects some public attitudes about asylum-seekers, it fosters these attitudes as well. According to a poll in 2000 (M. Lewis, 2005), the average estimate of the size of the minority ethnic population in the UK was 26% of the population. The figure at the time was actually around 9%. Three years later, a petition in *The Sun* provided a stark illustration of public opposition to asylum-seekers in January 2003. The petition urged then Prime Minister Tony Blair to stop Britain from becoming a 'soft touch' for so-called 'illegal asylum-seekers'. Over 300,000 people cut out the petition, completed it and returned it to the newspaper. *The Sun* claimed it was the largest response ever in Britain to a newspaper petition (N. Finney & Peach, 2004). These discourses help to shape general public discourses on asylum-seekers in the United Kingdom and, in turn, influence government policies relating to this population. I will describe some of the more influential policies below.

4.2 Governmental Policies Relating to Asylum-Seekers in the United Kingdom at the end of the 20th and the Beginning of the 21st Centuries

A number of government policies in the 20th century have directly influenced the resettlement and integration of asylum-seekers in Britain. In order to provide a context for this research, it is important to have an understanding of these policies, which have been shaped by the discourses on survivors of torture seeking asylum in the United Kingdom. In turn, the policies themselves continue to shape these discourses themselves. The most influential of these policies, *Section 55*, is introduced below.

4.2.1 Section 55

Widespread destitution of asylum-seekers in the United Kingdom was created by the passage of *Section 55* of the *Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act* of 2002. This act enables the Home Office to deny support from the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) to asylum-seekers who fail to claim asylum within three days of arriving in the United Kingdom. A report by the office of the Mayor of London found that, in London, approximately 14,000 asylum applicants per annum could be subject to the effect of *Section 55*, based on the rate in 2003 (Mayor of London, 2004a).

Supporters of the refugee cause have argued that *Section 55* has breached the UN Convention on Refugees. The Convention is 'meant to guarantee protection to escapees from disaster and assumes that each country has fair procedures for hearing their claims' (Belton, 1998, p. 317). Whether or not *Section 55* has breached the Convention, it has had a detrimental effect on the lives of many asylum-seekers in the country. Refugee service providers such as the Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group (SWVG), which will be described in some detail below, have drastically changed their mandates in order to address the destitution created by *Section 55*. Their clients include asylum-seekers and refugees who are not allowed to work but must exist on nominal NASS benefits. Due to *Section 55*, some clients do not even qualify for these and as a result are destitute (Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group, 2005). In the next section, I will describe policies that lead to no-choice dispersal, which, alongside *Section 55* has contributed to the destitution of asylum-seekers.

4.2.2 No-choice dispersal

Since the 1940s, the government of the United Kingdom has used various dispersal systems to accommodate groups of refugees that had been allowed to enter the country under a quota system. This policy of dispersal changed in 1999, when the *Immigration and Asylum Act* addressed spontaneous asylum-seekers for the first time. 'Spontaneous' asylum-seekers are those individuals who arrive in the country and then claim the right to seek asylum here. As it is often impossible for them to obtain travel documents in their countries of origin, survivors of torture tend to fall under this category. The 1999 *Act* addressed the preponderance of asylum-seekers who had migrated to the country's urban centres upon arrival:

Under the *Asylum and Immigration Act* 1999 introduced by the Labour Government, the deterrent measures [against asylum-seekers] were made harsher yet. Asylum-seekers are to be dispersed around the country, regardless of whether there is anyone of their language or nationality in the place to which they were sent; they could refuse to go, but on pain of losing

all support in money, kind or accommodation (Dummett, 2001, p. 127). Before the passage of this act, the numbers of asylum-seekers being greeted at the main ports of entry – including Southampton – had created major pressures on local councils primarily in the southeast of England. Forced dispersal – or 'no-choice' dispersal, as it is rather euphemistically called – was developed as a strategy to reduce the pressure on these sites and to better manage the process of claiming asylum.

The policy of 'no-choice' dispersal was developed, in part, to deal with the issue of destitute asylum-seekers in the United Kingdom. It was felt that if asylum-seekers were dispersed to carefully chosen parts of the country, the government would be better able to provide them with financial and social support and they would be more likely to be able to earn a living. Ironically, this policy has exacerbated some of the destitution that it was designed to alleviate (Dumper, Malfait, & Scott-Flynn, 2006; N. R. Finney, 2007; Griffiths, Sigona, & Zetter, 2005). By compelling asylum-seekers to move, the policy has weakened refugee support networks and has decimated some communities of asylum-seekers. The denial of the right to work, another policy that ultimately led to the destitution of asylum-seekers, is introduced below.

4.2.3 The Right to Work

More than two-thirds of asylum-seekers in the south of England insisted that the right to work would alleviate the mental health problems with which they had suffered since their arrival in the United Kingdom (Dumper, et al., 2006, p. 30). This statistic corroborates the finding that there is a strong correlation between positive mental health and economic opportunities such as the right to work, access to employment and maintenance of socioeconomic status. Dumper (2006) quotes one health worker at an induction centre, writing,

> Really, the problems started when they removed the right to work from asylum-seekers. During the previous system, individuals would arrive looking confused and in a distressed state. It was lovely then to see them blossom and look happy when they got work and could support themselves and maybe send money home to their families (p. 31).

Despite the economic and mental health benefits of employment, in 2002 the British government removed the concession that allows asylum-seekers to work. This legislation meant that asylum-seekers would no longer be able to work until they were given a positive decision on their asylum case, regardless of how long they were forced to wait for this decision. At the time, the British government defended its new policy on the basis that the majority of asylum decisions were made in less than six months. The Refugee Council countered that, 'Whilst this is true of initial decisions, many of these go to appeal and may be

overturned (there were 3,165 successful asylum appeals in the first quarter of this year)' (Refugee Council, 2002). The appeals process is often protracted. During this time, the asylum-seeker is forced to rely on support from the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) and is unable to put their skills and experience to use. This may lead to or aggravate some of the mental health problems experienced by them (Dumper, et al., 2006; N. R. Finney, 2007; Griffiths, et al., 2005).

The mental health issues with which asylum-seekers arrive in Britain do not cease upon their arrival in the country of asylum. 96% of asylum-seekers in the south of England felt that their health had deteriorated since coming to the United Kingdom (Dumper, et al., 2006). A third of them described their health as having severely deteriorated (*ibid.*). Only one person included in this survey on mental health and destitution described their health as having improved: 'Without exception, respondents felt that the uncertainty about their future and the difficulties they faced to survive each day, placed an unbearable burden on them' (Dumper, et al., 2006, p. 34). This uncertainty is due, in large part to the governmental policies described above. In order to address the issue of integration, the Government has written *Integration Matters*, which is introduced below.

The dispersal policies mentioned have created problems with the normative process of refugee integration. The aforementioned issues of destitution and dispersal continue to plague asylum-seekers in the United Kingdom. This is due, in large part, to the fact that asylum-seekers are being re-dispersed to regions of the country based solely on the availability of housing, a scarce and valuable commodity in Britain in the 21st century. This means that asylum-seekers find themselves in regions that have not benefited from the economic development that has benefited other regions of the country. In prosperous regions in the country's south, economic development has led to increased affluence, leading to the increased desirability of these regions, leading to further migration to these regions and, ultimately, leading to housing shortages. In contrast, asylum-seekers are being relocated to regions that have not seen economic development and, consequently, still have adequate housing resources.

Re-dispersal to less affluent regions of the country has long-reaching effects on the integration of asylum-seekers and refugees into the United Kingdom (Dumper, et al., 2006; N. R. Finney, 2007; Griffiths, et al., 2005). The extent to which people believe themselves to be at risk of economic threat is an important factor that shapes their attitudes towards asylum-seekers (M. Lewis, 2005, p. 7). In response to this tension, in July 2004, the Home Office drafted a controversial document, *Integration Matters: A National Strategy for Refugee Integration*. This

document aimed to provide 'A genuinely strategic approach to the integration of refugees', which was portrayed as being 'in the interests of the host population and of refugees themselves' (Home Office, 2005, p. 8). Drafters of this national strategy hoped to ease the integration of refugees by tackling some of the issues of mistrust that exist in British discourses on immigration. In the next section, I will discuss how these national policies of dispersal and destitution have led to an atmosphere of mistrust concerning refugees and asylum-seekers.

4.3 Trusting and Mistrusting Refugees

Ambrose, a mentee who is working with Time Together UK, writes,

> I understand integration as a state of mind where both newcomer and the citizen feel safe to interact. They *trust* and understand each other well. Integration is a two way process…the newcomer needs to want for it to succeed. At the same time the resident citizen needs to be educated about its importance [emphasis mine]' (Time Bank, 2007b, p. 10).

This reestablishment of trust is a difficult task, as it can be argued that the asylum process in the United Kingdom is based on *mis*trust. Asylum-seekers in the United Kingdom are guilty until proven innocent. That is, the burden of proof is on them to prove that they have been persecuted (and oftentimes tortured) before they are granted asylum in the country. In discourses on asylum in the United Kingdom, the process is described as being 'loaded against the right to claim asylum' (G. Barker, 2007). Belton writes, 'There is nonetheless a stubbornly inventive 'culture of disbelief' among the state's gatekeepers. Amnesty International remarks on the 'tendency to summarily dismiss asylum-seekers' claims as 'unfounded' or 'exaggerated'' (Belton, 1998, p. 317). Belton (1998) argues that this pervasive attitude of

mistrust has lead to a reduction in the number of asylum applications in the United Kingdom. This reduction was, 'in turn, advanced as "proof" that most asylum claims are bogus' (p. 317).

I will demonstrate that a sense of mistrust on the part of receiving communities is one of the main influences on discourses on survivors of torture in the United Kingdom. Here, I will contextualise this mistrust, using documentary evidence to establish that it has a pervasive influence on the discourse. This mistrust may begin early in the asylum process when, as is mentioned above, survivors of torture are required to go to extraordinary lengths to prove that they have been tortured and that they are therefore worthy of asylum. In fact, this sense of mistrust may even be instilled in the victim[12] long before they arrive on Britain's shores.

A *Torture Survivors' Handbook*, published by the organisation Redress (2006), cites a lack of trust as being a major hurdle to forming meaningful friendships in the country of asylum. Torture is designed to destroy a person's ability to trust: 'Sexuality, intimacy, trust, touch, love, a sense of self and power over one's own body are all co-opted to achieve the torturer's goals' (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2006, p. 74). This situation is exacerbated when the survivor enters into relationships, be they with friends in the country of asylum or with members of voluntary organisations, who may be mistrusting as well.

A central part of the torture treatment paradigm, which I will describe below, is the reestablishment of trust: '…care must be taken to establish trust, enabling a person to feel safe enough to disclose the most painful experiences' (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2006, p. 74). Gavin Barker (2007), an information and project worker on the New Communities Team in the Southampton City Council, contends

[12] n.b., it has been argued by Ekblad and Jaranson (1994) that a 'survivor' of torture considers him or herself to be a 'victim' prior to a cathartic re-identification that occurs during extensive psychotherapy

that the history of asylum in Southampton is based on historical precedents that have lead to a climate of mistrust. In the next section, I present some of these historical precedents and I begin to examine their contributions to discourses of mistrusting refugees.

4.4 Asylum and Immigration in Southampton

From a general examination of the context of discourses on survivors of torture in the United Kingdom, this chapter next focuses on these discourses in Southampton. I have chosen to conduct my research in Southampton for a number of different reasons. An obvious alternative would have been to carry out this research in London. As the capital of the United Kingdom, London has a diverse population of more than seven million. Additionally, London is the centre of the torture treatment movement and is the entry point for many immigrants arriving in the country. However, I am not interested in the integration – or lack of integration – of survivors of torture into a cosmopolitan European capital such as London. Instead, I am interested in the representation of this population in a relatively small city. As a port, Southampton has a long history of immigration, which is described at some length below. This history has shaped the discourse on all immigrants to the city, including survivors of torture. While discourses on survivors of torture seeking asylum in the United Kingdom may not be explicit in Southampton, they *are* there.

Southampton has a range of cultures and ethnic groups, which make up the estimated 228,600 people living within the city boundary. There is a large population of Polish immigrants in the city, with estimates as high as 20,000, or 1 in every 10 of the total population (BBC News, 2006). Southampton also has large communities of South Asian and Irish immigrants. The 2001 Census showed that 92.4 per cent of the city's population was white – including one per cent white Irish – while 3.8 per cent were South Asian, 1.0 per cent were Black, 1.3 per cent Chinese or other ethnic groups, and 1.5 per cent were of mixed race (Office for National Statistics, 2007).

Between 1996 and 2004, the population of Southampton increased by 4.9 per cent, the tenth biggest increase in England (Institute for Public Policy Research, 2007). In 2005, government statistics showed that Southampton was the third-most-densely populated city in the country after London and Portsmouth (National Statistics Online, 2007). Hampshire County Council expects the city's population to grow by around two per cent between 2006 and 2013, adding approximately 4,200 to the total number of residents (Southampton City Council, 2007f). The greatest increases are expected among the elderly.

I have examined the representation of survivors of torture in a city such as Southampton because Southampton is comparable to – and therefore representative of – many British cities of a similar size, ethnic composition and socioeconomic profile. As such, research on these discourses conducted in Southampton is generalisable, allowing me to use my knowledge of discourses on survivors of torture in Southampton to gain insight into these discourses in the United Kingdom on the whole. Additionally, analysis of these specific discourses will allow me to extrapolate patterns from this data to facilitate an understanding of wider discourses on asylum, immigration and survivors of torture.

4.5 Historical Precedents in Southampton

Public discourses on immigration to Southampton have varied according to the national and ethnic group concerned, economic conditions in the area and the broader political context of the time that dictated whether the arrivals were deemed 'deserving' or not (Information Center about Asylum and Refugees in the UK, 2007a). This can be seen below in discourses on immigrants from Chile and from Indo-China. I have chosen these two particular case studies because they highlight the differences between two distinct groups of immigrants to the south of England: political asylum-seekers who were fleeing persecution and economic asylum-seekers who were looking for improved opportunities in the United Kingdom. The following case studies will demonstrate some of the difficulties of applying the 1951 *Convention on Refugees* to refugee situations on the ground.

In light of my research questions, it is interesting to examine public representations of these two distinct groups. I argue that survivors of torture are represented in such a way that highlights their 'worthiness' as immigrants to the United Kingdom. This representation co-opts the survivor's personal trauma narrative. These narratives are then used as a tool to 'market' survivors to the British public. It is important, then, to examine the historical precedents of these types of representation. In what ways, for example were refugees from Chile represented as opposed to economic migrants from Indo-China?

4.5.1 Refugees from Chile in Southampton

The first refugees from Chile arrived in Southampton in 1974. These refugees were fleeing the military coup and the creation of the Pinochet regime in Chile. According to Kushner and Knox (1999), the local media in Southampton at the time published very few articles referring to the arrival of these refugees. Despite the paucity of media discourse, there was considerable local support for the resettlement of this group. One support program was created by the Joint Working Group (JWG) for Refugees from Chile, a collaboration of small voluntary

organisations in the south of England (Information Center about Asylum and Refugees in the UK, 2007a). In addition, local activists, such as members of trade unions and labour and human rights advocacy groups, alongside staff from the University of Southampton, had banded together to form Chilean Solidarity Committees. These committees adopted political prisoners from Chile. They also helped these refugees to enter the United Kingdom.

These local organisations – under the auspices of the JWG – were essential to the resettlement process. They organised accommodation and English-language training and helped the refugees to find employment. In addition, by providing scholarships, one organisation (World University Service, WUS) within the group helped many refugees to attend university in the United Kingdom. Within six weeks of arriving in Southampton, the 32 original Chilean refugees had been housed by local authorities and with local residents. A few of the refugees with academic qualifications were later employed at the University of Southampton (Kushner & Knox, 1999).

The British government had initially intended to resettle this group of refugees in other regions of the country. However, after the initial reception and resettlement period, it was decided that they would be resettled in Southampton. Trade unions, local authorities, academics and individuals in Southampton were so welcoming to this group that many refugees remained in the city (Information Center about Asylum and Refugees in the UK, 2007a). Significant numbers of resettled Chileans have since repatriated to Chile. Some estimate that 750 refugees had repatriated by 198, which marked the end of the military regime and the return to democratic elections (*ibid.*).

I contrast the resettlement of this group of refugees with refugees from Indo-China, who I will describe in the next section. Politics have played an important role in the resettlement of both groups. Kushner and Knox (1999) write, 'It was left-wing groups sympathetic to the cause of the Allende government who pioneered much of the support for Chilean dissidents to come to Britain and the election of the Labour government which precipitated a more favourable policy for them' (p. 291).

There was similar neo-liberal motivation behind the resettlement of the 'Boat People' from Vietnam. However, this support was eroded slightly when the actual identity of a majority of the 'Boat People' was discovered. While Kushner and Knox (1999) describe the resettlement of the Chilean refugees as 'a gesture of international solidarity', the resettlement of the 'Boat People' is disparaged as 'a media-driven resettlement scheme' (p. 292). I contrast these two

resettlements to illustrate the broader context of public attitudes towards asylum-seekers and refugees.

4.5.2 Refugees from Indo-China in Southampton

1979 saw the arrival in Southampton of the first major influx of refugees from Indo-China. This exodus began in 1975 when American troops were withdrawn from the country after the Vietnam War. During this mass departure, the majority of refugees were promptly resettled in the United States, while others were destined for France and the United Kingdom. However, in 1979, western media awoke to the crisis of the 'Boat People', 'as hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese took to the seas, risking drowning in shark-infested seas, or attack by pirates from Thailand' (Kushner & Knox, 1999, p. 306). By August 1982, 56 of the refugees who had been resettled in Hampshire had settled in Southampton, with a further 21 settling in nearby Eastleigh. In 1986, Southampton City Council hosted a seminar on meeting the needs of the Vietnamese in south England (Information Center about Asylum and Refugees in the UK, 2007a).

The first refugees from Indo-China had taken flight because of changing political circumstances following the fall of the government in Saigon in 1975. The Communists had taken over at this time and, for many refugees who were members of the South Vietnamese élite, life in the country had become untenable. However, at the time, only 4% of refugees surveyed in Britain gave communism as the reason for their flight. In fact, the majority was fleeing economic oppression. Most of the refugees interviewed in a British survey at the time had been business or professional people. They had fled because of the loss of property, money and position (Kushner & Knox, 1999, p. 308).

The 'Boat People' resettled in the United Kingdom were from both North and South Vietnam. Interestingly, nearly 20% of the group was ethnic Chinese (Information Center about Asylum and Refugees in the UK, 2007b). It is believed that one-third of the Vietnamese refugees resettled in the United Kingdom were political refugees – as defined by the United Nations *Convention on Refugees* – while the remainder had fled the country due to economic strife. Many ethnic Chinese had fled persecution by ethnic Vietnamese and had initially sought asylum in Hong Kong. The discrepancy, between 'worthy' migrants, who were fleeing communism, and those who had taken flight for economic reasons, led to some misgivings on the part of the British government, the British public and the British media. A similar discrepancy existed among the Chilean refugees who were mentioned above, but was less clearly represented in the media at the time (Kushner & Knox, 1999). In the next section, I will

examine how these misgivings have contributed to shape public attitudes toward asylum-seekers in the United Kingdom and, more specifically, in Southampton.

4.6 Immigrant Groups in Southampton at the End of the 20th and the Beginning of the 21st Centuries

Since 1999, all asylum-seekers who request accommodation assistance from the National Asylum Support Service are dispersed to a cluster area within one of eleven dispersal consortia around the United Kingdom (N. R. Finney, 2007). Southampton was not historically one of the 11 dispersal consortia and, as such, asylum-seekers in the city were forced to move – often with as little as two weeks' notice – in order to be eligible for NASS funds. Asylum-seekers do not have a say in this matter.

However, 2007 saw a new policy of re-dispersal in which 60 asylum-seekers, primarily families (as opposed to single men), were returned to Southampton (G. Barker, 2007). Although Southampton is not currently one of the eleven dispersal consortia around the United Kingdom, Southampton City Council believes that there is likely to be a resumption of dispersal to the City of additional people seeking asylum and supported by National Asylum Support Service funds (Southampton City Council, 2006b). In the next section, I will look at the historical precedents of immigration to Southampton. I argue that these precedents have shaped – and continue to shape – contemporary discourses on immigration to the city. It is important to understand the reaction of people in the city to previous groups of immigrants in order to understand better their reactions to current groups of immigrants, including asylum-seekers and refugees.

The authors Tony Kushner and Katharine Knox (1999) have distilled the discourses on historical and contemporary migrant communities in Hampshire. They have chosen to write about three distinct yet representative populations of refugees in the county: refugees from Chile and refugees from Indo-China, who I have discussed above, and Kurds from northern Iraq and southern Turkey. They have justified their choice of subjects, writing, 'The experiences of these refugees, though different, have all been coloured by the closing doors of Western Europe, and especially Britain, in granting a safe haven to refugees' (Kushner & Knox, 1999, p. 336).

4.6.1 Rationale for examining these particular groups of contemporary immigrants to Southampton

In this section, I look at contemporary immigrants to Southampton, including the most recent group of immigrants to gain a great deal of public attention: economic migrants from Eastern

Europe. While Eastern Europeans are not asylum-seekers *per se*, their migration has greatly affected discourses on immigration to the south of England and, as such, should be included in any discussion on the matter. The inclusion of a discussion of economic migrants from Eastern Europe is also important because their immigration has directly affected – and in some ways has distracted from – the discourses on survivors of torture and other asylum-seekers that are central to this research.

4.6.2 Punjabi Bhatra Sikhs from South Asia

The Partition of India in 1947 led many Sikhs to emigrate, and the population of *Bhatra* Sikhs in the United Kingdom, and in southern seaports such as Southampton in particular, grew exponentially. Currently, members of the *Bhatra* caste comprise a majority of the Sikhs in the city. According to the Sikh Federation's website (2007), Bhatra Sikhs pride themselves on their nationalism and orthodoxy. Sikhs remain one of Southampton's most visible minority groups, with Sikh *gurdwaras*, or houses of worship, in prominent positions in the city and Sikh religious festivals having an important role in the city's cultural calendar. In 2007, the celebration of *Vaisakhi*, or Sikh New Year, in Southampton attracted nearly 10,000 participants (Mistry, 2007). This is remarkable for a city with a population of just over 217,000. The Sikh Federation, which describes itself as the 'first and only Sikh political party' in the United Kingdom, is based in Chilworth, a wealthy suburb of Southampton (Sikh Federation, 2007). Although Punjabi *Bhatra* Sikhs originally fled persecution in India, their long history of immigration to the United Kingdom has in some ways facilitated their integration into the community of Southampton. The same cannot be said about Kurds from Turkey, Iraq and Iran. They have a similar history of fleeing persecution, but have not integrated as successfully into the host society that greeted them here.

4.6.3 Kurds from Turkey, Iraq and Iran

The persecution of Kurds in Iran, Iraq, Turkey and elsewhere has led to a massive refugee movement in and from the region (Kushner & Knox, 1999). Although Kurds have long been described as the largest ethnic group in the world without its own nation-state, their situation finally reached a boiling point in 1989. Since 1989, considerable human rights violations against the Kurds in Turkey and in Iraq have led to a substantial refugee influx. This, in turn, has led to the persecution of Kurds reaching the national agenda in Britain (Kushner & Knox, 1999). Following the Gulf War, Saddam Hussein remained in power. Kurds were then persecuted by his totalitarian regime like never before. As the governments of the west had had some role in putting the Kurds in harm's way, they felt some obligation to protect the Kurds following the first Gulf War. The predicament of the Kurds following the Gulf War

illustrated the necessity for the international community not to remain indifferent to such situations (Joly, 1992).

However, immigration policy in the United Kingdom changed abruptly at that time to reflect – and, in some sense, to fend off – this new reality: From June 1989, visas were required from nationals of Turkey after more than 4,000 Turkish Kurds had filed applications for asylum on arrival in the United Kingdom (Joly, 1992). This had a profound effect on Kurds who were trying to immigrate to the United Kingdom. Indeed, in 1989, airline staff prevented three Kurdish asylum-seekers from deplaning at London's Heathrow airport. This resulted in their being forcefully repatriated to Turkey where they were severely tortured (Joly, 1992). In the next section, I will examine another contemporary group of immigrants in Southampton: economic migrants from Eastern Europe. While these migrants are neither asylum-seekers nor refugees, their integration – or lack thereof – into the community has shaped general discourses on immigration.

4.6.4 Economic Migrants from Eastern Europe

Southampton City Council recognises that, for readers of some media in the south of England, a new type of migration poses a threat to the British economy and to British culture. This migration is perhaps perceived as even more alarming than the immigration of refugees and asylum-seekers and with even further-reaching detrimental effects on British society: the arrival of the Polish Plumber (and chef, and hotel employee etc.). In order to mitigate this perceived threat, the City Council has published *Myth Buster: Polish and Other East European Communities in Southampton* (2007). This may signal a trend in the discourse on immigration to the United Kingdom in general. This shift in focus is not a new phenomenon: Michael Dummett (2001), in *On Immigration and Refugees,* writes that, in the 1980s, the public anti-immigration discourse in the United Kingdom began to shift its focus. Rather than vilifying immigrants from the West Indies and from South Asia, the government (and conservative media in the United Kingdom) turned on asylum-seekers and refugees:

> Government policy came to be directed as much against refugees as against immigrants, two completely different categories of people. The Conservative government, followed in this by its Labour successor, did its utmost to blur the distinction, not only referring constantly to 'bogus asylum-seekers' but frequently describing them as 'economic migrants', as 'illegal immigrants' or as 'abusing the system' (p. 123).

This discourse, in which asylum-seekers are the villains, has continued for almost two decades. However, with the expansion of the European Union to include Eastern European

countries such as Poland, a new scapegoat for the United Kingdom's immigration concerns may have arrived on the scene.

As in the United Kingdom in general, the number of asylum-seekers in Southampton has declined. According to the Home Office statistics for 2004, approximately 4% of asylum-seekers were distributed to the south of England (Dumper, et al., 2006). It is expected, however, that this number will rise again (*ibid.*). As the number of asylum-seekers has declined, the number of economic migrants from the Eastern European nations that entered the United Kingdom since 2004 has increased. This migration has had a backlash on asylum-seekers, who 'are associated with illegality and deviance' (N. R. Finney, 2007, p. 2). Furthermore, the immigration of asylum-seekers is perceived to be motivated by a similar quest for economic opportunity. One of the primary goals of pro-survivor discourses on survivors of torture, then, is to differentiate this population from the population of economic migrants from Eastern Europe. I the next section, I will describe the torture treatment movement, which is fundamental to shaping this discourse and to disseminating personal trauma narratives of survivors of torture to the general public.

4.7 The Torture Treatment Movement

Resettlement in a country that grants asylum is viewed as the first crucial step in aiding survivors of torture to rebuild healthy, productive lives (Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture, 2004). Resettlement is a lengthy process that 'concerns virtually every aspect of life' (Burnaby, 1992). This process may include extensive psychotherapy. Indeed, this is one of the primary services offered by torture treatment centres such as the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture in London (Medical Foundation). They justify their work in psychotherapy as follows:

> Treating refugees and asylum-seekers often means that at a certain point in time memories of very traumatic events have to be dealt with. These people enter treatment because they have not yet managed to incorporate certain experiences in their life histories (Bot & Wadensjo, 2004, p. 363).

In the next section, I will examine the torture treatment more closely and will also explain why I have chosen to analyse survivors of 'torture', rather than 'other' asylum-seekers and refugees who have not been torture *per se.*

4.7.1 Rationale for conducting research on survivors of 'torture'

I have chosen to concentrate on survivors of 'torture' rather than on trauma. This is not a distinction that I have made, nor am I entirely comfortable with it. The global torture

treatment movement, which began with the founding of the Medical Foundation in 1985, has made this distinction. Discourses of the torture treatment movement are central to an understanding of my thesis. As such, I have adopted their distinction and have used it to structure my work. I have chosen to concentrate on survivors of torture because torture differs in fundamental ways from the trauma experienced by refugees in their home countries. While refugees tend to suffer trauma, 'torture is pain and suffering that has been 'targeted, intentional and deliberate' (Lennon & Meehan, 2004).

Torture was officially defined by the *Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment* in 1984. It is 'Any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining…information or a confession, punishing him for an act…or intimidating or coercing him' (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 1984). Some discourses on torture see torture, trauma and hardship as a relic, as something that happened during the Spanish Inquisition, for example. Contemporary discourses on survivors of torture bring these horrors into the present.

4.7.2 Torture as systematic trauma

All refugees are survivors of multiple traumatic experiences (Valerian, 2004). However, researchers such as Ekblad and Jaranson (1994) and Chaudhry (2004) argue that survivors of torture tend to interact with persistent memories of trauma differently than refugees. This interaction may affect their settlement experience. Consequently, one must distinguish between survivors of torture and what, for the purposes of this thesis, I will call 'other' refugees. The experiences – the ways in which they integrate these experiences into their life narratives – are fundamentally different:

> Memories of trauma [and torture] are different from…traumatic memories. Memories of trauma have become embedded in the person's life story. It is a narrative that is adapted to those a person is telling his or her story to; the story can be shortened, different emphasis can be made, or it can be told in more symbolic terms (Nijenhuis, 2001 in Bot & Wadensjo, 2004, p. 363)

Many refugees in the United Kingdom are the survivors of civil war. While the goal of war is often to kill one's enemy, this is rarely the objective of torture. Eliciting information is typically the short-term goal of torture. However, 'The long-term aim of torture, as it is practised today, is to send out signals to the population at large not to oppose the political regime' (Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture, 2004).

Torturers achieve this goal not by killing their victims, who are then either forgotten or martyred, but by destroying them (Abubaker, 2004). 'The victim must be mentally and emotionally broken so that long after the physical scars have healed, she [or he] is incapable of fighting back' (Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture, 2004). Through this mental and emotional destruction, the survivor of torture becomes a living and breathing symbol of – and enters into and helps to shape discourses on – the consequences of dissent. The survivor of torture is an embodied warning to her or his compatriots; a constant reminder that 'This could happen to you'.

Survivors often leave their homelands with no hope of returning. They seek asylum in the United Kingdom based on a 'well-founded fear of persecution in a particular country for the following reasons: race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group' (Border and Immigration Agency, 2007b). During asylum proceedings, the survivor must prove that they cannot return to their country of origin and that to do so would lead to continued persecution and, often, to death. However, immigration confronts a survivor with a unique state of affairs making their integration into the society of the United Kingdom exceedingly difficult. In addition, 'torture survivors, due to the *sequelæ* [the conditions resulting from a disease or injury] of torture, have greater difficulty in coping with the problems of living in exile then do other refugees' (Bøjholm & Vesti, 1992, p. 300).

As a large portion of this thesis discusses the torture treatment movement, I utilise the distinctions that the movement itself has developed. For instance, many torture treatment centres in Europe are at least partially dependent on funding from the United Nations' Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture. The Fund provides fiscal support 'to non-governmental organisations providing humanitarian assistance to *victims of torture* and members of their family [emphasis mine]' (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2007). It requires these organisations to work exclusively with survivors of torture and not with 'other' refugees.

The Manual on Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment or the Istanbul Protocol as it is more commonly called, became an official United Nations document in 1999. This document provides 'International standards, principles and codes of conduct…for law enforcement and health-care personnel relating to the treatment of prisoners, victims of torture and the investigation and documentation of torture' (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2006, p. 90). This document is a central tenet of the torture treatment

paradigm, which I will define in some detail below. More than almost any other document, the Istanbul Protocol has shaped international institutional discourses on survivors of torture.

4.7.3 Defining and redefining 'torture'

It is interesting to note here that, although torture was officially defined in 1984, the layperson's definition of torture continues to be a subject of much debate. The media in the West – and primarily the neoliberal media in the United States and in the United Kingdom – continue to grapple with the revelation that the United States military engaged in torture at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq and may continue to engage in torture at the prison at Guantánamo Bay. 'Torture' in these discourses is constantly defined and redefined.

In November 2007, it was disclosed that the United States military was using waterboarding as an interrogation technique on detainees in its so-called Global War on Terror. 'Waterboarding' is defined as an interrogation technique in which a cloth is thrust into a detainee's mouth and water is poured down his nose and throat. It is intended to simulate drowning and is used to coerce a detainee into providing information. In the media in the United States, however, there is a continuing debate on whether waterboarding is, in fact, torture. Rudolph Giuliani is the former mayor of New York City and was a Republican presidential hopeful in 2008. Giuliani defends waterboarding, saying that it is not torture *per se* because, 'It depends on how it's done; it depends on who does it' (WNYC New York Public Radio, 2007).

Malcolm Nance, who is a former instructor at the United States Naval Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape School counters, 'It's torture no matter how [it is done]. It is not about whether the technique uses 25 ounces or 64 ounces [of water]; it's a question of: do we, as Americans, torture?' (WNYC New York Public Radio, 2007). Similarly, Senator John McCain, who was also a Republican presidential hopeful and a former prisoner of war, avers,

It isn't about an interrogation technique. It isn't about whether someone's really harmed or not. It's about what kind of a nation we are. If we engage in a practice [such as torture] that was invented in the Spanish Inquisition, was used by Pol Pot in Cambodia in that great genocide, is now being used on Buddhist monks in Burma, how do we keep the moral high ground in the world? (WNYC New York Public Radio, 2007)

While the definition of torture as it is practiced by the West is being debated, there is no such controversy in the discourse on survivors of torture in the United Kingdom. By the general public, torture, when it is discussed at all, is accepted at face value. Although, during the

asylum process, the onus is on survivors of torture to *prove* they were tortured, there is very little *public* discourse about what actually constitutes torture for asylum-seekers in the United Kingdom.

As of 1990, it was estimated that 20-30% of the world's refugees had been tortured (Bøjholm & Vesti, 1992). Over a fifth of asylum-seekers in the south of England said that they had health problems which included physical beatings and torture at the hands of military (Dumper, et al., 2006). Today, this proportion of survivors of torture may be even larger. Survivors of torture may enter the United Kingdom as refugees, on visitor or student visas or they may enter without documentation. Although my research focuses wholly on survivors of torture, this research does not intend to discount the traumatic experiences of 'other' refugees.

4.7.4 The torture treatment paradigm and defining the 'survivor'

Although my research is set primarily in the field of sociolinguistics, to fully understand discourses of the torture treatment movement that have contributed substantially to discourses on survivors of torture in the United Kingdom, one must be aware of the torture treatment paradigm. An understanding of this crucial component of the discourse on survivors of torture will make an important contribution to an understanding of the discourse itself.

Torture treatment professionals typically address the medical and psychological needs of survivors of torture and take social needs in hand later. Almost all torture treatment programs in Western Europe and North America offer psychological services (Ekblad & Jaranson, 1994; Suedfeld, 1990). These services are designed to address a number of the sequelæ of torture:

> …[I]ncluding difficulty in getting to sleep, waking early, sometimes shouting or with nightmares, difficulties with memory and concentration, irritability, persistent feelings of fear and anxiety, depression, and an inability to enjoy any aspect of life (Redress, 2006, p. 3).

Psychological services address a client's safety needs by facilitating the 'conscious internalisation' of the torture experience and by protecting the client from the further threat of re-traumatisation {Gurris, p. xix in Graessner, Gurris, & Pross 1996).

Following an initial psychological assessment, the torture treatment professional determines whether a client will benefit from long-term psychotherapy. Psychotherapy is deemed central to successful torture treatment and, therefore, many eligible clients are encouraged to

participate (Ekblad & Jaranson, 1994; Suedfeld, 1990). Norbert F. Gurris (in Graessner, et al., 1996) describes the goal of long-term psychotherapy in torture treatment as follows:

The conscious internalisation of the entire traumatic reality into the patient's self-concept, so that at some point he can say: 'Yes, I really did experience that; it happened to me, but it's history. I am no longer a victim. I'm a survivor instead' (p. xix).

It is interesting here to note the parallel between this discourse on survivorship and the discourse on lexicalizing that was mentioned in the previous chapter. A discourse on torture that lexicalises individuals as 'victims' does a disservice, in my view, to the very people that it is aiming to help. Turner advises, 'In the context of a perceived just world, continued victimisation and marginalisation stand to have important consequences for people already sensitised by prior experience' (Turner, p. 62).

The lexeme 'survivor' acknowledges the catharsis that occurs in the process described by Gurris above. This process is one of the most important facets of psychotherapy as it relates to the larger discourse on survivors of torture: psychotherapy as the telling and *retelling* of one's life story:

> Based on the fact that we are to some extent the stories that we tell about ourselves, therapy can be looked at as the work of telling a story, as a way of telling and retelling the life and trauma story together with the therapist. It is a creative process in which different perspectives and incomplete short stories gradually take shape and become a complete, coherent and understandable entity. The creation of a new story structure involves a change of the client's experiences (Elsass, 1997, p. 133).

Although psychological sequelæ are present in a majority of survivors, it is necessary to problematise the somatisation of trauma that occurs in the torture treatment paradigm. For some survivors, the psychotherapeutic component of torture treatment is seen as negative or unsupportive. Although the 'talking cure' is pivotal to the torture treatment paradigm, the provision of psychological services may cause discomfort or embarrassment for some survivors. Although a client in a torture treatment program may not be interested in availing themselves of psychological services at the time, they are typically made aware that these services will be accessible in the future Van Willigen (1992) warns:

> It is questionable whether the kind of help offered to refugees [and survivors of torture] corresponds to the kind of help they think they need. In many non-Western countries, being treated by a psychologist or psychiatrist is considered as a taboo subject. Such treatment means being declared insane and causes loss of face in the family and in the circle of friends (Van Willigen, 1992, p. 292).

This important dilemma should be considered in all interactions with survivors of torture. Some survivors who value the trauma experience as an integral part of their identity will esteem disclosure as a constructive furtherance of the healing process begun in the psychotherapy session. For instance, the Chilean refugees in Southampton who were mentioned earlier saw that 'To adapt too fully [was] to reject one's past and in rejecting one's past one is [was] also denying the possibilities of progressive change…' (Kushner & Knox, 1999, p. 410). Conversely, there are survivors who will take exception to any attempt to promote such revelation. Each society expresses its values by fostering the exploration of certain subjects. Some topics are open and freely discussed while others are literally forbidden (Barnlund, 1987).

Conversely, the provision of medical care is often greeted with little resistance from survivors of torture. Torture treatment programs continue to create a climate of safety by addressing medical needs of their clients. This protects survivors from the threat of illness. Doctors and nurse practitioners in the torture treatment team treat the 'pain, scars and deformities' that serve as 'a continuous reminder of the torture' (Skylv, 1992, p. 38). Medical services may also include more thorough examination and documentation of the sequelæ of torture. A special form of consultation is often required of torture treatment professionals for medico-legal purposes. The resulting report may be of considerable importance for providing evidence to support a claim for refugee or asylee status (Allodi, 1998, p. 95).

'Asylum-seekers have to acquire refugee status through a *torturous*, lengthy and often traumatizing asylum procedure' [emphasis mine] (Van Willigen, 1992, p. 289). This process is particularly traumatizing for survivors of torture with asylum claims based on the torture experience: During the process of seeking asylum, the survivor is required to tell her or his story again and again at different junctures. They are thus forced to re-live a painful experience (Hajdukowski-Ahmed, 2003, pp. 216-217).

On their bodies and psyches torture victims carry the insignia of state violence. Paradoxically, in their flight from violence, it is to another state, albeit a new one, that they must turn for refuge. Unfortunately, these states, especially those of the first world, meet the refugees with further displays of state power and violence, even if the latter takes on only bureaucratic and judicial forms (Daniel & Knudsen, 1995, p. 7).

The survivor is not always asked to face this process alone. In best-case scenarios, a team of pro-bono lawyers and immigration assistants will assist the survivor. Legal professionals may call upon the torture treatment team to provide professional testimony in asylum hearings.

Additionally, the torture treatment team may be required to provide proof of the sequelæ of torture. As mentioned above, this documentation is the result of thorough psychological and medical examinations. This evidence is regarded as being critical to a successful claim for asylum.

During the torture treatment process, once a client's psychological and medical needs have been met, a case manager or social worker will assist the client to meet other needs. A case manager will often assist the client to navigate the myriad of services offered by the torture treatment centre. In addition, a case manager helps the client to access education or government assistance programs within the torture treatment network. The case manager also serves as a gatekeeper to the myriad services offered by other organisations outside of the torture treatment network. At this point, the torture treatment paradigm begins to address other safety needs of the survivor. For the survivor of torture in the United Kingdom, 'safety' often means successfully completing the complicated and lengthy process of gaining political asylum.

4.7.5 The voices of survivors of torture

It is imperative to emphasise that this is a thesis about *representation* and not about *performance.* Therefore, although the voices of survivors of torture are integral to discourses on survivors of torture, they are not central to my research into this discourse. Instead, I am often examining the absence of their voices, as I have explained above. Survivors of torture are often given a voice by the members of the discourse community that is engaged in their cause. The survivor's narrative of trauma is often elicited by a trained psychotherapist, refined by a legal professional, edited and published by a refugee service provider for the purpose of raising funds and is consumed by the public. For the purpose of this research, I am looking exclusively at the last two stages of this process. Consequently, the voices of survivors of torture are not the focus of my research.

4.8 Asylum- and Torture-Related Organisations

In this section, I will present an overview of four organisations that are working with asylum-seekers and survivors of torture in the United Kingdom. The 1999 edition of the Refugee Council's publication, *Refugee Resources in the UK*, lists 745 national organisations that provide some sort of assistance for refugees and asylum-seekers (Pirouet, 2001). I have chosen these four organisations based on the ethnographic fieldwork that I have been doing in Southampton. These organisations are the most heavily publicised in the offices of the city's refugee service providers and are the sponsors for a majority of the city's refugee events.

In the case of the Home Office's UK Border Agency, I have included this organisation because none of the other organisations would exist were it not for the Border Agency's asylum program. In selecting these organisations, I have been mindful of the words of Blommaert and Verschueren (1998), who write that, when selecting the members of a discourse community, 'the reason for this selection lies in the status and authority of these discourse producers…these groups furnish the lexicon for talking about the issue, the major patterns of argumentation, the appropriate styles' (27). Throughout my research, the names of these three organisations have appeared repeatedly; they are 'discourse producers' in the truest sense, as they have shaped the way in which people talk – and, indeed, think – about survivors of torture in the United Kingdom.

4.8.1 The discourse of helplessness

Throughout my thesis, I will be examining three seemingly different discursive positions on survivors of torture. The first is a psychoanalytic position that is created and shaped by a discourse community comprised of the members of the organisations that are engaged in working with survivors of torture. These organisations are staffed by psychotherapists and medical and social work professionals. Their discursive position is based primarily on a discourse of helplessness in which the survivor of torture may be incapable of surmounting certain pathologies, which have been attributed to the traumatic experience of torture, without the assistance of psychotherapy. This discourse may, I argue, discredit the coping mechanisms and survival skills that have been employed – to varying degrees of success – by the survivor. As such, this discourse may create a sense of dependence and may prolong a state of *victimhood* in the survivors that it aims to serve. I will discuss the discourse at length – and provide numerous examples of this discourse – in the next chapter.

4.8.2 The discourse of mistrusting refugees

The second discursive position is that of national government organisations such as the Home Office. This position is based in large part on a discourse of mistrusting refugees. As such, it may lead to intense feelings of mistrust within the local discourse communities, even among those who are most adamantly committed to the survivor's cause. I will be investigating how members of local discourse communities *do* 'torture talk' or, more simply, how they 'talk torture'. I seek to show where these discourses leave the traumatised subject, and to show what these discourses tell us about the asylum and refugee systems in United Kingdom. I will expand the discussion on this discourse in the chapter on discourses of mistrust.

4.8.3 The discourse of space and liminality

The final discursive position is that of the non-governmental refugee relief organisations that are active in and around Southampton. This position is created and shaped by the volunteers who are dedicated to working with these organisations. Their discursive position is based primarily on a discourse of space. In this discourse, survivors of torture are represented as 'neighbours' and as active members of the community of Southampton. The survivor's role – as the product of a global system that supports corrupt regimes in developing countries and tacitly supports the use of torture in a global 'war on terror' – is not central to this discourse. Here again it would be helpful to refer to the work of De Fina (2008), who discusses how narratives help to negotiate and assign identities at both the micro and macro levels. I will discuss these micro-level discourse communities in detail in the next section, which presents four organisations that are engaged with survivors of torture in the United Kingdom. I will further discuss – and analyse – discourses of space in the chapter on discourses of liminality.

4.8.4 The Home Office's Border Agency

I will begin my discussion of asylum- and torture-related organisations with the Home Office's Border Agency. The Border Agency is the only governmental organisation that I will be discussing in this section; the rest are non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The Border Agency is the gatekeeper, responsible for administering the United Kingdom's asylum program. As such, it is ultimately responsible for the granting of asylum to survivors of torture. In 2006 (the most recent year for which statistics are available), 17 out of every 100 people who applied for asylum were recognised as refugees and given asylum in the United Kingdom. Another nine out of every 100 who applied for asylum but did not qualify for refugee status were given permission to stay for humanitarian or other reasons. At the time these figures were published, 13 in every 100 applications had not yet resulted in a final decision.

In its role as gatekeeper, the Border Agency does a great deal to create and shape discourses on survivors of torture. I will be looking primarily at the role that the Border Agency plays in setting benchmarks that must be met in order for an asylum-seeker to be granted asylum. These benchmarks are integral to shaping how the personal trauma narratives of survivors of torture are elicited, edited and structured. Furthermore, these benchmarks are fundamental to the creation and shaping of discourses on survivors of torture in the discourse communities that I have described above.

4.8.5 The Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture

Helen Bamber began London's Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture in 1985. It is the only organisation in the United Kingdom dedicated exclusively to the treatment of survivors of torture. Bamber learned through her experiences at Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in Germany after World War II that survivors of torture and trauma often yearn for little more than a venue in which to talk about the pain that they have suffered. She has said, 'Above all else, there was a need to tell you *everything*, over and over and over again. And this was the most significant thing for me, realizing that you need to take it all' (Belton, 1998, p. 89). Similarly, yet from the survivor's perspective, Elie Wiesel, a Holocaust survivor, writes of the frustration of not being heard: 'It is not because I cannot explain that you won't understand, it is because you won't understand that I can't explain' (Schauer, et al., 2005, p. 2). The Medical Foundation – as it is more commonly called – continues to provide treatment and rehabilitation to survivors of torture and other forms of organised violence.

Since its establishment, more than 45,000 people have been referred to the Medical Foundation for help. In 2007 (the most recent year for which statistics are available), the Foundation's four centres received nearly 2,000 new requests for help (Medical Foundation). In that same year, clients came from nearly 100 countries, with sizeable numbers from Sri Lanka, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan and Iran. The Medical Foundation's primary treatment centre is in London. It also has branches in other centres of immigration to the United Kingdom: in Manchester serving the North West, in Newcastle serving the North East and in Glasgow serving Scotland. In addition, two more centres are planned for the West Midlands and Yorkshire & Humberside (Medical Foundation). The Foundation provides medical consultation and examination; forensic documentation of injuries; psychological treatment and support; and practical help to survivors of torture.

It is essential to examine texts published by the Medical Foundation in the critical discourse analysis of this thesis. As the primary organisation responsible for working with survivors of torture in the United Kingdom, the Medical Foundation publishes texts that are read by members of my target discourse community throughout the country. Central to the Foundation's mission are its efforts to educate the public and decision-makers about torture and its consequences. Its advocacy work strives to ensure that the United Kingdom honours its international obligations towards survivors of torture, asylum-seekers and refugees. As the sole expert on torture in the United Kingdom, many organisations refer to the Medical Foundation for their expertise when they are working with survivors of torture. For example, both the Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group and Time Together UK, who I will

describe below, have referred clients to the Medical Foundation and have relied on the Medical Foundation to provide them with forensic psychological and medical evaluations of survivors of torture when they were assisting clients to prepare their asylum cases.

4.8.6 Time Together UK

TimeBank is a 'national charity inspiring and connecting people to share and give time' (Time Bank, 2007b). In 2002, TimeBank launched the Time Together Mentoring Scheme to address the issues of refugees in the United Kingdom who were finding it difficult to integrate into their communities. This was, in part, due to the Government's policy of the dispersal of asylum-seekers. This policy, and the mass migrations that followed, saw refugees and asylum-seekers attempting to integrate into communities that were often less than welcoming. Since 2002, 'hundreds of refugees have been matched with volunteer mentors who have welcomed them to the UK and encouraged them to fulfil their potential – in education, language learning, employment and integration' (Time Bank, 2006).

Organisations such as the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture and the Southampton and Winchester Visitors Groups have a mandate to assist both refugees (those who have been grated asylum in the United Kingdom) and asylum-seekers (those who are still engaged in the process of seeking asylum). Time Together, on the other hand, only 'works with refugees who have the right to remain in the UK' (Time Bank, 2006, p. 16). For an organisation such as Time Together, this is an important distinction to make. The organisation hopes to facilitate the successful integration of refugees into new communities, some of which may be reluctant to welcome them. I distinguish between asylum-seekers – who may be perceived as being in a sort of legal limbo – and refugees, who are residing legally in the United Kingdom. The organisation provides a glossy training pamphlet that begins with a primer on 'Refugees in the United Kingdom' and includes a glossary that is careful to make the distinction between – and to define – refugees and asylum-seekers.

Projects such as Time Together UK are based on contact theory. By bringing together settled Britons and resettling refugees, Time Together aims to reduce hostility between these two groups. Finney and Peach write, 'Several studies identify the importance of contact with purpose – bringing people together to work towards a joint and mutually beneficial aim' (N. Finney & Peach, 2004, p. 69). This two-way process can result in changes in the attitudes of refugees as well as those of settled Britons. The constructive influence of this 'contact with purpose' may also have a ripple effect. An independent evaluation of Time Together found that '89% of mentors surveyed felt they had been effective in raising awareness of refugee

issues with family, friends and colleagues' and that '77% of mentees felt the scheme had helped them raise awareness of integration issues in their voluntary or professional workplaces' (Time Together, 2004).

4.8.7 The Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group

In the 1990s, asylum-seekers being detained at Winchester Prison and Haslar Detention Centre became the focus for campaigners based in Southampton and other areas of Hampshire (Information Center about Asylum and Refugees in the UK, 2007a). The Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group (SWVG) was founded in Winchester in January 2001. The organisation was originally established to visit asylum-seekers who were being detained in Winchester Prison. From this, SWVG has grown into a large organisation with a great deal of expertise and experience and a deep commitment to befriending and helping refugees and asylum-seekers and to raising funds and awareness (Firth, 2007).

As mentioned above, *Section 55*, which left many asylum-seekers destitute and unable to access National Asylum Support Service funds, has dramatically changed the work of SWVG. Rather than focusing primarily on the work of 'visiting', which was the organisation's original mandate, the focus has shifted to raising funds to provide subsistence allowances to asylum-seekers in the Southampton and Winchester area. Shirley Firth, a former president of the organisation stated:

> We have had to learn as we went along, and when we realised the need to found [a funding scheme for destitute asylum-seekers] four years ago, took huge leaps of faith and risks to support destitute asylum-seekers, never knowing to begin with if there would be enough money in the bank to continue, let alone to expand the work (Firth, 2007).

Gavin Barker, of Southampton City Council's New Communities Group, describes SWVG thus,

> No exaggeration: [SWVG is] one of the most dynamic groups working in the refugee sector who work with not only those who have lost everything but those who have lost any right to remain in the UK and any right of access to such limited support as the Government gives to the asylum process (G. Barker, 2007).

In the next chapter, I will further discuss the discourses of liminality that surround asylum-seekers in the United Kingdom. As I have mentioned above, asylum-seekers are in a state of legal limbo, where they are neither British nor do they hold any other viable citizenship. Although asylum-seekers typically have documentation of nationality that allows them to travel, by leaving their countries under situations of great duress and persecution, they effectively reject their birthright.

5. Discourses of Liminality in Representing Survivors of Torture

> You know, even my friends, sort of, who know what I do, their first question is, 'Oh, you help refugees here or you help refugees overseas?' It's interesting: that's always the first question, because it's loaded. If you're helping refugees overseas, that's fine, because people are in trouble. If you're helping refugees here, they obviously have some, you know, perception of what that is" (Rees, 2008).

> '"I feel that I am waiting for nothing, stuck in a limbo, in-between, I can't work, I can't go home, I can't get any support. I feel as if I am wasting my life" – 36-year-old man from Sudan' (Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group, 2007, p. 3).

5.1 Liminality

This chapter was originally titled 'Survivors of Torture and Discourses of Space'. While conducting my research in Hampshire, I became increasingly aware of a discourse that I had not expected to find: a discourse of 'space'. That is, I was intrigued to hear survivors of torture being described using – and, in some ways defined by – their physical location. Time and again, I heard that survivors of torture seeking asylum in the United Kingdom should be helped because they were 'here' now, in Southampton, and that, as 'our' neighbours, they deserved our assistance. However, at the institutional level, in London, I encountered a more transnational[13] discourse and was comforted by its familiarity: I am accustomed to hearing refugees and asylum-seekers being described this way. In the capital, the individuals I interviewed spoke about refugees as being part of global trends of migration. In both the

[13] See chapter one for a discussion of theories of transnationalism. See also De Fina, A. (2007). *Immigrants and Identity: A Discourse Approach*. Paper presented at the Annual Lecture of the Center for Transnational Studies. , Mar, P. (2005). Unsettling Potentialities: Topographies of Hope in Transnational Migration. *Journal of Intercultural Studies, 26*(4), 361-378, University of Southampton. (2006). MA/MPhil/PhD Transnational Studies: Society, Culture, Language. Retrieved May 21, 2007, from http://www.lang.soton.ac.uk/postgrad/transnational.html.

capital and in Southampton, survivors of torture who are seeking asylum in the United Kingdom occupy a strategic *positionality* in relation to questions of ethnic and diasporic identity. This, in turn, is unconsciously shaped by – and goes on to shape – discourses of transnationalism. Individuals are identified by where they were born, where they have lived in transit, and where they are living now. To describe the conditions of anomie and exile experienced by many survivors, many writers (cf., 1989; Gilroy, 1996; Hajdukowski-Ahmed, 2003; Rudge, 1989; M. Stroinska, 2003; M. Stroinska & Cecchetto, 2003; Wenk-Ansohn, 2006) have turned to the notion of liminality. Liminality describes an intermediary interlude: a transition from one state to another (Ghorashi, 2002).

Survivors of torture inhabit a liminal space in the discourses described in this thesis: they are neither here nor there, neither 'us' nor 'them'. In London, at the governmental level, survivors are 'them': the product of global trends in migration and of human rights abuses in the developing world. In Hampshire, survivors are, to an extent, 'us': our neighbours living amongst us. In order to benefit fully from the limited resources, such as volunteers' time and sponsors' money, that are available to them, survivors must perform the expected role in this liminal space. As was discussed in Chapter Two, survivors are expected to perform 'ascriptive identities' I order to gain access to limited resources of time and money that are available to them (Blommaert, 1995). There is external pressure on them to perform identities that have been defined and described by the discourse communities that I have studied for the writing of this thesis. Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) define these 'imposed identities', which are not negotiable in a particular time or place. The two authors present these identities in opposition to 'negotiable identities', which are contested by groups and individuals.

In many sites throughout the discourse community[14], survivors are represented as entering into a liminal period that is finite and defined. After an original period of exile, they are expected to either integrate into society (cf., Griffiths, et al., 2005; Home Office, 2002, 2005; Southampton City Council, 2006b) or, to a lesser extent in the discourses that I have analysed, to return to their countries of origin. The entirety of the asylum-seeking process is represented as a time of great transition: an evolution from asylum-seeker to destitute asylum-seeker to refugee. Despite discourses of 'integration', there is little representation of a shift from 'refugee' to 'Briton':

> A child or young person who has experienced political violence or war may have to deal not only with the psychological and physical impact of persecution, scapegoating and violence, but also of separation, loss and the many *transitions* and changes of being in exile in Europe (Redress, 2006, p. 25, emphasis mine).

The Mayor [of London], as indicated, agrees… that integration prospects for refugees could be enhanced by offering them intensive one-to-one help in navigating their way through the *transition* period after a positive asylum decision (Mayor of London, 2004b, p. 11, emphasis mine).

Indeed, the Government concentrates its efforts and resources on a 28-day period of transition, beginning when an asylum-seeker is granted refugee status and ending when their National Asylum Support Scheme (NASS) funding is terminated:

> It is clear, in other words, that this 28-day period is of great importance in ensuring that most refugees make a successful *transition* to a settled life in the UK. The

[14] See ch*a*pter one for a definition of discourse communities. See also Erikson, K. (1995). Notes on Trauma and Community. In C. Caruth (Ed.), *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (pp. 183-199). Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, Miller, N. K., & Tougaw, J. (Eds.). (2002). *Extremities: Trauma, Testimony, and Community*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press..

> Government now intends to concentrate on this window as the critical period in its refugee integration strategy (Home Office, 2005, p. 34, emphasis mine).

This discursive construction of integration and of homeland is based on an understanding of identities and cultures as entities – much like 'nation' and 'state'[15] – that can be entered or left. The asylum-seeker is expected to leave their identities as, for example, 'Zimbabwean', 'asylum-seeker', and 'destitute asylum-seeker' and enter into an identity of 'settled' 'integrated' refugee. There is a preoccupation with space, be it the United Kingdom or an imagined homeland, rather than a recognition of the plurality of home.

For those in the discourse community, this period of transition does not end even when the refugee is granted citizenship in the United Kingdom (usually after a period of five years after being granted indefinite leave to remain in the United Kingdom). Alternately, the Government believes that refugees and asylum-seekers effectively become 'Britons' when they take part in a citizenship ceremony, as can be seen in the extract below.

> The Government believes strongly that the grant of British citizenship should not be seen as a legal formality, but as a positive event for celebration – *and one which [sic] should in itself contribute to the integration of new arrivals into British society*. It has already established new citizenship ceremonies, where groups of new Britons (whether refugees or not) formally take on the rights and responsibilities of citizens in an atmosphere of national and civic pride. These ceremonies have proved popular and successful (Home Office, 2005, pp. 35-36).

Citizenship – and the citizenship ceremony – is represented here as an essential rite of passage. It is only after this point that asylum-seekers are referred to, in the Government's discourse, at least, as 'Britons'.

[15] Which are described at some length in chapter two.

For some members of the discourse community – including volunteers who work with refugee service organisations in the Southampton area – the refugee 'crisis' in the United Kingdom is a temporary issue and will be dealt with, by the government or by the survivors themselves, given time. An interview I conducted with three female volunteers for the Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group (SWVG) included the following discussion. I had asked the women why they had chosen to volunteer for SWVG rather than for another charity:

> W: I think that this group [SWVG], and any group like this, is more short-term, isn't it. You can't imagine it being here forever – or needed forever, hopefully. Whereas all those [other charities], I guess, will always be around.
>
> L: That's so true…
>
> Researcher: So, [the issue of destitute asylum-seekers is] a solvable problem in some ways?
>
> W: Yeah, I guess so. I get that. I hope it is.
>
> L: Well, either way, I think one day perhaps there won't be such a group. Which, in a sad way, as in… people will get deported, that there'll be zero tolerance of anyone coming here. That's kind of how I see it, sadly. Or…
>
> W: Things get *that* good that [there is no need for refugee service agencies]…
>
> L: But I do, for whatever reason, I see it as a short-lived thing… (Devine, Dumper, & Hulme, 2008).

This liminal state, of never fully integrating asylum-seekers into British ways of living, and of perceiving them to be a part of a 'problem' that is both temporary and solvable, has led to a certain discourse of mistrust that I will describe in the final chapter. It is based on the discursive production of nation and state, which I will describe below.

5.2 Discourses on National Identity

In this section, I will provide concrete examples from the texts that I have analysed of the discursive construction of the tropes of nation and state. In my chapter on the theoretical and methodological background of this thesis, I have gone some way to define these two tropes vis-à-vis transnationalism. Fischer (1995) aims to problematise the notions of nation and state, which he describes as being among 'the sentimental essentialising categories of romanticism that certain kinds of refugees become entrapped by and attempt to use to gain sympathy with little effect' (p. 127). These tropes are central to the institutional framing of these discourses at the national level.

Blommaert (2008) attests that contemporary discourses on immigration employ the *modern* notions of 'nation' and 'state' when discussing the *post-modern* phenomena of migration and diaspora. As such, he continues, these discourses are inadequate for describing the type of migration that is occurring in Europe today. What is needed, instead, is a post-modern reading of diasporic identity. In the discourses that I have analysed, discourses of nationality continue to be defined by *modern* conceptualisations of British ways of living. These representations deny that 'British' culture is itself in a state of almost constant flux, being altered both from within and without by influences from North America, the developing world and beyond. I will provide further evidence to support this statement below.

Johnson (2002) advises that discourse producers at the national and governmental levels do not expect British ways of living to change. Rather, these ways of living are seen by the British public as needing to be defended by the government: they are under threat externally by an inundation of media being produced in North America and internally by immigrants, who bring with them their own ways of living. Berlant (1991) has argued that citizenship entails a personal investment in the nation. She describes the nation as producing the appearance of reality through the dynamics and the artefacts of citizenship. This is similar to the way in which representations of survivors of torture simulate real individuals through the combined techniques of the documentary and the imagined. These representations make use of a number of techniques, such as fiction, oral history[16] and testimony, to create the discursive image of what Perera (2007) describes as an 'impossible' subject.

[16] See chapter one for a discussion of oral history. See also Perks, R., & Thomson, A. (Eds.). (1998). *The Oral History Reader*. London: Routledge, Portelli, A. (1998). What Makes Oral History Different. In R. Perks & A. Thomson (Eds.), *The Oral History Reader* (pp. 63-74). London: Routledge, Thompson, P. (1978). *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press..

Suvendrini Perera (2007) describes asylum-seekers as performing the 'frontiers of citizenship'. She asserts that asylum-seekers occupy the liminal space of the so-called 'not-quite citizen'. As such, they become impossible subjects who are expected to come to stand in for a particular narrative about citizenship. This narrative is shaped by the interrelationship between legal and sociocultural representations of citizenship. In the critical discourse analysis of State discourses on asylum-seekers that I have conducted, the fundamental question is: How is citizenship embodied by the State? Once this is established, I describe how characters of the State – such as citizen, marginalized[17], and non-citizen – are redeployed by other actors in the discourse community such as refugee service organisations at the national and local levels.

Fischer (1995) warns against relying on the 'romantic tropes of essential and exclusive connection between soil and identity, the tropes of authenticity or autochthony' (p. 127). Such terms, he continues, 'inevitably fall apart as soon as they are subjected to a historicizing gaze, and their mobilization invariably are indexes of either receding agrarian pasts or nationalistic ideologies whose deployment in a fast-pluralizing world is archaic and violence inducing' (p. 127). In the next section, I will describe how traditional notions of nation and state have led to an '*othering'* of asylum-seekers in the United Kingdom.

5.2.1 Dominant images of the 'other'

Insidious in the discourses that I have analysed is the marked tendency to try to identify a 'real' asylum-seeker on extra-legal grounds[18]. One significant way in which this takes place is

[17] See chapter one for a discussion of theories of marginalisation. See also hooks, b. (1990). Talking Back. In R. Ferguson, M. Gever, T. T. Minh-ha & C. West (Eds.), *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures* (pp. 337-340). New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art and Massachusetts Institute of Technology..

[18] By 'extra-legal grounds', I mean on grounds that go beyond the mere legal determination of an individual's

through the scrutiny of the *visual image* of the asylum-seeker. Within the discourse community, this makes it possible to claim that given individuals are not 'real' asylum-seekers because they do not *look* (or conduct themselves) like 'real' asylum-seekers. This suggests that asylum-seeker status is implicitly understood to involve a performative dimension (L. H. Malkki, 1996).

Refugee Action's *Refugee Week 2008* (Refugee Action, 2008), which I describe in great detail in the conclusion plays with this concept of the performative dimension of 'asylum-seeker' and 'refugee'. They ask visitors to their website to do the following exercise:

Imagine a refugee standing in front of you.

- What does he or she look like?
- Now, look at this photograph.
- Did the refugee you imagined look anything like this?
- Well, model Khaibir Rahim is a refugee.

The text is accompanied with a black-and-white photograph of Khaibir, who is a striking young Afghan man. In a moment of meta-discursive reflection, National Coordinator of Refugee Week, Almir Koldzič says, 'In order to start changing the way people perceive refugees we need to change the way they are represented' (*ibid*.). The website continues, 'With 20-year-old Afghan Khaibar as the face of Refugee Week, a massive shake-up of their

refugee status by the Home Office's UK Border Agency. It would be useful to note here the use in conservative, anti-immigration British media of the misnomer 'bogus asylum-seeker'. An asylum-seeker cannot, by definition be 'bogus', as they have not yet made any legal claim. Alternatively, one could correctly write about 'bogus' refugees, who have been granted refugee status based on false pretences.

image is in store' (*ibid*.). Using the lexicon of performance theory (cf., Cox; Gilbert; Jeffers; Masters; Ogbu; Perera; Roach; Wake), Khaibar does not perform the role of 'refugee': or, at least, he does not perform the role in a way that a British-born public expects him to.

Stuart Hall (1996) writes that each society has processes of representation that try to cope with difference. These processes tend to represent difference as part of some constructed totality. In many of the representations analysed for this thesis, survivors of torture who are seeking asylum in the United Kingdom are essentialised as being a collection of charming 'ethnic' tropes. They, then, are the *allochthons* who are discursively contrasted to the *autochthons* of British-born society (Blommaert & Verschueren, 1998).

My analysis of this has led me to focus, in part, on different aspects of representation than those on which I had originally focused. In the beginning of my analysis, I was intrigued by the portions of the discourse that most clearly relied on co-opting – and to some extent commodifying – the trauma narratives of survivors of torture. However, as I became more familiar with these discourses, I began to look more closely at the discursive constructions and representations that I once took for granted. For example, the national television channel, BBC One's, 2009 appeal for the Refugee Council begins with this introduction, which is similar in many ways to the ways in which refugee issues are often introduced:

> 'Living in safety is something *we all* take for granted. But, for many, trapped in areas of conflict, there's no choice but to leave their homes. And that means leaving family, friends, a sense of belonging, culture, identity: in short, everything and everyone they love' (BBC One, 2009, emphasis mine).

This introduction – and the many introductions that that are worded in a similar way – is based on a number of presuppositions that serve to *other* asylum-seekers and refugees. The

first, which I have emphasised above, is the use of the pronoun 'we', or, in this case 'we all'. There is no definition of who constitutes this in-group 'we'[19]. Norman Fairclough, in his text, *Analysing Discourse*, advises, 'Pronouns are usually worth attending to texts' (2003, p. 149). In this case, who is the 'we community'? This televised fund-raising appeal does not begin with a disclaimer that states that it has been intended for a particular audience of individuals who do, in fact, take for granted the fact that they live 'in safety'. Nor does the appeal begin by stating that it is *not* intended for the refugees that it aims to help. By constructing itself – and its audience – in such a way, the appeal has the unintended consequence of highlighting the alterity[20] of asylum-seekers in the United Kingdom (Tarulli, 2000). It creates or reinforces the concept that there is an 'us' that takes for granted that we live in safety, and a 'them' that must leave behind 'everything and everyone they love' in order to find such safety.

Asylum-seekers are frequently described in terms of 'ethnicity' (Baumann, 1991; Martin, 1984; Morrissey, 1984; Office for National Statistics, 2007; Sales, 2005; Southampton City Council, 2004) rather than 'nationality'. As such, in the discourses I have analysed, we have

[19] The terms 'in-group' and 'out-group' originated in social identity theory Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. (1979). An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict. In W. G. Austin & S. Worchel (Eds.), *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations* (pp. 94-109). Monterey, CA: Brooks-Cole.. Social identity theory is comprised of four elements that describe the psychological basis of intergroup discrimination. These elements include categorisation, a process during which we put others – and ourselves – into categories. For example, categorising someone as a Muslim, a Briton or an asylum-seeker is a way of saying other things about that person. This, in turn, leads to identification, where one identifies with an in-group of similar people in order to augment ones self-esteem. Comparison allows us to compare our in-group with other out-groups, with a favourable bias toward the group to which we belong. Finally, psychological distinctiveness describes our desire for our identity to be both distinct from and positively compared with the identities of other groups Taylor, D., & Moghaddam, F. (1994). Social Identity Theory. In D. Taylor & F. Moghaddam (Eds.), *Theories of Intergroup Relations: International Social Psychological Perspectives* (pp. 80-81). Westport, CT: Prager Publishers..

[20] Bakhtin describes the dialogism of alterity as two people talking across a gap. Bakhtinian definitions of identity are concerned with central questions of how identity correlates to alterity and of how the 'self' constructs itself in dialogue with the 'other'.

the discursive construction of identities such as 'Kurd' (N. Finney & Peach, 2004; National Refugee Integration Forum, 2006; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2006; Southampton City Council, 2006b) and 'Tamil' (Perera, 2007), rather than 'Iraqi' or 'Sri Lankan'.

This representation is often carried out in a way that is unsystematic. For example, Southampton City Council's (2006b) *New Communities Interagency Integration Strategy and Action Plan* defines new immigrant communities thus:

> During the last six years an increasing number of people with refugee status have chosen to settle in Southampton and there are now growing *Somali, other African, Afghan* and *Kurdish* communities in the City and this population is estimated to be between 4,000 and 5,000 people (p. 8, emphasis mine).

This particular discursive construction of ethnicity combines identities based on nationality ('Somali'), citizenship on a particular continent ('other African') and ethnicity ('Kurdish'). This is in stark contrast to the discursive construction of the identities of autochthonous British-born citizens, who, except for a few notable exceptions (cf., Refugee Week, 2008b) are represented in terms of nationality (cf., British Council, 2007; Chadha, 1989; Nettleton & Simcock, 1987) rather than ethnicity. Autochthons are almost always described as being 'British', with no mention of their original country of origin. Yon (2000) states that the dichotomy between asylum-seeker culture and autochthonous culture is necessary in an age of rapid globalisation: A flattened image of 'back home' is invoked by governmental discourses on immigration to mark a difference between the imagined communities of 'here' and 'there,' 'then' and 'now''. However, Yon warns that this aspiration for unambiguous distinctions between 'here' and 'there' break down under the conditions of globalisation.

As I have mentioned before, survivors of torture who are seeking asylum in the United Kingdom are under external pressure – from, amongst others, the discourse community that I have described in chapter one – to perform various roles throughout the asylum-seeking process. These performances "draw on and produce an assembly of theories of the self and self-representation; of personal identity and one's relation to a family, a region, a nation; and of citizenship and a politics of representativeness (and exclusion)' (Gilmore, 2001, p. 8). These performances also tend to hew to images of the 'other' that dominate national discourses on nation, state and immigration.

Representations of asylum-seekers as being novel or strange maintain centuries-old dominant images of the 'other' in élite discourses of European travellers, explorers, merchants, soldiers,

philosophers and historians (A. J. Barker, 1978; Lauren, 1988). Since the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 and 7 July 2005, these representations have been further complicated by a politics of exclusion based on an anti-Islamic – or Islamophobic – discourse at the governmental level that then goes on to shape the discourses of grassroots organisations (Gilbert, 2007).

Survivors of torture who are seeking asylum in the United Kingdom are expected to perform *Britishness* – or some semblance of this – in their daily lives in order to integrate and in order to cause a minimum of fuss, particularly in the largely working-class neighbourhoods of Southampton where they have been able to afford housing and have therefore been settled. W., a volunteer for the Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group, describes the unsuccessful integration of the female Zimbabwean asylum-seeker with whom she is volunteering. The asylum-seeker's integration has been unsuccessful despite her attempts to perform *Britishness*:

> W.: I know S., who I visit [volunteers within this group call their volunteer work 'visiting']. I know she's not happy going out of the house, going up Shirley[21]. She'll go up with other people now and then. I've invited her out before. But it's not all to do with, you know, because she's a nervous person. It's just because of the way people stare at her. Not that she's got anything weird about her. She's an attractive girl and she just wears British clothes and, you know, nothing strange. But I've been with her and people *do* stare at her (Devine, et al., 2008).

[21] A 2001 census of priority neighbourhoods in Southampton found that Shirley had a "less ethnically diverse make up than Southampton". This information demonstrates how much the demography of this neighbourhood has changed in the last ten years. In Shirley in 2001, over 96% of the population was white Southampton City Council. (2001). *2001 Census Priority Neighbourhood Profiles*. Retrieved from http://www.southampton.gov.uk/Images/4.%20Outer%20Shirley_tcm46-165424.pdf.. The census also found that Shirley had a high proportion of single parents with dependant children and that over 62% of the single parents in Shirley did not work. Furthermore, the census showed that 7.25% of people in Shirley were economically inactive, describing themselves as 'permanently sick' or 'disabled', compared to just over 5% in Southampton.

Here, W. has subconsciously adopted the some discourses of aberrance and alterity. S., an asylum-seeker from Zimbabwe, is afraid to leave her home despite the fact that there is nothing 'weird' about her: she dons 'British' dress and does not wear anything 'strange'. Despite these efforts, she is stared at by the British-born people of Shirley and is afraid to venture out alone. This is especially ironic for this particular neighbourhood of Southampton, which is home to a large portion of the City's Polish migrant population. The difference here is that, although Polish migrants may not dress 'British', they dress 'Western', and this is enough to save them from being singled out as being different. Also, and perhaps most importantly, Polish migrants are white.

There is a stark contrast between the discursive construction of the identity of asylum-seekers and refugees when they are represented as a human rights concern and when they are represented as immigrants. In an interview, I asked Gerdy Rees, the coordinator of *Refugee Week 2008* about his friends' perception of his engagement with the refugee cause and about their perception of refugees in general. His reply:

If, you know, if we sat and chatted about the global issue, of migration, they'd understand that and see the ins and outs and the reasons, but when it becomes personal, when it becomes local in their community, this 'Other', you know, it takes on a different form to them. There's no correlation between the reasons globally and the actual results of someone actually ending up in their community with a different way of life, a different culture and different norms, which may completely contradict with the norms of that person. You know, the host community. So I think, when it's local, that makes a big difference. Because suddenly it's not just a moral thing of 'yes or no', it's actually real; it's there' (Rees, 2008).

This perception of asylum-seekers and refugees is a direct response to discourses that draw attention to the liminality – and alterity – of this population. Because governmental and institutional discourses of integration have been misguided, and have provided refugees and refugee service providers with a set of unrealistic and unobtainable goals for so-called 'successful' integration, there is no hope that refugees will ever integrate in any way that can be construed as being successful. Asylum-seekers are bound to fail in their integration and their supporters – and Rees would count his friends among them – continue to mistrust asylum-seekers and refugees and are reluctant to welcome them into their own communities. One important way in which asylum-seekers are '*othered*' is through the use of their personal trauma narratives: I describe this below.

5.2.2 Trauma narratives and the discursive construction of alterity

One way in which survivors of torture are '*othered*' is through the use of trauma[22] narratives in their representation by the government at the national level and by refugee service organisations at the national and local levels. The personal trauma narrative is recontextualised[23] throughout the asylum and torture treatment processes. It is co-opted and represented in a psychoanalytic[24] and social work context; a legal and bureaucratic context[25]; and a humanitarian context. Using Fairclough's (2003) paradigm of texts as representation, we can see that personal trauma narrative, as a genre, is often the most concrete form of representation, with the explicit inclusion of the processes, participants and circumstances of the torture experience. We are told that survivors of torture are 'just like you and me', only they have been tortured. In these representations, the survivor's trauma narrative is often used to show how the survivor of torture is like 'us' – and therefore deserves our respect and assistance – but is somehow *fundamentally different* from 'us' in that they have survived trauma that we have never experienced.

Representations of survivors of torture within the discourse community almost always adhere to one of two paradigms: the 'before and after' paradigm and the 'after only' paradigm. In the 'before and after' paradigm, the survivor is introduced and we are told how she or he

[22] See Chapter One for a discussion of trauma studies.

[23] Recontextualising is the process of removing something from its normal context and placing it in proximity to other things or other ways of observing to see how it compares Smith, S., & Watson, J. (Eds.). (2002). *Interfaces: Women, Autobiography, Image, Performance*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press,..

[24] See Chapter One for a discussion of the inclusion of psychoanalytic discourses in general discourses on survivors of torture.

[25] See Chapter Two, for a discussion of the legal and bureaucratic contexts of these discourses. See also Home Office. (2004). Improving Opportunity, Strengthening Society: The Government's Strategy to Increase Race Equality and Community Cohesion. Retrieved from www.homeoffice.gov.uk/docs4/raceequality.htm, Srikant, S., & Slembrouck, S. (1996). *Language, Bureaucracy and Social Control*. Harlow, UK: Addison Wesley Longman Limited..

has led a 'normal' or 'typical' life. Then, we are confronted with the torture incident, which serves as a schism: dividing 'normal' life from the nightmare that is to follow. At this point, the survivor stops being 'just like us' and becomes something else.

In the 'after only' paradigm, we are introduced to the survivor, but only after she or he has suffered their first trauma or incident of torture. This is the case, for example, with 'This is Céline's Story', published by the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture for an electronic fundraising campaign (Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture, 2007c). Although Céline appears to be in her 30s, based on the timeline of her life on the Foundation's website, Céline's life – or, at least, its representation on the website's timeline – 'began' in 1999, when her mother was 'publicly raped'.

We learn that, in the same year, her brother was forced to rape her and was then murdered. The catalogue of atrocities goes on. There is no representation here of Céline as a 'normal' person. From the beginning, she is essentialised as a compendium of unspeakable acts: there is little hope that Céline will ever be one of 'us' when she has suffered so much and so often. We have no baseline of what Céline once was: no idea of where she went to school or what she did for a living, for example. As such, we have no idea of what successful torture treatment or integration would mean to Céline: what, for her, is self-actualisation?

A pamphlet from the Newcastle Tenants' Federation (2008) represents asylum-seekers thus: 'The first step is to understand that refugees and asylum-seekers are not a threat. They themselves are threatened and need help and protection. They are just like you, but they have lost their homes, jobs and, often, families' (p. 4, emphasis mine). Representing survivors as being 'like us' is a central tenet of many of the discourses I have analysed. Empathy depends on a sense of commonality between people and on curiosity about other people's perspectives. In order to feel empathy for someone, we must imagine and attempt to understand their perspective.

Gerdy Rees, the coordinator of *Refugee Week 2008*, states:

> Refugees, in my opinion, *are just people like you and me*, who have found themselves in a situation – or have been forced into a situation – where they've had to leave everything they know: and everything they, you know, own: their family, their country and their culture. Um, but not by any choice. They're just ordinary people who found themselves in extraordinary circumstances. And with that, obviously, refugees are obviously a 'victim' of something. Whether, you know, they're a victim of torture or whether they're a victim of having to… you know, suddenly having to be removed. On top of that, *they are just normal people* who, when they do arrive in a country, just want to rebuild their life (Rees, 2008, emphasis mine).

Often, as is the case in Rees's quotation, torture is alluded to and is not described explicitly. It is enough in these cases to allude to the fact that a person has been tortured and that they therefore deserve our respect and assistance. Gavin Barker, the information and project worker for the New communities Team of the Southampton City Council advises groups, such as the Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group (SWVG), to 'build personal narratives' into their fund-raising materials (2007). He points out that the copywriters should choose 'unexpected' narratives, in order to better personalise the plight of destitute asylum-seekers (*ibid*.). Still, he acknowledges the difficulties of 'revealing raw, personal narratives to a possibly hostile audience' (*ibid*.).

Torture, when the subject is broached at all, is often mentioned in an off-handed way: it is the benchmark of true suffering; it is often what differentiates asylum-seekers from 'us'. For example, during a training session for the *Time Together UK* Mentoring Scheme, torture was mentioned by the British-born trainer like this:

- 'God knows what [refugee mentees have] suffered, in their own country and beforehand…'
- 'We've got one [refugee mentee], who was tortured and what have you…'
- 'Some of [the refugee mentees] have suffered torture, blows to the head…'

In his allusion to trauma and torture, Rees from *Refugee Week 2008* refers to two different types of victimisation that may occur and that may lead to a person seeking asylum in the United Kingdom: being a victim of torture and being a victim of 'suddenly having to be removed [from your homeland]' (Rees, 2008). This distinction is unexpected in the discourses that I have analysed, which do not often draw a distinction between the *trauma* of being forced to flee and the *victimisation* that occurs subsequent to torture. I will discuss this further in the chapter on discourses of helplessness. In the next section, I will discuss how discourses of trauma and victimisation are one small portion of larger discourses of integration.

5.2.3 The discursive representation of 'integration'

The discourses I have analysed place an unrealistic amount of responsibility on the asylum-seeker for their 'successful' integration into British ways of living. These same discourses also lead the discourse community to inadvertently blame the asylum-seeker when their integration is anything less than 'successful' and leads, for example, to the asylum-seeker being stared at while they walk down the street. In addition, this discourse essentialises British ways of living: we understand that, by 'British clothes', W. means the casual jeans-and-

t-shirts of white middle-class Britons and not the salwar kameezes of their South Asian neighbours, who are also, by definition, British, if they hold British passports.

In contrast, and within the discourses of the same organisation, asylum-seekers are expected to perform their *ethnic-ness* (as opposed to *Britishness*) when it suits the goals of the organisation. For example, the organisation sponsors a number of events, such as a midsummer picnic, at which the asylum-seeker is asked to wear traditional 'ethnic' dress and to bring an 'ethnic' dish from their homeland to share. With such complicated questions of strategic positionality vis-à-vis ethnicity, one wonders what role the survivor is expected to play who, while headed to the picnic, is required to take a public bus that they board on the street in Shirley

Despite these inconsistencies, integration remains the ultimate goal of many programmes designed to give support to asylum-seekers and refugees. Again, although 'successful' integration is rarely *defined* in the discourses I have analysed, it retains its place as the aspiration of government plans for refugee integration[26]. At the organisational level, some organisations have resisted this unrealistic and ill-defined goal and have urged asylum-seekers to take an important role in establishing their own aspirations. For instance, *Time Together UK* urges British-born mentors to draw up an 'action plan' with their refugee mentees. They advise the mentor and mentee to ask themselves, 'What goals or targets does the mentee have that the mentor might be able to assist them with?' (Time Bank, 2007a, p. 15). In contrast to the Government's *Integration Matters* strategy, this method allows the mentoring team to create an action plan with a realistic, well-defined goal that has been set by

[26] Various benchmarks and targets, which are to be achieved by a refugee and their British-born mentor, *are* defined in Time Together UK's *Mentoring Preparation and Action Plan* Time Bank. (2006). Mentoring Preparation and Action Plan. In Time Together (Ed.). London: Time Bank.. However, this 'action plan' is never described as working toward the abstruse objective of 'integration'.

the asylum-seeker. In this way, *Time Together UK* helps to shape counter-hegemonic discourses of integration that I will describe at some length below.

5.2.4 Counter-hegemonic representations of 'successful' integration

It is common sense that you can get more out of life if you can take an active part in the society you live in (Stuart, from Scotland, in Time Bank, 2007a, p. 12).

On 29th and 30th June 2006, the National Refugee Integration Forum (NRIF) held its fifth National Refugee Integration Conference. 'That the conference was oversubscribed reflected', in the words of the pamphlet produced for the Conference, the 'importance' of that that year's theme: integration (National Refugee Integration Forum, 2006, p. 12). In a paper presented at the Conference titled Feeling at Home in the UK (Phillimore, 2006), a researcher presented her findings after asking a number of refugees what they would need in order for them to feel 'at home' in – or integrated into – Birmingham. According to the refugee respondents, one of the key factors that would lead to successful integration was 'community' (Phillimore, 2006). Phillimore (2006) defines 'community' as respondents wanting 'friendly neighbours and opportunities to make friends generally. Many [respondents] had felt isolated and valued being part of an ethnic or refugee community and [valued] sharing their experiences' (p. 12, emphasis mine).

This discourse of wanting to be surrounded by – and to belong to a group of – other people who share your ethnicity and share your (often traumatic) experiences is counter-hegemonic, contradicting discourses of integration that are espoused at the national level by the Home Office (2002, 2005), by the Home Office's Refugee Integration Unit (National Refugee Integration Forum, 2006), and by organisations such as the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture (Mughal, 2008). Graham, a British-born mentor with the Time Together UK Mentoring Scheme, defines the benefits of integration in this way:

> Full integration is essential if any multicultural society is to succeed. Once ethnic minorities isolate themselves within their own groups and ghettos, racial tensions quickly result and disaster follows. 'Multicultural' does not mean many societies within a society, it means one fully integrated society (in Time Bank, 2007a, p. 12).

Graham's view of integration is presented in the organisation's handbook for new mentors. No attempt is made to problematise Graham's view of integration, which seems to counter the thread of the dominant discourse. It is merely presented alongside other so-called 'definitions of integration' (Time Bank, 2007a, p. 12). Again, the onus is discursively placed on the asylum-seeker to integrate and their failure to do so is seen as their fault: 'ethnic minorities' are

represented as isolating 'themselves'. At the local level, this type of integration into white middle-class society is similarly represented as the ultimate goal of a successful refugee resettlement programme by policy-makers such as Southampton City Council's *New Communities Unit* (Southampton City Council, 2006b).

It is important to remember that survivors of torture who come to the United Kingdom as refugees or asylum-seekers differ in some fundamental ways from economic migrants. Ogbu (1987) differentiates between 'voluntary' and 'involuntary' minorities: 'voluntary' minorities include economic migrants and expatriates who have made a conscious decision to leave home in order to better their prospects. Refugees, asylum-seekers and survivors of torture are, to all intents and purposes, 'involuntary minorities'[27]. They are unable to return home due to personal persecution and due to British asylum law that precludes political asylees from returning to the countries in which they were persecuted until they have obtained British citizenship. Involuntary minorities, Ogbu (1987) maintains, 'see their own cultural differences as barriers that they need to overcome to achieve success' (p. 38).

Paradoxically, though, the act of bridging the gap between the two cultures of homeland and country of asylum 'risks diminishing [survivors'] identity as a people whose culture can exist nowhere else' (Corson, 2001, p. 39). Integration into British ways of living is the ultimate goal of successful torture treatment programmes as described by the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture (Mughal, 2008). Survivors of torture may see this integration, which is a benchmark of success for both the government and for refugee service

[27] There may be slightly more overlap than these labels would suggest: for example, many refugees are so-called 'involuntary' migrants, insofar as they have left their homelands involuntarily due to situations that have made life there untenable. However, many citizens in similar situations have stayed behind. As such, even the most clear-cut refugee could be construed as being a 'voluntary' migrant: making the choice to leave their country of origin.

organisations, as ultimately creating a sense of *anomie.* 'Anomie' is a feeling of disorientation and alienation from society caused by the perceived absence of a supporting social or moral framework. Hence, a survivor may be reluctant to integrate into British ways of living and may resent any pressure to do so. Instead, 'real effort is made to re-spin the relationship web, but basically to re-create everything as closely as possible to what was lost' (Baker, 1992, p. 99).

Rather than integrating into British ways of living, survivors of torture may recede into ethnic enclaves where future prospects may be limited. For these survivors, this becomes an effort at self-preservation.

> The decision to preserve one's identity in a foreign environment applies not only to short-term visitors…who adjust 'as little as possible so as to make the return less difficult' but also to long-term or even permanent, residents of the new community (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000, p. 170).

A survivor may find comfort in the familiarity of an ethnic enclave; autochthonous ways of living may represent overwhelming diversity. Often, there is certain trepidation to engage. Fox (1994) warns, survivors 'may be insulted when we bring up the subject of "difference", for which they read "deficiency". We have to tread carefully' (p. 10-11). Because of this apprehension, asylum-seekers may be reticent to engage in torture treatment programmes or government initiatives that have integration as their goal. For asylum-seekers from former British colonies such as Zimbabwe, there may be a particular disinclination to integrate into British ways of living, which represent decades of defeat. As asylum-seekers are integrated into British ways of living, they may increasingly lose control of their lives.

For asylum-seekers from former British colonies, British 'culture' is a dominating and homogenizing cultural force. Spanish repulses the Mayan immigrants in the 1992 study because they perceive it as the language of conquest, of the destruction of their indigenous culture. British 'culture' – and the English language – have played their own colonising role, damaging indigenous languages and cultures around the world (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). Survivors of torture who are seeking asylum in the United Kingdom are unable to return to their home and to their original ways of living. They may feel threatened by the normalising force of British 'culture' and may lack the motivation necessary to engage in torture treatment programmes.

For these survivors, 'successful' integration may be defined as having a home in a Sikh neighbourhood in Southampton where the survivor eats Punjabi food, worships in a Sikh

gurdwara and speaks Punjabi with their neighbours on the street. This is not, however, represented as being 'successful' integration, even by the most supportive of advocates for asylum-seekers. Shehzad, a Muslim, British-born mentor of the *Time Together UK* Mentoring Scheme, recognises that other Muslim immigrants to the United Kingdom should not be expected to integrate fully into British ways of living. That is, they should avoid the society's more unsavoury elements:

> I think the important thing is the definition of what is 'integration' and what it is not. For instance, if going to church, drinking [a] pint of beer at [the] local pub, going clubbing and having sex before marriage are indicators of integration, then we have a problem. Muslims, especially, are forbidden by their religion to do the above activities. However, speaking English, making friends with other community members is the right barometer for integration (in Time Bank, 2007a, p. 12).

Another Muslim British-born mentor on the scheme, Shahidul Alom, describes with a certain sense of un-self-conscious *anomie*, the sentiment of never quite feeling 'British'. This sense of liminality, of existing between two identities, is shaped by and goes on to shape the discourses that I have examined in this thesis:

> In my opinion, integration plays a major role in belonging to any particular society. I myself consider myself to be a British-Muslim foremost. This does not mean that I am entirely alienated from any aspect of British life. What is more, I feel the better for being both. I am a third generation Muslim in this country and I only see this country as being my home. So, I make every effort to participate in its future and prosperity. That does not also mean I lose other identities as well. As human beings, we all belong to different groups in society and according to our needs an interests we manipulate our membership of those groupings (in Time Bank, 2007a, p. 12).

In representing British culture (or 'ways of living' to use the lexeme of this thesis), *Time Together* goes some way to *other* British people in much the same way that asylum-seekers are *othered* by British discourses on immigration. In their *Mentoring Preparation and Action Plan* (Time Bank, 2006), the British-born mentor is advised to ask her or his refugee mentee, 'Are there any aspects of UK culture or people's behaviour which are unfamiliar or surprising to you? e.g. the way people dress, what they eat, and bank holidays'. While there are many discourses about integrating asylum-seekers into British ways of living, there are very few about asylum-seekers returning to their countries of origin once conditions have improved there. I will introduce a few of these below.

5.2.5 The limited representation of discourses of return

The aim of [*Integration Matters*] is to support and enable refugees to integrate swiftly. Ultimately, the strategy seeks to help as many refugees as possible take up citizenship of the

UK if they wish, while recognising that some will be able to return to their countries of origin if circumstances allow (Home Office, 2005, p. 12).

In BBC One's appeal for Refugee Action (2009), one asylum-seeker, a female photographer from Zimbabwe, is interviewed and asked about her aspirations once she has 'sorted out' her asylum claim:

> Interviewer: 'What would you like to do now that you've sorted out your asylum? [claim]'
>
> Urginia: 'Most of all, I'm looking forward to going back to Zimbabwe once the situation is sorted out and to go and help rebuild Zimbabwe' (BBC One, 2009).

Immediately following this response, the camera cuts away and the interviewer does not engage further with this subject. The cut is not particularly jarring, as the appeal is brief (less than ten minutes long) and is full of rapid camera jump cuts. Perhaps due to this fear of alienating potential supporters, there is a marked absence of a discourse of return in the discourses I have analysed. In fact, a preliminary search for references to 'return' in the data I have collected provided only mentions of an asylum-seeker's fear of returning to their home country and did not return any mention of the positive prospect of return once the political situation in a country of origin had been rectified. Asylum-seekers are expected to integrate; they are not expected to return to their countries of origin. Another way in which survivors are marginalised is through the UK Border Agency's mistrust of their self-described country of origin. This is introduced below.

5.2.6 Liminality and mistrust in establishing country of origin

In this case study from the Helen Bamber Foundation (2008a), we read of a 'lovely young woman'. She 'is HIV positive and the prognosis if she is returned to either Uganda or Rwanda (her nationality is being disputed by the Home Office) is two years'. Blommaert describes similar situations of mistrust in which forensic linguists are brought in to asylum interviews in order to assess an applicant's language and to determine their country of origin. In such cases, a survivor may once again rely on a sort of strategic identification: they will describe themselves as 'Ugandan' when speaking to compatriots, but as 'Rwandan' when conversing with asylum officers or refugee relief workers (c.f.,Blommaert, 1995; Blommaert & Verschueren, 1998).

The survivor's worth in these situations depends almost wholly on their nationality. By performing the desired nationality – and, in the case of an asylum-seeker, this nationality

would be the nationality of the less prosperous or more dangerous country – the survivor knowingly engages in a reductionist discourse that equates developing world nations with the problems they suffer. All of the discourses described and analysed above have promoted an atmosphere of liminality that then must be managed on both the governmental and grass roots level. I will begin my analysis of these discourses by looking at governmental discourses.

5.3 Managing Liminality: Constructing Discourse at the Governmental Level

I have adopted the lexicon of Blommaert and Verschueren (1998) here and have called the integration of asylum-seekers into British ways of living a 'problem'. The Government is slightly more diplomatic here, and often refers to the 'challenges' of integration, which they define thus:

> [I]n order to achieve their full potential, refugees face the challenges of communicating effectively in the host community's language and of gaining employment appropriate to their abilities and skills.
>
> To contribute to the community as fully as possible, personal safety is a prerequisite while negative stereotypes can create artificial barriers between refugees and host populations.
>
> In gaining access to public services, early contact is essential where it has not already been made before refugee status is gained (Home Office, 2005, p. 8).

Governmental integration initiatives endeavour to promote contact between immigrants and existing populations of – mostly – British-born Britons. Their aim is to foster agreeable relationships, positive local attitudes and ultimately to facilitate 'integration' into British ways of living (N. Finney & Peach, 2004). Examples of these schemes at the local level include the Southampton City Council's New Communities Team (G. Barker, 2007; Southampton City Council, 2006b), the *Time Together UK* Mentoring Scheme (2004) and the University of Southampton's Student Action for Refugees (STAR) group's *Youth Programme*. One of the primary governmental initiatives regarding the integration of asylum-seekers and refugees is the Government's *Integration Matters*, which I will introduce and analyse below.

5.3.1 Integration and Integration Matters: A National Strategy for Refugee Integration.

In an analysis of governmental discourses on survivors of torture seeking asylum in the United Kingdom, 'integration' can be defined at two levels. The simpler approach is to state the intended outcome of governmental – and organisational – policies of integration. At a deeper level, the notion can be problematised to give a summary of the complex processes of change – many of which are long-term – that public policy has developed to promote the

successful integration of asylum-seekers and refugees into British ways of living. The Government's document, *Integration Matters: A National Strategy for Refugee Integration* (Home Office, 2005), falls somewhere between these two definitions of 'integration'. 'Integration', the strategy reads, means that refugees are 'empowered to achieve their full potential as members of British society; contribute fully to the community; and access the public services to which they are entitled' (p.11). This definition of 'integration' is neither a summary of the processes of change required for successful integration nor is it an accurate statement of the strategy's intended outcome.

The Government's strategy is, on the one hand, too limited (and too limiting, as we will see below in the ways in which this strategy shapes the discourse of refugee service providers at the national level). Focusing on the refugee's own role, the strategy does not designate a clear goal for public policy-makers, host communities or host cities such as Southampton. On the other hand, the strategy is over-ambitious. Empowering people to achieve their full potential (or to become self-actualised as Maslow (1954) defines it in his *Hierarchy of Needs*, which I described in Chapter One) is an *aspiration*, not an *outcome* that can be quantified or verified. Whether many British-born citizens themselves ever become self-actualised or 'contribute fully to the community' is a subject for serious debate; and any judgement of self-actualisation will, of course, be subjective (Home Office, 2005, p. 11).

Integration Matters confirms the weakness of its own core definitions of 'integration' when, discussing indicators chosen by the Government to gauge progress toward integration, the Home Office (2005) writes 'it is unrealistic to aim for [refugees] to achieve outcomes against these indicators that match those of the broader UK population' (p. 40). By setting as its goal a vague aspiration that the Government itself thinks is unrealistic, *Integration Matters* does not enhance coherence in public policy.

Unfortunately, the damage caused by a poorly designed policy such as *Integration Matters* does end at the governmental level. Indeed, as I have described throughout this chapter, governmental discourses go on to structure discourses at the organisational level in London, which, in turn, go on to influence discourses at the grassroots level in Southampton. By putting 'integration' as its ultimate goal, the Government has created unrealistic aspirations for refugee service organisations throughout the country and has doomed them to fail. I will discuss the organisations' reaction to – and shaping of – these discourses below.

5.4 Liminality at Work: Shaping Discourse at the Organisational Level in London

In this section, I will look at the shaping of discourses at the national level by refugee-service organisations in London. To continue with our examination of the top-down hierarchy of discourse dissemination, I have investigated how the government at the national level crafts the discourse on survivors of torture who are seeking asylum in the United Kingdom. Now, I will examine how this discourse is shaped by national torture-related organisations that are headquartered in London.

In this section, I will be analysing the discourses of the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture, the Helen Bamber Foundation, Refugee Action's *Small Actions* Campaign and the Red Cross's Refugee Service Unit. Across these discourses, I will be examining the ways in which survivors of torture are represented as being liminal. I will also look at how this unrealistic goal of 'integration' has led to some sense of failure among these organisations.

5.4.1 Discourses of the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture

One of the predominant goals of the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture (Medical Foundation) is the integration[28] of survivors of torture into British society. Aliya Mughal (2008), the Medical Foundation's Senior Press Officer, describes it thus: '[Survivors] need to be provided with the means of access to services that will give them cultural integration… Because [torture treatment is] not just about learning to cope with trauma, but also [about] integrating into a new society… rebuilding your life as is possible when you're dealing with that kind of history'.

[28] As it is defined, in part, by the Home Office under the aegis of the UK Border Agency.

This ambition, while commendable, is problematic for two reasons. Again, as in the Government's discourses on integration (cf., Griffiths, et al., 2005; Home Office, 2002, 2005; Mayor of London, 2004b; National Refugee Integration Forum, 2006; Phillimore, 2006; Southampton City Council, 2006b), 'integration' is not defined and is, therefore, an unobtainable goal. Also, as I have discussed before, this goal is based on the presupposition that British ways of living are static and homogenous. Alternatively, Southampton City Council's *New Communities Team* (2006b) advises, 'New communities are varied and not homogenous' (p. 3).

This description is in contrast to descriptions of autochthonous communities, which are, one presumes, based on representations within the discourse community, *not* varied and which *are* homogenous. British ways of living are entities that are to be protected, in this case, from the influence that new immigrants may have on these ways of living. One way of protecting British ways of living is to guarantee that all individuals who want to enter into them have been trained in some way – in this case during the torture treatment process – to integrate in the least disruptive way possible. There is little acknowledgement in this discourse that survivors may have something valuable to contribute to society.

In stark contrast to the discourses of organizations such as Refugee Action (the producers of *Refugee Week* and *Small Actions,* which are described in some detail in other parts of this chapter and in the Conclusion) the discourses of the Medical Foundation are based on the presupposition that survivors of torture will experience the least amount of cognitive dissonance[29], stress and re-traumatisation if they are trained to integrate well into an as yet

[29] 'Cognitive dissonance' is the uneasy feeling caused by holding two antithetical cognitions simultaneously. These cognitions may include attitudes and beliefs, and also the cognizance of one's behaviour. The theory of cognitive dissonance Festinger, L. (1957). *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University

undefined British ways of living. In the next section, I will contrast these discourses of dependency with the discourses of cooperation that are present in the literature of the Helen Bamber Foundation: an offshoot of the Medical Foundation.

5.4.2 Discourses of the Helen Bamber Foundation

The Helen Bamber Foundation has crafted a discourse that is similar to the discourse of the Medical Foundation; only it goes one step further. Again, this discourse relies heavily on the first person plural pronoun: 'we'. While 'we' as an in-group pronoun is not defined, one presumes, based on both the discourses of the organisation and its target audience, that 'we' are English-speaking British-born Britons[30]. On their website, the Helen Bamber Foundation warns,

> We are becoming increasingly wary of outsiders. We shy away from their suffering. We suspect their motives. However, the measure of our humanity is reflected in the way we treat strangers – especially strangers so damaged and brutalised they can barely function. We must recognize our fear and not let it hinder offering assistance (Helen Bamber Foundation, 2008b).

Again, this website has been constructed by individuals who have the best interests of survivors in mind: the organisation is staffed by medical doctors and psychologists with years of torture treatment experience between them. However, from the opening page of the organisation's website, the reader is confronted with representations of autochthony and alterity. The world is immediately divided into 'we': the intended audience of this website;

Press. proposes that individuals have a motivational drive to reduce this dissonance by altering their attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours, or by justifying or rationalising them.

[30] It is interesting to note here that neither of the main torture treatment organizations in the United Kingdom: the Medical Foundation and the Helen Bamber Foundation, offers its website in any language other than English. It would be very difficult for a Farsi-speaking survivor of torture, for example, who is seeking torture treatment without the help of an English-speaking intermediary.

and 'they': the so-called 'outsiders' of whom 'we are becoming increasingly wary' (*ibid*.). In this discourse, the Helen Bamber Foundation is merely re-presenting the discourse of the Government while attempting to criticise – or at least problematise – this self-same discourse.

However, in the same extract describing the Foundation's purpose, the organisation goes one step further and discusses cooperation: a notion that is starkly missing from the discourses of the Medical Foundation, where survivors are represented as the beneficiaries of work being done by the professionals who are employed by the organisation. In the discourses of the Helen Bamber Foundation, survivors are still represented as the beneficiaries of goodwill, but they are represented as co-workers and teachers as well: 'The key question is - how can we [British-born donors and asylum-seekers alike] work together to create the human and social changes needed to make a better world? The answer rests in our commitment to listen and learn from those whose suffering we find the most difficult to face' (Helen Bamber Foundation, 2008b).

Here, the liminality of survivors of torture is not only celebrated, it is exploited for what it can contribute to greater discourses on human rights and social progress. Although survivors are not 'us' – that is, they do not constitute the 'we' to which this website is addressed – they are not 'them', either. They are not the 'other' from which British ways of living must be protected. Instead, we are encouraged to learn from these people who have suffered things that not only have we not suffered ourselves, but which we may even find difficult to face. In that fundamental way, they are different from 'us' and will never become 'us'. Yet, we may still learn from them. In the next section, I will discuss now Refugee Action's *Small Actions Campaign* has expanded upon – and altered – these discourses of cooperation. I will also problematise some of the representations of the *Small Actions Campaign*.

5.4.3 Discourses of Refugee Action's Small Actions campaign

My research has shown that these representations of alterity are evident in even the most tolerant of discourses when discussing survivors of torture who are seeking asylum in the United Kingdom. Gerdy Rees is the coordinator of *Refugee Week*, an annual refugee awareness event that will be described in some detail below. Rees describes the organisation's *Small Actions* campaign, which aims to bring together refugees and 'British-born' people through a series of 'small actions', such as watching a movie that is about exile or taking your grandfather down to the offices of the local refugee community organisation to have tea. Such campaigns are an example of the 'image initiatives' defined by Finney and Peach (2004) as

having the goal of raising the profile of refugee issues and challenging biased and inaccurate media images.

The *Small Actions* campaign serves to inadvertently highlight difference and is based on the flawed assumption that autochthonous people in the United Kingdom are homogenous: white and espousing a culture that is fundamentally different from the culture of refugees. Furthermore, the discourse of the *Small Actions* campaign is based on the presupposition that British-born individuals will benefit from being exposed to the culture and experiences of refugees. This discourse does not allow for a 'British-born' woman of Punjabi descent who lives in a Punjabi-British community, does not speak English and, within a wider white British, English-speaking context, feels the exact sense of anomie and exile that is illustrated in the film about exile that she is being asked to watch.

The underlying assumption of the producers of the *Small Actions* campaign here is that the people who are likely to be engaged in the defined 'small actions' are white Britons who enjoy a preternatural sense of belonging and who subsequently need to be educated about the feelings of newcomers to the country. Therefore, we have small actions such as: 'Spend a day in Brick Lane and do some "ethnic shopping"' (Refugee Week, 2008b). Again, the presumption of the producers of the *Small Actions* is that those who are engaged in *Refugee Week* would not typically venture to Brick Lane – a small commercial street in East London and the subject of Monica Ali's 2003 novel about Bangladeshi immigrants to London – and that the shopping that they do there would somehow be 'ethnic'. Throughout my research, I have seen that the word 'ethnic' is often associated with cultural anomalies: notions that white, English-speaking majority would find 'exotic' and would associate with a non-white, non-English-speaking minority. This discourse does not allow for the British-born woman described above, for whom a trip to Brick Lane is simply one stop on her list of daily errands.

Furthermore, *Small Actions* encourages us to 'Talk to people who talk to lots of people – taxi drivers, hairdressers, pub landlords and bar staff. Better still, introduce them to a refugee or asylum-seeker' (Refugee Week, 2008b). The presupposed homogeneity of autochthonous culture in this discourse does not allow for non British-born individuals who work in these positions. Instead, British-born taxi drivers are encouraged to talk to asylum-seekers, whose lives will be different than their own.

When heterogeneity *is* mentioned in this discourse, it is startling and shows the lack of this trope in other portions of the discourse. Of the more than 100 small actions listed on the

organisation's website, this is one of the few that mentions the heterogeneity of British society:

> Not everyone will be living somewhere where they can meet a refugee, but everyone has a family tree. We all come from somewhere, and most of us have ancestors who will have migrated at some point or other – for example, 40% of people in the UK have Huguenot links. Understanding where your family comes from, and the decisions they made to come here will encourage empathy with those who have come to the UK more recently (Refugee Week, 2008b).

In this discourse, the presence of this outlier only serves to draw attention to the nature of many other representations of British nationality. Elsewhere in the discourse, 'British' is almost always synonymous with 'British-born', autochthonous ways of living. This is the one of the few representations of autochthonous ways of living that allows for – and, indeed, celebrates – non-British influences. In the next section I will examine the ways in which the Red Cross' *Refugee Service Unit* has engaged with – and, in some cases attempted to shape – these discourses.

5.4.4 Discourses of the Red Cross's Refugee Service Unit

In an interview with Krista Armstrong, the Refugee Services Coordinator of the British Red Cross, she relayed an anecdote, which, in my opinion, sheds light on one of the central tenets of this thesis: during the process of seeking asylum in the United Kingdom, survivors of torture are constantly performing the roles that they feel are expected of them by the discourse community that controls access to the limited resources that are available to them. Armstrong describes the anecdote thus:

> [The British Red Cross' Refugee Service Unit is] not a drop-in service, as I mentioned. We usually have appointments but a lot of clients do come in often. In this case, there were three Congolese women… I wasn't in Reception, I was just upstairs on the phone with the receptionist and I just asked, 'Could you just find out what [their inquiry is] about?' One [Congolese woman] was like, 'Oh, I'm destitute, I have nowhere… I'm staying somewhere AND I'm a survivor of torture! I've survived torture!' And the next [Congolese woman] said, 'Oh, I'm a survivor of torture, too!' And there was a third [Congolese woman], who sort of said that in the background and I was like, 'Okay!'

Armstrong goes on to engage in a *metadiscursive* analysis of the situation. She acknowledges that, in some way, the discourses of her own organisation may have contributed to or shaped the discourses – and identifications – of these three vulnerable women.

> And it was just, it was quite amusing in a sense because they were saying [that they were survivors of torture] with some humour, which was perhaps positive in some sense… And we did do [the women's needs] assessments and they *were* all victims of

> some violence.... But, I saw one of [the Congolese women] the other day, and she's, I mean, a tremendous woman, very good sense of humour, but very fragile as well. I mean, there's certain experience… And, well, she said it, and there's strength there and it has had… There's obviously underlying things, but you don't just wanna focus on that. We're focusing on the overall situation: we're focusing on, you know, getting people into the support they need, the security. She had psychiatric help: the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture, you know, she'd already received counselling from there for quite a long time. So, but it was interesting that they said… You know, I guess that that's what they thought might get attention, or was something…

This incident indicates that, although these women may occupy a liminal space, they are fully aware that in order to benefit most from the limited resources offered by the Red Cross, they must engage with the strategic positionality of 'survivor of torture'. Now that I have analysed discourse at both the governmental and organisational level in London, I will show how these discourses shape discourses at the grass roots level in Southampton.

5.5 Liminality at Home: Grass-roots Activism in Hampshire

5.5.1 Southampton City Council's New Communities Team

In 2006, the Southampton City Council published a fact sheet titled, *Myth Buster: A lot of rubbish is talked about asylum!*. This fact sheet was widely circulated to employees of the City Council and was on offer at an event at Southampton's Civic Centre, which invited the public to 'meet the Communities Team' and to 'celebrate Southampton's diversity' (Southampton City Council, 2006a). The fact sheet uses data from organizations such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and Refugee Action, to 'bust' the 'myths' surrounding asylum and to promote a 'better understanding of asylum' (*ibid*.).

In its title, the document presupposes that commonly held beliefs in the public discourse on asylum are, in fact, 'rubbish'. The authors do not seem to be concerned that this is dismissive and may be off-putting to the exact audience they are attempting to educate. Examples of such 'rubbish' are cited throughout in the form of 'myths', which are then 'busted' with 'facts'. For instance, *The Sun* is quoted as reporting in 2003, 'The most cautious estimate is 50,000 bogus asylum-seekers and illegals a year [are] slipping into Britain'. The City Council then presents statistical evidence to demonstrate that this is simply not the case. Instead, the City Council writes, '48% or nearly half all asylum claimants in 2002 [84,130 asylum applicants] were recognized as having the legitimate right to remain in this country' (Southampton City Council, 2006a). The City Council also presents the 'myth', reported in *The Express* in 2005, that 'Britain is the asylum capital of the world' (*ibid*.). This is countered with the fact that 'The

UK, one of the richest countries in the world, hosts only 3.5% of the world's total refugee population'. One of the central distinctions in discourses on immigration to Southampton is the division between asylum-seekers and so-called 'economic migrants'. I will describe and analyse this below.

5.5.2 Asylum-seekers versus economic migrants

Two other documents, also published by the Southampton City Council (Southampton City Council, 2007c, 2007e), pit asylum-seekers against economic migrants, their competitors for the limited emotional and financial capital of the City of Southampton. These documents highlight the differences between these two groups of vulnerable people. The main tenet of this discourse is that asylum-seekers and economic migrants leave their countries-of-origin and come to the United Kingdom for very different reasons. Thus, both groups should be welcomed (or at least tolerated) by Britons, but for very different reasons. One of the documents points out that refugee-producing countries such as Iran, Eritrea and Afghanistan (the top three countries-of-origin of asylum-seekers to the UK in 2006) have 'restrictions of basic freedoms, arbitrary and unjust long-term detentions without trial and regimes that use violence as a form of control' (Southampton City Council, 2007c).

The authors differentiate between these two distinct groups of people immigrating to Southampton: one is fleeing a traumatic past while one is seeking a better future. In this discourse, immigrants are *marketed* to the Southampton public in very different ways. The document reveals that no 'economic migrants come through the asylum route because their background circumstances and motives for coming here have nothing to do with fleeing war and persecution' (Southampton City Council, 2007e). There is no discourse of the trauma of economic strife in Eastern Europe. Instead, the focus is consistently on the mitigation of the threat that this group poses to the economy of Southampton. Questions such as, 'What about competition for local jobs – won't this lead to increased unemployment or lower wages?' and 'What about demands on welfare support – aren't these resources being stretched?' are answered with statistics in an attempt to alleviate this apparent menace (Southampton City Council, 2007e).

When writing of Eastern European migrants, the focus is consistently on the economic impact of migration. There is no discussion of a threat to British ways of living and no need to mitigate such a threat. As I have mentioned before, perhaps Poles, who are white Europeans, are perceived to be similar to Britons. As such, they pose no real threat to British ways of living. This is in stark contrast with the media's representation of the threat posed by

immigrants from the West Indies and South Asia, who were often represented as a threat to British culture during the 1980s (Kushner & Knox, 1999). The threat posed by immigration to the economy of Southampton is mitigated, but the benefits of such immigration are never even discussed, at least not in the documents that I have analysed (G. Barker, 2007; Southampton City Council, 2005, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c, 2007e).

There is a discussion of homelessness, council housing, and employment and Council taxes in Southampton. However, there is no similar discussion about the dire economic situation in Poland. What has forced people to emigrate in the first place? In this discourse on pan-European migration, there has been no commodification of personal trauma. There is not, for example, an anecdote relating the narrative of Krzysztof, the Polish Plumber, who is forced to leave his family because he cannot find work at home. Instead, using a barrage of statistics, the Council mitigates the threat that such an economic migrant poses to the economy of Southampton.

Interestingly, the Council points out that, 'while much media focus has been on economic migration to the UK, few are aware that there are several million Britons living abroad today, most having migrated for economic betterment; no-one disputes their right to do so' (Southampton City Council, 2007c). This point is interesting for a number of reasons. First, a survey of the BBC will show a number of programmes based on the very premise that Britons are, increasingly, heading to Europe for a *Place in the Sun* or are already *Living in the Sun*. Perhaps this mass exodus is, as the titles would suggest, meteorologically motivated, but each episode of these programs focuses heavily on the cost of living in the United Kingdom and on the fiscal benefits of moving abroad.

Economic forces have, in part, forced Britons to flee Britain. In the discourses of the Southampton *New Communities Team*, there is no link between these forces and the appeal of a conservative, anti-immigration discourse in the United Kingdom. This discourse, combined with difficult financial circumstances for a portion of the population, has facilitated the 'scapegoating' of asylum-seekers and economic migrants. A member of the *New Communities Team* avers, 'Win the battle over asylum-seekers and the public will find another scapegoat' (G. Barker, 2007). As working-class Britons feel increasingly economically disadvantaged, they may either leave Britain or remain here, struggling and looking for an explanation for their poverty. Conservative media sources, acknowledging this anxiety, has provided an explanation in the form of asylum-seekers and, increasingly, economic migrants. In the next section, I will describe how one grass roots organisation has attempted to overcome these

conservative, anti-immigration discourses, by describing asylum-seekers as being 'local' and by describing them as being part of the 'solution' rather than being part of the 'problem'.

5.5.3 Love thy Neighbour: Discourses of the Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group

> Um, personally I felt… I've always had an interest in the asylum-seeker setup in Southampton and refugees, and everything. And when 'C.' found out about the organisation, it seemed to fit everything I was interested in. And I like anything local, that you can keep pretty small. If it gets too big, I just… I *would* be interested, but it loses its big interest to me. I can sort of visualise it because it's local. And that's it for me, I think. Feeling like what I'm giving is going to be dealt with locally rather than just lost in advertising, literature and marketing (Devine, et al., 2008).

My ethnographic research (which involved attending their groups meetings; reading and analysing their intragroup e-mails and public-education materials; and 'visiting' with a Kurdish asylum-seeker for nearly a year) has shown that the discourse community comprised of the members of the Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group is not an overtly 'political' discourse community. For the most part, they have not become involved in this cause because they are concerned about human rights in Zimbabwe or because they have spent time volunteering in refugee camps in the Horn of Africa. Instead, they are concerned about survivors of torture because they are concerned about the Southampton area in general and are concerned about the city's residents. There is little discussion of the asylum-seeker's life prior to their arrival in the United Kingdom or of the conditions that led them to flee their country in the first place. In some ways, this is a spontaneous consideration: volunteers are leery to engage in a dialogue that may re-traumatise the survivor of torture. In other ways, it is not important to the work at hand. Here, I must draw a distinction between this realm and the therapeutic realm, where the asylum-seeker's life prior to their arrival in the United Kingdom is of greatest importance.

At the grassroots level in Hampshire, Christianity and the Christian background of many of the discourse community's central figures have helped to shape discourses on survivors of torture. For example, the Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group's (SWVG) annual general meetings, monthly free lunches and new volunteer trainings are all held at churches in the area. While there is no outright mention of Christianity – or of any religion for that matter – at these events, one is left to wonder if their location has the effect of inadvertently alienating non-Christian citizens of the area who are interested in volunteering with the organisation.

This is not the only illustration of the pervasiveness of Christianity in pro-survivor discourses in Southampton. In their newsletter, the group presented the highlights of its summer picnic, which was called *Fun, Friendship and Food for Destitute Friends*. In a synopsis of the day's highlights, the Reverend Ian Johnson writes, 'One East European lady is now seeking baptism after being a secret Christian for many years in the Soviet Union' (Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group, 2007, p. 12).

Similarly, the group's December 2006 newsletter, *Winchester Voice for Refugees* (WVR) describes talks that members of the group have been asked to give 'about the plight of asylum-seekers and the work of the Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group' (2007, p. 15): At that time, members had visited the following groups:

- Saint Cross Fellowship of Winchester
- Avenue Saint Andrew's Southampton
- Saint Peter's Women's Group Winchester
- Vigil at the Buttercross Winchester

This religiosity is further represented in the discourse, which holds at its heart the Christian motto: 'Love thy neighbour'. Indeed, the city's first *Enabling Christians in Serving Refugees Conference* was called 'When I Needed a Neighbour', taking place on 11-12 September 2008.

Where survivors of torture – or asylum-seekers in general, for that matter – are not housed in a particular neighbourhood or city, there is a tacit understanding in the discourse that the residents of this neighbourhood or city are not impinged upon by the arrival of such immigrants in the United Kingdom. 'D.' (2008), a central figure in the Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group, describes the perceived disposition of the residents of Winchester, a mostly affluent city north of Southampton that, according to research for Channel Four's *The* Best *And Worst* Places to Live *In The UK: 2006*, is the best place to live in the United Kingdom:

I guess Winchester's not a place where people care [about destitute asylum-seekers in Hampshire]. I mean that not in a 'Oh, they don't care', but they're not impacted by it so, like I said, I would not necessarily be thinking about [destitute asylum-seekers] at all and so the people that we meet have been forced to think about it because we're talking about it. And therefore, you get their attitudes, but in general, again, on the whole, they've heard a bit about what we're saying and are quite sympathetic, yeah (Vinnell & Vinnell, 2008).

In contrast, in the discourse community that I have studied in Southampton, where there is the perception that where there are more asylum-seekers (and among them more survivors of torture) the discourse is dissimilar. This discourse, while being tacitly *anti*-immigration, is presented as being *pro*-immigration by 'A.' (Vinnell & Vinnell, 2008), another central figure in SWVG:

> If you looked in Southampton as you do… I think I did mention once to somebody that we were working and I remember them saying, 'Oh, yes, there do seem an awful lot of [asylum-seekers] here', which is, in a way, I could understand… I could see it that they weren't particularly pro-[immigration]. So, maybe if I was [*sic*] living in Southampton I would feel…'

Although 'A' halts and doesn't finish her statement, we understand that she complies with the anonymous individual from Southampton, who, faced with 'an awful lot' of asylum-seekers, tends to be less than 'pro' immigration.

In 2008, the Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group decided to redesign its logo. The original logo consisted of a wordmark: the organisation's initials in a recognisable font. However, it was not felt by some members that this wordmark represented the organisation's 'human' side. One artistic member of the group designed a new logo: a circle of exclusively white-faced stick figures, holding hands in a round, encircling the letters 'SWVG'. The new logo was lauded in a flurry of approving e-mails. That is, until it was noted that the figures were, in fact, all white and that, as such, they did not reflect the reality of the work that the group was doing. In one e-mail after another, members expressed their concern:

> I feel similarly to M. They both have their merits – the SWVG black and white [logo] is more business-like and more suited for headed paper, letters etc. Whereas the other one with the people shows more of the 'story behind the name' (but would be better with less [*sic*] white faces) (from e-mail correspondence 8 February 2008).

I have included this anecdote because it is a rare example of the metadiscourse of an organisation that is mindful that its members are predominantly white, while the people that it helps are not.

In the next chapter, I will look at discourses of helplessness that are, in part, shaped by the above discourses of liminality. Finally, I will show how discourses of both liminality and helplessness eventually lead to discourses of mistrust and will argue that these discourses eventually undermine the integration of asylum-seekers into British ways of living.

6. Discourses of Mistrust

On the practical level, trust is often a category attributed to American gullibility, or to the sensibilities of comfortable, rich Europeans, or to limited groups of clinicians and therapists who over time build up rapport [with the survivor of torture] (Fischer, p. 128).

The more I have engaged with my data, the more I have realised that discourses of trust – and of mistrust – are actually a furtherance of the discourses of liminality that I have examined in the previous chapter. In the discourse community[31] that I have analysed, asylum-seekers are consistently represented as being neither 'us' nor 'them'. In some fundamental way, this discursive construction of liminality shapes and is shaped by discourses of mistrust. By 'mistrust', I mean both mistrust *of* the asylum-seeker by members of the discourse community and mistrust *by* the asylum-seeker of members of the discourse community. *Liminal* representations – and, by this, I mean representations in which asylum-seekers are represented as being somehow 'less' than British – of asylum-seekers run the risk of raising doubts about the asylum-seeker's commitment to British ways of living. Malkki (1987) cautions:

> This kind of approach [to representation] marks the refugees as people who fall into the narrow cracks between borders, between societies and between cultures. They effectively disappear into the liminal world of the aberrant where they are depicted as impure, immoral, terroristic and criminal in a 'pathologisation of uprootedness' (p. 32).

This 'pathologisation of uprootedness', which is present in many governmental discourses on immigration (cf. Home Office, 2002, 2004, 2005; National Refugee Integration Forum, 2006; Secretary of State for the Home Department, 2005), leads to a deep-seated sense of misgiving,

[31] See Chapter Two.

even among those in the discourse community who would describe themselves as ardent supporters of asylum-seekers. For instance, A., who is a central figure in the Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group, describes the beginning of her 'career', visiting and working with asylum-seekers in and around Southampton. She began by visiting incarcerated asylum-seekers in Winchester Prison in the late 1990s[32]:

> [A]t first, you know, I wasn't sure about it because obviously if you're in prison, there's usually a reason why you're there. So, I was a little bit suspicious to start with because I couldn't really believe that the government would just push people into prison if they hadn't actually done anything. And as I visited one particular young man and then another, I realized that [the British Government] *did* actually [imprison innocent asylum-seekers] (Vinnell & Vinnell, 2008).

The representation of asylum-seekers as being 'aberrant' and under suspicion is pervasive in both governmental discourses and in the conservative, anti-immigration media. These representations go on to colour the discourses of the members of SWVG even today, when volunteers are visiting destitute asylum-seekers who are no longer imprisoned and who are expected (by the government and by other discourse producers) to integrate into the communities in which they live.

During an interview, W., a volunteer with SWVG who is visiting a destitute female asylum-seeker from Zimbabwe, admitted after some hesitation, 'I don't always believe [asylum-seekers]… I don't believe that you could say categorically that everybody that's here saying

[32] The late 1990s saw the development of a contentious Government scheme to move hundreds of asylum-seekers into prisons across England and Wales, where they were integrated into populations of 'normal' prisoners. Approximately 50 asylum-seekers were moved into Winchester Prison. The asylum-seekers there were held with remand inmates, who often endure worse conditions than sentenced prisoners. Burrell, I. (2001, January 22). Prisons inspector attacks jailing of asylum seekers*. The Independent, online edition*. Retrieved from http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/this-britain/prisons-inspector-attacks-jailing-of-asylum-seekers-702814.html.

that they've suffered torture has suffered torture, that's all. I don't believe that' (Devine, et al., 2008). W.'s lack of trust exemplifies what Valentine and Daniel (1995) depict in the introduction to their edited volume, *Mistrusting Refugees*: '"Individualities" constructed in oral autobiographies are deemed irrelevant by many [individuals working with refugees], whereas for the refugee this [individuality] is the foundation on which a meaningful world may be rebuilt' (p.5). In fact, these individualities often become irrelevant upon arrival in the United Kingdom, where asylum-seekers and refugees are often represented *en masse*. The Medical Foundation (2007a) warns, 'upon arrival in the UK [survivors of torture] will all share one thing in common. Having escaped hatred and hostility, they find that their welcome in the UK is usually less than sympathetic' (p. 8).

6.1 Torture treatment and reestablishment of trust

One of the central tenets of the torture treatment movement (cf., Gross, 2004; Turner, 1995) is that it is designed to re-establish the trust of – and trust in – the asylum-seeker. Despite the goal of re-establishing trust and providing a voice to survivors, in the discourses I have analysed, we very rarely hear from the survivors themselves, and I argue that this may be because the voice of the survivor her- or himself is not necessarily deemed as being trustworthy. Instead, at every stage of the production and representation of their identities, the survivor of torture is represented by a third-party agent, be it an interpreter, her or his legal counsel, a psychologist or a torture treatment professional.

Despite this reliance on intermediaries, Voutira and Harrell-Bond (1995) contest that engagement between refugees or asylum-seekers and their autochthonous intercessors does not have the potential of re-establishing trust in any simple sense. The authors posit that the entire structure of the humanitarian regime is loaded with competition among asylum-seekers, and public suspicion and mistrust of asylum-seekers. In this section, I will analyse the ways in which the discourse community has attempted to re-establish trust in their engagements with survivors of torture who are seeking asylum in the United Kingdom. I will also engage with these discourses to show that they contain certain linguistic features that contribute to a pervasive climate of mistrust and fear of asylum-seekers. The first document that I will analyse is titled *Interviewing Alleged Victims of Torture*, and was written by the Home Office with the assistance of the Medical Foundation.

6.1.1 Re-establishing trust in the discourse of Interviewing Alleged Victims of Torture (2007)

With the help of the Medical Foundation, the Home Office (2007) has drafted guidelines for asylum officers who are interviewing 'alleged victims of torture'. The first piece of advice that they offer to these asylum officers is based on the discursive presupposition that asylum-seekers exist in an atmosphere of mistrust:

> Officers should try to develop an atmosphere of trust. Victims of torture may need a sympathetic ear before divulging details of the abuse they have suffered. An adversarial interview style, comprising many short questions that invite short answers, is an ineffective means of gathering information about an individual's torture and will therefore be inappropriate when such information is being obtained (p. 1).

An 'atmosphere of trust' must be 'developed'; it is assumed that, outside of the confines of the interview, the 'victim' of torture lives in an atmosphere of mistrust. This is especially damaging to the survivor because it reinforces one of the major goals of torture, which is to destroy both a sense of trust *and* a sense of trustworthiness. Redress, an organisation that is run *by* survivors of torture *for* survivors of torture, warns, 'Some torturers tell their victims that they will not be believed when describing their torture, and the asylum official's disbelief [therefore] reinforces the torture' (Redress, 2006, p. 7). This atmosphere of mistrust begins with the torture experience – and often beforehand – and persists until the asylum interview and, as I will show, often afterward, even when the asylum-seeker has been granted asylum.

It is interesting, too, to note here that the authors of *Interviewing Alleged Victims of Torture* specify that 'an adversarial interview style' is 'an ineffective means of gathering information about an individual's torture' (p. 1). It is not, however, an 'ineffective' means of gathering *other* information (e.g., the asylum-seeker's date of arrival in the United Kingdom). Asylum-

seekers tell us that, upon arrival at the United Kingdom's ports of entry, the asylum-seeker is more or less assaulted as their life story is thoroughly dissected in order to determine their country of origin, reasons for leaving home, and reasons for arriving in the United Kingdom. By its very nature, the asylum interview, too, is an adversarial situation: the context in which a personal trauma narrative[33] is related is important: where it is being told, to whom and why. Additionally there is the shaping presence of an interrogator – in this case, a Home Office employee – and the value of what is ultimately at stake: asylum in the United Kingdom.

The adversarial nature of the asylum interview discounts the value that is inherent to any retelling of the personal trauma narrative. Each time the survivor is asked to engage with – and perform – her or his personal trauma narrative, the audience is responsible for witnessing this performance. The narrative has the power to act as a testimony against the torturer and to re-establish trust in the welcoming community. Helen Bamber, one of the founders of the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture, and her co-author, Michael Korzinski (2006), warn,

> Assessment of a torture victim can be a challenging task. On the most basic level, human beings find it difficult to discuss events that make them feel ashamed. Torture victims are frequently unable to provide a coherent account of their experiences or feelings. As a result, care must be taken to *establish trust*, enabling a person to feel safe enough to disclose the most painful experiences. In this way, clinical interviews can play a critical role in restoring a victim's belief in the humanity of others (p. 76, emphasis mine).

[33] See Chapter One See also Eder, J. (2003). Narratology and Cognitive Reception Theories. In T. Kindt & H.-H. Muller (Eds.), *What is Narratology?: Questions and Answers Regarding the Status of a Theory* (pp. 277-302). Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, Inc, Onega, S., & García, L. J. A. (Eds.). (1996). *Narratology*. London: Longman Group Limited, Prince, G. (1996). Introduction to the Study of the Narratee. In S. Onega & L. J. A. García (Eds.), *Narratology* (pp. 190-202). London: Longman Group Limited.

This is a point that I will touch on throughout my analysis: survivors are asked to perform their personal trauma narratives and that these narratives are then co-opted or, in some cases, commodified. This process of commodification (which often begins at the asylum interview) demeans the survivor and devalues the therapeutic potential of the performance of the personal trauma narrative (Gangsei & Deutsch, 2006; Sack, 2006; Wenk-Ansohn, 2006). Furthermore, it essentialises the survivor: identifying them as the sum of their traumatic experiences and not as a woman or man who has overcome nearly insuperable odds to arrive – and seek asylum – in the United Kingdom. I will examine this phenomenon further in the next section, which looks at one organisation that uses the personal trauma narratives of survivors' in their fund-raising endeavours.

6.1.2 Re-establishing trust through the use of personal trauma narratives in the discourses of Time Together UK

One method offered for re-establishing the public's trust in the survivor of torture is to co-opt the survivor's trauma narrative[34].

For example, Finney and Peach (2004) advise: 'Having refugee speakers [at a refugee awareness event] also aims to cultivate empathy, with the added ingredient of perceived authenticity[35]. Trust for the source of a message is an important factor in how the message is

[34] It should be noted that there is very little advice in the discourses I have analysed on reëstablishing the *survivor's* trust in an asylum system that has been described by some authors as competitive, suspicious and mistrusting Voutira, E., & Harrell-Bond, B. E. (1995). In Search of the Locus of Trust: The Social World of the Refugee Camp. In E. D. Valentine & J. C. Knudsen (Eds.), *Mistrusting Refugees*. London: University of California Press. and by others as tortuous and lengthy Van Willigen, L. H. M. (1992). Organization of care and rehabilitation services for victims of torture and other forms of organized violence: A review of current issues. In M. Basoglu (Ed.), *Torture and its consequences: Current treatment approaches* (pp. 277-297). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press..

[35] See Chapter One and also Fischer Fischer, M. M. J. (1995). Starting Over: How, What, and for Whom Does One Write about Refugees? The Poetics and Politics of Refugee Film as Ethnographic Access in a Media-saturated

received' (p. 68). Indeed, Onat (2007) counsels 'It's not enough to do stories *about* asylum seekers; you must do stories *with* asylum seekers as well'. Again the onus here for re-establishing trust is placed on the asylum-seeker. There is little discourse about the survivor's mistrust of the British-born audience. It is ironic that the authors cite 'trust for the source' as one of the reasons to include refugee speakers at a refugee awareness event. As I will establish below, even the most zealous advocates of asylum-seekers and refugees show a fundamental lack of trust in them.

I argue that I believe that this approach to representing asylum-seekers is misguided for a number of reasons. First, although it may re-establish trust *in* the survivor of torture (by using a narrative that is somehow deemed to be more 'authentic' than a *retelling* of that same story), it does not necessarily aim to re-establish the trust *of* the survivor of torture. The survivor of torture has presumably first performed their trauma narrative to a suspicious UK Border Agency asylum officer and now they are expected to *perform* this same narrative for a suspicious audience of would-be supporters. This is done despite advice that is given elsewhere in the discourse community. For example, *Time Together UK*'s own warning about British-born 'mentors' engaging in personal discussions with refugee 'mentees':

[I]t is probably not wise to ask very personal questions. This goes not just for your first meeting but for all subsequent meetings too. People of different cultures may find questions that you may think are innocuous deeply offensive and intrusive. Allow your mentee to set the tone and level of what is divulged. This way you will avoid any awkwardness on either part (Time Bank, 2007a, p. 6).

World. In E. V. Daniel & J. C. Knudsen (Eds.), *Mistrusting Refugees* (pp. 126-150). London: University of California Press..

Second, apart from this warning, there is little acknowledgement of the power of the trauma narrative to re-traumatise its narrator. Throughout the discourses I have analysed, the trauma narrative is represented as a powerful tool in both therapy (Agger & Jensen, 1990; Gangsei & Deutsch, 2006; Merscham, 2000; Sack, 2006; Schauer, et al., 2005; Waisman, 2005; Wenk-Ansohn, 2006) and testimony (Agger, 1992; Chun, 2002; Cox, 2007; Felman & Laub, 1991; Godin, et al., 2006; Miller & Tougaw, 2002; Simon & Eppert, 1997; Strejilevich, 2006; Yaeger, 2002). However, in using the personal trauma narrative for fundraising appeals, it is co-opted for use in re-establishing trust. If the trauma narrative is told and retold (or performed and re-performed, to use the lexicon of trauma theory[36]) without fully recognizing its therapeutic potential, then it is co-opted and ultimately, I contend, it is commodified.

Time Together UK (Time Bank, 2006) has had some limited success in re-establishing trust with their mentoring scheme, which pairs refugee mentees with British-born mentors. They report that, by empowering refugees with confidence to live in a new society, their scheme, 'develops people who can speak up and who want to get involved in doing something to counterbalance the negative media focus on refugees and immigration' (Time Together 2004). This discourse goes some way to develop the potential of the trauma narrative to serve as testimony and, as such, for the survivor to be empowered in speaking against their torturer. One could argue that, by fostering relationships between (relatively) powerful British-born Britons and (relatively) powerless asylum-seekers, the scheme is inherently empowering. I will, in the next section, analyse how the discourses of the Medical Foundation also attempt to re-establish trust by co-opting personal trauma narratives.

[36] See Chapter One.

In contrast to the other two organisations (the UK Border Agency and *Time Together UK*) that I have presented, based on their discourse, the Medical Foundation is evidently conscious of the power of testimony and is cognizant of the desire of *some* survivors to tell their stories. Aliya Mughal, the organisation's Senior Press Officer, says:

> But, for many others, [documenting personal trauma narratives for press purposes or media purposes is] very important. And people that we see: we see journalists, teachers, and political activists… A lot of the people that we see. So, for them, before the trauma, it was very important to be very public and to have a voice and publicly and so we'll engage with those people and we'll work on case studies that can be put into the public domain (2008).

Her acknowledgement of this desire to testify, and of the asylum-seeker's stature *before* the trauma, serves to highlight the lack of this trope in other representations. Despite the best of intentions, the use of refugee voices and personal trauma narratives can be problematised as well. I will do this in the next section.

6.1.3 Voicelessness and Mistrust

In her seminal article, 'Speechless Emissaries: Refugees, Humanitarianism, and Dehistoricization', Malkki (1996) problematises the way that refugees have traditionally been represented by those organisations that are dedicated to helping them. For her, the predominance of visual representations – such as photographs – had silenced asylum-seekers and refugees. Consequently, asylum-seekers and refugees are in need of someone to speak for them. Historically, humanitarian organisations had filled this role, by assigning captions to photographs and by providing 'expert testimony' about the conditions that refugees face (Malkki, 1996).

Of late, refugee 'voices' (cf. Museum of London, 2007#334; Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group, 2007), 'life stories' (cf. Broomfield, 2009; Ortiz, 1985; Patai, 1988) and 'testimony' (cf. Agger, 1992; Agger & Jensen, 1990; Chun, 2002; Cox, 2007; Felman & Laub, 1991; Godin, et al., 2006; Miller & Tougaw, 2002; Simon & Eppert, 1997; Strejilevich, 2006; Yaeger, 2002) have come to dominate current representations of asylum-seekers and refugees. As such, we have the headline: 'Exhibition Gives Voice to Young Refugees' in the *Guardian* (Gaines, 2006); the organization, London Refugee Voice, which serves as 'a voice for refugee communities in London' (2009); and even the headline on the BBC News website, 'Google Earth's Voice for Refugees', which describes how international aid agencies are using Google Earth's mapping technology to show the plight of the world's refugees (2008).

Such representations reveal unease in the discourse community with the complexities of 'representation' and hint at organisational metadiscourses on the topic. Nonetheless, in 'Listening to the Displaced', Rajaram (2002) suggests that even when the express purpose of a project is to 'listen' (cf. Belton, 1998; Chun, 2002; Demusz, 2000; Fox, 1994; Gilbert, 2007; Harris, 2000) or to 'give voice': 'The institutional framework of the aid organization continues to set the boundaries within which refugee identity is voiced… [leading to] conceptions of refugees that are resistant to compound and detailed senses of social and political identity' (p. 262). In the discourses I have analysed, representations of survivors of torture continue to be mediated by the discourse producers, depicting refugees' problems and needs over narratives that reveal the complexities – and totality – of their lived experience. I will, in the next section, show how torture treatment programmes, such as the one at the Medical Foundation, have attempted to provide asylum-seekers and refugees with a 'trustworthy' voice.

6.1.4 Torture treatment and the provision of 'voice'

One of the recurring tropes in the discourses I have analysed (cf. Museum of London, 2007; Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group, 2007) is that torture treatment – and torture treatment agencies and refugee service providers – somehow empower and provide a voice to survivors of torture. Intrinsic to this trope is the fact that an individual is only powerful – and, indeed, only possesses a voice – if she or he is telling their story to powerful people. In their country of origin, a survivor may have recounted their ordeal to friends and family members dozens of times. In spite of this, the survivor does not have a 'voice' until they are telling their story to Western supporters. Indeed, rather than talking about 'giving' asylum-seekers and refugees a voice, Wake (2007), in her discussion on performance and asylum, discusses a process of 'enabling' a refugee's voice for an audience of 'white middle class actors and academics'.

This focus on voice and voicelessness suggests that the discourse community is concerned with issues of representation, and is endeavouring to problematise what Rajaram (2002) calls the 'bureaucratisation of knowledge about refugees'. In this process of bureaucratisation, the opinions of experts are privileged over the lived experience of refugees themselves (L. H. Malkki, 1996). The various attempts to problematise these processes of representation are wrought with their own challenges, and attempts to 'give voice to the voiceless' can actually be *dis*empowering as representations are often dependent on the (refugee advocacy) group's specific agenda. As I have demonstrated, there is an insidious climate of mistrust of asylum-seekers and refugees in the discourse community. Further, agents within the community are

fully aware of the value of asylum or leave to remain in the United Kingdom: as such, there is a tacit understanding that asylum-seekers will go to any lengths to gain asylum, including deception. For these reasons, relatively little value is placed on the lived experience of refugees, as we will see below.

6.1.5 Beyond Belief: Trust in the Asylum Process

As I have established elsewhere in this thesis, by its very nature, the British government's asylum policy has a certain amount of both *performativity* and theatricality built into it. In order to be successful in the asylum process – and to be granted asylum or leave-to-remain in the United Kingdom – asylum-seekers are expected to perform certain roles. In this process, then, asylum-seekers are the 'performance-makers', while Home Office employees become the 'audience members' (Gilbert, 2007). A number of authors (cf. Cox, 2007; Gilbert, 2007; Jeffers, 2007; Masters, 2007; Perera, 2007; Roach, 1996; S. Smith & Watson, 2002; Wake, 2007) have written about the performative act of testimony which requires, at its very core, for the audience member (in this case, the Home Office employee) to say, 'I believe you' or, at the very least, 'I believe *in* you'. This confidence is central to the process of witnessing. It is, however, fundamentally lacking from many of the discourses that I have analysed. I will, in the next section, analyse grassroots discourses about asylum-seekers and will show that they show similar levels of mistrust to those of the discourses of the Home Office.

6.2 Discussing trust at the grassroots level with volunteers of SWVG

In response to the question: 'What do you think about survivors of torture who are seeking asylum in the United Kingdom', C., a volunteer with the Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group, replied:

> I would want to believe them because, you know, if it *is* the truth then wouldn't it be awful to be in that situation and not be believed? Whereas, they obviously desperately want to be away from that country, *to want to make up stories like that*, and it's a free world, I think. Do you know what I mean? Why shouldn't they be [wanting to flee from their countries of origin]? If I can go live in their country, why can't they come and live in mine? (Devine, et al., 2008)

Although she 'wants' to believe them, it is clear that C. does not quite trust survivors of torture who are seeking asylum in her country. L., another volunteer I interviewed at the same time, concurs, not with C.'s desire to believe the asylum-seekers, which is perhaps what one would expect, but with C.'s suspicions. Asylum (or leave to remain) in the United Kingdom is seen as such a valuable asset that asylum-seekers are expected to go to any lengths, be they honest or otherwise, to obtain it.

Similarly, conditions in the countries that produce asylum-seekers are imagined – and are discursively constructed – to be so appalling that they render life in these countries untenable[37]. L. assents to C.'s estimation: 'Yeah and I do believe there's obviously a reason for wanting to come away [from their country of origin] and yeah, pretty much…' Next, W., a very vocal member of SWVG and very much the decision-maker for this particular group of friends, challenges the judgment of C. and L.: 'I thought that [asylum-seekers and refugees were to be trusted], but I don't always believe everybody… I don't believe that you could say categorically that everybody that's here [in the United Kingdom as an asylum-seeker] saying that they've suffered torture has suffered torture, that's all. I don't believe that'.

Next, C., who had originally expressed a desire to 'believe' asylum-seekers when they relayed narratives of torture, either sees the feels unsure or, in the interest of politeness[38] and a desire to save face, partially renounces her opinion: 'No, I agree, and they probably haven't ['suffered torture', to use W.'s words], but I'd rather give them the benefit of the doubt'. Subsequently, W., in a further effort to avoid threatening her associate's positive face, hedges[39] a bit: 'Oh, yeah. Definitely. I don't mind [asylum-seekers and refugees] being here, I just worry that [asylum-seekers and refugees] feel that they need to say that [they have been tortured] to

[37] It is interesting to note that during this entire 1.5-hour interview with three members of the Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group, there was never any discussion of the actual conditions (such as civil war and genocide) that produce asylum-seekers and refugees.

[38] Politeness theory (e.g, Brown and Levinson, Brown, P., & Levinson, S. (1987). *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. states that some speech acts threaten the 'face needs' of other speakers. The authors theorised that one changes ones language based on the listener. Hence, our strategies for gaining compliance – and for avoiding situations that may threaten the face of the listener – change depending on the audience. Politeness strategies are used to formulate messages in order to save the listener's face when face-threatening acts are inevitable or desired. This means that the speaker avoids embarrassing the listener or making them feel uncomfortable.

[39] For a full description of linguistic hedging vis-à-vis pragmatics, refer to Grundy, P. (2000). *Doing Pragmatics*. London: Arnold, Levinson, S. (1983). *Pragmatics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Peccei, J. S. (2001). *Pragmatics*. London: Routledge.

come here and I think then they've got to live with this story that they've not actually experienced and it's a weird old mix…'.

In this statement, W. has agreed to something slightly different than the topic that is currently at hand: She has stated that she doesn't mind survivors of torture being here (in the United Kingdom), which is not exactly what C. and L. were discussing. Nonetheless, she still has not agreed with the subject at hand: survivors are to be believed when they are relating their personal trauma narratives. Instead, one gets the impression that W. recognises that asylum-seekers will use *any* means necessary to come to the United Kingdom, but that once they are here, she accepts the inevitability of the situation. It is interesting to note, however, that W. states that she does not 'mind' asylum-seekers being in the United Kingdom: she never states that she welcomes them[40].

Because she perhaps realizes the harshness – and possible contentious nature – of her attitude, W. shifts the conversation subtly here, implying that she is merely concerned for the welfare of alleged survivors of torture who are seeking asylum in the United Kingdom:

> Yeah, I just think that… if they've got a reason for coming, then just come [to the United Kingdom] and don't make up that you've suffered some torture. Because I just think then you've had to share that [personal trauma narrative] with somebody, somebody that's interested and wants to listen to you, and is gonna help you. And then you're coming along with this story all the time about something that never happened and who's gonna doubt it and then you know, you would then go away from that person and think, 'Gosh, I've had to make up this bloomin' story here of being tortured and now it's getting a bit out of hand and nothing really *did* happen to me', you know and then it could play on their mind and, before they know it, they perhaps they think really did suffer torture. I dunno…

[40] It is important to remind here that these women would describe themselves as being 'pro-immigration' and that they are volunteering with one of the South's most important voluntary refugee relief agencies.

This is one of the few examples of metadiscourse in this 90-minute interview: here, W. acknowledges that to talk about torture is to discursively construct an identity that has been tortured or, at the very least, to integrate a torture narrative into one's own personal identity. She accepts the threat that this sort of deception poses to the mental health of the asylum-seeker who has *not* been tortured. W. does not judge asylum-seekers for being dishonest; instead, she is concerned about their mental health.

Moreover, she agonises about the person who has volunteered to help the survivor (with what, she does not say)[41] and who is ultimately deceived. Again, it is interesting to note that

W. uses a fictional 'somebody' here, which essentially *others* the duped volunteer. In fact, W. is herself a volunteer, so she would have been accurate in saying, instead, 'Because I just think then you've had to share that story with *me*, *I'm* interested and want to listen to you, and *I'm* gonna help you'. By *othering* the object here, W. puts linguistic distance between herself and the person who has been taken advantage of.

L. then shares W.'s concern, 'L: "[The asylum-seekers] start believing that [torture] happened, don't they though?', at which point, W. hedges again, 'That might not be true but I just, you know…' Then, L. goes out on a limb a bit, putting forth, for the first time in this conversation, the idea that *any* trauma is justification for leaving one's country and for seeking asylum in another: 'But, I dunno, I don't know what the criteria [for asylum or leave-to-remain] is. Do you know what I mean? How bad does it gotta get before you get heard[42] and, you know,

[41] Throughout these discourses, there is a certain ambiguity about with what, exactly, volunteers are 'helping' asylum-seekers and refugees. This is perhaps due, in part, to the ambiguous nature of the Government's discourses of 'integration' (Home Office, 2002, 2005; Mayor of London, 2004; National Refugee Integration Forum, 2006; Southampton City Council, 2006), which I have described in a previous chapter.

[42] This is an unconscious continuation of discourses of voice and voicelessness: the survivor is only 'heard' when a powerful Western audience listens to her or his story.

granted asylum or… Is that the lengths you've gotta go to get it? I dunno'. L. realizes that her opinion may be unpopular and peppers her speech with the linguistic hedges (c.f., Crystal, 1988; Grundy, 2000; Levinson, 1983; Peccei, 2001), 'I don't know' and 'I dunno', which are extremely common throughout this conversation.

Finally, rather than picking up L.'s thread and continuing to discuss levels of trauma, C. returns to an earlier topic of conversation: asylum-seekers and refugees in general (as opposed to survivors of torture who are seeking asylum):

> Let me go back to the question of 'What do you think about asylum-seekers and refugees' and the ones in London that go around pick-pocketing and stealing: left, right and centre. They're the ones that I do feel… I do have bad feelings towards sometimes. You know, and it makes me feel ashamed of that, feeling like that, but um you don't go to another country to do that. That's what I feel (Devine, et al., 2008).

Here, C. makes a clear distinction between trustworthy or honest asylum-seekers and refugees and dishonest immigrants who steal 'left, right and centre'. It is interesting to note, too, that she places this problem 'in London', and not in Southampton. She makes no attempt to reconcile her opinion that some asylum-seekers are dishonest when they make asylum claims (see above) with her representation of them as being honest once they have arrived in the United Kingdom.

In the next chapter, I will discuss how many of the tropes presented in this chapter, such as voicelessness and powerlessness; have led to overarching discourses of helplessness when discussing survivors of torture.

7. Discourses of Helplessness

> 'Asylum seekers fleeing to the UK have lost everything. They don't want special treatment' (Refugee Council, 2007a, p. 1).

Of the three major types of discourses that I have analysed: discourses of liminality, discourses of mistrust and discourses of helplessness, the last is, for many reasons that I will outline in this chapter, perhaps the most engaging because it builds on the two previous discourses. As I have continued to conduct research on survivors of torture, my original conception of them as being helpless is constantly challenged. Nonetheless, the discourses I analyse continue to be peppered with messages about assisting 'helpless' asylum-seekers and refugees. For example, from the BBC News, we learn: 'After the Soviets were kicked out of Afghanistan, the entire world watched while America and its partner-in-crime Britain ignored the helpless and displaced refugees' (2002); and from Researching Asylum in London: 'Refugees and asylum seekers are often portrayed as helpless which leads to misunderstanding and reduced quality of performance of housing providers' (Zetter & Pearl, 1999); while from Zim Dialogue (a website offering support to and raising funds for asylum-seekers in the United Kingdom from Zimbabwe): '[The public's] urgent action to help helpless Zimbabwean Asylum Seeker will be greatly appreciated and highly valued' (2007).

In this chapter, I have again looked at three different levels of the hierarchy of discourse producers and shapers in the discourse community under study. At present, in the field of sociolinguistics, there is a debate (c.f., Kutter, 2007) on the array of attitudes that emerge when global and local social realities interact or overlap, which will be explored in this chapter. The first – and most global – level of this hierarchy is that of the British Government. I

will show that the Government is responsible for creating a regime, which I have described at some length in Chapter Two[43] in which survivors of torture who are seeking asylum in the United Kingdom are rendered economically destitute.

Destitution is a real concern and is detrimental to the mental and physical health of many asylum-seekers. This destitution leads to asylum-seekers being portrayed – in the media and by pro-asylum-seeker organisations – as being helpless. Using texts produced by the Government for both the general public and for refugee relief organisations, I will also show that the Government is responsible for both creating and fostering an overarching discourse of helplessness about survivors of torture who are seeking asylum in this country.

The second level of the hierarchy in the discourse community includes national torture-treatment and refugee relief organisations. Faced with a paradigm that has been structured by the Government and that renders survivors of torture economically destitute – and, as such, highly dependent on charity – these organisations perpetuate (and continue to shape) discourses of helplessness in the hopes of raising funds for an admittedly 'needy' population. The materials produced at this level for both public awareness-raising campaigns and for training materials are then adopted at the grass-roots level by organisations that work with asylum-seekers and refugees 'on the ground' in cities such as Southampton.

The final level of the hierarchy is comprised of the grass-roots organisations that work with survivors of torture. These organisations – as I have shown elsewhere in this thesis – are predisposed to see asylum-seekers as a local 'problem'[44] and are therefore inclined to seek

[43]See also, Border and Immigration Agency, 2007; Home Office, 2002, 2004a, 2004b, 2005; Immigration and Nationality Directorate, 2007; Mayor of London, 2004b; National Refugee Integration Forum, 2006; Secretary of State for the Home Department, 2005; The Home Office, 2007

[44] I have consciously adopted the lexeme 'problem', which is used at all three levels of the discourse-production

solutions that can be enacted locally. These solutions include campaigns that attempt to raise funds from the local public and, when possible, eschew government funding, which is often seen to be both limited and limiting. I will demonstrate that, despite a tacit rejection of Government (and conservative anti-immigration media) discourses, the discourses of these local organisations are fundamentally shaped by policies that cause economic destitution amongst asylum-seekers. I will also show that these organisations have espoused some of the most troublesome tropes present in Government-level discourses of helplessness.

7.1 Three Strands of the Discourses of Helplessness

The discourses of helplessness[45] illustrated in this chapter can be divided into three different strands: The first is a discourse of pathologisation; the second, a discourse of dehistoricisation and depoliticisation; and the final strand is a discourse of victimisation. Using critical discourse analysis, I will show that the first two strands of discourse lead to the third: that the pathologisation and dehistoricisation of survivors of torture – in pro-asylum discourses and anti-asylum discourses alike – lead to asylum-seekers being represented as victims rather than survivors in the discourse community.

Many of the discourses that I analyse in this chapter fail to recognise one major fact: survivors of torture who are seeking asylum in the United Kingdom represent a tiny proportion of survivors of torture worldwide. This significant *minority* of survivors who have reached the shores of the United Kingdom are amongst the most resourceful, well connected and diligent. The Medical Foundation (2007a) addresses this fact in this example of metadiscourse:

hierarchy to describe the difficulties presented by immigration to the United Kingdom. For further discussion of this, please refer to (Smith, 1987; Yon, 1999).

[45] See Chapter One, for a discussion of learned helplessness.

> The picture that emerges from the [representation of] spectrum of cases [treated by the Medical Foundation each year] is not the definitive face of torture for the year in
>
> question. It can't be as it deals only with those victims who have managed to reach the safety of the UK and the doors of the [Medical Foundation]. Nor do the cases we see [at the Medical Foundation's London treatment centre] offer a full picture of torture in the countries [the survivors] have fled, for a number of prerequisites determine who reaches us – including mobility and at least some financial resources. Many victims die in prison. Others are so wracked with pain and illness that flight into exile is impossible (p. 14).

The discourses that I will describe below do not take into account these facts and represent survivors of torture as being helpless and hopeless, mentally- and physically-ill individuals who are alone in the world. One way in which they construct this imaginary is through discourses of pathologisation, which I will introduce and analyse below.

7.1.1 Discourses of pathologisation

In the discourse of pathologisation, survivors of torture are represented as an amalgamation of the various sequelæ, or consequences, of the torture that they have survived: that is, a survivor is no longer represented as an individual. Instead, discourse producers (such as national torture-treatment organisations) present the public with a list of physical and mental health symptoms or of problems to be solved. We see this, for example, in the case of the Medical Foundation's electronic fund-raising campaign: This is Céline's Story (2007c). The survivor of torture is impersonalised, that is, she is not represented as a human being. Instead, the survivor is objectivised, because she or he is linguistically realised using metonymical reference. More specifically, she or he is somatised, as she is represented by means of reference to her body. Alternatively, the survivor may be pathologised. These linguistic tactics

are typically employed in order to heighten the emotional impact of the representation on the audience[46].

Many of the texts – both written and oral – that I have analysed demonstrate a high degree of similarity in their representation of the survivor of torture as 'victim'. The survivor is not represented as an agent: she or he has no control over the events relayed in her or his personal trauma narrative. Personal trauma narratives are almost always conveyed in the third person singular, thus further reducing the agency of the survivor (Fairclough, 2003). For example, we read that Céline's brother raped her and that she fled home. In these narratives, survivors are rarely activated (represented using verbs in the active voice). For example, Céline is 'placed in a hostel' and is 'kept awake by her roommate's many male friends'. In addition, the survivor is subjected, represented as the subject of passive constructions. For example, we read that Céline has been 'raped and sexually assaulted, repeatedly' or that she is kept awake by 'vomiting with fear' (Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture, 2007c).

Recently, the Medical Foundation launched an electronic fund-raising and public education campaign. The e-mail began, "[G]et closer to the lives you help transform'. On the organisation's website, the reader is faced with the same representations that are typically used in fund-raising campaigns such as these: a group of survivors is presented with no back-story, which essentially dehistoricises[47] them: trapping them in the amber of a traumatic torture experience and a presence in the United Kingdom that is fraught with need and dependency. We do not know where these survivors came from and we do not know why they

[46] For a discussion of *objectivation*, cf. Van Leeuwen, 1996, pp. 59-61.
[47] See the next section, *The Dehistoricising and Depoliticising Gaze* for a discussion of the process of dehistoricisation.

are seeking asylum in the United Kingdom (rather than in another country, for example). Instead, we are told,

> Each month we try to bring you closer to those whose lives you help transform. Armel, Marcel and Serge-Erique all share similar experiences of detention, torture and organised violence. They met at the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture where they are part of a therapy group.

Here, torture is alluded to in a way that is intended to stimulate the audience without offending its senses: Armel (and one presumes that these are all pseudonyms) tells us, 'I was arrested and kept in cells *in which frankly only God and I know what happened, and perhaps the people who put me there* [emphasis mine]' (Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture, 2009b).

Discourses of pathologisation such as these are created at the international and national levels by organisations dedicated to the medical and psychological treatment and rehabilitation of survivors of torture. Volunteers who work with this population at the local level then espouse these discourses[48]. They are often surprised – I hesitate to write 'delighted' or 'disappointed' here, as it is not entirely clear what value judgement is being made – when they discover that the survivor with whom they are working is not as disabled as they expected them to be.

7.1.2 Pathologising helplessness

Throughout these pro-asylum-seeker discourses, there is an overarching theme of helping individual asylum-seekers and not of altering hegemonic discourses or transnational systems that disadvantage asylum-seekers. Destitution, a state that is created by the Governmental

[48] Some pro-survivor volunteers come to this work from medical professions. For example, of the five volunteers of SWVG that I have interviewed, two were nurses.

policies that I have described in Chapter Two creates a discourse that, by its very nature, portrays asylum-seekers as being, not only helpless, but also somehow less than willing to help themselves. For example, we read 'One of the main aims [of one national refugee relief scheme] is to help people get the confidence to get a paid job, [emphasis mine]' explains Johannes Hagos, who runs the scheme, 'and the paid job comes when you integrate with society. Many refugees stay with people from their own country, [yet] we are trying to build a stronger sense of a wider community' (YouthNet UK, 2009). Statements such as this, which are rife in the discourses I have analysed, put the onus on the asylum-seeker to somehow 'integrate' into British society and to help 'build a stronger sense of a wider community'.

Furthermore, this type of statement disseminates a belief that any failure to integrate is due to a lack of 'confidence' on the part of the asylum-seeker. This furthers a discourse, described above, that pathologises the asylum-seeker. She or he has been so damaged by some personal trauma (that is not described in this particular extract) that she or he lacks the 'confidence' necessary to obtain gainful employment. Here, 'confidence' is what is lacking. Rather than challenging Governmental policies that do not allow asylum-seekers to work, these discourses – despite the fact that they are tacitly pro-asylum-seeker – shift the blame to asylum-seekers, who, if only they were 'confident' enough, could find a job[49] and could then integrate into British society. This is echoed in a statement from a BBC One (2009) fund-raising appeal for Refugee Action: 'For the past two years, Kazim [an asylum-seeker from Afghanistan] has been involved in projects run by the Refugee Council. The latest, Strong Voices, aims to help young asylum-seekers rebuild their confidence and integrate with the local community'.

[49] It is interesting to note here that discourses around asylum-seekers and employment very rarely talk about 'careers': instead, the focus is on 'jobs'. This goes some way to discredit asylum-seekers who bring valuable skills and experience to the British job market.

In addition, discourses such as this cast aspersions on refugees (or asylum-seekers) helping other refugees. Rather than fostering this relationship, these discourses depict these relationships as being counterproductive. The discourse producers are wary of relationships amongst compatriots at the exclusion of other relationships with Britons. We read, 'Many refugees stay with people from their own country, [yet] we are trying to build a stronger sense of a wider community' (YouthNet UK, 2009). An adversarial relationship is created here: while British-born volunteers are attempting to 'integrate' asylum-seekers, asylum-seekers are sequestering themselves in ethnic enclaves.

Although 'integration' and successful settlement are the goal of both the volunteer and the asylum-seeker, the means by which they attempt to achieve this are represented as being, not only very different from each other, but at odds. In these discourses, a refugee helping other refugees creates isolation and hinders the construction of a so-called 'stronger sense of a wider community'. This, in turn, generates a stronger sense of dependency – and helplessness – among refugee communities. It also provides a foothold for conservative anti-immigration groups that intend to create a discourse that represents asylum-seekers as a 'drain' or a 'burden' on British society. Below, I will analyse discourses that attempt to rebut representations that problematise the refugee-to-refugee relationship.

7.2 The Dehistoricising and Depoliticising Gaze

Despite the tendency of international and national discourse producers to focus on personal trauma narratives, in many facets of my research, I have encountered a predisposition, among the pro-survivor volunteers who I have interviewed, to generalise survivors of torture who are seeking asylum in the United Kingdom. Therefore, volunteers tend to talk about all survivors – regardless of country of origin or linguistic or ethnic group – as if they were a whole. When speaking of survivors, these volunteers repeatedly use pronouns such as 'they all' to describe survivors. W., a volunteer with the Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group (SWVG), uses this very pronoun, but is conscious that, in doing so, she is at risk of being perceived as being insensitive to the individual plight of asylum-seekers. When I asked her what, for her, had been the most surprising aspect of her work with SWVG, she responded,

> [I have been] surprised that they're quite… I know that sounds quite awful 'they', I mean I've only known a few people that were asylum-seekers in SWVG, but they all seem much more 'with it' than you probably imagine. If you told somebody you're involved in this group, they'd imagine some poor thing… person with one set of clothes and nothing else and it's not like that. So, I guess that was quite a surprise to me. They're quite self-sufficient and they have a lot of contact with a lot of people in their network. A lot of them are churchgoers, so that brings in a lot more contact with other

> people. They're not as isolated as you visualize. I don't think. And they can make friends with people from their own countries and other countries quite easily [emphasis mine] (Devine, Dumper, & Hulme, 2008).

She continues with this discussion: that asylum-seekers share similar experiences and similar life stories, despite different countries of origin and different linguistic or ethnic backgrounds: 'And they've all got a similar thread running through their lives, really. Not that what we've experienced isn't as destitute as what I guess some people are suffering. Or, maybe they're not. I don't know. So, that's a surprise for me [emphasis mine]' (Devine, et al., 2008).

> W.'s 'I don't know' in the above utterance suggests that she feels that she is voicing an opinion that may not be popular among other members of the discourse community. Based on this comment – and on others that I will present below – it is evident that the process of individualising asylum-seekers that is practised by international and national discourse producers is not always effective. Despite these organisations' high level of reliance on personal trauma narratives in their public education and fund-raising campaigns, the volunteers who work with these individuals at the local grass-roots level continue to think of asylum-seekers in general terms.

It is interesting to note here that W. says that survivors can make friends with 'people from their own countries and other countries quite easily'. She does not, however, say that these asylum-seekers can easily make friends with Britons. During my ethnographic research with this group, I noted a marked lack of spontaneous 'friendship' between British-born volunteers and their asylum-seeking 'clients'. In fact, there was much discussion about what, exactly, to call the asylum-seekers being assisted by the organisation: were they friends, clients or *visitees*?

By co-opting the personal trauma narratives of survivors of torture and presenting them in their public-education and fund-raising campaigns, discourse producers such as the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture (cf., Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture, 2007a, 2007b; 2007c, 2008, 2009a, 2009b) and SWVG (cf., Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group, 2005; 2006, 2007) are asking the public to see survivors as individuals and to resist the temptation – present in many conservative, anti-immigration discourses – to view refugees and asylum-seekers as 'huddled masses' who are threatening to 'flood' or 'inundate' the shores of Great Britain.

Populations of survivors of torture are, almost without exception, comprised of individuals with imperative needs who have been victimised in numerous ways. The problem is that the culture – and discourses – of relief and enduring assistance that I have analysed for this thesis are often accompanied by a number of other social processes and practices that Malkki (1996)

describes as 'dehistoricising'[50]. This process of dehistoricisation creates and shapes a discourse in which it is difficult for people who are defined as 'refugees', 'asylum-seekers' or 'survivors of torture' to be approached as historical actors rather than simply as mute victims.

This type of dehistoricised and depoliticised discursive representation can strip survivors of the authority to give credible narrative evidence or testimony, which, in turn, leads to the culture of mis/distrust that I defined in the previous chapter (Balibar, 1988). Pre-history – that is, events that occurred before the defining torture experience – is often abstracted in later phases of the re-contextualisation of the personal trauma narrative. For example, at the grass-roots level (in the discourses of the Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group, for example), there is little or no representation of the political activities of a survivor of torture before she or he was tortured. In fact, of all of the discourses that I have analysed, a discourse of political activism is only present in the discourses of the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture. Hence, in their fund-raising and public education materials we learn,

Ali was a respected intellectual, inspiring his peers to rally against repression under the Islamic Republic of Iran. Never fearful of confrontation, he pitted himself against the religious academics who sought to silence him and challenged the military officials who would have seen him dead (Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture, 2009a)

In a map of the world included in the organisation's 2006-2007 annual report, Dispelling the Myths (Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture, 2007a), the Medical Foundation presents an essentialised and distilled image of both the nation states that torture their citizens and of the survivors themselves. Thus, we learn that in Sudan, the tortures used

[50] 'Dehistoricisation' is a process by which asylum-seekers, refugees and survivors of torture are discursively removed from an historical context and are, at the same time, depoliticised.

'included beatings, mock drownings and suspension', while in Ethiopia, 'other forms of torture included beatings, food deprivation, and falaka – beatings on the soles of the feet' (p. 14-15). We learn that a 28-year-old female client from Turkey was 'detained several times, beaten unconscious while naked and sexually assaulted' while a 32-year-old male client from Iran was 'suspended and beaten with hose pipes and truncheons' (*ibid*.).

However, the Medical Foundation goes one step further and also goes some way to provide the history of the situation that led to torture in the first place. This is important, I believe, in representing survivors of torture in a way that does not essentialise them as 'victims', but instead represents them as survivors who have struggled and fought and who have relied on great personal resources to find their way to the United Kingdom and to the doors of the Medical Foundation. L., a volunteer for SWVG, found such information to be helpful in fashioning a further understanding of the asylum-seeker client with who she is working:

> But I think [the history of the asylum-seeker before arrival in the United Kingdom is] what SWVG have highlighted, isn't it? Because, like, they've given us talks and, you know, on the journey… on someone's journey from the start, when they leave their home, it could be in flames. You know, they come back from work or whatever… And then for the whole journey of getting across here and then being picked up here and just what that's like. I think that's given me real insight into it because I never understood… Well, really knew that much about it at all (Devine, et al., 2008).

Despite L.'s engagement with this discourse of *historicality*, I have found throughout my ethnographic research with these organisations that this sort of knowledge – or concern – is uncommon. While, at the national governmental level, country of origin is extremely important (in determining refugee status, for example), at the grassroots level, it is much less so.

In Southampton at least, and in the discourse community that I have analysed, survivors of torture are represented – and understood to be – distinctly *not* British. Beyond that, though, their country of origin is not paramount. Race, and by this I mean skin colour, tends to dominate discourses of a survivor's origins and, ultimately, her or his ability to 'integrate' into British society. There is a tacit understanding that white asylum-seekers would have a much easier process of 'integration' than would their black African counterparts. As I have mentioned elsewhere, 'Africa' is construed as one, unified country of origin with asylum-seekers from Somalia, for example, being represented – and discussed – in much the same way, as are asylum-seekers from Zimbabwe.

7.3 Discourses of Victimisation

In discourses of victimisation, the survivor is presented as a passive 'victim' of torture and not as an active 'survivor'. During their 2006 fund-raising event, Voices in a Strange Land[51], SWVG asked actor, Colin Firth, to read from the memoirs of his friend, a refugee named Mohammed. In their newsletter, in an article describing this 'performance', the organisation notes (in a rare example of metadiscourse[52] within this particular discourse community), they write, 'Mohammed now runs a Lebanese restaurant in this country, but the [performance] is not about his culinary skills but of the torture he endured as a sixteen year old' (Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group, 2007, p. 11). In this discourse, Mohammed is eternally trapped in the identity of his 16-year-old, tortured self. There is no room for development, empowerment or self-actualisation in a discourse that, in order to incite an audience and, in doing so, to raise funds, perpetuates this type of representation.

Instead of hearing about Mohammed's successes: his restaurant's annual revenue or enrolling his daughter in primary school, for example, we hear,

> He was brought to the local police station by men who interrogated him about his politics. His head was shaved, he was forced into a tyre and his feet were beaten with bamboo sticks. Mohammed described the blows as 'like red hot skewers shoved into his brain'. They gave him a plastic bucket to drink from, but he was too weak to lift it so they poured it over him and laughed. He tried to smile, determined to be as strong as them' (Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group, 2007, p. 11).

[51] It is interesting to note that the name of this event co-opts many of the tropes that I have described elsewhere in this thesis. Ergo, we have the discourse of alterity, of describing the United Kingdom as a 'strange land' for asylum-seekers and refugees; and we have the discourse of voicelessness: the event is defined as a way of giving 'voice' to asylum-seekers and refugees.

[52] Taylor and Moghaddam (1994) describe metadiscourse as 'our ordinary, everyday practices of talking about what we say and do with language'.

In the newsletter, we read that Mohammed attended the 'performance' of Voices in a Strange Land and, 'there were tears in his eyes as he heard his story read so powerfully by his friend, Colin [Firth]' (Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group, 2007, p. 11). There is no explanation of why Mohammed did not read his own story: perhaps the story, when read in the author's voice, was too disquieting or perhaps Mohammed's English merely was not good enough for a public reading. There is also no mention of the risk of re-traumatisation that comes from this type of performance. The psychological power of these narratives is well documented. Stories such as these ought *not* be co-opted for this type of performance: they ought to be used as testimony against torturers or in cases, such as asylum hearings, when their retelling will directly benefit the asylum-seeker her or himself. Mohammed's tears during the presentation are presented as a badge of its authenticity, of its power to move its audience: there is no question that perhaps he is crying because he has been re-traumatised by having to relive this traumatic episode in his life.

These types of representation – and performance – serve to perpetuate a state of victimisation that begins with the torture experience, continues during flight, is exacerbated during the asylum process[53], and again during the settlement process, which is often fraught with the insults and injustices of destitution (cf. Mayor of London, 2004a) and of racially-motivated harassment and violence (cf. Finney & Peach, 2004; Goldberg, 2000; Sales, 2005). This state of victimisation is understood to end when the survivor is in the care of organisations such as SWVG. However, by co-opting personal trauma narratives for this type of performance, these very organisations perpetuate a state of victimisation. This is despite warnings from government bodies such as the Home Office (2005) that 'Experiences of insecurity and

[53] As I have mentioned elsewhere, the asylum process in the United Kingdom has been described as 'torturous' (Van Willigen, 1992).

victimisation can make it virtually impossible for [asylum-seekers and refugees] to play an active part in the community' (p. 17).

7.3.1 Problematising representations that victimise survivors of torture

The Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture in London is aware of the challenges posed by the above representations and has even gone so far as to begin to engage in a metadiscourse about the use of the word 'victim' in their organisation's name. I asked their senior press officer, Aliya Mughal (2008), about this problematising during our interview:

> TM: And, finally, like I said, before we began recording the interview at least, you mentioned that you're working on a style guide for the organisation and, as I said, coming at this from a sociolinguistics point of view, that's of a lot of interest to me. So, I'd be interested to talk about that a little bit.
>
> AM: Yeah, the style guide: it's really for internal purposes, but it's quite interesting, as you say, from sociolinguistics, because one of the issues that we're addressing in there is language. So, the language that you use to describe a 'victim' or a 'survivor' of torture, and I think that if you look at other organisations like ourselves – we spoke to quite a few people like Médecins Sans Frontières, NSPCC [National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children], and there's no agreed kind of rules on whether you call somebody a 'survivor' or a 'victim'. But, I think it's always important to think about that because people are individuals and you have to put them into the context of the story you're telling. While they may have been a victim of torture, they are a man, a woman, and a child, who has a personal history before and beyond that trauma. But, also when people… you know, you have to speak to the clients themselves, when they come to the Medical Foundation, for instance, some of them might regard themselves as a 'victim', because they were a victim of an act that was inflicted upon them. But then, going through the journey of rehabilitation, and healing, they might one day be able to call themselves a 'survivor' because that word is very loaded. You know, somebody who's 'survived' an experience. So, you know, I think you have to think

about the terminology that you use very carefully. …So, within the context of torture, I think you just always need to be aware of how a person views themselves in the journey that they're hopefully taking from what they suffered to hopefully what they might be able to recover from or learn to cope with better… because you can never really recover from torture [emphasis mine].

TM: And do you foresee, some time in the distant future, the organisation being renamed at all?

AM: Renamed? That's a big question… There is… Why do you ask that? Because of the fix in terminology?

TM: Because I come from an organisation called 'Survivors International[54]' and [the founders] made a very conscious decision to call it that and we talked a little bit about this…

AM: There are discussions actually… there always have been discussions. The organisation was set up in 1985, so going back more than 20 years, and at the time, it was set up by a group of doctors, so hence the 'Medical' Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture, because we were seeing more 'victims' and that's why it became so paramount that an organisation was set up solely to deal with that client group. Um, but yeah, we are aware of the importance of your name, the importance of the brand: what it means in terms of the profile that you get, how people perceive you, how people perceive your client group. So, there is an on-going discussion at the moment. I couldn't say when, or if, at the moment, it will change, but that is something that we're looking at and considering…

According to Finney and Peach (2004), the discursive construction of asylum-seekers and refugees in the British press depends not only on their background (such as ethnicity or reasons for persecution and flight), but also on the political mood of the country at the time (such as the needs of the labour market), and on foreign policy. For example, in contrast to the current representation of asylum-seekers, Spears (1999) found that Hungarian and Kosovar

[54] The torture treatment centre where I was employed for two years in San Francisco, California.

refugees were treated as 'victims' rather than 'problems' by the British press for decidedly political reasons: 'the enemy was well known, opposition to communism had to be shown, support for NATO was necessary, the refugees were European, and part of large exoduses' (Finney & Peach, 2004, pp. 55-56).

7.4 Agency – or the lack thereof – in the representation of asylum-seekers

Representations of asylum-seekers are reliant on representations of transnationalism in general. In 21st-century England, where flights to Europe – and further afield – are advertised for as low as £1.00, Britons see themselves as being at a smorgasbord, with hundreds of destinations at their fingertips. This creates an imaginary in which asylum-seekers are faced with a similar embarrassment of riches. Although the United Kingdom is seen as a rewarding choice for country of asylum (despite the hazards of racism and destitution, which are widely recognised through the discourse community) it is seen as *one* of *many* similarly lucrative options. In fact, this is one of the only cases in the discourses that I have analysed when survivors of torture are invested with a certain amount of agency: they are represented as weighing their options and ultimately – and almost always due to pecuniary considerations – choosing the United Kingdom.

In reality, a majority of the world's refugees have very little choice in where they are resettled, further reducing their sense of agency in the process. For these refugees, there is no 'choice' between the United Kingdom and France, for example. Instead, their country of resettlement is chosen by officers of the International Organization of Migration (IOM), working in tandem with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). In this process, some consideration is given to family reunification, where refugees are 'reunited' with family members who are already living in the developed world. In these cases, a refugee from Sierra Leone, for example, would be 'reunited' with a sister or brother who has already immigrated to the United Kingdom. However, family reunification involves a lengthy bureaucratic process that may take years to complete. Further consideration is given to unaccompanied minors, who are 'reunited' with family members where possible, but who often enter the foster care system in their countries of resettlement.

In the discourses that I have analysed, British nationality is represented as a commodity that is 'sold', oftentimes by mercenary people traffickers who facilitate the procedures of emigration, passage and immigration. This commodity is 'bought' by savvy asylum-seekers who are in the market for a new home. This discourse of the commodification of British

nationality can be seen in the following excerpt from an interview that I conducted with three members of SWVG.

> C: 'What was *really* interesting, my client said to me that, when she was coming over here [to the United Kingdom], she thought it'd be like going to heaven. Oh, what a shock that must have been'.
>
> L: 'And how did she… You know, what did she hear back? Why… So, why do [asylum-seekers] get it in their heads, 'Okay, I'm going to go to England or I'm going to go to Germany or I'm going to go to Fr[ance]… Whatever'.
>
> C: 'Presumably because they're the affluent countries and because they've got everything [asylum-seekers] want, and everything's on tap'.
>
> W: 'I think it's sold to them that way, too, isn't it? I think there's [*sic*] people that go around…'
>
> C: 'In films…'
>
> W: 'Yeah, in films… They do, don't they? I think they think that. There's a lot of them out there, selling it to them. 'This is the way to go,' you know. Because they're the people that make money out of people by getting them a visa or a pass… or a ticket, whatever'[55].
>
> C: 'Whatever they're watching at home, on TV or wherever, it's predominantly American, you know… it's Western, isn't it? They're not going to be watching anything from anywhere else. And, they're having to do everything in English as well. So, they are fed it, aren't they?'

[55] W. here is referring to the 'coyotes' mentioned earlier in this section. 'Coyote' is a term that is used to describe the intermediaries who facilitate the emigration, passage and immigration to the United States of thousands of undocumented migrants from Mexico and Central America. They often do so at exorbitant cost to the migrant.

> W: 'Why would they think anything different, really? If you watched a program on, I dunno, the Congo for the last ten years, that looked all exotic and we would think, 'Oh, I must go there'. We wouldn't think any different, I suppose, would we?'

It is interesting to note here that these volunteers blame the destitution of asylum-seekers – at least in part – on misconceptions on the part of the asylum-seeker who overgeneralises and presumes that 'America' must equal 'England'. It follows that, had the asylum-seeker more savoir-faire, she or he would know that, in the United Kingdom at least, the streets are not, in fact, paved with gold and that they should remain in their own country or go to another country. Here, emigration is based wholly on the appeal of the destination, and not on the horror of the home country. That the destination does not fulfil the expectations of the asylum-seeker is the fault of a marketing campaign – through popular culture and through film in particular – that is actually intended to market the United States. British government policies that create destitution are not mentioned in this dialogue.

7.5 Problematising discourses of destitution

Many of the governmental schemes[56] designed to deal with the so-called 'problem' of asylum-seekers have, in fact, led to a culture of destitution amongst them. Discourses of destitution, which represent asylum-seekers as helpless drains on society, tend to perpetuate a state of victimisation that begins with the first traumatic experience encountered by a survivor of torture. In the newsletter of the Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group (2007), we read of a 67-year-old woman who takes issue with the label of 'destitute asylum-seeker': 'Dear Reader', she writes, '"Destitution" – it sounds as if people have been put in the bin and are scavenging. It makes me sound like an animal. Perhaps that is what I am now. All I am' (p. 2).

[56] For further discussion of these schemes, see Chapter Two, and Griffiths, Sigona, & Zetter, 2005; Home Office, 2002, 2005; Mayor of London, 2004b; National Refugee Integration Forum, 2006; Phillimore, 2006; Southampton City Council, 2006b.

This quote confirms what organisations such as Amnesty International and Refugee Action (Adkins & Sample, 1999; Dumper, et al., 2006; Ekblad & Jaranson, 1994; Southampton Voluntary Services, 2006) conclude in their critical reports on asylum policy in the United Kingdom: that destitution is detrimental to the mental health of asylum-seekers.

Within the discourse community, there is an on-going discussion of a need to problematise the false dichotomy – presented in the conservative, anti-immigration media and, to some extent, by the Government – between what is often portrayed as 'an easy ride' and a state of destitution, which has been created by Government policies that do not allow asylum-seekers to work. In anti-immigration discourses, stories of the failure of asylum-seekers (either in their asylum claims or in their 'integration', or lack thereof into British society) are offered freely, while success stories often need to be purposely elicited, to show that a particular programme has been successful, for example.

Those who are working with asylum-seekers and who are providing them with accommodation recognise that this dichotomy must be addressed head on. They advise 'having individual [asylum] cases splashed across the newspaper is actually quite helpful [in raising funds and public awareness' (Barker, 2007)[57]. They continue, 'people who aren't overly sympathetic to asylum-seekers are more sympathetic to those they know locally' (*ibid*.). As such, they contest, the 'local media is likely to be far more sympathetic and therefore may be the key' to fostering understanding and sympathy of asylum-seekers (*ibid*.).

[57] This is in direct contrast to the relative inefficacy of representing personal trauma narratives that I describe below.

Within these discourses, I have noted a marked lack of discourse about undocumented workers[58], who, in discourses on immigration to the United States, at least, are afforded some agency in the fact that they have 'pulled themselves up by their bootstraps'. Perhaps the lack of this discourse reflects a society that is based, in some part, on a strong social welfare system and not strictly on 'sink-or-swim' capitalism. Among some discourse producers in this community, there is a cognizance of the risk of creating dependency among asylum-seekers who are not allowed to work and are therefore financially dependent on charities such as SWVG. However, within the Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group, although dependency was mentioned, the organisation's support programme for destitute asylum-seekers creates this exact high level of dependence and, when the allotted funds have been exhausted for a particular asylum-seeker, all support is retracted and the asylum-seeker is left to fend for her- or himself. In the literature of other organisations I have analysed, the concern about dependency is addressed directly: ''Remember the scheme is about empowering your mentee to do things for him/herself. You aren't supposed to be doing everything for them!' (Time Bank, 2007, p. 18).

Volunteering for an organisation such as SWVG, which should be a rewarding undertaking, becomes fraught with feelings of hopelessness and a fundamental inability to help in light of Governmental policies that lead to destitution. C., a long-time volunteer with SWVG, is concerned that the limited financial support provided by SWVG leads to subsistence among the destitute asylum-seekers with whom she works:

[58] Contrast this with the dominant discourse in the United States around undocumented workers from Mexico and Central America.

C: 'Especially how little they live on. They're just not… Bless them. They're just not allowed any sort of a life [in the United Kingdom] either, really. Are they? They can't live here really, they're just surviving

W: 'Yeah. Like, they're safer, I guess, but they're not really living'.

C: '…just surviving'.

L: 'You just hope they're safe, anyway'.

C: '…with a roof over their head and a bit to put in their mouths. It's a privilege to work with them, like L says, face to face with somebody really needing'.

7.5.1 Problematising discourses of helplessness in the Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group

In 2006, the Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group (SWVG) published a pamphlet titled 'Sanctuary in UK?'. Similar in content to the material published by the Southampton City Council (cf. Southampton City Council, 2005, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c, 2007d), this educative pamphlet attempts to 'bust' the 'myths' surrounding asylum. However, as the SWVG's goal is to provide person-to-person care for asylum-seekers, the focus is much more on the personal needs of asylum-seekers in the Southampton area and less on the economic impact of their arrival here.

In this pamphlet, personal trauma is commodified for a public that is expected to sympathise with the destitute asylum-seeker, and then to act on this sympathy. The ultimate goal of this publication is to recruit volunteer 'Visitors' for the organisation and to raise funds to sponsor the group's work. We are presented with 'the story of one asylum seeker' (Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group, 2006). This woman, who is given the pseudonym 'Gloria', is from the Congo and was 'seized by the military, blind-folded, beaten and brutally raped' (*ibid*.). We are given this insight into Gloria's trauma narrative without any other biographical information about her.

In much the same way that modern Western medicine has reduced patients to a collection of symptoms, the SWVG pamphlet reduces Gloria to an enumeration of the trauma that she has suffered in her short life. Gloria is presented as a list of traumata. The SWVG provides a list of services (or solutions to Gloria's problems) that they have been able to provide for her and, at the end of the paragraph that describes her plight, Gloria's 'mental and physical scars' appear to be 'on the mend' (Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group, 2006). Unlike the Southampton City Council, the SWVG then provides readers with an outlet for the sympathy

that they inevitably feel after reading Gloria's story. Readers are told that, if they 'have a few hours a week to spare', they too can 'help' (*ibid*.).

Throughout my contact with the SWVG, I have remarked that there is a discourse on powerlessness. Visitors (as the volunteers who work with asylum-seekers are called) and staff of the SWVG feel that they cannot change the 'system'[59], which is fundamentally flawed in its treatment of asylum-seekers. Rather than changing the system or even attempting to address the problems inherent to this bureaucracy, the members of the SWVG are called upon to address the problem at its most basic level: the individual. Asylum-seekers, it is believed, have been victimised by their home governments and are now being victimised by the Home Office. Visitors from SWVG intend to offer shelter from this storm.

It is interesting here to contrast the literature produced by the Southampton City Council with that produced by the SWVG. The Southampton City Council calls for tolerance but does not call for (nor does it provide any outlet for) individual action. On the other hand, the SWVG calls for both tolerance and, more importantly, individual action in the form of financial donations and volunteering. The Council focuses primarily on the fiscal realities of the City (and the impact of immigration on this reality) while the SWVG focuses on the needs of individual asylum-seekers. While the Council tends to mitigate the threat posed by asylum-seekers and economic migrants, the SWVG only does this once, busting the 'myth' that 'Thousands of asylum-seekers have come to Britain, bringing terror and violence to the streets of many towns' with the fact 'There is no evidence for a higher rate of criminality among asylum-seekers and refugees. They are often the victims of crime. There have already

[59] Established and codified by the Government's Home Office UK Border Control Agency in documents such as (Border and Immigration Agency, 2007; Home Office, 2002, 2004a, 2004b, 2005; Immigration and Nationality Directorate, 2007; Secretary of State for the Home Department, 2005; The Home Office, 2007)

been countless attacks on asylum-seekers around Britain' (Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group, 2006).

With the best of intentions, the SWVG perpetuates the image of the asylum seeker as victim: of crime in their own home and of crime in the United Kingdom. In some ways, the linguistic victimisation stands in sharp contrast with the SWVG's stated goal: to empower asylum-seekers and refugees. If 'typical' Britons perceive asylum-seekers to be helpless victims, perhaps they will be more likely to help them. If, on the other hand, asylum-seekers are represented as empowered people who have taken matters into their own hands and left their countries for a better life in the United Kingdom, then we may be less likely to offer them our assistance. Therefore, 'The Story of One Asylum Seeker' ends not with a snapshot of Gloria, working full time, shopping at Marks and Spencer and enjoying a cappuccino at Starbuck's, but by reminding us of Gloria's 'mental and physical' scars, which are only 'on the mend'.

Another common refrain in this discourse community is that the helplessness and destitution of asylum-seekers leads to a feeling of helplessness among the volunteers who are working with them. Unemployment and statelessness are seen as being the 'real' problems faced by asylum-seekers in the United Kingdom. These problems are seen as being unsolvable. W., a volunteer with SWVG, expresses her concerns and feelings of ineffectuality:

> W: I think the challenging thing [about working with asylum-seekers] for me would be like L. said, perhaps feeling like I'm actually achieving anything. Giving [asylum-seekers] some money and having a quick chat and making sure they're safe is one thing, but what they *really* want is to have their status in this country and that just goes on and on and on and you just think, 'That's all they want, really'. Nothing I'm doing is really going to make any difference. And I wish I could just wave a wand and sort it all out. But that all takes either masses of time and experience, which I haven't got, and probably a little bit of money to help with the solicitor, I guess. And to keep seeing somebody and not being able to give them any good news, or find anything out that's different, and then you put yourself in their shoes and think, 'How do they keep going?' Not only have they got not much money, they're not with their family, they're not in their country, they're living somewhere very very basic. They've also got not much chance of staying and, you know, sometimes I find it a challenge to actually know what to say to that person. You know, 'How's your day?'. You know, it all seems like the wrong thing to say. 'How you feeling?' You know. 'Have you eaten properly?' And all that.

Through all of the meetings that I attended while conducting my ethnography, I was painfully aware of this feeling of ineffectuality. There is endless discussion about what can be done to help asylum-seekers at the local level, but there is an omnipresent understanding that, without massive change at the national and transnational levels – very little can be done to help this population. On the other hand, one way in which asylum-seekers can truly hope to

help themselves is by helping each other. In the next sections, I will discuss the few discourses that represent the 'helpful' asylum-seeker.

7.6 Counter-hegemonic Representations of the Helpful Asylum-Seeker

Rather than representing what asylum-seekers need from British society, Refugee Council, in their pamphlet Tell it Like it Is: The Truth About Asylum (Refugee Council, 2007b), represents what they can contribute to the United Kingdom, from 'academic or teaching qualifications' to the positive contributions of asylum-seeking children to 'schools across the country'. This, the Council continues, 'enable more successful integration of families into local communities' (p. 5). In line with these discourses, in a 'Response from a SWVG Visitor', we are faced with one of the few representations, in the newsletter of the Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group at least, of the contributions that refugees and asylum-seekers are able to make to British society:

> Being granted permission to work whilst their appeals are being processed or until their countries of origin are deemed safe enough for return would give asylum-seekers the opportunity to provide for their own needs. How else are they to survive? Aside from this, the UK would benefit from the richness and diversity of their experiences and the expertise that many of them have (Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group, 2007, p. 6).

7.6.1 Representations of cooperation amongst asylum-seekers

Right through the discourses that I have analysed, there is a marked lack of a discourse about asylum-seekers helping each other. From time to time, there is the acknowledgement that asylum-seekers – and survivors of torture in particular – have endured a great deal and that 'we' can learn from this stamina. However, there is rarely the acknowledgement that new asylum-seekers can perhaps benefit from the experience of more seasoned asylum-seekers and refugees who have been living in the United Kingdom. Perhaps this sort of cooperation is looked on with a certain amount of mistrust; perhaps it is seen as tantamount to a certain kind of collusion and is therefore to be avoided. Refugees, as I have described elsewhere in this thesis, are frequently represented en masse (c.f., Alcoff & Gray-Rosendale, 1996; Yaeger, 2002). Barthes (1980) describes the representation of refugees in this way: 'Refugees stop being specific persons and become pure victims in general: universal man, universal woman, universal child, and, taken together, universal family'.

Conversely, asylum-seekers are often represented alone, at sea in autochthonous society, relying only on the kindness of British-born intermediaries working for organisations such as the Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group. A 42-year-old asylum-seeker from the

Democratic Republic of Congo describes the isolation felt after being granted asylum in the United Kingdom thus: 'I don't feel like a woman anymore. I don't feel like a mother anymore. I feel isolated and alone. I feel I have lost myself' (Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group, 2007, p. 3).

Discourses that foster cooperation among asylum-seekers serve to foster relationships that can help, not only with logistical matters such as finding accommodation or employment, but with mental health and recovery as well. For example, Urginia, a refugee from Zimbabwe, describes her experience with the Refugee Council thus: 'The Refugee Council was a place where I could go and feel free, meet up with other refugees, and hear other stories that were even worse than mine' (BBC One, 2009). This is in stark contrast to representations throughout this discourse community of the solitary asylum-seeker. For instance, the Time Together UK mentoring scheme advises its volunteers: 'Remember that for most [refugee] mentees you will be the first British person to actually LISTEN to them – this means that they might feel you are their only support' (Time Bank, 2007, p. 18). This piece of advice adopts the trope, which I have described elsewhere in this thesis, that asylum-seekers and refugees are voiceless until they have shared their personal trauma narrative with a British-born listener.

When cooperation is represented, it serves to remind us that it is an exception and that there is a dearth of refugee-led or asylum-seeker-led organisations in this discourse community. A. and D. (2008), two central figures in the SWVG, provided this anecdote of their work with asylum-seekers in Winchester and Southampton:

> D.: Some of [the asylum-seekers and refugees] are very positive and it's usually very often, some of them are in a worse state… Speaking of: There was somebody from Uganda who had been tortured and he had trouble with his leg and he couldn't move at all. But, he was a focus for asylum-seekers in Southampton. You know, he was guiding them, helping them. They'd come to him… He got sent back in the end, but, you know and there was a person who went to Bristol and was working for… He was destitute and working for the church's organisation to help the homeless [laughter all around]'.
>
> A.: Yeah, so, you know, there is an awful lot there and it just perhaps needs a little support at the right time. To push off and then move on themselves. (emphasis mine)

Indeed, both of these volunteers expressed some surprise at the capability of the asylum-seekers with whom they had worked. This is shown in the following dialogue:

> D.: …[S]ometimes we [British-born volunteers] feel that we're the only people that can help [asylum-seekers], whereas they are quite resilient, many of them. They've been through…

> Researcher: Could you expand a little bit on that? That's very interesting to me: this idea that, you know, there is maybe a feeling of people who are involved in the cause that they're the only people that can help them. But, then there is an understanding that there's a resilience or survivorship…
>
> A.: Well, that's what I think, that, you know, they've got here… I mean, I couldn't do it. They've found their way, they've obviously had to go through unpleasant immigration… usually unpleasant. I mean, and yet, they're still able to be surviving and, so, I think it's very important that we don't make them dependent on us… As D. says, 'Give what is needed'. But, if they move on or if they have other friends or other organisations then great! …and, another time, [an asylum-seeker] said, 'I went into somewhere and I bought myself a cup of coffee and I paid out of my own purse, with my own money'. And I said, 'So, you really feel as if you're, you know, moving on?' And she said, 'Yes'. And I could really see that that was really good, whereas there can be a tendency for me to want to say, you know, 'Well, I'll come with you. I'll…' But I could sort of step back and think, 'Yeah, this is good, you can manage and you're doing well' (Vinnell & Vinnell, 2008).

In the conclusion to this thesis, I will discuss how these discourses of liminality, mistrust and helplessness shape – and are shaped by – the commodification of personal trauma narratives in pro-immigration discourses in the south of the United Kingdom in the beginning of the 21st century. I will also describe best practices, discourses in which survivors are represented as being British (and therefore as not occupying a liminal space), as being trustworthy, and as being active agents in their own destinies. Finally, I will suggest further research that should be conducted in this area.

8. Conclusion

8.1 Key Findings

In this chapter, I outline the central findings of the thesis that contribute to answering the three main questions that have guided my research: How are survivors of torture represented in discourses on immigration to the United Kingdom in general and to Southampton in particular; To what extent does this representation commodify their personal trauma experiences; and How does this representation affect the way that they are perceived by the individuals who are engaged in their cause? Next, I describe some 'best practices' that I have encountered in my research. I provide these to contrast with other practices of representation that have been described in previous chapters. I conclude this chapter by considering the thesis' scope for future research and alternative lines of enquiry.

8.1.1 General findings about attitudes in the discourse community toward asylum and asylum-seekers

A substantial body of research has been conducted on Britons' attitudes towards asylum-seekers, refugees and other immigrants (c.f., N. Finney & Peach, 2004; N. R. Finney, 2007; Griffiths, et al., 2005; Home Office, 2005). The new work that I have outlined in this thesis focuses on survivors of torture who are seeking asylum in the United Kingdom, and is grounded in decades of research into immigration and race relation issues in general. While discrimination is now less based on 'race' or skin colour – or country of origin – there remains a great deal of concern about, mistrust of, and hostility towards newcomers to the United Kingdom (Daniel & Knudsen, 1995; Fischer, 1995; Turner, 1995). There is a perceived lack of knowledge in the general population about asylum issues and a general lack of public information about these issues. The Labour Government that has been in power during my research has attempted to counter this lack of knowledge using a series of so-called 'myth-busting' campaigns (Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture, 2007a; Southampton City Council, 2007c, 2007d, 2007e). Despite these campaigns, in the discourse community that I have analysed, there is a lack of confidence in policy and governance on asylum issues.

In relation to asylum issues, I have found there is widespread belief, even among the 'pro-immigration' discourse community that I have studied, that the United Kingdom accepts asylum-seekers too readily and that, as such, there may be too many asylum seekers. Furthermore, it is believed that a significant minority of asylum seekers is not 'genuine' (i.e., is

not seeking asylum for the reasons outlined in the United Nations *Convention on Refugees*[60]). These asylum seekers – both 'bogus' and 'real' – are seen as posing a moderate threat to British ways of living (including religion, values, ethnicity and health). Still, at least within the discourse community that I have studied, this threat is mediated by the 'ethnic' culture that asylum-seekers bring to the country. Asylum-seekers are also seen as posing a modest threat to the British economy through their lack of legal documents of immigration which undermine normal procedures of employment and create an underground economy, increased competition with British-born workers and an economic burden on the social welfare system. Within the discourse community, asylum-seekers are sometimes seen as being treated well by the Government, and that this treatment is sometimes to the detriment of the existing British population. As such, fears about asylum are closely associated with notions of national identity and national security. While British-born informants within the discourse community relish their own transnationality[61] – and the benefits that this brings – and many dream of moving abroad, there is an essential conviction within the discourse community that Britain should, for the most part, remain British (insofar as it is populated by British-born individuals).

8.1.2 Findings about the role of the media in creating and shaping discourses within the discourse community

Issues and concerns surrounding asylum-seekers are common to many countries, not only the United Kingdom, although levels of hostility towards refugees and asylum seekers in the United Kingdom are above the European Union average (European Monitoring Centre on Racism

[60] For a further discussion of this Convention, see Chapter Two

[61] By 'transnationality' here, I refer to the understanding that is present – at least among certain members of the discourse community – that, while they remain British passport-holders, they have the opportunity to travel and live almost anywhere in the world.

and Xenophobia, 2001). However, when people engage with these issues on a local and a personal level, as they do within the discourse community in Southampton, there is potential for empathy and tolerance. I have found that it is useful to view the relationship between the production and reception of media[62] discourses as a 'circuit of discourses': the media has great potential to define the discourse on important issues such as immigration and asylum. The effect of the media on the public can be ideological, and, in relation to asylum issues, the concept of 'moral panic' has been seen to be applicable.

Key factors that determine the effect of the media on attitudes within the discourse community include: an individual's perception of the sources of information or media messages. Messages from so-called 'conservative' media sources such as the *Sun* or the *Daily Mail* tend to be dismissed outright, while 'neoliberal' sources such as the *Guardian*, and the BBC were given a good deal of credence. Furthermore, local sources – be they 'conservative' or 'neoliberal' – such as the *Southern Daily Echo*, which is published in Southampton, tended to be trusted more than national sources by some informants. Other factors that determine the effect of the media on attitudes include an individual's prior awareness, knowledge, interest in and personal experience of the issues: informants often offset anti-immigration discourses with personal anecdotes of 'successful' asylum-seekers. These sketches relied heavily on the overcoming of great personal odds and, as such, often made extensive use of personal trauma narratives

In addition, the prominence of a message, including its repetition, determined its effect on attitudes within the discourse community: certain news stories, such as the arrival of numerous Polish economic migrants in Southampton (Southampton City Council, 2007e),

[62] By 'media' here, I mean the television and radio media as well as documents that are created and distributed by refugee relief organisations within the discourse community.

shaped discourse within the community more than others, as these stories were repeated often and were prominent in many media sources, both national and local. Another determining factor was the relationship of the message to the individual's existing attitudes, including whether it confirmed or challenged these attitudes: for many within the community, pro-immigration messages, which confirmed their own ways of thinking, were seen as 'soft' human interest news stories. For example, Aliya Mughal, the Senior Press Officer at the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture, describes her transition from being a journalist to working with survivors of torture:

> My background is in journalism. So, I started off as a reporter and then progressed to be a news editor on a series of local papers and then started to kind of look at the issues from the other side of the fence. So, not just reporting the stories, but looking at how they are developed. So, working with the *human interest*, the *actual subjects of those human-interest stories*. So, I decided to go into human rights for that reason and then joined the Medical Foundation about two… just over two years ago as the senior press officer [emphasis mine] (2008).

Alternatively, anti-immigration news stories, while looked upon with a good deal of derision, are believed to represent some 'real' truth. Although the tone and origin of these messages was disparaged, the veracity of the 'facts' was rarely questioned. W., a volunteer with the Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group, puts it this way,

> And that is all those [anti-immigration] attitudes. [Members of a wider *anti*-immigration public are] all walking around with [anti-immigration media representations] in their heads. They've all read the *Daily Express* or the *Sun*[63] that morning, and the way it's worded in those papers, everything [related to immigrants

[63] These two newspapers, the *Daily Express* and the *Sun* were often cited within the discourse community as being two examples of particularly conservative, anti-immigration media sources. As such, many of the discourse community's own discourses were designed to counter discourses presented in these sources.

> and asylum-seekers] is wrong, everything is bad. You know, the news headlines: you just cringe when you hear them. The statistics they come up with, which are just so weak, you wonder where they get them from.

The effect of the media on attitudes within the discourse community is also determined by an individual's views of their own attitudes, and of majority public attitudes: many in this discourse community saw themselves as a sort of 'cultural élite', while friends and colleagues with anti-immigration sentiments were portrayed as 'ignorant' or 'misled'.

Informants had many effective methods for dealing with the contestation of meaning between discourse producers – such as the media and national refugee organizations – and discourse consumers. When presented in *anti*-immigration media sources, personal trauma narratives were co-opted to be used as evidence of the helplessness of asylum-seekers and, therefore, the likelihood that they would become a burden on the State. Conversely, in local *pro*-immigration discourses, these narratives were used to represent these individuals as being 'victims' and were used to elicit sympathy and, ultimately, donations of time and money

There is consensus among the discourse community that anti-immigration media discourses on asylum, refugees and immigration are narrow, negative, unbalanced and sometimes inaccurate. They reinforce negative stereotypes and an inflammatory and derogatory lexis that relies on misnomers such as 'bogus asylum-seeker' has become commonplace. In anti-immigration representations, there is a lack of contextual information, and of personalized stories. However, there is evidence that local media in Southampton, particularly the local press, have addressed the issue in a more balanced and imaginative manner.

Prior research suggests that media coverage does have an effect on attitudes (and behaviour) towards asylum seekers, refugees and immigrants (Fischer, 1995; Kaplan, 2005; Leovi, 2007; Phillips, 2000; The MediaWise Trust, 2007; Time Together, 2004; WNYC New York Public Radio, 2007). Nonetheless, it is extremely difficult to determine or describe the causal relationships. As Fairclough and his critics describe, media messages are seen to be filtered by the audience. However, in general, hostile discourses toward asylum-seekers within the discourse community – and in the public at large – are fortified by a cycle of reinforcement. For real change to occur, this cycle needs to be interrupted by addressing both pre-existing attitudes within the discourse community and within wider media messages.

Despite a current social and political focus on community relations and cohesion (c.f., British Council, 2007; Home Office, 2004; Southampton City Council, 2007b), only a small minority of the projects that I have reviewed specifically aim to influence *attitudes* towards refugees,

asylum seekers and other immigrants. These attitude-related projects can be broadly grouped into three categories: those primarily concerned with integration; those primarily concerned with images; and those primarily concerned with 'hard' facts, such as statistics.

I have identified four key issues as being important to the success of these attitudes initiatives.

- Developing and stating clear, precise and realistic aims;
- Identifying audience segments to be targeted, and developing methods appropriately;
- Carefully considering the appropriate timescale and geography for the initiative;
- Co-opting personal trauma narratives in a manner that empowers the survivor of torture while educating and engaging the public.

Refugee Week, which addresses all four of these key issues, will be described in some detail later in this chapter:

8.1.3 Findings about the somatisation and pathologisation of personal trauma narratives

Discourses on survivors of torture who are seeking asylum in the United Kingdom are based – almost wholly – on self-help and popular psychology discourses that are pervasive in both Western media and Western academic discourse about trauma (Barnlund, 1987; Brison, 2002; Culbertson, 1995; Gilmore, 2001; McAlister, 2006; Patai, 1988). This is in direct contrast with earlier discourses on immigration that were based on political discourses of disempowerment, such as discourses on Chilean refugees in the south of England (Kushner & Knox, 1999). These contemporary discourses, which are ostensibly pro-asylum-seeker (and pro-immigration in general) tend to create a culture of helplessness and victimisation. This, in turn, leads to anti-immigration discourses that portray asylum-seekers and refugees as being a drain on society. Discourses that portray individuals as being victims have two – or more – contradictory aspects or possible outcomes. They may elicit sympathy and lead people to volunteer to help people in need. Then again, they may also perpetuate states of victimization and helplessness in the very population that they are designed to help. They may lead people in host countries (such as the United Kingdom) to view the victimized population as more of a drain on cultural and financial resources than they actually are.

Despite the prevalence of these representations in the discourses that I have studied, the fact is, 'Most [survivors of torture] just plain cope well'. Bonanno (2004) writes. 'The vast majority of people get over traumatic events, and get over them remarkably well. Only a small subset –

five to 15 percent – struggle in a way that says they need help' (*ibid.*). What these prototypes of resilience suggest is that human beings are naturally endowed with a kind of psychological immune system, which keeps them in balance and overcomes wild swings to either end of the emotional spectrum. Media campaigns which capitalize on representations of this resilience (some of which I will describe below), rather than focusing on – and commodifying – personal trauma narratives, go some way to representing survivors of torture in a way that empowers them. In the next section, I will look at some of the best examples of these discourses within the discourse community.

8.2 Best Practices: Effective Representations of Survivors of Torture

8.2.1 Defining best practices

Throughout this thesis, I have problematised representations of survivors of torture. In this section, I would like to present two schemes of representation that characterise the best practices in representing survivors of torture. In my opinion, these two schemes have addressed the concerns that I have raised throughout my thesis and have gone some way to representing survivors of torture in a way that is enlightening, engaging and, above all, empowering. I understand that these representations are merely different ways of representing and, in some ways, objectifying refugees. However, almost all forms of representation of any group as large and diverse as the population of survivors of torture will have to rely, to some extent, on generalisations that objectify the population they aim to represent. In my analysis, such 'objectified representations' of survivors are investigated as being the textual realities that are elemental to the survival of institutions – such as the Home Office and the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture – and of hegemonic relations in general (D. E. Smith, 2005, p. 27). For the purpose of this thesis, it is critical not only to note how people become engaged with, and how their lives are organised by, the institutional foci of the discourse producers. It is also important to analyse how this engagement is arbitrated by the institutionally-designed discourses that organise these relationships.

8.2.2 Examples of best practices from the discourse community: Reintroducing Refugees

In 2008, Refugee Week published a series of promotional materials entitled *Reintroducing Refugees*. These materials aimed to go beyond the statistics and negative stereotypes that are typically represented in conservative, anti-immigration British media and to represent refugees as individuals who have overcome barriers and have achieved great things. For a number of reasons, which I will outline below, I believe that *Reintroducing Refugees* goes some

way toward representing survivors of torture and trauma in a way that helps to enlighten and engage its intended audience and, furthermore, aims to empower the asylum-seekers and refugees that it represents.

The campaign begins with the rather glib pronouncement that refugees are "…funny, talented, sexy, groovy, sporty, spicy!" (Refugee Week, 2008a). In an interview that I conducted in the Refugee Council's London offices, I asked Gerdy Rees, the coordinator of Refugee Week 2008, about the inspiration behind this tagline. He stated that:

> Sure the title, 'Reintroducing Refugees', I was quite proud of. It took me a long time… it sounds simple. It took me a long time to come up with that, to kind of put it in a way that basically explained the entire premise behind the campaign, but it was that, it was literally just 'reintroducing' what a refugee is to people. So, it wasn't… it wasn't portraying refugees as spongers or scroungers. Nor was it portraying refugees as people who were coming here for help. It's portraying refugees just, as I mentioned earlier, as people who have found themselves in extraordinary circumstances but now want to just get on with rebuilding the life that they had before, or to get over what they had….

In the 'Reintroducing Refugees' section, we have profiles of people who we found… or we thought were either quirky or interesting or who had particularly made a success of themselves. We have a young businessman of the year, Peter Padua, was granted young businessperson of the year for his IT company, which has really launched off. We also had an aspiring model, a heavyweight boxer… things that people can really relate to. So somebody's looking at this person and they're thinking, 'Oh, this guy's a flamenco player. I love flamenco playing. I'm also a flamenco player, but he's a refugee'. So, what they don't look at is, 'Oh, this person's a refugee, that's what I notice about them'. They think, 'Oh, this person is a flamenco player', and they find out… And it reaches onto that level. You know, the similarities that people have the fact that… Just as you'd look at someone on the street and think, 'Oh, this person's got pink hair, um, that's really cool'. You wouldn't think, 'This person's a refugee' and then think, 'They've got pink hair'. I'm not really putting it that eloquently, but… The basic premise was exactly that: reintroducing what people… How people perceive refugees and how they're represented.

I would like to comment on Rees' use of the verb 'reintroducing' in the title of the campaign, *Reintroducing Refugees*. Throughout the discourses that I have analysed, refugees are consistently 'reintroduced', and 'myths' about refugees are 'busted'. There is a tacit presupposition in these discourses that a) the public has some knowledge of refugees, b) this knowledge is rife with misconceptions that have been created and shaped by anti-

immigration media in the United Kingdom and c) these misconceptions can be refuted through effective public education campaigns.

As I have mentioned before, there is little room in this discourse community for the well-educated member of the public who is still opposed to the cause of refugees. I approached this topic when interviewing Aliya Mughal, the Senior Press Officer of the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture:

> Interviewer: One of my concerns as a pro-refugee researcher is that there exists a public that is knowledgeable about the issues surrounding survivors of torture, yet still remains opposed to giving them asylum in the United Kingdom. Could you tell me what the Medical Foundation has done to target this public? …As opposed to a public that has been swamped with myths about torture and survivors of torture… that there exists a public that knows, that maybe isn't surrounded by these myths, that has a pretty good knowledge base about the topic but still doesn't necessarily believe in asylum in general or in providing asylum to survivors of torture.
>
> Aliya Mughal: I suppose that's engaging with people on a different level. So, as well as the talks and the press material that we do, we do have advocacy officers that are involved with various stakeholder groups… just various forums, where they will actually meet with high level decision makers. So, they're people that are aware of the issues. And, I suppose the public, who are very knowledgeable: they know these issues and what they need persuading of is a torture survivor's right and need to be here and to be seeking refuge as they do. So, you know, as well as, as you say, 'busting the myths', with people who aren't so informed, we're also working with higher-level decision-makers and policy advisors to hopefully work on that side of things. But, I think it's always good to constantly reiterate and bring home the issues and to tell the stories of survivors to people who are knowledgeable, because you have to ask yourself the question, 'Why are they still opposed [to] or questioning of somebody's right to asylum or just to somebody's general rights to housing and health… access to health, if they are aware of the issues?' How can they then… What is the logic of that? If you know the issue, how can you then say, 'Well, I still don't think this person has a right to refuge' (Mughal, 2008).

It would be interesting, in a further research project, to analyse the discourses of the materials produced for the decision-makers that Mughal describes. This is not, however, the focus of this thesis: which has looked at intra-discourse-community discourses and at public education campaigns. One such public education campaign is *Reintroducing Refugees*, which I will describe below.

8.2.3 Reintroducing Refugees as counter-hegemonic discourse

In promotional materials, *Refugee Week 2008* describes itself thus: '[We are] using real stories of real people to bust the myths constructed by years of negative media coverage' (Refugee Week, 2008a). I believe that the organizers of this event are unintentionally undermining

their own goals. For, not only are they busting the myths created by years of 'negative media coverage': they are busting the myths created by years of positive media coverage as well. As I have described in many places throughout this thesis, media coverage with the best of intentions has the tendency of representing asylum-seekers and refugees as helpless (Huguenin-Benjamin, 2005; International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims, 2006; Jacobsen & Smidt-Nielsen, 1997; Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture, 2007b, 2007c; The Red Cross Centre for Victims of Torture, 2005; Valerian, 2004; Wood & Rennie, 1994). *Refugee Week 2008* is designed to create a counter-hegemonic discourse that rebuffs this representation. Almir Koldzič, the National Coordinator of *Refugee Week 2008*, Almir clarifies, 'We would like to see more projects and activities portraying refugees not only as victims of circumstances, but as people who have helped build this country and culture' (Refugee Week, 2008a).

Because I have spent the last three years analysing the representation of survivors of torture, I was aware from my first exposure to *Reintroducing Refugees* that the discourses created and shaped by this particular public information campaign were counter-hegemonic. It was clear to me that this campaign had not been designed to merely counter the 'myths' presented by conservative media in the United Kingdom, which are then 'busted' by a number of other refugee-awareness campaigns (c.f., Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture, 2007a; Southampton City Council, 2007c, 2007d, 2007e). Instead, and of much more interest to this thesis, this campaign had been designed to counter neoliberal, pro-refugee discourses that represent refugees as being vulnerable victims. I asked Rees if this was, in fact, the case:

I wouldn't say that it was [designed as a reaction to other representations of refugees in the media]… *Refugee Week*, um, its entire premise is designed, um, to not 'combat', but to sort of provide the *yang* to the *yin* that is the left-wing portrayal or the charity or the NGO portrayal which is always, for obvious reasons, portraying refugees as victims to gain popular support for their cause. And what this does obviously is… it just puts, again… It just boxes refugees, so they're not in a box of 'sponger' and 'scrounger', but they are in a box of 'victim', 'helpless person that needs our help'. What *Refugee Week* wants to do is take that away, take those boxes away and just let the people be people, because that's exactly what they are. So, not to box them at all, but really to take out those bits that you can't box: the really individual bits and to flaunt that. That's what *Refugee Week* is about, that's particularly what that *Reintroducing Refugees* campaign was focused on (Rees, 2008).

What *Reintroducing Refugees* does most effectively, I argue, is co-opt the personal *success* narratives of survivors of torture and trauma and does in a way that highlights the resilience of this population rather than highlighting their victimisation. In the next section, I will further explore these discourses of resilience in the 'best practices' that I have analysed.

8.2.4 Discourses on resilience

According to epidemiological research conducted by the World Health Organization (1977), one out of two people has been or will be seriously traumatized at some time during their life by war, violence, rape, cruelty and incest, among other causes. One in four will experience at least two serious traumas. The remainder are also bound to suffer in one way or another. Yet the notion of resilience, which is an individual's ability to grow in the face of terrible problems, had not been scientifically studied until recently (Bonanno, 2004). For many years, people have despised – or feared – victims. In many cultures, victims are regarded as being guilty of something. A woman who has been raped, for instance, is often condemned as much as her attacker because it is believed that she must have 'provoked' him. Sometimes, a victim is punished even more seriously than an aggressor.

This disdain or hatred has also been directed against refugees and the survivors of war. The families and villages of these victims are suspicious and say: 'He is coming home. That means he must have hidden somewhere or collaborated with the enemy'. After the Second World War, which was the most deadly in human history, public discourses about victims swung to the other extreme: victims became heroes. By pushing these individuals into making 'careers' as victims, some Western discourses found a convenient way of downplaying the crimes of the Nazis. The fact that these victims survived – rather than being killed, as many of their compatriots were – was co-opted in some discourses to downplay the savagery.

8.3 Recommendations for further research

I would recommend, where possible, that future researchers conduct research – in particular linguistic ethnography – with policy producers. These are important voices to consider, as their policies go on to create and shape national level discourses about asylum-seekers. Rather than just surmising about the intention behind these policies, it would be informative to follow the policy-formation process from beginning to end. In particular, it would be interesting to examine governmental policies written in response to traumatic events such as the anti-terrorism/anti-immigration policies written in response to the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 in the United States and of 7 July 2005 in the United Kingdom. In a similar

vein, I would recommend that research be conducted on policies written in response to transnational trends such as the expansion of the European Union to include less affluent Eastern European countries. How do these policies address the concerns of the public that are raised by these events and trends?

I would also recommend that further research be conducted – with the proper ethical considerations, of course, and with the assistance of a psychological professional – with survivors of torture themselves. As I have acknowledged throughout, their voices are important to a full understanding of the effect of these discursive representations on the ways of living of these new Britons. Rather than looking at representation, further research might examine 'performance'. It could set out to analyse the performative aspect of 'doing' the role of 'survivor of torture'. To what extent do survivors hew to the representations that are described by this thesis? Do they perform the role of 'victim' or of 'survivor' or both? When do they perform these roles and why? This analysis would lead to a fuller understanding of this complex relationship.

In conclusion, I would like to say that I hope that this research will contribute to a deeper understanding of representations of not only asylum-seekers: while I have focused on pro-immigration discourses on survivors of torture, this research – and the theories with which I have engaged – have allowed me to look at representation in general. Representations of marginalised peoples of all types are shaped by – and shape – many of the factors that I have discussed here. By better understanding the representation of this one group of people, I hope to contribute to a better understanding of marginalised peoples in general.

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Table One: 2001 Southampton Census, Ethnicity

www.statistics.gov.uk

Ethnic Group (all people)	Value	England and Wales Average	England and Wales Rank out of 376[1]	Regional Rank out of 67[1]
White	92.4%	91.3%	301	58
Largest Ethnic Minority Group	*Indian 2.2%*			
Place of Birth (all people)	**Value**	**England and Wales Average**	**England and Wales Rank out of 376[1]**	**Regional Rank out of 67[1]**
Born in UK	91.1%	91.1%	304	48
Born elsewhere in EU (including Republic of Ireland)	2.6%	2.3%	77	26
Born outside EU[2]	6.2%	6.6%	75	19

[1] For each indicator shown in the Census profile, an average percentage figure; the area's ranking among the 376 local and unitary authorities within England and Wales; and its ranking within Wales or the relevant English Government Office Region is shown. Average percentage figures for English local or unitary authorities are based on a combined average for England and Wales. Average percentage figures for Welsh unitary authorities are based on the Welsh average only.

[2] In the case of asylum-seekers and refugees, the ten main countries of origin in 2004 were Iran, Somalia, China, Zimbabwe, Pakistan, Iraq, the Democratic Republic of Congo, India, Afghanistan and Sudan.

Table Two: EUMC Typology Of Attitudes Towards Minority Groups

Adapted from (EUMC, 2001, p. 24)

Attitude Group	Characteristics					
	Disturbed by people from minority groups?	**Do minority groups enrich society?**	**Should assimilation be demanded?**	**Support for repatriation/restrictive acceptance?**	**Support for anti-racist policies?**	**Other**
Intolerant (14% overall; 15% UK)	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Less educated and optimistic than average.
Ambivalent (25% overall; 27% UK)	No	No	Yes	Not sure	No	
Passively tolerant (39% overall; 36% UK)	No	Yes	No	No	No	
Actively tolerant (21% overall; 22% UK)	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes, strongly	Highly educated. More optimistic than average.

Table Three: Informants' Personal Backgrounds and Profiles

Name	Initial Used in Transcription	Approximate Age	Date of Interview	Place of Residence (At time of interview)	Profession, Employer	Involvement with Refugee Relief Organisations
Wendy Dumper	W.	Early-40s	15 May 2008	Lordswood, Southampton	Emergency Call Respondent, Hampshire Constabulary	Volunteer, Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group (SWVG)
Lisa Devine	L.	Mid-30s	15 May 2008	Townhill Park, Southampton	Child Mental Health Nurse, NHS Trust	Volunteer, SWVG
Catherine Hulme	C.	Late-30s	15 May 2008	Townhill Park, Southampton	Child Oncology Nurse, NHS Trust	Volunteer, SWVG
Ann Varnell	A.V.	Mid-60s	30 June 2008	Winchester	Retired teacher	Former Chair, SWVG
David Varnell	D.	Mid-60s	30 June 2008	Winchester	Retired engineer	Former Vice-Chair, SWVG

Aliya Mughal	A.M.	Mid-30s	17 October 2008	London	Senior Press Officer, The Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture	See Profession
Gerdy Rees	G.	Late-20s	17 October 2008	London	Coordinator of *Refugee Week 2008*, The Refugee Council	See Profession
Krista Armstrong	K.	Mid-20s	08 November 2008	London	Refugee Services Coordinator British Red Cross	See Profession

Interview Questions for Ethnographic Interviews

Based, in part, on *Attitudes towards Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Other Immigrants: A Literature Review for the Commission for Racial Equality* (Finney and Peach).

1. What do you think about asylum seekers and refugees?
2. What do you think about survivors of torture who are seeking asylum in the United Kingdom?
3. What do you think about other immigrants to Southampton: for example, immigrants from Eastern Europe?
4. Do you think your attitudes are exceptional in Southampton or do they tend to reflect the attitudes of your friends, neighbors and coworkers?
5. How are your attitudes developed and influenced? Particularly, how are they developed and influenced by media coverage of asylum seekers and refugees?
6. There are many worthwhile charities vying for your time and money. Why have you chosen to work with SWVG and not with the RSPCA, for example?
7. What, for you, has been the most rewarding aspect of working with SWVG?
8. In contrast, what, for you, has been the most challenging aspect of working with SWVG?
9. What, for you, has been the most surprising aspect of working with SWVG?
10. If you were to recruit other people – such as friends, neighbors and coworkers – to join a group such as SWVG, what tactics would you use?

Finney, Nissa, and Esme Peach. "Attitudes Towards Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Other Immigrants: A Literature Review for the Commission for Racial Equality." Ed. Commission for Racial Equality: Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees in the UK, 2004.

Interview Questions for Wendy Dumper, Lisa Devine and Catherine Hulme

Conducted on May 15, 2008

Based, in part, on *Attitudes towards Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Other Immigrants: A Literature Review for the Commission for Racial Equality* (Finney and Peach).

11. What do you think about asylum-seekers and refugees?

C: "I try to put myself in their shoes and think what it would be like to be born into a country where you just don't want to be, can't be, and try to look at it from that angle, really".

W: "Yeah, I'd probably agree to that. Yeah, I think about what I *have* got. So, I've got my freedom and my, you know, liberty to walk down the road and then I imagine it not being there anymore."

12. What do you think about survivors of torture who are seeking asylum in the United Kingdom?

W: "Yeah, do you want my honest opinion?"

T: "Certainly".

W: "I hope that they are seeking it and that they are survivors of torture. I know that sounds a bit harsh but sometimes I just think that the stories that you hear are so well-rehearsed that… I mean, I'm sure that there is torture going on but, you know, I don't think everybody could probably claim truth when they're talking torture. I would say that some people expand on it a little bit because they feel that it might help their case and who's to prove any different. Of course, there is torture going on and for those that have suffered it, it's dreadful and we wouldn't have a clue of any kind of thing that they've experienced. But, I do believe that there would also be people that are saying that there is torture: mental torture and physical and bad memories, but again you couldn't doubt it because you wouldn't know any different".

C: “I would want to believe them because, you know, if it is the truth then wouldn’t it be awful to be in that situation and not be believed? Whereas, they obviously desperately want to be away from that country, to want to make up stories like that, and it’s a free world, I think. Do you know what I mean? Why shouldn’t they be? If I can go live in their country, why can’t they come and live in mine?”

L: “Yeah, and I do believe there’s obviously a reason for wanting to come away and yeah, pretty much…”

W: “I thought that, but I don’t always believe everybody… I don’t believe that you could say categorically that everybody that’s here saying that they’ve suffered torture has suffered torture, that’s all. I don’t believe that”.

C: “No, I agree, and they probably haven’t, but I’d rather give them the benefit of the doubt”.

W: “Oh, yeah. Definitely. I don’t mind them being here, I just worry that people feel that they need to say that to come here and I think then they’ve got to live with this story that they’ve not actually experienced and it’s a weird old mix…”

T: “If you could expand on that a little bit, it’s very interesting to me, actually”.

W: “Is it?”

T: “Yeah, this idea of living with a story that isn’t necessarily your own”.

W: “Yeah, I just think that… if they’ve got a reason for coming, then just come and don’t make up that you’ve suffered some torture. Because I just think then you’ve had to share that story with somebody, somebody that’s interested and wants to listen to you, and is gonna help you. And then you’re coming along with this story all the time about something that never happened and who’s gonna doubt it and then you know, you would then go away from that person and think, ‘Gosh, I’ve had to make up this bloomin’ story here of being tortured and now it’s getting a bit out of hand and nothing really *did* happen to me’, you know and then it could play on their mind and, before they know it, they perhaps think they really did suffer torture. I dunno”.

L: “They start believing that happened, don’t they though?”

W: “That might not be true but I just, you know…”

L: "But, I dunno, I don't know what the criteria is. Do you know what I mean? How bad does it gotta get before you get heard and, you know, granted asylum or… Is that the lengths you've gotta go to get it? I dunno".

C: "Let me go back to the question of what do you think about asylum-seekers and refugees and the ones in London that go around pickpocketing and stealing: left, right and center. They're the ones that I do feel… I do have bad feelings towards sometimes. You know, and it makes me feel ashamed of that, feeling like that, but um you don't go to another country to do that. That's what I feel".

W: "If you're gonna come to the country come on good faith… good thoughts [agreement all around]. Obviously, if they've got nothing…"

T: "And, maybe they've been given this opportunity and that they're squandering it by abusing it".

C: "Well they're abusing it, yeah. And, you know, there is help there, you know, there is help around, and they don't need to be out doing that. Even if it's, you know, it's minimal, you could still survive on it in an honest way".

13. What do you think about other immigrants to Southampton: for example, immigrants from Eastern Europe?

C: "It's quite a historical thing isn't it? It's happened throughout our history, anyway. And, just because this is a big time again, that it's happening again… Um, even though it's constantly happening in dribs and drabs all over the place. I just think it's gonna settle down again. I think a lot of them will have to go back, won't they, because they can't afford it over there. But, and sometimes you think, 'Why do they have to have their own little communities?' But then, when you think about the Brits and when they go to Spain or India or wherever they go: everybody does the same. They all have their own little areas, their own little communities, own little shops. So, it swings in roundabouts, really".

W: "I agree and… I don't mind. I like the thought of Eastern Europeans being in this country. I just don't like people's attitudes. I mean, where I work, you know, as soon as they know it's… Say, it's a car accident or something and, there's been a foreign person… Well, they'll put it down that they're 'Polish'. And I just think, 'Well, they could be from anywhere!' They could've lived here 20 years, you know. Don't just assume because you read the *Daily Express* or whatever that it's gonna be some Polish person. And then I think, when I see Polish shops

going up or something like that, I feel, 'Gosh! Good luck to them!' I couldn't even have and open my own shop in my city that I grew up in. And they've kind of managed to do it and I think, 'Brilliant. Good for them!' And I also, when I pass them, people that… you obviously can see them in their little gangs or people walking along, um, in their langauge. And I think, I feel for them because I think, I know me, from when we go on holiday somewhere, and you've been there a little bit and you *do* feel a bit out of it because you don't speak the language. I just think, 'Gosh!' You know, I always want them to think we're nice [laughter] and I try to smile at them as they go by because I think, 'We're not all anti, you know?' And I'm sure they get it. A lot. Don't they?"

C: "It also must be quite hard to come here because we're not necessarily a nice bunch, are we [laughter]?"

W: "Not at all. Down here we're not".

C: "Yeah".

W: "I know there are other cities… In addition, you do hear it from all over the country. You know, people moaning about it and… commenting… but… You know, the other day, I was in the park and some really awful English people were in there, absolutely awful, making a mess and swearing and drinking… And then, I went past a group of women who were obviously Muslim, and talking in their *own* language, and they all smiled at me and I thought, 'I'd much rather have thousands of them to one of these scumbags in our country. They bring a lot into our country and we people don't appreciate it".

C: "They do, and they've been through such a lot. They haven't had a lot, either. You know, they've lived in poverty probably a lot of their… a majority of them and they come over here and see how awful we are and I just feel sorry for them to be honest".

W: "Exactly"…

T: "And going back to questions of regional difference. Do you think it *is* different, the reception of this population of survivors of torture, of asylum-seekers and refugees: Do you think that they're better received in the South than they would be in the North or in London. As an American, I really don't know, but my perception is that the reception in the South is better, but I don't know".

C: "I always think that there's a lot more eth… diversity up in the North, in places like Blackburn and places like that. I always imagine that there's a lot more ethnicity up there as opposed to down here. Because it's cheaper… it's cheaper to live up there, I think, on the whole. And in London, as well I suppose there's more, even though it's not cheaper to live. I just imagine there's places… so they've got… there's a lot more going on there. Do you know what I mean? …than we're used to here".

T: "So maybe it's easier… these people stick out more when they immigrate to the South."

W: "I think that was the case. I don't think it is as much now. Once upon a time, when I was a child, you could say that there was a lot of difference in the North to the South, but I would say different now. And also, I would say it depends on where you're talking about in the South, too, because the Southwest, say, has probably got little because of the work situation. But then you would think… I dunno… East, like in Norfolk and in that area… I've read things before and heard things about lots of um, I don't think it was daffodils fields or something like that, and they have a lot of immigrants come there to work. And I just think… And cheap labor and all that and I guess if there's something going on in an area in the country, they'll be there… When they get put in places because of, when they've arrived and they've claimed asylum and they've been put somewhere, I don't necessarily think that that was the best place to be put because that area tends to, I would say, have a little bad feeling about it because the people that have originated from there are very anti-it and C's right, you know, and the areas where people are more used to it they probably get better reception and there'll be more going on for them".

T: "I was wondering, do you think, because they stick out a little bit, um… that they're more likely to get help where in the North they just blend in and people don't really pay them any mind?"

C: "I imagine that. That's what I was just thinking, actually. If there's fewer about there's more help, isn't there? It's a big city and if there's not a lot of people here there's a lot of people that wanna do good".

W: "I don't know. I think differently. I think with a bigger city where it's still going on, those people are already aware and there's more things going on and expanding whereas you've got lots of people in an area that have never been used to people coming and who starts the ball rolling? You know, you just get, you know, even with SWVG, they have spoken about when they started and that all stemmed from having people in prison! Well, I guess they only went

into the prison because there was nowhere else, nothing else set up for them, and that wasn't that long ago. So, over the years that's developed and, had it been an area that was used to people coming in, things would've already have been in place and organizations might have just hooked on to the ones that were already in place, I think. I don't know".

14. Do you think your attitudes are exceptional in Southampton or do they tend to reflect the attitudes of your friends, neighbors and coworkers?

W: "Mine, I would say, exception. Definitely. I find that only… You mean, how we feel about, what, being with people, refugees and asylum-seekers?"

T: "Exactly".

W: "I would say yeah. I know this sounds ridiculous, but sometimes I feel embarrassed… not embarrassed… more about the reception you're going to get when you say work with that… Sometimes you don't say it because you don't want to hear bad words, so you just keep quiet about it".

C: "I think my friends… are all quite interested, actually, in it and they're very good about it and so they all seem quite interested and family, but I think that there's still an element of distrust from certain people that I'm quite surprised with really but I suppose… because they've had such bad press, and with people just trying to get into the country, not necessarily asylum-seekers or refugees, just people trying to get *into* the country, I think that the wrong people get picked on as well and so people are thinking, 'Oh well, they're just here; they're just pretending' and that sort of thing so that there is an undercurrent of bad feeling, of mistrust but I think people want to… they want to believe them. They are interested.

W: [In response to a discussion about low-paid Eastern European pub workers in Ireland]: "I think this is the problem, though. I think in England and Ireland, everybody that's from that country tend to be quite greedy now. And, once upon a time, you would've had an influx of British people wanting to do those jobs. But now people want more and more money, it's just… And they're the ones who are probably moaning about the people coming in. And yet, they're the ones who are doing all of the work that they don't wanna do! And I think, 'Be less greedy and share the work and it won't get taken over by anybody'. We'll all just be equal. But the Brits are just too greedy now. It makes a big difference. And then they still moan about the people who *are* doing the other jobs that are low-paid. But they won't take them themselves".

L: "The thing is, I get a lot of negative views from a lot of my friends. And, um, I'm talking even nurses, other nurses that I know. I find that their main concern is they don't feel like the NHS system can, you know, look after them. They feel that, you know, we're not getting priority, well that sort of thing. And they just don't think we should be… We should be looking after our own, if you like, first. And then when I think about my friends in the police force, they certainly have a very negative attitude, but they see them all as troublemakers. They don't see it, you know, that they're all individual and some people are here, you know, for… what do you call it? …for genuine reasons. And that's it, really. Yeah, but I haven't really come across anyone who's ever said to me, 'Oh, that's really good!'"

T: "And when you say, "They see them all as troublemakers"…

L: "That's an awful thing to… That's an awful word".

T: "No, no, no. It's fine. I'd just like to get to the bottom of it. Do you think they mean immigrants in general or specifically economic migrants from Eastern Europe?"

L: "Yeah, abroad".

15. How are your attitudes developed and influenced? Particularly, how are they developed and influenced by media coverage of asylum-seekers and refugees?

C: "The media influences a majority of the country, I think. Whatever the media says, they believe!"

L: "Yeah, see, I'm not influenced by the media. I mean there's certainly… You get good people wherever you are. Don't you? …I think, for me personally, I tend to look at the individual anyway so I think, that probably goes with my job. I'm certainly not influenced".

W: "I wouldn't say that I'm influenced either, but I can see how people are. It never looks at two sides of the coin, does it? But then, nowadays, they do that about everything, you know, 'nuisance boys'… 'Oh, they've got hoodies. That's it. They're troublemakers'. They're quick to go down the throat of everything. You won't find that they just do that about immigrants… I know Sebonswe, who I visit. I know she's not happy going out of the house, going up Shirley. She'll go up with other people now and then. I've invited her out before. But it's not all to do with, you know, because she's a nervous person. It's just because of the way people stare at her. Not that she's got anything weird about her. She's an attractive girl and she just wears British clothes and, you know, nothing strange. But I've been with her and people *do* stare at her. She's never said that to me, but I know that that's probably what the problem is. And

that is all those attitudes. They're all walking around with it in their heads. They've all read the *Daily Express* or the *Sun* that morning, and the way it's worded in those papers, everything is wrong, everything is bad. You know, the news headlines: you just cringe when you hear them. The statistics they come up with, which are just so weak, you wonder where they get them from. I just think anybody, you know, I always do, if anybody comes out with some comment, I always question it. I'd say, 'Well, what makes you think that, though?' Sometimes it'll be my mum that I'm doing that to, so rather than have an argument, I'll back out, but generally I wanna keep it going as far as I can to make them realize that it's not everyone and that it is the media that are swaying their brains. Sorry. I've gone on a bit…"

a. In addition, how are your attitudes developed and influenced by the material that you receive from organizations such as the Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group (SWVG)?

C: "I think it opened my eyes, really, more than anything. I really was quite ignorant to it all, to be quite honest. I always thought how hard it must be for these people, but I can't see them anywhere so it's not, you know, it's not my problem at the moment. And then, when I saw their group advertised and everything, I thought, 'Well, that's something really worthwhile doing,' you know? Helping people that have really just got nothing because everybody in this country has got… If you're born here, you can't really say you're poor, really, I don't believe that. And people that think they're poor have still got their Sky TV and flat screens now and I just think it's all about, you know, those that haven't got anything. And it is, you know, just thinking about, 'What if it was me?' What if anything happened in this country and we had to flee and it *could* happen in this country. What… you know, how awful would that be to go to a country and they say, 'No, you've gotta go back'. You know?

W: "Then where to go to?"

C: "Yeah, nowhere to go".

W: "Stuck in the middle".

C: "And just… it'd just be awful".

L: "But I think that's what SWVG have highlighted, isn't it? Because, like, they've given us talks and, you know, on the journey… one someone's journey from the start, when they leave their home, it could be in flames. You know, they come back from work or whatever… And then for the whole journey of getting across here and then being picked up here and just what that's

like. I think that's given me real insight into it because I never understood… Well, really knew that much about it at all".

W: "I do think that's the kind of thing perhaps that could be highlighted more in the media. I know it does, but people choose to not read things like that. But if they did a little program about it like they have all these other programs… Instead of wasting our time watching those, perhaps they could do a serial of what it's like as a regular slot. But, um, I thought that that art thing we went to [*Border Country* by Melanie Friend at the Winchester School of Art] probably brought more to my mind than anything. The detention centers: I didn't really understand what that was all about. At that was grim, I would say. That's a horrible, clinical thing. Because these people have often come from countries where life is nothing like our life anyway. No matter what they're coming to, it's all going to be *so* alien to them. So then, to be put in some place that's all clinical and fitted-out…"

L: "Regimented".

C: "What was *really* interesting, my client said to me that when she was coming over here she thought it'd be like going to heaven. Oh, what a shock that must have been".

L: "And how did she… You know, what did she hear back? Why… So, why do they get it in their heads, 'Okay, I'm going to go to England or I'm going to go to Germany or I'm going to go to Fr… Whatever".

C: "Presumably because they're the affluent countries and because they've got everything they want, and everything's on tap".

W: "I think it's sold to them that way, too, isn't it? I think there's people that go around…"

C: "In films…"

W: "Yeah, in films… They do, don't they? I think they think that. There's a lot of them out there, selling it to them. 'This is the way to go,' you know. Because they're the people that make money out of people by getting them a visa or a pass… or a ticket, whatever".

C: "Whatever they're watching at home, on TV or wherever, it's predominantly American, you know… it's Western, isn't it? They're not going to be watching anything from anywhere else. And, they're having to do everything in English as well. So, they are fed it, aren't they?"

W: "Why would they think anything different, really? If you watched a program on, I dunno, the Congo for the last ten years, that looked all exotic and we would think, 'Oh, I must go there'. We wouldn't think any different, I suppose, would we?"

16. There are many worthwhile charities vying for your time and money. Why have you chosen to work with SWVG and not with the RSPCA, for example?

W: "I would say more because C bent my arm [laughter]".

L: "And then W bent my arm [continued laughter]".

W; "Um, personally I felt… I've always had an interest in the asylum-seeker setup in Southampton and refugees, and everything. And when C found out about the organization, it seemed to fit everything I was interested in. And I like anything local, that you can keep pretty small. If it gets too big, I just… I *would* be interested, but it loses its big interest to me. I can sort of visualize it because it's local. And that's it for me, I think. Feeling like what I'm giving is going to be dealt with locally rather than just lost in advertising, literature and marketing".

C: "And I hate animals [laughter]. No, I just think, as opposed to the RSPCA, because that's something you could again work with, I suppose, locally if you wanted to, but it's not people is it? It's all about people".

L: "Yeah, definitely. It's about working with people with real needs, I think. And um… That's it."

T: "Then… Sorry, to kind of hone the question a little bit… Why *not* an organization that works with people with spina bifida or works with, you know, people with HIV/AIDS or works with the homeless in Southampton or…"

L: "I think because those sort of… um, organizations are, I dunno, it's almost like they *do* get more sympathy, don't they? There're so many people involved with those already, and people understand that. I think people… it's easier for people to work with those sorts of charities whereas really this type of group is really in the minority. So, I think they're getting the help they need. Whereas this group just needs us.

W: "I think that this group, and any group like this, is more short-term, isn't it. You can't imagine it being here forever – or needed forever, hopefully. Whereas all those others, I guess, will always be around.

L: "That's so true…"

T: "So, it's a solvable problem in some ways?"

W: "Yeah, I guess so. I get that. I hope it is".

L: "Well, either way, I think one day perhaps there won't be such a group. Which, in a sad way, as in… people will get deported, that there'll be zero tolerance of anyone coming here. That's kind of how I see it, sadly. Or…"

W: "Things get *that* good that…"

L: "But I do, for whatever reason, I see it as a short-lived thing…"

T: "Interesting. Yeah, I've kind of felt that since the beginning of our discussion this morning that that was kind of an undercurrent, which is interesting".

C: "…the other groups are all about people that are already here… If somebody's got somebody with spina bifida in their family… then they go all out to raise money for those people. But, it's different. You're not going to have that from this point of view. You know, you're not going to have somebody with a refugee in the family. It's something that's totally about people and people who haven't got anything and it's… for me, as well, being a nurse, I've worked with people already that've got, you know, diseases and things like that. So, it's something a little bit different as well, away from work and I think it's the most deserving thing that is around at the moment. I think the charities that are British-based or whatever, anything to do with home… any charities that I have any dealings with have to do with abroad where they haven't got as much as us because everybody here's got enough"

17. What, for you, has been the most rewarding aspect of working with SWVG?

L: " I think definitely working with the client. I know that sounds really clichéd, but I think, you know, when they call and they know someone's there at the end of the phone, and they can say, 'Thank you,' and they're just grateful for that, really. And sometimes it's doing very little, but that's what makes a difference, is the little things. So, for me, definitely knowing my client and working with him; sorting out whatever his needs are and going day to day really…"

W: "I would say that, too, yeah. You know, sometimes, I know it's an awful thing to say, in your busy life and you think, 'Oh, I've gotta go around and see that person' or, 'Oh, I've got to ring them'… When you do, you just think, 'Oh, I'm so glad I did that'. They're fine and pleased to hear from you or see you and nice to see them and you talk about their country a little bit

and you kind of learn a bit more about what they're all about and, I think, it just changes everything. All that selfish stuff we go around with all the time. You get kind of brought back down to earth a little bit again when you meet them".

C: "Especially how little they live on. They're just not… Bless them. They're just not allowed any sort of a life here either, really. Are they? They can't live here really, they're just surviving

W: "Yeah. Like, they're safer, I guess, but they're not really living".

C: "…just surviving".

L: "You just hope they're safe, anyway".

C: "…with a roof over their head and a bit to put in their mouths. It's a privilege to work with them, like L says, face to face with somebody really needing".

18. In contrast, what, for you, has been the most challenging aspect of working with SWVG?

L: "I think coming up against attitudes… It doesn't really affect the work I do because I know what I believe and I know what I feel so I just get on with it anyway. But again, what W was saying earlier, you almost do… You know, you're apprehensive about telling anyone what you do because you don't want to hear the negativity. So, for me, I find that a bit of a challenge. I'm getting braver with it because I want people to, you know, question me about it or… Just so you can get it across, really. It's not all about that and they're not bad people and…"

C: "One of those police friends actually offered the chair, didn't they, for my client".

L: "How did you manage that? Well done!"

C: "She hasn't got it *yet* [laughter]".

W: "I think the challenging thing for me would be like L said, perhaps feeling like I'm actually achieving anything. Giving her some money and having a quick chat and making sure they're safe is one thing, but what they *really* want is to have their status in this country and that just goes on and on and on and you just think, 'That's all they want, really'. Nothing I'm doing is really going to make any difference. And I wish I could just wave a wand and sort it all out. But that all takes either masses of time and experience, which I haven't got, and probably a little bit of money to help with the solicitor, I guess. And to keep seeing somebody and not

being able to give them any good news, or find anything out that's different, and then you put yourself in their shoes and think, 'How do they keep going?' Not only have they got not much money, they're not with their family, they're not in their country, they're living somewhere very very basic. They've also got not much chance of staying and, you know, sometimes I find it a challenge to actually know what to say to that person. You know, 'How's your day?'. You know, it all seems like the wrong thing to say. 'How you feeling?' You know. 'Have you eaten properly?' And all that.

C: "It all seems so trivial…"

W: "Yeah, it does".

C: "Because what you really want to say is, 'I've got your citizenship' or… Do you know what I mean? You just wanna give them some good news for a change."

W: "And another comfier room and lots more food… I'm sure they don't want it but that's the way that we've brought up, isn't it, to be comfy; and you just wanna share that thought with them, really. And you do just wanna give them that hope. You know, I've had conversations with her before where she'll ask me what do I think and I just think, 'I don't know what to say,' because I don't know what's going to happen. I would say there's more of a chance of staying now than there's ever been, but what do I know?"

19. What, for you, has been the most surprising aspect of working with SWVG?

W: "Surprised that they're quite… I know that sounds quite awful '*they*', I mean I've only known a few people that were asylum-seekers in SWVG, but they all seem much more *with it* than you probably imagine. If you told somebody you're involved in this group, they'd imagine some poor thing… person with one set of clothes and nothing else and it's not like that. So, I guess that was quite a surprise to me. They're quite self-sufficient and they have a *lot* of contact with a *lot* of people in their network. A lot of them are churchgoers, so that brings in a lot more contact with other people. They're not as isolated as you visualize. I don't think. And they can make friends with people from their own countries and other countries quite easily. And they've all got a similar thread running through their lives, really. Not what we've experienced isn't as destitute as what I guess some people are suffering. Or, maybe they're not. I don't know. So, that's a surprise for me".

L: "I'm surprised to see how happy… I'm surprised that they're… they *appear* to be so emotionally stable. I'd expect to see a lot more post-traumatic stress. I'd expect them to be,

yeah, more distressed at the end stage, you know what I mean? But they're not. They're quite happy-go-lucky and they can talk to you about their day… I would expect to find them more depressed and not really concerned in what's going on in *your* life. Do you know what I mean? It's not like they're really expecting you to be there for them every minute of the day. They'll ring you when they need you"…

W: "The network is probably bigger than I expected, I think".

L: "Yeah, but how do they cope? I don't know how they're coping emotionally with that".

C: "I don't think that all show it necessarily".

L: "Do you not?"

C: "Because I think *my* client does get low. And it's only through me sort of wheedling it out of her *really*…"

L: "So, is that a cultural thing that they don't show it or is it because they're so relieved to be here?"

C: "I think it's probably that she doesn't feel that she knows me that well and she probably feels like I'm doing a lot for her. So, she doesn't want to be down for me and all that sort of thing. Do you know what I mean? She doesn't want to seem ungrateful or anything, but… I think they probably, you know, when they're sitting there alone… My client, she can't get out very much anyway and she's lost a lot of friends… You know, she *did* have quite a big network and a good network… Good friends. But then she went to the police station with one friend recently and she got arrested and she's in prison. Then, the other family she used to live with, they've had to apply for asylum themselves because their visa ran out so they're in Coventry now, so they're miles away. She's had two friends die as well over here. You know, it's been… They seem to get moved around as well. Do you know what I mean? The friends, obviously… One had to go to Reading and all this sort of thing and it all just seems so…that it's traumatic here almost it's almost like losing your family, I'd imagine, because they *are* like your family and she seemed very close to them and they were obviously very fond of her and it just… You know, she hasn't seen her daughter for four years; she's grown up. I just think that's… You know, she's bound to get low and I don't blame her. I just don't feel like… I just feel totally… Not useless but like, inadequate, I suppose. Because you *do* want to make things better and it is impossible. And, until recently, we thought my client was going to be exe… Um…

T: "Deported. Not executed we hope [laughter]".

C: "Sorry. 'Deported'. A couple weeks back. Go on, have a good laugh. 'Exported', I was going to say. If she gets deported, it would be a shame. She would feel ashamed. So, she was even thinking that she would go back voluntarily because she'd feel ashamed to get deported from here, chucked out of Britain. Or, and not wanted almost, as well. And then, just by shear… For no good reason, we went a letter to them to say her change of address and they said they'd given her practically another year, another nine months here".

T: "Wow".

W: "That is a surprise though, isn't it?"

C: "A big surprise".

W: "The way that it's all dealt with so differently. Depending on when you write and who you write to… And everything's so mishmash… It's a mess, a complete mess. I just think, if that [her client's asylum application] had all happened last year, none of it would've been rejected. I'm convinced of that…"

C: "Really?"

W: "I am, because I think, 'Nothing's changed'. Her sisters' circumstances were no different to hers".

T: "And the sister applied after [your client]…"

W: "They both applied after [my client]. They've both been given leave to remain".

C: "You just feel like the government's got an agenda… A secret agenda, really".

W: "And then, if some big thing gets blown up, they change all the rules again. And people just can't keep up with it. But it's not exactly something funny, is it? They're playing with people's lives. And that's what's awful. …When it's about people being deported to another country it's another thing again, isn't it?"

20. If you were to recruit other people – such as friends, neighbors and coworkers – to join a group such as SWVG, what tactics would you use?

T: "Because I know that both of our interviewees have mentioned that you recruited them to join the group, so what tactics did you [C] use? And, if we were just going to share the wealth or spread the word, what tactics would you [W and L] use?"

L: "I know when I'm talking to people who don't perhaps understand it and I always talk about, you know, the group really monitor the clients well so the clients that we see are genuine cases and not, you know… They're not into drugs and they're not drinking, which I feel sad about, too. There's still a need for them [clients that use drugs and alcohol]. They still need help and but, okay, if you're going to start somewhere, and people don't wanna be dealing with that side of it and you can say, 'Look, these are this group of people and they're not doing anything illegal, they're just here for these reasons and the group monitor it really. You don't have to… They don't tolerate any bad behavior… So that's kind of how I talk about it and people seem to understand that really. Because again, people's views are influenced by the media and they see them as troublemakers and yep… And that's not the case at all. But, yeah, I'd certainly talk about our group. It's a pretty clean group, isn't it?"

C: "And yeah, your experiences. I think you do have to put them right, don't you, on what the media are saying".

W: "I've done it by saying, 'You know, we don't have to do a lot, really. You need to be able to read e-mails, and answer telephone calls… But, apart from that, *really* we're free to do as we want".

L: "Some of them [the clients] don't even ask for that [the £20.00 per week of ASSIST money]. And some of them say, 'I don't need anything'. I think that always surprises people: that they're not just out for anything they can get. …I think that always surprises people, definitely, because they're not all out for everything they could possibly get. They just… They're so glad to be safe. I dunno. I think that changes people's opinions".

T: "Is there anything else you'd like to add?"

C: "I think, as well, just differentiating immigrants, um, and the refugees… They all think of the people who are jumping on the boats at Calais".

W: "Everybody's in the same big banner, but they're not, are they?"

C: "Yeah. But they don't realize that these people have come from war-torn countries…"

L: "And when you start to get people to think about it and think, 'Why are these people fleeing? Why are they going abroad?' Because you don't think about… I mean, I certainly never *really* thought about it… I and I know people even less so than me. So…"

W: "Lots of countries have got lots of things going on, haven't they?"

C: "Everywhere".

W: "And I just feel, 'Those that've got here, gosh, what a mean feat that is to get here, really. Because it's not exactly like in the middle of Europe, is it?"

L: "No. That determination…"

T: "Do you think the media does a bad job at connecting kind of… I know that you just mentioned Burma, but um… Kind of disasters that happen in the world with the refugees that they produce. I mean…"

C: "Yeah. They don't do that, really. They do show refugees just, you know, going over the boarder, from say Kenya or Sierra Leone or somewhere like that, and they'll show huge… Um, huge camps, don't they, on the media and they say, 'These are the refugees'… But they don't say, um, and they don't connect that to how many of those people would be in this country. And we've taken some of those people away from the situation. And those people aren't trying to get away. They wanna live in their country, they just have to get far enough away to be safe. And it isn't necessarily safe in those places".

T: "Anything else that you'd like to add?"

L: "No. I'm just thinking about aware… How we could improve. I think it's all about awareness. But I don't know how… If any of us… I mean, it's a voluntary group, isn't it? And if any of us really have that time. I mean, that's how I can see it, you know, improving. But, I dunno".

T: "But your feeling is fundamentally that if people *were* aware, they would support they cause".

L: "More so, maybe. They perhaps wouldn't go out of their way to do anything but perhaps…"

W: "I think that it's a difficult charity to get any funding for, from people in our walks of life, because I think… I would say that most of the people in the group are very affluent and I think

that it's probably funded by most of the people in the group. And extension of that are probably people that are friends of people in the group and who don't wanna offend them. But genuine generosity is probably very weak. If I went around my office at work and told them what it was for, I bet you I wouldn't get much interest, nor in the family or anything. Because I think that it is a charity and a cause that's personal to you and not a lot of people are, you know, like *us*".

T: "I know that you raised money at your birthday party. Was that successful did you feel?"

W: "Yeah. I was pleased with what came out. But there were some people there that didn't give money, obviously not. And I was surprised, really. Because I would always respect someone's charity, even if it had nothing to do with what I liked. I just think everybody's got their own choices. You don't bring your own little hang-ups into it. …And yet, the likes of people that would turn my request down, are the people that would probably sign up for a direct debit [for another charity] and that's rubbish… That's just *thick-o* attitude. They then are the type of people that would tell people, 'I pay £20 a month to the…' whatever it is and like to tell you…"

L: "It's all about the recognition, isn't it?"

W: "It's not about what the charity are doing. They're quick enough to tell you that they don't like what you're doing, but they're quick enough to tell you that they're giving money to something that probably just pays for a leaflet to be distributed to one street, you know. And… big deal!"

C: "But the trouble is, in this day and age, people are so selfish that you don't get money unless you… You have to pay people. Because people are very suspicious, aren't they? And they won't give money; people won't volunteer… You can't have such big organizations that you've got without paying people. Um, that go overseas and stuff to these disaster zones. And I think that people… They don't trust anybody anymore. They don't give money like they used to give. …I think that people have just gotta trust that the money is getting to the… If you don't… A lot of people I know have the attitude that they don't know that the money's getting there, so they don't do anything, they don't *do* anything. Nothing at all. Whereas, at least if you have a little bit of faith in it and, you know, some of the money will get there hopefully. Otherwise, there won't be any charities at all!"

T: “So you think that, um, SWVG’s size is a benefit to the organization, because you have more transparency with a smaller organization”.

W: “…If it gets any bigger, that’s when things start to change, isn’t it?”

Finney, Nissa, and Esme Peach. "Attitudes Towards Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Other Immigrants: A Literature Review for the Commission for Racial Equality." Ed. Commission for Racial Equality: Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees in the UK, 2004.

Interview with Ann and David Varnell

Conducted on June 30, 2008

Based, in part, on *Attitudes towards Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Other Immigrants: A Literature Review for the Commission for Racial Equality* (Finney and Peach).

1. What do you think about asylum seekers and refugees?

D.: "In general, I suppose, before I became a member of SWVG, I never thought much about them. They never sort of imposed on my life and so I had not many thoughts, but since working with SWVG, I do realize how destitute and needy they are and how much they have suffered when they come to this country so in general, I am very positive towards them but recognize that there are, you know, people who come in under that guise and, you know, may not deserve asylum but… I'll stop there".

T.: "What was the catalyst, then, for someone that didn't think that much about them to all of the sudden becoming very involved in their cause?"

D.: …

A.: "Yes, well I'm really rather like David: I didn't know personally anything much about asylum-seekers. I'd always read the paper and felt tremendous sympathy for refugees, particularly those who were being displaced in their own countries, and being moved around into camps. I'd felt compassion in that way, but it was really through a friend at church, I was talking and she was saying that she was visiting Winchester Prison and, at that time, I had just finished my job and I was wanting to do something but I was looking fairly carefully at what I would do and I thought, "Well, this would be something that I would really, you know, enjoy". It was different and it was challenge and I would like to find out more. So I began, actually, by visiting asylum-seekers in Winchester Prison. And at first, you know, I wasn't sure about it because obviously if you're in prison, there's usually a reason why you're there. So, I was a little bit suspicious to start with because I couldn't really believe that the government would just push people into prison if they hadn't actually done anything. And as I visited one particular young man and then another, I realized that they did actually… These people had

not really done anything but they really hadn't anywhere else to put them at that time so they had put them into Winchester Prison and put about 50 into each prison across the country…"

2. What do you think about survivors of torture who are seeking asylum in the United Kingdom?

D.: "I guess as a result of being part of SWVG, I've attended several medical reviews of asylum-seekers and realize that the, you know, just the horrific background some of the asylum-seekers have, which you tend to forget when you meet them day to day, you know, they're just people, which is good in some senses, but you… It's brought to you what's behind and what's caused them to come to this country and it becomes very much alive and you realize how much it's changed their whole life and how some of them are very loathe to even speak about it and you see the symptoms in all asylum-seekers: you see the trauma, the lack of sleep and behind that you know that there's been some pretty bad persecution. So, you've got on your doorstep now, people that are not just hungry, and penniless, but also who've got terrific medical problems, both physical and mental! Um and so, there's obviously a great sympathy for them and I'm just sad that they're not getting the support that they need from our country".

A.: "Yes, I feel the same. On meeting different asylum-seekers, they on the whole always seem fairly upbeat and you don't really realize what's gone on before…I find it very distressing at times to um… You're talking with people and you're visiting them and, although you've got some idea of their case history, as D. said, they don't very often… Well, they never talk about it. But, from time to time, it comes out. You know, women who have left two children behind, you know, and a husband that had been killed. Others who have left their children behind and haven't a clue what's happening to them. And, they don't moan about it but it slips out and you feel absolutely shocked that you know, some of these people are then put into detention, you know, which is really against the law and it isn't seen to be recognized unless somebody else really pushes the evidence in front of people. So, it's quite… humbling, really, to meet the people and to see that they're living their lives and taking the opportunities that are given. Yet, they've got all of this trauma behind them and yet, they're not moaning – very rarely – and many of them have mental health problems and are suffering and have left, you know, comfortable and good lives behind and had to to come into sort of destitution and quite a humiliating position. So, I feel very strongly about it, really, that more isn't being done and that many people are looking on people as "scroungers" and "bogus" and so on when they're people, really, who are suffering a lot".

3. **What do you think about other immigrants to Southampton: for example, immigrants from Eastern Europe?**

A.: "Well, um, I think we need, we have needed the labor force. He have been very happy, you know, to *use* people for building and for plumbing and for upkeeping hotels and for working on the farms and the agriculture, you know, and I think that, as long as it's well managed and that these people are looked after, and given proper recognition and that, you know, housing and so on is being carefully seen to… And I think the word "managed" really, if the situation is managed properly, I think they're a great help to countries but… and to this country particularly. But I do think that we're not always good at managing resources that we were given, so I think sometimes it can cause problems and sometimes people coming in are not sure of the laws and what's happening, but I'm all for it! I have a Polish daughter-in-law, which is very nice and she has a lot of Polish friends and, you know, I think they're making great contribution".

D.: "I have a Polish daughter-in-law as well [laughter all around]. Yes, I mean I agree with A. I think there is a problem as I say… as A. was saying it's the managing of it and it is quite difficult because people coming to this country are naturally coming… whether it's asylum-seekers or immigrants, I guess, they come and it's a new country and everything is new to them and they tend to gravitate towards their own and so you tend to get them set up as "ghettoes" is probably too strong a word, but… they live together and they then form themselves as an entity, which can be seen negatively by the population. And it's quite difficult to integrate, I would say. The only other thing I would say is that the distinction between immigrants and asylum-seekers is so dull… is so fudged in so many people's minds, that to get a focus on either can be difficult. You know, you tend to equate one to the other and some of the things one says or one does aren't applicable to…"

A.: "I mean I do understand that, um, if you live in certain areas of this country, which we don't, and you see your jobs being taken for one reason or another perhaps because you haven't got the skills or you don't *want* to do the work that the immigrants are… You may begin to build some resentment and I do that and that's why I really do think it's got to be well managed and, as I say, I'm not always sure that we're doing that".

4. **"Do you think it's important for organizations such as SWVG to draw very clear distinctions, in their literature and in things that they use to educate the public, between these immigrants that we've just spoken about and refugees and asylum-seekers?"**

D.: “It’s essential. It is. Because nowhere else in the general literature on… certainly not in the press, both the tabloids and the non-tabloids, if you like, have difficulty in distinguishing themselves. You can see some of the articles in there and we’ve always tried to start any discussion about asylum-seekers by trying to define the difference and, you don’t want to spend a lot of time at the front, so you’ve got to do it in a fairly neat way: “This is what we’re focusing on”, and that’s not a group… Yep, very important, because of they way that they’re treated as one by everybody else”.

A.: “Yeah, I think, that’s always in any talks that I have given. I’ve always started and I’ve always said, you know, “These are the people that we’re talking about. You know, people that have been involved in conflict and have had to flee their country and had fear of their lives and they’re not economic migrants. You know, I have always sort of tried to make that clear from the beginning and have sort of brought it in as little bits and pieces and I’ve gone through and, I think, in the literature it was always there. I agree with D.; it is very important”.

D.: “Extremely. I was asked to give some talks and that was one of the key things always to define that at the front”.

5. Do you think your attitudes are exceptional in Southampton or do they tend to reflect the attitudes of your friends, neighbors and coworkers?

A.: “No, I think most of our… certainly most of our friends and members of our church of course, on the whole, would be in sympathy or say they are! One or two of our neighbors have… you know, they’re sympathetic but they sort of keep saying, “Oh, we’re overcrowded”, underlying that they’re not really with us. But, um, I think on the whole, certainly when we’ve stood at the bus crossing and things like that, we’ve had some resentment, haven’t we, in Winchester? But a lot of positive support. But, you know, some quite tough words. “Send ‘em back” and “They shouldn’t be here” and “You know that’s not the truth, don’t you?” and that sort of thing but our own friends and certainly members of the church, on the whole, I would say are in sympathy”.

D.: “I guess Winchester’s not a place where people care. I’m mean that not in a “Oh, they don’t care”, but they’re not impacted by it so, like I said, I would not necessarily be thinking about them at all and so the people that we meet have been forced to think about it because we’re talking about it. And therefore, you get their attitudes, but in general, again, on the whole, they’ve heard a bit about what we’re saying and are quite sympathetic, yeah”

T.: "So, maybe they hadn't necessarily formed an opinion yet and once they'd met you, and it's kind of brought to the forefront, their opinions tend to be positive".

A.: "I think they're quite surprised… always surprised that they're not allowed to work, always surprised that they're destitute. 'What! In Southampton, you've got people who are destitute?' And they're shocked about those sorts of things. But I don't think people would say to our faces, you know, 'You're stupid doing this kind of work' and that kind of thing but occasionally you've got the odd kind of comment coming through like, 'The country's overcrowded anyway', 'We've got far too many people here'. So, you hear little signs, but, um, certainly not people we know… If you looked in Southampton as you do… I think I did mention once to somebody that we were working and I remember them saying, 'Oh, yes, there do seem an awful lot of them here', which is, in a way, I could understand… I could see it that they weren't particularly pro-. So, maybe if I was living in Southampton I would feel…"

D.: "They're all rapists and murderers".

6. How are your attitudes developed and influenced? Particularly, how are they developed and influenced by media coverage of asylum seekers and refugees?

A.: "Well, by meeting… working with and visiting my… I have nothing but admiration, really for the people that I visit. You know, their courage and their lovely way of being with people and their lack of materialism and you know, many of the things that I find in this country are not very appealing. So, I've been very impressed and my attitudes have been strengthened in support of them, really, yes".

D.: "Yes, I mean having met and sort of been with asylum-seekers for quite a while, then the attitudes of the press and anybody else are irrelevant because you feel, 'These are the asylum-seekers', and we know them and our opinions are based on those and what everybody else says may be true of somebody else somewhere else. The attitudes can't be influenced more than by… the people themselves".

A.: "I mean, if some of them do commit crimes, as obviously some of them do, and a lot of them have been under pressure and I accept that they must go into the justice system and I understand that they're not all saints, and some people do the wrong thing and they've got to be penalized, just like the rest of us".

D.: "I mean, they're just people, from that point of view and they'll have their foibles and perhaps criminal tendencies or whatever else, like any part of a population, but behind that, they've also got this tremendous persecution and, you know, it obviously doesn't help…"

A.: "And, you're often surprised that they don't more often do the wrong thing. You know, because they're pushed into such vulnerable positions, really. I'm surprised that many more of them don't work, or that they don't steal or do the wrong thing, really. You know, people that I visit, they certainly don't take advantage of SWVG: they don't ask for things unless they really need them. And so I, you know, my attitude is that they're great, really".

7. There are many worthwhile charities vying for your time and money. Why have you chosen to work with SWVG and not with the RSPCA, for example?

A.: "Well, I have to say, I chose it first because of a friend. And it was a challenge. I mean, I *normally* would have chosen to work with families or children because that has been my sort of training and so I was sort of looking at that… Um, but then, the friend was doing the prison visiting which was something that I had never done before, so I suppose it was a bit of a challenge and something different and once I really got involved, I really become sort of 'hooked' on it, actually, and found that I *was* dealing with… perhaps I did deal with a family at one point and people who had a child. But, I just do find it a very attractive… You know, worthwhile job to do, really…"

D.: "Yes, I guess it's much the same with me. I was sort of, as I said, 'reeled' into it… It was put before me, if you'd like, and having seen it, it was just something that needed to be done, you know, and I thought that there were things that I could do to help and the people that we were working with were so positive and joined together that it was a pleasure to work with them as well as working with the asylum-seekers"…

A.: "It's political, you know. You're not being party political, but you have got the way now that you *may* be able to bring about some change. So, which you know, is always a good thing if you can do it".

D.: "It's both hands on trying to help people who are fairly desperate at the same time it's trying to influence and make aware to other people and influence when we can influence too try and assist in some change. So, yes, it's global as well as very personal and direct".

8. What, for you, has been the most rewarding aspect of working with SWVG?

D.: "I think it's the friendship from the asylum-seekers. You know, the positive thing that A. was talking about, you know, that they are so positive and so friendly and warm towards you. You know, you feel them as real friends. You know, one or two of them I would willingly give my family into their hands… It's the positive attitude there. There are many other things: working with a group with so many positive people in there. And there's a lot of positives there, all over…"

A.: "One of the things, really, was getting that young man off the plane. I mean, you know, who was just about being deported to the Congo and along with a lot of other people and you know, there were only four of them who got off… were taken off that plane and one of them was taken off because of what you [D.] and Shirley Firth had done. I mean that was… I found that terribly rewarding. I mean, I didn't do it. I was just aware of all this that was going on. And that was one thing. And I dealt with a young family and with a baby and it wasn't very… Sadly, they both… they all had to go back, but all the work that was done: being with her, not while she was having the baby, but, you know, all that leading up to her having the baby and helping with keeping their morale up and dealing with… they were destitute and… you know, seeing all that through was very… I felt was very rewarding and… But, it was very disappointing that we couldn't stop them being deported and… But, I think there were other forces at work there and… as well as us and SWVG. I think if it had been up to SWVG, we would've got them held back but there was somebody else who really wanted them out of the country. And we couldn't work against that. But, you know, that was very frustrating but the whole thing had been… You know, they rang us from when they got back and said that, you know, how grateful they were… the help that they had so I hope that they'll always have a feeling for English people and that was very rewarding"…

D.: "One doesn't appreciate how much help you *can* be, just by sitting listening. You know, a person that they've not had the opportunity to spend time with and just listen. Often, they don't say anything, but I know of one of two cases where I know they've left and fed back how much it's meant to them, even though there wasn't anything as dramatic as deportation. And I think the other side of the coin is: sometimes we feel that we're the only people that can help them, whereas they are quite resilient, many of them. They've been through…"

T.: "Could you expand a little bit on that? That's very interesting to me: this idea that, you know, there is maybe a feeling of people that are involved in the cause that *they're* the only people that can help them. But, then there is an understanding that there's a resilience or survivorship…"

D.: “I think you can get very emotional… not emotional but very tied-up with a particular asylum-seeker and what to do, naturally everything that you can for the asylum-seeker. But, I do think you can raise expectations of things that can’t happen. But, also that if you weren’t there, they would survive. Part of it, visiting them, must be to try to make them more able to use their own talents to get on their own feet, which they’re quite capable of doing. I mean, what we have got is resource, in terms of people, knowledge and contacts, which obviously they haven’t got. So, we can give them or make available to them a lot of things. But they can also seek out those things with our help and stand on their own feet. I mean, they have to be pretty resilient, most of them, to have got here in the first place”.

A.: “Well, that’s what I think, that, you know, they’ve got here… I mean, I couldn’t do it. They’ve found their way, they’ve obviously had to go through unpleasant immigration… usually unpleasant. I mean, and yet, they’re still able to be surviving and, so, I think it’s very important that we don’t make them dependent on us… As D. says, ‘Give what is needed’. But, if they move on or if they have other friends or other organizations then great! I mean, I have a young woman and she had got refugee status, which obviously, she was at CLEAR [City Life and Education for Refugees] and CLEAR was doing enormous amounts and I thought, ‘That’s great!’. Because, a) It relieves me and also, then it means that she, herself, has got other people to work with. And also she was going to the job allowance place herself and occasionally she’d ask me to check the form or maybe ring somebody up but, you know, she was going on her own and I thought, ‘Well, maybe I should be going’, but she seemed happy to go and I think that’s great! Because… And, another time, she said, ‘I went into somewhere and I bought myself a cup of coffee and I paid out of my own purse, with my own money’. And I said, ‘So, you really feel as if you’re, you know, moving on?’ And she said, ‘Yes’. And I could really see that that was really good, whereas there can be a tendency for me to want to say, you know, ‘Well, I’ll come with you. I’ll….’ But I could sort of step back and think, ‘Yeah, this is good, you can manage and you’re doing well’”.

D.: “Some of them are very positive and it’s usually very often, some of them are in a worse state… Speaking of: There was somebody from Uganda who had been tortured and he had trouble with his leg and he couldn’t move at all. But, he was a focus for asylum-seekers in Southampton. You know, he was guiding them, helping them. They’d come to him… He got sent back in the end, but, you know and there was a person who went to Bristol and was working for… He was destitute and working for the church’s organization to help the homeless [laughter all around]”.

A.: "Yeah, so, you know, there is an awful lot there and it just perhaps needs a little support at the right time. To push off and then move on themselves".

9. In contrast, what, for you, has been the most challenging aspect of working with SWVG?

A.: "…"

D.: "I think, and perhaps this is something that we should make clearer at the training, that the downside of visiting asylum-seekers, or the major downside, is the fact that so few of them do get what they are looking for and many of them have to go back and having visited an asylum-seeker for so long and having set up that relationship and know about them and then find that they have to go back is really, sort of, the lowest point. I think that's probably one of the most annoying things from my point of view, is having visited somebody for two or three years and we get on really well and went through his medical…"

A.: "And one of the things I find is, you know, you're with people who you know if they could work, or if they had the same rights as, say, my children, you know, would be really doing really well, you know, and could have a really productive and creative sort of life. And you see it all being just wasted, you know, well not… I mean, they do their best. The go to City College and they get A-levels and are working hard, but you *know* that they are capable of much more and okay. Once, one chap said to me, 'One day, I'll get my piece of paper and then I can wear a tie and take my briefcase'. You know, it's so hard, isn't it, because he's such a positive person and, you know, would be great in a little business or something, you know, and yet he cannot get that bit of paper, you know. And a wasted life, really".

D.: "That is the sadness: not being able to… That is the sadness of particularly wasted *young* lives. Um, because they're going through a period when they should be getting good jobs, should be getting married or… And those who are married are split from their families and, again, their children are growing up and they're not seeing them and that waste of 'prime time', as it were, is the sadness, a general sort of feeling, um, that really makes you feel sad for them".

10. If you were to recruit other people – such as friends, neighbors and coworkers – to join a group such as SWVG, what tactics would you use?

A.: "I mean, the most effective that I have… is when we've given talks. And people have come up afterwards and said, you know, 'I would like to… Would you… How could we help? What could we do?' And that has always been a good way. Occasionally, if we've put things into the

church magazine, a couple people have responded and have been interested and then we've invited them to coffee evening and talked to them and given them just the basic ideas and if they want to go on to do the training. But those are the main ways…"

D.: "Yeah, I think that's true and as part of doing that, I think to distinguish asylum-seekers so they know who we are talking about but, from then on, just to tell the story. To say that they have been destitute and of course, as always, to give a case. If you talk… We've used… What's her name? 'Gloria'. As a pseudonym…"

A.: "Any story…"

D.: "Any story like that and the fact that people *are* sleeping rough on the streets of Southampton. That, you know, just giving the facts, really. And making it clear. Admittedly, most of the recruiting is done on fertile, hopefully, fertile soil, in the sense that it's the churches that we started with and we would expect some sort of sympathy. But, when people… certainly when people in churches or most people we've spoken to, are aware, of the situation… it's very positive".

A.: "Yes, I mean, and we've had…"

D.: "Just demonstrate, really, with an example, to really hit home…"

A.: "And leaflets. I mean, we've… I've found that putting leaflets in appropriate places… We haven't… I mean, we personally have never done a lot of other advertising, you know. I mean, in the paper, if there's ever an article in the paper, we always put addresses and… for people to approach and it's mainly been from talks, hasn't it?"

D.: "Or from personal experience, as A. was. You know, with a friend. Um, I don't think we've ever had to go hard to recruit".

A.: "No, I've never…"

D.: "We've never had to sort of… If we had, I don't know what we would've done. But, what we were doing seemed to, in general, get the flow of people and it was more money than people and the two went hand-in-hand, actually. The money came and people came with it".

A.: "I've never *personally* tried to recruit any of my friends. I've never… I mean, they all know what I have done, but I've never pushed it because I feel that if people wanted to do something, they would ask, like I asked my friend. You know, she said… I mean she wasn't

actually trying to recruit. She said she'd been… she came late to something and she said, 'Oh, I've had to go for an emergency coffee morning'. And I just, which is unusual for me, I said, 'Well, what was that?'. You know. And then she explained. But I personally don't recruit hard ever…"

D.: "We haven't had to, you know".

A.: "…Certainly, if anybody's interested, we would tell them and so on…"

T.: "Then, a similar question: If recruitment hasn't been difficult and hasn't been something you've been focusing on necessarily, how about raising money for the organization? What kind of tactics have you used? Is it the same use of a personal story? We talked about the pseudonym 'Gloria'".

D.: "Well it depends on the circumstances. When we first joined, the group was run on a budget of £3,000.00 because it was purely visiting and we didn't have the problem of destitution. So, money wasn't a problem then and there was a charity who were friendly with S. [one of the founding members of the group] who would give the £3,000.00 or so we needed. So, there wasn't a great focus, at least when we first started. When we started to build up things, we began to need a bit more money. But, until destitution came, we weren't rushing around, trying to get money, particularly, we were more, you know, 'Just concentrate on the visiting'. And then, when it did come it was a major thing. You know, we really needed thousands. In our minds, I don't know what figures we had, but £30,000-£40,000 instead of £3,000.00. And so, we had to make a decision then: 'How is the charity going to solve the problem', or are we going to say, you know, 'It's beyond our capabilities'? That was a big decision and we said we'd go for it and…"

T.: "About how long ago was that?"

D.: "About six years?

A.: "Then, we went to the churches…"

D.: "We had to think where would we most likely get the money from".

A.: "We we did: we got money from the churches, which gave us confidence to go forwards. And then we started applying to trusts and charities and… some of them said yes. So that was another bit of encouragement…"

D.: "I think the churches were the main… We went to about 15 or 16 and asked them for about £800.00… for asylum-seekers and all of those churches, most of them, anyway, gave the full amount. Some gave less. Others had collections. But, of course, it was a wonderful way of making people aware… So, the churches were the obvious place to start and it worked very well and it's something that you could back to and one of the churches did ask us, 'When are you coming back?' …[Raising money] is obviously a problem for a cause like asylum-seekers. You know, if it's dogs or children in need then it's easier, but in fact, I think it surprised quite a lot of people that we were able to raise, for the last two or three years, £80,000.00 a year, which is quite a lot, you know, particularly for that sort of cause. …I think a next step may well be to approach individuals of influence, i.e., with a lot of money and a lot of rich friends. I mean, that's what many charities do and we haven't done that. You know, they go to Lord Sainsbury and tell him a good story and you get a check, straight back".

A.: "…Some places are not now wanting to give for destitution, because they see it as a black hole, whereas if they give it to you and you use it for something specific, then they see…"

D.: "Change in the government, campaigning… Organizations were more willing to give money if it helped to change the attitude in the country than they were to give money if people were destitute".

A.: "And you can see, if you could change the government to allow asylum-seekers to work, then, that would be great. But we were campaigning on both fronts. You know, in the meanwhile, people are on the street. I mean, that's where we saw the greatest need, to give people a room. I mean, most people would say to us, if they didn't have the subsistence money, if they could just have the room, they'd find a way…"

D.: "…It's always difficult [raising money]. Maybe that's one of the heartening aspects: people were so positive when they were aware of the situation. It gave you encouragement that people would come up and say, 'What can we do?'… I guess we haven't spread it too much outside of the churches. We have done some talks to various other organizations".

A.: "We haven't seemed to have had much money from groups like that [the Rotary Club & cetera]. But, if you could get…"

T.: "Tell me a little bit more about 'Gloria'. I know that she's a pseudonym, but how did she come about and is she a conglomeration of people's stories, or is she…"

D.: "No, she's a specific asylum-seeker".

A.: "Yeah, she's a young Congolese girl. Who… I mean, how much do you want to know?"

T.: "I just want to know how her story was chosen among all of the other stories you'd heard and how that came about because certainly a central part of educating people about SWVG and spreading the word is personalizing it and telling individual stories…"

A.: "I think she was one of the first people that we got to know, really…"

D.: "She was there at the beginning and at a time when we were needing to advertise and she was fairly obvious, wasn't she, from that point of view?"

A.: "Yes. I mean, she was a woman, she was very vulnerable, she was found crying in the back of a church. You know, so she was literally taken off the streets, so she had nowhere to go, she was very sick and she wouldn't tell the doctor, so it was one of the visitors who really pushed and said to her, 'Tell them this', and 'Tell them that'. You know, and got her to hospital and got her accommodation and got her a visitor and so, you know it's a progression because, you know, not only was it a very sad and shocking story, but… there's been positive outcomes all the way along".

D.: "It meant it would illustrate both the plight of asylum-seekers in the worst sense: the persecution in once sense, the way they were treated over here; as well as demonstrated how we could help and the help we could give because the need was so great, the help we could give was quite across the board, it wasn't just, you know, money, it was getting her involved in different groups and getting involved in the medical, getting a surgeon, doing her legal. You know, it sort of encompassed the good things that we were able to do and the negative things associated with… the problems of the asylum-seeker, all in one. Having said that, I mean, if we'd done it a year later, we could've had several stories of a similar…"

A.: "Yeah, but also the fact that she, after all this, and all the work was done, you know, she has applied and has every right to have Section 4, but her case, she had a letter from the Home Office saying that her case couldn't be looked up for another five years. You know, so she's a sort of 'legacy' case. So, it's the whole gamut, even after all this, this and this it shows the failure of the Home Office… It shows everything *and* in a vulnerable woman, so it has everything…"

D.: "Well, we could have several cases like that now, you know. It's just that that was the first one".

A.: “But not maybe with the whole range…”

D.: “And she’s been right with us for a long time”.

A.: “And some of the people that we knew, who probably had similar stories, have been sent out to Liverpool or wherever they send them now and have continued their cases there, so we haven’t got personal contact at all”.

Finney, Nissa, and Esme Peach. "Attitudes Towards Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Other Immigrants: A Literature Review for the Commission for Racial Equality." Ed. Commission for Racial Equality: Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees in the UK, 2004.

Interview with Aliya Mughal: Senior Press Officer,

the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture

Conducted on October 17, 2008

Based, in part, on *Attitudes towards Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Other Immigrants: A Literature Review for the Commission for Racial Equality* (Finney and Peach).

1. Ted Way: "Good afternoon. I'd like to begin by asking you to tell me a little bit about your background and how you came to be involved with survivors of torture and their cause".

Aliya Mughal: "Okay. My background is in journalism. So, I started off as a reporter and then progressed to be a news editor on a series of local papers and then started to kind of look at the issues from the other side of the fence. So, not just reporting the stories, but looking at how they are developed. So, working with the human interest, the actual subjects of those human-interest stories. So, I decided to go into human rights for that reason and then joined the Medical Foundation about two… just over two years ago as the senior press officer".

2. TW: "And why survivors of torture and not, for example, refugees in general or asylum-seekers in general?"

AM: "Well, I think um… survivors of torture are quite… They're almost like an unknown in the whole debate about asylum and refugees. You hear a lot of talk and a lot of discourse about economic migrants, illegal immigrants, but you don't see so much focus on torture survivors. You do, you know, kind of off-hand, but they can get dropped into the conversation, I think, without context. So, I was quite interested in finding out more about that. And also, you

know, it's always a challenge to work with a subject matter and an area and an issue that is, to an extent, underplayed".

3. TW: "Okay. What do you personally… Or, maybe we can talk organizationally, what does your organization think about asylum-seekers and refugees?"

AM: "Well, in our experience, asylum-seekers and refugees are quite marginalized in society in terms of how they have to navigate an asylum that's completely foreign to them. So, you know, we are always aware of working with those difficulties. So, not only are our case workers and clinicians dealing with the psychological trauma that somebody's going through as a torture survivor, but also the practical ramifications of that, of, you know, trying to ascertain what their rights are for benefits, for welfare, for housing. So, those are all the difficulties that they face, as well as, you know, having fled persecution and torture and having come to a country where they think they can access and seek refuge. They're also dealing with ignorance, hostility sometimes in the immigration process and also from the public. So, that's what we see and what we tend to deal with on a daily basis".

4. TW: "And what do you think of survivors of torture specifically who are seeking asylum in the United Kingdom? Or, what's the organization's stand on survivors of torture who are seeking asylum in the United Kingdom?"

AM: "…They have rights under the UN Convention against torture, also under the UN Refugee Convention. If they have a genuine fear of persecution on return to their country for reasons of race, religion & cetera and then they have a right to refuge here and the people that we see we take objective, impartial evidence of the torture that they've endured. So, our view is that where that is completely incontestable, they should be provided with refuge here and also with rehabilitation. They need to be provided with the means of access to services that will give them cultural integration… Because it's not just about learning to cope with trauma, but

also integrating into a new society… rebuilding your life as is possible when you're dealing with that kind of history".

5. TW: "Okay. Thank you. And, do you think that organization's attitudes are exceptional or do they tend to reflect the attitudes of the public in general or of other organizations… other not specifically right-wing organizations, that hold clearly oppositional attitudes, but other human rights organizations?"

AM: "I think our views are very well matched with people like Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Refugee Council… all of the other organizations that deal with this particular client group. Whether those views are reflected in the public… I think over the past, say, five or ten years, the public's views have changed. You know, you did have a very 'right-wing' sort of view. And I think there are still elements of that in society, and still in certain sections of the media unfortunately. But, as far as the Medical Foundation, Amnesty, Redress, Reprieve… all of the other organizations that campaign and work with torture survivors… You know, one of our goals is to educate the public and decision-makers about the reality of torture and its consequences for torture survivors. So, hopefully we are seeing a more enlightened shift".

6. TW: "And what would explain that, do you think? What is your perception of that shift?"

AM: "I think it's just… you do have more organizations that are trying to tell the stories of people and you do have a press that is more aware and you also have… You know, some of it is political, some various political point scoring and, you know, people will – on opposite sides of the fence – will try to arm themselves with information. So, it enters the public discourse in that way as well. But I think it's a combination of factors. You have, also, I don't think you can underestimate the public as a whole; you have people who are wanting to educate themselves. If you look at the breadth of publications on the Internet: newspapers, blogging sites… there is

so much information out there and people interacting and wanting to find information, so that's… I think there's a big move towards that and obviously there's the polar opposite: you've got the positive press and the negative press, but hopefully with that plethora you can sift… sift out the necessary and hopefully get the accurate facts".

7. TW: "Do you think, working with the press, that… Sorry to go off these questions a little bit. That the expansion of the European Union and the arrival of immigrants from Eastern Europe, has taken the focus or shifted the focus a little bit away from asylum-seekers, refugees, survivors of torture?"

AM: "I think you can muddy the issue for some people when it's not reported properly. So, when you have newspapers or people that will describe 'immigration'. They just talk about 'immigration' and swamped into that is asylum. So, you have this perception that all asylum-seekers are immigrants or that all immigrants are bogus asylum-seekers. That's one term. Semantically, it's not correct, you can't be 'bogus', you know, you can't be 'bogus' or 'illegal' if you're seeking immigration… I'm not going to go into all those details. So, it can get muddied; it can get muddled. That's an issue. But, generally, I think that when the reporting's been done about some of the people who are coming here from Poland, from Europe, I think that it's a separate issue. They're not coming here because of reasons of persecution or refuge, they're coming here because of economic reasons and… in many cases, rightfully so. But, I think that's a completely separate issue for us and, thankfully, we've not had to contend with any negative press that's been on the basis of a lack of understanding of those issues and muddying them with ours. I think in the public perception, you know, in some irresponsible reporting, I can think of a case, but on the whole, we're not having to go on the receiving end of any of that…"

8. TW: "Okay. Great. How do you believe that maybe the organization's attitudes or maybe we can go more general and say the public's attitudes, are developed and

influenced by… and we've talked extensively about the media already… but particularly how are they developed and influenced by media coverage of survivors of torture? So, maybe shifting our focus a little bit or concentrating our focus, talking more specifically about public perceptions of this population of survivors of torture. How do you think… What does the Medical Foundation do to influence public attitudes about this population?"

AM: "We do quite a lot. We do issue quite a lot of press material and also policy statements and also we do have a very active website. So, those are all the tools that we use to raise awareness. Also, fundraising: our fundraising activities are… They're also two-fold: it's about the money; it's also about awareness. So, all the material that we put out there is responsibly researched and it's also with the informed consent of clients. So, we are always trying to provide an accurate and balanced picture which sometimes does challenge the picture that's already out there, which may be well be one based on myths propagated by political rhetoric or what have you. Um, so, yes, we'll issue positive press, proactive press, we'll place things in the media. We'll also issue letters in response to views and articles and comments that are contrary to what is the case regarding torture and torture survivors. We also do a lot of public speaking: so, we'll attend seminars, conferences, schools, universities, church groups anything and across all spectrums of society where we can engage in a debate and encourage people who are either aware of the issues or not aware of the issues to kind of seek the full facts. So, yeah, we are quite active in that aspect".

9. TW: "Yeah. You touched on… answered or almost answered a lot of the other questions I'd like to ask. But, um, let me just regroup a little bit… Okay, question number six: In light of my research, very specifically, talking about press releases and maybe stories that you release, you talked about using survivors' stories a little bit. I'm particularly interested in the communications strategy of the Medical Foundation. Of

course, coming at this from a sociolinguistics point of view… Um, specifically I'm interested in the use of personal trauma narratives that may have been written for asylum cases… The use of these trauma narratives in the strategy. So, how they're used, how you integrate them into your communication strategy. And, could you tell me a little bit more about the ideas behind the strategy?"

AM: "Okay, well it's… we think it's very important and empowering to torture survivors and also important in the context of telling the story from a human perspective to actually use – I use that term 'use' – to actually 'relay' the stories of people. So, that's why we have such a focus on survivors and survivors' stories. When we actually documents those stories for press purposes or for media purposes or on our website, we do that with the explicit informed consent of the clients involved. So, really it's a case of involving clients who are ready and able, who've kind of progressed through their treatment with us to a point where they are able to actually be involved in this kind of activity because, for some people, you know, they can't verbally communicate or articulate their feelings and their thoughts or talk about their past in a context outside of the clinical environment. But, for many others, that's very important. And people that we see: we see journalists, teachers, and political activists… A lot of the people that we see. So, for them, before the trauma, it was very important to be very public and to have a voice and publically and so we'll engage with those people and we'll work on case studies that can be put into the public domain. And, we do that in such a way that it's interactive and they have a very big part in that. So, we'll tell the story… You know, we'll listen to the story and then we'll translate that into a form that can be used and it's constant involvement with that client. So, they will have approval on how the story is used: the words that are used and if they are happy with the general piece. So, that's the way we choose it. It's not a case of, 'Well, we select certain people and dismiss others'. It's also getting balance. So, you need to be able to tell the stories of men, women, children who've been through various forms of conflict, escaping different countries, so that you can, you know, you can convey the

information and respond to the points that kind of, um, illustrate the key aspects of our work and the different sorts of backgrounds that people have: the diversity, basically, of the client group that we see because no one story reflects everybody's. They're all very unique and so we try very hard to speak to as many survivors as we can, um… within, obviously, confidentiality issues, sensitivity… All of those issues are taken into consideration".

10. TW: "Okay. Great. Thank you very much. Um, would you say that this strategy was designed in reaction to other representations of survivors of torture in the media? I know we've touched on that a little bit already, but…"

AM: "I think a little bit. It's kind of 50/50, I suppose, because you are… You have to be conscious of the views that are out there in the public domain. If you need to challenge those, or respond to those then that's a necessary… a necessary part of the communications strategy, but it's also proactive. It's not *just* responding *when* there's something in the media, but it's actually proactively putting material out there and saying, 'Look, this is our stance; this is the reality and this is what torture survivors have to say'. So, *yes* we respond to what's out there in the media, but I think that more so we do more just to constantly work with people for them to pick up on things so that the *first* thing that hits the media and the *first* thing that hits the public is the true, realistic account, not the negative one that we then have to backtrack and counter".

11. TW: "Okay. Okay. Great. Thank you. In your opinion, how successful has this strategy been in raising awareness about survivors of torture?"

AM: "I think it's been very successful. Over the years, we've developed quite a few media contacts who come back to us again and again, who we with consistently. And, we have slowly seen a shift in the language used by the media. So, you know, you don't see such a confusion of terminology between 'torture survivors', 'asylum-seekers', 'economic migrants',

'illegal immigrants' & cetera. I think we have seen a positive shift. And, it's not only the media, it's also, you know, we engage with other NGOs, various people and those networks, and those relationships have really built up and not just in the London area, but in other regions. Like in Scotland: I don't know if you're aware but in Scotland, the press… the political, kind of with a small 'P', views on torture survivors are very… very informed. There's quite a big movement in the North. And we have national centers in Scotland, in Manchester, in Newcastle and a couple more opening: one in Birmingham and one in Yorkshire. So, in those areas, we're constantly networking and we do so, you know, initially there's a little bit… there's a slight lack of awareness but as we go in and we work with people and other organizations who are doing the same work as us, you do see a shift. So, I think it has been successful. Yeah".

12. TW: "Okay. I think we would probably say we've answered question number seven about choosing people to represent and not representing others; we've touched on that. Or, not even just touched on it, but covered it… I'd like to continue with question eight. Although we've talked a lot about myth busting, question number eight deals with… I write, 'I've noticed that many of the public education materials published in the United Kingdom are based on the presupposition that the public has been misled about the plight of survivors of torture and, as such, many of these public education campaigns are designed to 'bust' these 'myths'. And, I've quoted something from the Medical Foundation's website about myths surrounding survivors of torture and torture and the reality of this issue. One of my concerns as a pro-refugee researcher is that there exists a public that *is* knowledgeable about the issues surrounding survivors of torture, yet still remains opposed to giving them asylum in the United Kingdom. Could you tell me what the Medical Foundation has done to target this public? …As opposed to a public that has been swamped with myths about torture and survivors of torture… that there exists a public that knows, that maybe isn't surrounded by these myths, that has a

pretty good knowledge base about the topic but still doesn't necessarily believe in asylum in general or in providing asylum to survivors of torture".

AM: "I suppose that's engaging with people on a different level. So, as well as the talks and the press material that we do, we do have advocacy officers that are involved with various stakeholder groups… just various forums, where they will actually meet with high level decision makers. So, they're people that are aware of the issues. And, I suppose the public, who are very knowledgeable: they know these issues and what they need persuading of is a torture survivor's right and need to be here and to be seeking refuge as they do. So, you know, as well as, as you say, 'busting the myths', with people who aren't so informed, we're also working with higher level decision-makers and policy advisors to hopefully work on that side of things. But, I think it's always good to constantly reiterate and bring home the issues and to tell the stories of survivors to people who *are* knowledgeable, because you have to ask yourself the question, 'Why *are* they still opposed or questioning of somebody's right to asylum or just to somebody's general rights to housing and health… access to health, if they are aware of the issues?' How can they then… What is the logic of that? If you know the issue, how can you then say, 'Well, I still don't think this person has a right to refuge'"?

13. TM: "And the second to last question, and then I'll add another question talking about the style guide that we mentioned before we started recording: If you could talk to me a little bit about the public education materials published, once again, by the Medical Foundation… My experience – I've lived in the UK for two years now – my experience has been a little bit that a lot of the public education materials published here are intended for a public that is already pro-survivor of torture and are therefore 'preaching to the converted'. So, could you tell me what the Medical Foundation has done to target a public that may not already… So, going from a public, in the last question, that *is* aware, to a public that is not aware at all. So, my only concern is

things… And this is true for every organization that works in a field similar to this… is that people are not going to happen upon the Medical Foundation's website unless they are looking for it, unless they're already interested in the cause. So, how does the Medical Foundation target people who are completely ignorant to the cause of survivors of torture?"

AM: "Well, we do talks. So, we will go to… We actually ask and we are invited to go to schools, universities and churches. So people who… And often when we go to those… I often do a quite a few of those personally, you will meet people who didn't know anything about the Medical Foundation, didn't even know that you have people in this country who are fleeing torture. So, that's one avenue in. Because, when you go to those sorts of places, yeah, some of the people in the audience, they will be aware of the issue, but a majority of them may not. And, not to the extent that w explain it to them, either. Because I think people are engaged with the issues or know of the very superficial facts. So, they won't actually have thought about it on any more of a deeper level. And then fundraising, they actually… They put out material… They target people who don't know the issues and who, you know, really it's important to be informed of the sorts of people that you're living with in your fellow society, so fundraising do that. We also deal with public talks and seminars. We also go to seminars about human rights, but also different sorts of subject matters where people might have some kind of interest in this area, but they won't necessarily have associated torture with our subject matter. So, we'll go and talk to people in different arenas as well. So, hopefully, we do reach out to many people. But, you can only do what you can do. Sometimes you are going to come up against negativity and some people's complete ignorance and unwillingness to engage with the issues. So, it's just a constant drip-drip process, I think. You know?"

14. TM: "And, finally, like I said, before we began recording the interview at least, you mentioned that you're working on a style guide for the organization and, as I said,

coming at this from a sociolinguistics point of view, that's of a lot of interest to me. So, I'd be interested to talk about that a little bit".

AM: "Yeah, the style guide: it's really for internal purposes, but it's quite interesting, as you say, from sociolinguistics, because one of the issues that we're addressing in there is language. So, the language that you use to describe a 'victim' or a 'survivor' of torture, and I think that if you look at other organizations like ourselves – we spoke to quite a few people like *Médecins Sans Frontières*, NSPCC [National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children], and there's no agreed kind of rules on whether you call somebody a 'survivor' or a 'victim'. But, I think it's always important to think about that because people are individuals and you have to put them into the context of the story you're telling. While they may have been a victim of torture, they are a man, a woman, a child, who has a personal history before and beyond that trauma. But, also when people… you know, you have to speak to the clients themselves, when they come to the Medical Foundation, for instance, some of them might regard themselves as a 'victim', because they were a victim of an act that was inflicted upon them. But then, going through the journey of rehabilitation, and healing, they might one day be able to call themselves a 'survivor' because that word is very loaded. You know, somebody who's 'survived' an experience. So, you know, I think you have to think about the terminology that you use very carefully. Um, it's the same with disability issues. So, you know, when you're describing somebody who is disabled, it's a person who *is* disabled, it's not, you know, 'the disabled', or we don't talk about people collectively as 'the blind', it's 'people who are blind', or that happens to be part of their… that makes up part of their person; it's not their whole person. So, within the context of torture, I think you just always need to be aware of how a person views themselves in the journey that they're hopefully taking from what they suffered to hopefully what they might be able to recover from or learn to cope with better… because you can never really recover from torture".

15. TM: "And do you foresee, some time in the distant future, the organization being renamed at all?"

AM: "Renamed? That's a big question… There is… Why do you ask that? Because of the fix in terminology?"

16. TM: "Because I come from an organization called 'Survivors International' and they made a very conscious decision to call it that and we talked a little bit about this…"

AM: "There are discussions actually… there always have been discussions. The organization was set up in 1985, so going back more than 20 years, and at the time, it was set up by a group of doctors, so hence the 'Medical' Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture, because we were seeing more 'victims' and that's why it became so paramount that an organization was set up solely to deal with that client group. Um, but yeah, we are aware of the importance of your name, the importance of the brand: what it means in terms of the profile that you get, how people perceive you, how people perceive your client group. So, there is an ongoing discussion at the moment. I couldn't say when, or if, at the moment, it will change, but that is something that we're looking at and considering…"

17. TM: "Great. I would love, maybe within the next year as I'm writing up, be privy, at least in part, to that process…"

AM: "Yeah…"

TM: "…it's very much central to my thesis. This has been great. I don't know if you want to add anything…"

Finney, Nissa, and Esme Peach. "Attitudes Towards Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Other Immigrants: A Literature Review for the Commission for Racial Equality." Ed.

Commission for Racial Equality: Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees in the UK, 2004.

Interview Questions for Gerdy Rees,

Coordinator of *Refugee Week 2008*

Conducted on October 17, 2008

Based, in part, on *Attitudes towards Asylum-seekers, Refugees and Other Immigrants: A Literature Review for the Commission for Racial Equality* (Finney and Peach).

1. **Could you begin by telling me a little bit about your background and how you came to be involved with asylum-seekers and refugees and their cause?**

Personally, it was a bit of a wayward course. I started off by volunteering back in 2003 in Palestine, where I'd never really heard of refugees or anything; it was really in my area of interest, whereas that region of the world was. And so, I found myself spending six months in Palestine. But, as a part of that work that I was doing there, I ended up living inside a refugee camp and living with a particular family. And then, this whole issue of being outside of your own home… And, obviously in Palestine it's a lot different: they're outside of their own home but also very close to it, as well. But then, this issue of being completely outside of your own culture really started to spring up in my head. And when I came back to the UK, I started volunteering with the British Red Cross in their refugee unit as a case worker where I got to meet daily refugees and asylum-seekers from all over the world and got to hear their stories and got to hear… *had to* basically… got to sit down and listen to what had happened and why they were here. And, you know, it just sort of amazed me the concept of being outside of your own culture and suddenly finding yourself, not by choice, but by force to completely take on an entirely new way of life. Um… It petrifies me, the thought of that every happening to me: that's kind of how I got the interest. It really struck me and so, since then, I've started to work for the Refugee Council and on Refugee Week. So, it wasn't direct, but I sort of 'found myself' in that way".

2. **What do you think about asylum-seekers and refugees?**

"Refugees, in my opinion, are just people like you and me, who have found themselves in a situation – or have been forced into a situation – where they've had to leave everything they know: and everything they, you know, own: their family, their country and their culture. Um, but not by any choice. They're just ordinary people who found themselves in extraordinary

circumstances. And with that, obviously, refugees are obviously a 'victim' of something. Whether, you know, they're a victim of torture or whether they're a victim of having to… you know, suddenly having to be removed. On top of that, they are just normal people who, when they do arrive in a country, just want to rebuild their life".

3. **What do you think about survivors of torture who are seeking asylum in the United Kingdom?**

"Victims of torture… from my experience working with victims of torture with the Red Cross, it's more difficult for victims of torture to integrate into society than it would be for someone who has just been made to leave their country. Um, mostly because torture has, obviously, long-lasting psychological effects, and physical effects. So, bearing that in mind, I would say it's a tougher struggle for people to integrate into what it is… a social norm. You know, in the UK, getting on to the tube is a social norm but to a survivor of torture that can be absolutely horrifying and bring up all sorts of things that they're working to suppress or get over. Um, so it's not impossible, but I would say that it was a more difficult struggle than someone who wasn't a survivor of… who didn't go through that in their past. On top of that… just trying to rebuild a life".

4. **What do you think about other immigrants to the United Kingdom: for example, economic migrants (to use the language of public education materials published for *Refugee Week 2008*) from Eastern Europe?**

"Talking just as myself, personally, um, I have to be honest and say I've never given an awful lot of thought to the ins and outs of economic migrants. In my opinion, having not delved into it much, if someone from Eastern Europe particularly, now that they're part of the European Union, and have the free right to travel to whichever country, to work in whichever country, that's that, as far as I'm concerned. You know, it's not a plus nor is it a negative; it's just a fact of life. Our labour's um… especially with the European Union become less and less, sort of, sovereign borders, it's becoming a lot more open; it's becoming a lot more liquid. I mean, people go and work in Poland who are from Britain; it's exactly the same to me. It doesn't give… there's no plusses or negatives".

5. **Do you think your attitudes are exceptional or do they tend to reflect the attitudes of your friends, neighbours and colleagues?**

"Well, colleagues, yes, because obviously the centre I work in. And, it depends. I mean, obviously, with refugees and asylum-seekers, I would say no. There was an unfortunate time when I was made unemployed. Um, a couple of years ago. And, I had to go basically and work

for Transport of London which was to go into this completely other… this completely new sector I'd never found myself working in. And, it was the best thing that I ever had done because I basically got to meet in a working environment 'real' people, because my only sort of criticism of the charity sector is we're all very altruistic, we all have… we work toward the same goals; we're all on the same level. Whereas, if you go to any other sector, it's just *real* people, people who *are* racist, who are sexist, whether they admit to it or not, or whether they even understand that they are. But, they are. And that really shocked me. But it was great, because then you realize that you have to work a lot harder to reach that level. So, no, I don't think people do. Um, at all. You know, even my friends, sort of, who know what I do, their first question is, 'Oh, you help refugees here or you help refugees overseas?' It's interesting: that's always the first question, because it's loaded. If you're helping refugees overseas, that's fine, because people are in trouble. If you're helping refugees here, they obviously have some, you know, perception of what that is".

6. **Okay, I'm interested in that a little bit. Sorry to go off the set questions. One of the distinctions I have to make in my thesis is the difference between a local discourse saying, 'Refugees are here; they're our neighbours'. And, that's what I'm finding in Southampton: 'We're helping refugees because they're here and they're our neighbours'. People that *are* helping them. And, the global discourse, which says, 'Refugees are part of mass migrations and part of global issues of famine and global issues of civil war'. It's interesting that your friends make that distinction. You said that the first question they ask you is making that distinction. Do you think that they see refugees and asylum-seekers more as of a global issue or a local issue? And you said that they'd be happier if you were working with them abroad, but not so happy that you're working with them here. If you could expand on that a little bit…"**

"I mean, assuming, I mean, never having really discussed it at any depth, it's just I see it as a loaded question. Um, I would say that people would perceive it more as a local issue. If, you know, if we sat and chatted about the global issue, of migration, they'd understand that and see the ins and outs and the reasons, but when it becomes personal, when it becomes local in their community, this 'Other', you know, it takes on a different form to them. There's no correlation between the reasons globally and the actual results of someone actually ending up in their community with a different way of life, a different culture and different norms, which may completely contradict with the norms of that person. You know, the host community. So I think, when it's local, that makes a big difference. Because suddenly it's not just a moral thing of 'yes or no', it's actually real; it's there".

7. **"So, these are people that may, in some general sense, support refugees but wouldn't necessarily support a refugee moving in next door or…"**

"Sure, for a myriad of reasons, I guess: from misconceptions of why refugees come. Regardless of whether they know an awful lot about the global issues, people can sometimes fall into *not* differentiating between an economic migrant and a refugee, or whether they think refugees will sort of come and impose culture on their culture and impose changes in what's right, just to please them when, you know, we've never done it for us. These sort of things".

8. **"I'm glad that you brought that up independently, because I found it in my research as well. How are your attitudes developed and influenced? Particularly, how are they developed and influenced by media coverage of asylum-seekers and refugees? And not just maybe… If we could avoid focusing purely on right-wing media, but maybe we both… Based on what we do, based on what I did for a living, based on what you do now, we're probably both maybe not right wing in our politics. So, maybe looking at left-wing media and centre media as well".**

"Um, just to mention the right-wing media for a moment, it obviously has an agenda and it portrays refugees in a certain way, which obviously has a lasting and rippling and dangerous effect. Um, the left wing and more central media does, in my opinion… One of the lucky things that I get to do here every day is help Refugee Council in sifting through all of the national press every morning for any mention of asylum-seekers or refugees and it does give you a good understanding of the sort of portrayal in the centre or the left, which… it's not exactly positive, but it's certainly not negative. It's a lot more factual. And how that influences me personally… Well, it's interesting because having worked… Having worked very closely along with the Red Cross, and my job here… I don't have an awful lot of interaction with refugees unless they're colleagues. So, just your average man or woman on the street who happens to be a refugee, I don't have any sort of contact with them. So, I don't generally discuss stories of why they came here. It's in the media that these sort of things come up. You'll very rarely see in the media stories of refugees who are, you know, running a really successful business. You only see, in my opinion, you only see refugees when they're talking about their trouble… why they've had to come here and now they're building a new life. It doesn't really mention what that new life is. So, all it makes you look at is stories of people. But, it always does portray them as a victim… As the one who is seeking help… And whether it looks at them in terms of… as a success story, as someone who came here and got help or someone who's just coming here and we haven't got any help to give them".

9. **In light of my research, I am particularly interested in the promotion materials published for *Refugee Week 2008*. Specifically, I am interested in the campaign titled "Reintroducing Refugees", which begins by stating that refugees are "…funny, talented, sexy, groovy, sporty, spicy!" Could you tell me a bit about the ideas behind this campaign?**

"Sure the title, 'Reintroducing Refugees', I was quite proud of. It took me a long time… it sounds simple. It took me a long time to come up with that, to kind of put it in a way that basically explained the entire premise behind the campaign, but it was that, it was literally just 'reintroducing' what a refugee is to people. So, it wasn't, just to go back to the previous question, it wasn't portraying refugees as spongers or scroungers. Nor was it portraying refugees as people who were coming here for help. It's portraying refugees just, as I mentioned earlier, as people who have found themselves in extraordinary circumstances but now want to just get on with rebuilding the life that they had before, or to get over what they had. So, someone who's come here… In the 'Reintroducing Refugees' section, we have profiles of people who we found … or we thought were either quirky or interesting or who had particularly made a success of themselves. We have a young businessman of the year, Peter Padua, was granted young businessperson of the year for his IT company, which has really launched off. We also had an aspiring model, a heavyweight boxer… things that people can really relate to. So somebody's looking at this person and they're thinking, 'Oh, this guy's a flamenco player. I love flamenco playing. I'm also a flamenco player, but he's a refugee'. So, what they don't look at is, 'Oh, this person's a refugee, that's what I notice about them'. They think, 'Oh, this person is a flamenco player', and they find out… And it reaches onto that level. You know, the similarities that people have the fact that… Just as you'd look at someone on the street and think, 'Oh, this person's got pink hair, um, that's really cool'. You wouldn't think, 'This person's a refugee' and then think, 'They've got pink hair'. I'm not really putting it that eloquently, but… The basic premise was exactly that: reintroducing what people… How people perceive refugees and how they're represented".

   a. **Was this campaign designed as a reaction to other representations of refugees in the media?**
      i. **If so, which?**

"I wouldn't say that it was… Refugee Week, um, its entire premise is designed, um, to not 'combat', but to sort of provide the *yang* to the *yin* that is the left-wing portrayal or the charity or the NGO portrayal which is always, for obvious reasons, portraying refugees as victims to gain popular support for their cause. And what this does obviously is… it just puts, again… It

just boxes refugees, so they're not in a box of 'sponger' and 'scrounger', but they are in a box of 'victim', 'helpless person that needs our help'. What Refugee Week wants to do is take that away, take those boxes away and just let the people be people, because that's exactly what they are. So, not to box them at all, but really to take out those bits that you can't box: the really individual bits and to flaunt that. That's what Refugee Week is about, that's particularly what that Reintroducing Refugees campaign was focused on".

i. **Do you think, to go off the questions again… Do you think that there's ever a risk of maybe presenting them in too positive a light… insomuch that people might say, 'Well, these people are doing fine. They don't need my help'. I don't remember the name… Padua, he's got this company that's doing very well; refugees don't need my help. Has that ever crossed your mind?"**

"Well… the point of it is… It's not of Refugee Week and the way we present refugees… We do focus on refugees and not people seeking asylum, so not asylum-seekers. Obviously, we have some portrayal of asylum-seekers, but the premise is for those who've already been granted status, who are the refugees, that's sort of our main area, and those are the perceptions that we're trying to change of those people. So, people who wouldn't necessarily need help; they just want to be themselves, but they want to move away from this stigma that has followed them. Um, in terms of, for the asylum-seekers, um, not getting help… I dunno. I mean, obviously in the Reintroducing Refugees section, the interviews focus mainly… For example, with the flamenco player, wasn't a refugee, was an asylum-seeker; he didn't have status yet. Um, and that interview focused mainly on his love of flamenco, where it came from, and that really highlighted that. But, it also mentioned the fact that it did… it brought up that he hadn't yet gotten status and that he was trying to get it. So, in a subtle undertone, yes, it raised it, but not overly. But whether that would make people think, you know, 'They don't need my help', is not really something that we put much thought into, to be honest".

b. **In your opinion, how successful was this campaign in raising awareness about the contributions of refugees to British society?**

It's difficult. Refugee Week is a hearts and minds campaign. So, it's very very difficult to measure, which brings a whole new load of problems as an organization. But, it's difficult to measure. I would say that it is… I mean Refugee Week itself is getting bigger every single year: more and more events, more and more diverse stuff happens across sectors. So, for example, when I first joined about four years ago, I would say 70-80% of the people who have gotten involved in Refugee Week were the 'converted'. You know, they were people working

in charities or people working with refugee issues or things like this. But now, I'm finding more and more people involved with Refugee Week are from business sector and the arts sector or private sector: all sorts of different organizations. It's really diverse. Mostly through the premise that we've been promoting: people to work in partnership with organizations that they don't usually work with. That's the way of getting the audience: to bring people in. Um, so, in that way, it's very successful in reaching new people. Whether these people were sort of fence sitters before, we have no way of telling. It's unfortunately not measurable at all in the short term. It's going to be a long time before we can see any substantial results, I think, for Refugee Week. It's unfortunate… It's not really a question I could answer because it's not measurable, but our gut feeling is, 'Yes. It's successful and it's growing'".

10. From reading the promotional materials for *Refugee Week 2008*, it's clear that you have chosen to represent certain asylum-seekers and refugees, highlighting their stories and even including their photographs. Could you please tell me how these particular individuals were chosen?

"Sure. We set out… Obviously, Refugee Week is a partnership agency of 11 different organizations. So, we're working very closely with our partner agencies that are based up and down the country. What we wanted from this campaign was to find… Originally we wanted to find about 11 individuals who were, as the title suggests, either sexy, quirky, funny. Eleven individuals who were either refugees or asylum-seekers, who had something about them that just made you go, 'Wow. You're really cool'. Something about them that just sort of stuck out. Um, which is very difficult to find in your regular host society, so it's quite an issue to narrow it down to just refugees and asylum-seekers and then find some really particularly cool ones. Um, so what we set about is getting each of our different partner agencies from across the regions of England and in Scotland and Wales, just to hunt all their contacts, all their clients, their clients' friends, um, and just put a message out, you know, 'Get in touch if you have any particular interests in sports or in music'. So, we chose… We got a whole bunch of candidates there and some interesting and some just frankly *not* interesting. Lovely people, but no one would particularly want to read about them in that context. And we wanted to be as diverse as possible; we wanted to be as geographically diverse as possible as well. So, we had quite a few candidates from the London area, but we didn't want to focus… We wanted to make sure that we had representation from Wales, from Scotland, from Leeds, you know, to really promote the absolute nationwide issue that is Refugee Week, in particular. So, that's how we went about it and then we got their contacts, who had introduced us, so whichever agency introduced us to that particular individual, *they* led the interview. We came up with questions

and the basic structure of the interview, but *they* led the interview. Obviously, for reasons of people's own security… Not physical security, but just to make people feel safer and at home when they're… not necessarily telling their story, but talking about themselves. So, that was the process".

11. I've also remarked that many of the public-education materials published in the United Kingdom are intended for a public that is already pro-refugee and are therefore "preaching to the converted". Could you tell me what *Refugee Week 2008* has done to target a public that may not already be aware of refugee issues or, if they are aware, may not support the refugee cause?

"This is where Refugee Week is different from other agencies that promote the refugee cause. Whereas other agencies focus a) on refugees being victims – trying to get *help* for refugees, really pushing the reasons why someone would come to seek sanctuary, where obviously that can be taken up by the 'converted' and pushed, but for people who know those reasons but just, frankly, still don't agree, it's not gonna get through to them. Where Refugee Week stands out is that it doesn't take that approach at all. It does focus on people. So, being a refugee is secondary; being an individual is primary. But Refugee Week's entire premise is creating spaces of encounters. So, what that means is all the 500 or 600 Refugee Week events that take place each year, all have the premise of being a space of encounters, where local refugee and host communities find themselves together. Whether they're invited to an event or they happen to bump into a Refugee Week event, and suddenly just find themselves encountering refugees, encountering the 'Other', and the reason… the thought behind this, is, 'When you suddenly find yourself encountering this person who's not the statistic and who's not this person you're reading about on a website, but there they are: this is Jade and I've been chatting to her for half an hour, turns out she's a refugee'. You know, if you don't get on personally, then you don't get on personally. But, if you do, then you suddenly find yourself enjoying the company of a refugee. And so, I think that can break through the barriers of the 'unconverted' you suddenly bump into someone and suddenly discover the issue, but also those who really do not agree that refugees should be here. If they suddenly find themselves chatting to someone that they're genuinely getting on with, that can really have a deep and lasting effect I think. Again, being a 'hearts and minds' campaign, that's exactly where we're trying to get at".

12. I've noticed that many of the public-education materials published in the United Kingdom are based on the presupposition that the public has been misled about the

plight of asylum-seekers and refugees in the United Kingdom. Therefore, many of the materials are designed to "bust" the "myths" surrounding this population. For example, the *Refugee Week 2008* website reads, "There is so much misinformation circulating about refugees and asylum-seekers in the media that it is sometimes hard to work out what is reality and what is myth". One of my concerns as a pro-refugee researcher is that there exists a public that *is* knowledgeable about the issues surrounding asylum-seekers and refugees, yet still remains opposed to their cause. Could you tell me what *Refugee Week 2008* has done to target this public?

"It's a space of encounters and if somebody who is opposed to refugee causes cannot just get on personally with someone who's a refugee, for their own ideology, there's not much that Refugee Week can do about that. That's not… That's not what we're trying to change. We're offering opportunities, but we can't force beliefs. If they're not listening to facts, or, if they know the facts, but as far as they're concerned, 'that's that', there's very little I think that can be done about that. That's always gonna happen".

"Would you like to add anything?"

"I don't know if you've heard of the *Small Actions* campaign. The *Small Actions* campaign is basically as it sounds. It's gonna be… We're promoting 20 tiny actions, sort of everyday things that everyone can do. And, the point of the actions is to change the way that refugees and British-born people see each other and interact. So, it's things like, 'Watch a movie which is about exile', 'Or, take a friend who happens to be a refugee…' or 'Take your granddad down to the local refugee community organization and have tea'. Again, it's all about creating encounters and it's about breaking down the perceptions of refugees. So, if you've never met a refugee, get in touch with a talks group and get a refugee to come and speak at your school, for example. Each of the ideas was chosen to appeal to a particular audience: to churches, to schools, to book groups & cetera… It's taken the space of encounters and trying to make it… Trying to empower everybody to be able to do that. So it's taken it away from us and creating those and to everyone creating them, in the simplest way. So, the fact that you don't even realize that you're doing it. That's kind of the…"

Finney, Nissa, and Esme Peach. "Attitudes towards Asylum-seekers, Refugees and Other Immigrants: A Literature Review for the Commission for Racial Equality." Ed. Commission for Racial Equality: Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees in the UK, 2004.

Interview Questions for Krista Armstrong, Refugee Services Coördinator

British Red Cross

Conducted on November 08, 2008

Based, in part, on *Attitudes towards Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Other Immigrants: A Literature Review for the Commission for Racial Equality* (Finney and Peach).

1. I wanted to start by asking you how you got into this kind of work to begin with.

"Okay, it was a little bit by chance, because I was interested… always interested in working overseas with refugees or displaced populations and I was very interested in refugee issues. I… my background was: I did international relations at Saint Andrew's [University in Scotland]. I was brought up before that in the area around Geneva. So, I was aware of international issues and the International School did quite a lot with the UN and things like that. So, that was always an area I sort of wanted to work with. So, I became interested in the Palestinian issue through international relations and did my Master's on… Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. And that sort of introduced me to migration issues and forced migration issues more generally. So, then, when I was looking for work, I was a volunteer first here with the British Red Cross, as an information officer and then went to work in Geneva with the Canadian Mission and IOM [The International Organization for Migration] on their counter-trafficking programme and then came back for this job. So, it was sort of like that: I fell into it. It was sort of more migration…"

2. And why, going back to the very beginning… Why migration? Why is it of interest to you personally?

"Well, I think it was sort of through the perspective of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and the lack of rights, the lack of opportunities. I mean, they've been in the camps for 60 years… more than that now. Yeah, since 1948. Some of them came later, obviously… The whole perspective of not having many rights. Then, I looked at the *sans papiers* [undocumented immigrants] in France, and the vulnerability of the populations, especially in the West, when they don't have access to certain services or… media attitudes. Um, just more generally, any migrant, anywhere in an environment, is generally more vulnerable… they don't have resources and

stuff like that. So, it's just… Through that perspective, I became interested… I guess looking at the rights perspective as well. And identity, too…"

3. Okay, if you could expand on that as well…

"Well, no, just the identity of someone, for instance, who's Palestinian, who's in Lebanon, who's been in Lebanon their whole life, and yet their identity is very much Palestinian and the identity actually becomes stronger, sometimes, when you're abroad than when… And also, at the same time, you adopt certain aspects of the culture where you are locally and I think… I've learned a lot more since I've been in this job about particularly Britain or particularly Western Europe and the way it's treating asylum-seekers and refugees and… in general, I was just quite interested in forced displacement. I mean, trafficking is perhaps the extreme example and I learnt, you know, a lot about their programmes and things like that, through them".

4. What do you personally think about asylum seekers and refugees?

"I don't like the term 'asylum-seeker' anymore because I think it has lost its meaning, but, I think seeking asylum is… you know, a genuine human right and I think it's been sort of taken out of the definition. It's too charged at the moment. I think the actual term 'asylum-seeker' is too charged. Um… I think 'refugee' term is still… I mean, this is just in terms of the terms, people are people and, you know, that's a category more, a definition category, through what they've come for rather than actually… I don't think it's good to lump somebody as an 'asylum-seeker'… I see, as the Red Cross, you know, we're working at the moment with asylum-seekers and refugees as opposed to all migrants, but we're looking to work in other areas: domestic violence victims and other areas. That's just because of the service… the nature of the service, but in general, I don't like defining people through the terms. But, I just think it's perhaps some of the most vulnerable people in society though… Not always, not necessarily, it depends what… obviously what people would have been through. But I just think, because of the experiences, because of the trauma that perhaps they would have experienced in their home country: the displacement, having to leave, uproot from your home country, not being able to go back, people you might have left behind, close family members… I think there's a number of… so many things they take with them when coming to this country and I think it's never someone's first choice to leave and not come back. Like, many people who can… and see the situation improve, would love to go back, but there's other persons who've just been through too much trauma in that country; they just can't face… I'm working… We work with people at every stage: so we work a lot with failed asylum-seekers and destitute failed asylum-seekers. So, they're amongst the people that can be the most vulnerable, whose lives were suddenly changed… the fact that they had to leave but they would rather be street

homeless around London than return. So, yeah, I think they're the most… one of the most vulnerable categories of migrants".

5. **What do you think about survivors of torture who are seeking asylum in the United Kingdom?**

"By the way, I don't really like overusing the term 'vulnerable', but it is… Um… survivors of torture? We were talking about it earlier and how that's such a strong word, it such a loaded… and it could be people that are victims of horrendous acts of violence as those… You can't… I guess it can be very difficult… There are such different experiences and people's own coping mechanisms and I think it's… It's something that I just can't fathom. Torture is something I just find very difficult… I was reading Helen Bamber's [the founder of the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture] book a few weeks ago and I had to put it down… You know, the description of everything that had happened to someone. I think when I work with clients. You go into that… We try not to… If we don't need to, we won't go through it, especially if we've got notes, we'll just go, 'Oh, we'll take the representations that you've already…' and we can just send that over the organization we're referring them to. So, often the Helen Bamber Foundation, the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture… But often it's um… individual experiences that the person's been through. It's their own state that they're at at that stage that's the most affected. Some people will have tremendous strange and have had support through their families and still have that support and are engaged with services and doing fine, and are doing okay and it's just like anything that can happen to someone that would need to be considered. I'm not finding my words very well!"

6. **And you mentioned earlier, before we started recording, an anecdote about clients of yours who self-identified as being survivors of torture: if you could just tell me that again so that we could get it on tape, as it were.**

No, it was just a few weeks ago we get… We're not a drop-in service, as I mentioned, we usually have appointments but a lot of clients do come in often. In this case, there were three Congolese women… I wasn't in Reception, I was just upstairs on the phone with the receptionist and I just asked, 'Could you just find out what it's about?' One person was like, 'Oh, I'm destitute, I have nowhere… I'm staying somewhere AND I'm a survivor of torture! I've survived torture!' And the next person said, 'Oh, I'm a survivor of torture, too!' And there was a third person, who sort of said that in the background and I was like, 'Okay!' And it was just, it was quite amusing in a sense because they were saying it with some humour, which was perhaps positive in some sense… And we did do the assessments and they were all victims of some violence. I think they were all three of them Congolese. I don't think they came together

necessarily, but it's a day when there's another drop-in at another centre, so I think they might have just sent them over independently. But, I saw one of them the other day, and she's, I mean, a tremendous woman, very good sense of humour, but very fragile as well. I mean, there's certain experience… And, well, she said it, and there's strength there and it has had… There's obviously underlying things, but you don't just wanna focus on that. We're focusing on the overall situation: we're focusing on, you know, getting people into the support they need, the security. She had psychiatric help: the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture, you know, she'd already received counselling from there for quite a long time. So, but it was interesting that they said… You know, I guess that that's what they thought might get attention, or was something…"

7. **If you could expand on that a little bit. Do you think that they were saying this because they felt like it was maybe a way that they could guarantee that they'd be seen that day or a way to guarantee that they'd get their foot in the door?**

"It could have been both. I could have been, I think… They weren't saying it, I think, to be, you know, I don't think they were saying it… Yes, I do think they were saying it to get some sort attention, but it wasn't being very overdramatic about it. It was just sort of saying, 'Yes, I am too, actually'. You know, I guess it was more that. I guess it was the ease with which you say it, I guess, because obviously, when you're discussing the client, it's not the first thing you would ask, so you wouldn't touch on those kind of things unless you needed to. So, yeah, it was interesting that they said it right away".

8. **What do you think about other immigrants to the United Kingdom: for example, immigrants from Eastern Europe?**

"I think they're doing tremendous work for the economy, for the British economy, to be honest. I think there's been so much migration in the last few years to Britain that the attitudes have become much stronger against migrants generally. You know, the government's been tightening up on non-EU migrants… All the problems… That they see as problems, politically. Um, so they've been trying to tighten up border control against asylum-seekers, or access to the country. So that's been tightening up, but I think… Migrants, there are so many categories. I mean, I'm a migrant, in a sense: I'm half British, half Canadian, but still I wasn't brought up here. I think, migrants from Eastern Europe, you know, I have a few of them who are my friends, and it's not… There are a lot of expectations on coming to Britain. It's not, sometimes you can see by the fact… I mean, this flat was redecorated, for instance, by some Bulgarian workers, and they were fantastic. They work with my mom; they worked really hard. I mean, I think there are some values that Britain has actually lost. I know that's

another issue, but I feel that British workers who were working in the hallway didn't do much work and cost a fortune, whereas the Bulgarians had very strong sense of family. You know, they got along really well with my mom, they did fantastic work; they worked extra hard, and actually, we were like, 'No, don't work on Sundays!' And I admire… I mean, I don't wanna generalize, I think there are a lot of… people are people… I just think that migrants get a hard time anywhere: Eastern Europeans are no exception. I do think that more work can be done to raise awareness about what people's situations might be if they come to the UK without any of their own resources. For instance… my colleague had a family of… I think they were Polish, actually, a family with three young children: they just came, turned up in London and wanted to be housed, and they were actually excluded under welfare rights and things and that was interesting to actually work around. And, many people do turn up, thinking that they will find a job and they will be okay. And, I think that there's maybe a little bit more awareness that could be done in their home countries about what people's rights are if they come. And, there could be more organizations here that actually… I think people are not always aware what their rights are. The paths of migration often cross and we've had, not recently for example, some Romanian clients, before the A2 came into… The accession of Romania and Bulgaria into the EU and they were asylum-seekers, they were actually *Cegens* from Romania and they had had their own experience of violence from what they were telling me and then, no, they're no longer to claim asylum or asylum support because technically they have the right to remain in Britain. So that was a group where actually the situation in Romania has not improved, but, you because they're EU, it's considered safe and also you can't claim asylum from another EU country because you have freedom of movement anyway. Although the jobs they can access are… they have much fewer rights than do other migrants from other accession countries… I do feel that between economic migrants and refugees there is a difference. There are new forms of refugees, obviously; it's not political anymore. They talk about 'environmental refugees', which is almost a misnomer, because it doesn't make sense, but for want of a better word, you know, that's going to maybe a new phenomenon. But I do think that those who flee for safety, you know, for reasons of their actual danger to their persons and, you know, whether they've experience violence or not, I do feel that there are more in need, if you like, of status, of protection, perhaps, than economic migrants. But then, people will go to such extremes also for economic reasons. So, it's a difficult one to categorize. But, I do think that amongst those refugees, those types of migrants, refugees still have a certain level of need… You could have quite an argument… I'm sure that there are different perspectives on it, it's just… People that have been victims of violence… It's one thing, yes, to have your currency devalued [as it was in Argentina during that country's economic crisis]… It's a different matter

to actually experience extreme violence and be at risk of that further violence and not to be able to heal from that as well. I think there're many more vulnerabilities".

9. Do you think your attitudes are exceptional or do they tend to reflect the attitudes of your friends, neighbours and co-workers?

"I think, to be friends with me, you probably have to… I think, generally my co-workers… We have the same sort of ideals and the same ways of looking at things. I think amongst my friends, generally, too… As we were saying earlier, refugees are often people who have often been politically active in their own countries or for ethnic reasons… Even so, it's such a plethora of different backgrounds, you can't… I've been so impressed by the people I've worked with and met. But generally, all of my friends agree".

10. How have your attitudes been developed and influenced? Particularly, how have they been developed and influenced by media coverage of asylum seekers and refugees?

"I don't read the *Sun* or the *Daily Mail*. I don't read those papers. I just know that they're the examples, or I'll read the statistics, you know, how their sales will go up if they put a story about an asylum-seeker and a violent story, even if it's not the same story, but if it's next to each other, by association, on the cover, sales go up. So, I like, as you mentioned, the *Guardian* and the *Independent*, you know, sometimes cover it, not dramatically, not to a great extent, but at least, the *Independent* more than the *Guardian*. So, 'Have I been influenced by the media?' Not so much. It's more through reading… I really like the publication *Forced Migration Review* which is from Oxford, and I try and read more things about refugee law or just try and read other things, rather than articles in the press. The *Times* did a coverage on the Red Cross last year and they interviewed some of our clients and they did actually very positive… they took a very human perspective actually. You know, someone from Ethiopia was a victim of torture and he was disabled and street homeless at the same time so he was actually on crutches and street homeless and he was interviewed and I think he affected the journalist quite a lot and she wrote a very positive story about his life as well as about two other asylum-seekers that she met, so that was a very positive story that was in the media. But, in general, yeah, I haven't been massively influenced by the media.

11. There are many worthwhile charities vying for your time and money. Why have you chosen to work with the British Red Cross and not with the RSPCA, for example?

'…I was brought up near Geneva and I always held the Red Cross in very high esteem: it's always been something where I really like the neutrality principle… I really like the

humanitarian principles of the Red Cross movement and I think it's something that… I personally admire people who work for national charities and I think my background has been very international and I was brought up not in Britain… I'm more interested in international issues as well, and I think, for that reason, I was attracted to that. But, with the Red Cross, I just really like the fundamental principles and the fact that it's… I mean, it's not Amnesty International: Amnesty International do wonderful work. In fact, sometimes they use our cases. We'll introduce cases to them for them to write reports but we actually see the client and 'get the stories', if you like because we can't do public… we don't publically campaign; everything goes through private channels. If there were things that were really concerning [us] we'd take them to higher levels within the Red Cross… and they would take it to governments on a private level… I was interested in working with refugees… I applied for a job here and I applied for a job working in Afghanistan, so I guess my interests are working with international organisations. And, I'm actually very… this sounds odd, but I'm very interested in conflict and how it affects populations and looking at trying to provide humanitarian assistance in those areas and… looking at the treatment of prisoners of war and detainees and all of those issues. Perhaps that's why…'

Finney, Nissa, and Esme Peach. "Attitudes Towards Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Other Immigrants: A Literature Review for the Commission for Racial Equality." Ed. Commission for Racial Equality: Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees in the UK, 2004.