

Oxford Brookes University

Sent to Coventry:

The role played by social networks in the
settlement of dispersed Congolese asylum seekers

Fraser Murray

Department of Planning

Oxford Brookes University

September 2015

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the award of
Doctor of Philosophy

Abstract

The interplay between the UK's asylum policies and the response by asylum seekers in cultivating friendship ties and social networks is the focus of this thesis. The importance of this research lies in how it demonstrates the way friendship ties develop among dispersed asylum seekers and how they are integral in bridging the void between asylum legislation and the refugee experience.

As a result of asylum policies and their implementation, a liminal space emerges which asylum seekers are forced to inhabit while awaiting a decision on their asylum claim. This research is based on a framework that identifies how UK asylum policy shapes this liminal space and its relationship to the refugee experience. Building on existing academic research focused on contrasting bridges which offer asylum seekers a means of mediating passage, this thesis presents friendship ties and social networks as highly adaptable mechanisms. Such mechanisms function alongside both state-supported structures and RCOs but, more importantly, compensate for the shortcomings of both in terms of service provision.

Based in Coventry, a dispersal city, the research provides an original angle, focusing on Congolese asylum seekers who have never previously formed the basis of study in the UK. It shows how asylum seekers' daily lives are affected by the asylum regime and how they develop friendship ties and social networks as a means of mitigating the difficulties of living in the UK. By providing rich and nuanced accounts of asylum seekers' friendship development---the dynamics and longevity of these friendships---the research puts the experiences of asylum seekers within the context of the refugee experience and presents how the imposition of dispersal forces asylum seekers to develop alternate strategies to survive. These strategies are led by key individuals who support others in forming, developing and mobilising social networks and social capital.

Contents

Abstract	3
Acknowledgements	12
List of Stakeholders interviewed as part of research	13
Chapter 1: Introduction	15
1.1 Introduction	15
1.2 The Aims and Objectives of the Research	16
1.3 Asylum Policy and Dispersal	16
1.4 Conceptual Framework.....	17
1.5 Relevance of Research/Contributions	20
1.6 Methods	20
1.7 Congolese Asylum Seekers in Coventry.....	20
1.8 Setting the Scene for the Research.....	21
1.9 Outline of the Thesis.....	22
Part One- Foundations	25
Chapter 2: Refugees, Legislation and Policy.....	26
2.1 Introduction.....	26
2.2 The Refugee Framework and Definitions.....	29
2.3 British Immigration Legislation to 1999	34
2.4 The Circumstances leading up to the Implementation of the 1999 Asylum and Immigration Act36	
2.4.1 Pull and Push Factors to 1999	36
2.4.2 Negative Media/Politics.....	37
2.4.3 Post 1999 Arrival of Asylum Seekers	39
2.4.4 Government Reaction.....	41
2.4.5 New Labour and Asylum	42
2.4.6 Demagnetising the UK: New Support, Accommodation and Dispersal	42
2.4.7 Asylum Support.....	43
2.4.8 Dispersal	44
2.4.9 Co-option of Regional Consortia.....	45
2.4.10 Impact of Dispersal on Asylum Seekers.....	46
2.4.11 Role of the Voluntary Sector	48

2.5 Social Exclusion, Integration and Settlement	50
2.5.1 Social Exclusion.....	50
2.5.2 Social Exclusion and Immigration	52
2.5.3 Government led Refugee Integration Strategy.....	56
2.6 Conclusion	58
Chapter 3: The Refugee Experience.....	60
3.1 Introduction	60
3.2 Refugee Experience	60
3.2.1 Strengths of the Refugee Experience	60
3.2.2 Weaknesses of the Refugee Experience.....	61
3.2.3 Incorporating the Refugee Experience into the Research.....	62
3.3 Liminality	63
3.3.1 Abject Cosmopolitans and Abject Spaces.....	64
3.3.2 Structuration and Structure and Agency	65
3.4 Developing coping mechanisms	66
3.4.1 Social Networks.....	66
3.4.2 Social Networks and the Refugee Experience	68
3.4.3 Strength of Weak Ties	70
3.4.4 Social Networks and Integration	73
3.5 Social Capital	76
3.5.1 Introduction.....	76
3.5.2 Social Capital and Trust	77
3.5.3 Social Capital and Migration.....	79
3.5.4 Strong and Weak Ties.....	80
3.5.5 Strong Ties	81
3.5.6 Weak Ties	82
3.5.7 Weak Ties and Friendship Ties	83
3.5.8 Social Capital, RCOs, Networks and the Refugee Experience.....	83
3.6 Refugee Community Organisations (RCOs).....	85
3.7 Conclusion: Key concepts and how they develop the conceptual framework.....	90
Chapter 4: Research Methods	93

4.1 Introduction	93
4.1.1 Research Strategy; Phenomenology Epistemological Standpoint	94
4.1.2 Conducting a Phenomenological Inquiry.....	95
4.2 Case Study as a Strategy	99
4.2.1 Rationale for a Single Case Study.	99
4.2.2 Matters of location- Why Coventry?	99
4.2.3 Why the Congolese Community?	100
4.3 Researching Networks: The Friendship Tree.....	101
4.3.1 Sample	103
4.4 Interview Process	104
4.5 Analysis.....	106
4.5.1 Defining a Social Network and Social Capital	108
4.6 Longitudinal Research.....	109
4.7 Interviews with Key Actors	110
4.7.1 Avoiding the Pitfalls of Researching Asylum Seekers: Participant Skepticism and Ensuring Personal Safety and Dignity in the Research	110
4.7.2 Participation of Asylum Seekers	111
4.7.3 Engagement with Participants: Methods for the Phenomenological Study of Asylum Seekers	112
4.7.4 Befriending and Building Confidence	113
4.7.5 Interviewing Experiences.....	114
4.7.6 Research in a Second Language.....	115
4.7.7 Participation of Non-Asylum Seeking Actors.....	117
4.7.8 Interviews with Stakeholders	117
4.7.9 Other Methods Used- Photographs.....	118
4.8 Ethics and Politics of Researching Refugees.....	118
4.8.1 Interviewees: Matters of Position and Ethics.....	118
4.8.2 Leaving the Field	122
4.9 Strengths, Weaknesses and Limitations of Strategy	123
4.10 Conclusion	124
Part 2: Empirical chapters	126
Chapter 5: The Coventry Experience.....	127

5.1 Introduction	127
5.2 Historical Background of Migration to Coventry up to Dispersal in 1999	128
5.2.1 The Dispersal Process	130
5.2.2 Placement (Dispersal) of Asylum Seekers in Hillfields	132
5.3 Hillfields	137
5.3.1 Poor Accommodation	139
5.4 Local Organisational Response	143
5.5 Conclusion	147
Chapter 6: On the Road to Coventry	149
6.1 Introduction	149
6.2 Arrival and Bewilderment	150
6.3 Temporary Accommodation	153
6.4 Circumstances of Isolation	154
6.5 Existence of Friendship Ties	159
6.6 Evolution of Contacts	160
6.7 Evolution of Friendships	161
6.8 Transition to Dispersal Accommodation	168
6.9 Dispersal and Developing Networks	171
6.10 Developing the Friendship Trees (forming of the social network)	172
6.11 Findings from Friendship Trees	173
6.12 Key node/Liminal Expert	175
6.13 Role of Key Node/Liminal Expert	176
6.14 Entering a Social Network	180
6.15 Personal Motivations	183
6.16 Links between Networks/ Organisations	186
6.17 Conclusion	186
Chapter 7: The Functions of the Network and the Roles of Individuals	193
7.1 Ties that Provide Support	193
7.2 Member Responsibilities	195
7.3 Degrees of Closeness in Network	199
7.4 Learning about Daily Life in Coventry	201

7.5 Finding food.....	202
7.6 College	205
7.7 Laundry Club.....	206
7.8 Employment	207
7.9 Formalising the Social Network.....	208
7.10 How the Social Network Functions.....	209
7.11 External Experiences of the Social Network.....	210
7.12 Conclusion	210
Chapter 8: The Network as a Crucial Part of the Asylum System	213
8.1 Introduction	213
8.2 Trust as Social Capital	213
8.3 Housing.....	218
8.3.1 On Arrival.....	218
8.3.2 Homelessness	225
8.4 Financial Support	229
8.5 Interaction with the Voluntary Sector	235
8.6 Health	237
8.7 Legal Aid	239
8.8 Perceptions of Vulnerability and Maintaining Dignity	241
8.9 Finiteness of Support.....	242
8.10 Leaving Dispersal Accommodation.....	244
8.11 Reaching the End of the Asylum Process and Beyond	249
8.12 Becoming a Refugee yet Still Relying on the Social Network	251
8.13 Long term Expectations of the Refugee	254
8.14 A Social Network or an RCO?.....	256
8.15 Being Suspicious by Remaining on the Margins	259
8.16 Conclusion	261
Chapter 9: Conclusion	268
9.1 Introduction	268
9.2 How can the Critical Exploration of Concepts such as Social Networks, Social Capital and Liminality Contribute to Ways of Understanding the Refugee Experience under Conditions of Dispersal?..	268
9.3 How Friendship Ties and Informal Networks Develop amongst Asylum Seekers and Refugees	269

9.4 How these Relationships Facilitate the Settlement Process and Help in Developing an Understanding of the Local Environment Where Asylum Seekers are Accommodated.	275
9.5 The Role that Networks Play in Developing a Sense of <i>belonging</i> within a Dispersal City.....	280
Chapter 10: Key Findings and Recommendations:.....	283
10.1 Contributions to academic knowledge are:.....	283
10.2 Refugee Experience.....	284
10.3 Liminality	285
10.4 Social Network	285
10.5 Liminal Expert.....	286
10.6 Social Capital-Trust.....	286
10.7 Social Capital	287
10.8 Refugee Integration	287
10.9 Recommendations for future research	287
Bibliography.....	290
Appendix: Examples of Friendship Trees	316

Figures

Figure 1: Conceptual model of research.....	92
Figure 2: Coventry: note that the red spot is Hillfields. From: http://www.weather-forecast.com/locations/Coventry	127
Figure 3: Map of England and Wales. Coventry is flagged in red. Map from: https://www.google.co.uk/maps/place/Coventry/@52.4136708,-3.7563024,7z/	128
Figure 4: Taken by Espoir, male aged 28, Hillfields, accompanied with the comment that the pictures look nicer than the actual area.....	137
Figure 5: Coventry Refugee Centre, taken by Juliette, female aged 29.....	143
Figure 6: The different wards of Coventry (Hillfields is in the centre). From: http://www.politicsresources.net/area/uk/loc04/Pages/coventry/election_results_2004.html	146
Figure 7: This is the main square where on warmer days participants would spend the day, taken by Claude, male aged 25, Hillfields.....	148
Figure 8: Asylum seekers' accommodation. Taken by Espoir, male aged 29, Hillfields.....	212
Figure 9: Taken from the corner where her flat was situated. Bernadette, female aged 24, Hillfields... 260	
Figure 10: Part of her route from the flat to the shops. Taken by Bernadette, female aged 24, Hillfields	266

Acknowledgements

This thesis has taken quite a long time to complete and has really drawn on the patience of many people. I would like to first thank my supervisors Sue Brownill and Nando Sigona, first for their patience but more importantly their support over the entire research process. They have both been extremely diligent in providing me with advice and guidance at every step of the way. I would also like to thank Roger Zetter who was my initial supervisor for his encouragement and advice in the early stages of the research.

I want to thank Lea Esterhuizen for her long discussions on the use of differing research methodologies when researching refugees. To Trish Hynes who has acted as sounding board too often over the years, providing me with sound advice and encouragement. Also thanks to Stefan Preuss, Alex Mann, Mairi McLeod, Doug Harris, Rebecca Williams, Barbara Harrell-Bond, Graham Toft, Kedia Paye, Kristy Johnson, Phil Baker, Deniz Demir and Bila Inogwabini for all their advice and support from an academic and non-academic perspectives. Thank you to Veronika Kokina, Izzy Quilter, Anne Dawson and Natalia Chan for helping with the formatting and developing the friendship trees.

Getting this thesis completed is greatly due in part to people who had nothing to do with the actual research. I am deeply indebted to Martin Webster for his generosity when everything seemed lost. I will never forget that. My parents have been a constant source of support throughout the process and deserve much credit for this research. Callum, Seth and Nina though they don't really understand, have been inspirational.

Finally this paper is about an incredible group of people who let me into their lives and provided me with a window of learning which proved to be a very humbling experience. To Serge and his friends I hope that this paper provides some sense of justice living in such unjust circumstances. It is to them and my parents that I dedicate this research.

List of Stakeholders interviewed as part of research

West Midlands Strategic Partnership - WMSPARS- representative

Coventry City Council - Housing representative

Osaba Family Centre - Manager

Coventry Refugee Centre - Deputy Manager

Coventry Peace House - Manager

Coventry Refugee Centre - Caseworker

Coventry City Council - Hate Crime Coordinator

Coventry City Council - Head of Housing Policy and Services

Coventry City Council - Housing Strategy Manager

Anchor Centre PCT - Centre manager

List of Participants in the research; the names of the participants are pseudonyms.

- 1) Serge, Male 29
- 2) Espoir, Male 28
- 3) Dada, Female 28
- 4) Adolphe, Male 33
- 5) Joseph, Male 40
- 6) Antoine, Male 25
- 7) Claude, Male 26
- 8) Adele, Female 22
- 9) Dax, Female 30
- 10) Juliette, Female 29
- 11) Pascal, Male 25
- 12) Ibis, Male 22
- 13) Jean, Male 27
- 14) Danielle, Female 25
- 15) Bernadette, Female 24

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

I was in Coventry for a couple of weeks. I didn't know anybody, I kept on getting letters from the Home Office but I did not understand them. I took them to my agent but he was not helpful. I met Dada who translated the letters for me, my asylum application had been rejected and I needed to make an appeal. Dada explained what I had to do; she introduced me to other Congolese who helped me as I was told to leave my house a couple of days later (Joseph, Male, 40).

An investigation of the interaction between the mechanisms of dispersal and the formation of friendship ties and social networks amongst asylum seekers is the focus of this research. Through an exploration of the experience of dispersed Congolese asylum seekers in Coventry, this research broadens the understanding of social networks, placing them within the restrictiveness of the asylum regime, and presents the complex, evolving and adaptive relationship between the two. The research offers a detailed analysis of how friendship ties can develop into a social network, how they function and the relationships that develop within them. To this end the research places the evolution of social networks within the concept of the refugee experience.

To broaden the understanding of social networks of asylum seekers, the research explores UK asylum legislation and policy. There is a significant body of academic publications that have demonstrated the restrictiveness of the asylum process. Concepts such as liminality, social networks and social capital, as defined in the literature are used as tools to enable the research process. These tools provide the means of understanding how asylum seekers form relationships as coping mechanisms.

This research demands attention because it demonstrates how asylum seekers develop social networks as a means of support; identifies how essential social networks are in the daily lives of asylum seekers by providing direct support as well

as acting as a bridging agent to ensure that individuals receive support from agencies that are funded to provide asylum support and advice

1.2 The Aims and Objectives of the Research

Aims: to investigate the interplay between the mechanisms of dispersal and the formation of friendship ties and social networks amongst asylum seekers.

Objectives:

- 1) To discuss how the critical exploration of concepts such as social networks, social capital and liminality can contribute to ways of understanding the refugee experience under conditions of dispersal.
- 2) To ascertain how friendship ties and informal networks develop amongst asylum seekers and refugees.
- 3) To determine how these relationships facilitate the settlement process and help in developing an understanding of the local environment where asylum seekers are accommodated.
- 4) To discuss how the role of social networks continues beyond the confines of the asylum process.

1.3 Asylum Policy and Dispersal

Asylum legislation in the UK has increasingly become based on the concept of deterrence (Bloch and Schuster 2005; Kusher and Knox 1999; Solomos 2003; Zetter 2006). Over the last 20 years new asylum legislation has frequently been introduced. The changes in legislation show that the government has been pursuing an increasingly restrictive agenda aimed at deterring potential asylum seekers from deciding to come to the UK. Deterrence is not a new feature of overall UK legislation (Hynes 2007). For example, the legislative changes brought about by the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act, is important background for this research as it was at this point the government removed asylum seekers from mainstream forms of state support and established a separate department within the Home Office responsible for accommodation and support of all new asylum claimants.

In the latter part of the 1990s an increase in the number of people claiming asylum in the UK coupled with the length of time the Home Office was taking to decide on individual asylum claims led to increasing pressure on local authorities to provide accommodation for asylum seekers in London and the southeast. Until 1999, asylum seekers were supported by the local authority in which they resided. Dispersal was originally an idea of the Tory government. It was to build on the dispersal that was already been conducted by London boroughs who were placing asylum seekers in their care in cities in the north of England where accommodation was available and cheaper. To alleviate pressure on local authorities in London and the southeast, New Labour looked to 'burden sharing' (Robinson 2003) by moving new asylum claimants to areas of the UK with sufficient unoccupied and available social housing. Dispersal was a key element of New Labour's 1999 Asylum and Immigration Act (Schuster 2003).

Coventry is one of the areas that the Home Office identifies as a dispersal area. The city had established ethnic minority communities but did not have a significant presence of the types of new ethnic groups being dispersed. In the 12 months after the 1999 Act came into effect over 1700 asylum seekers were dispersed to Coventry (Coventry City Council 2003). Important to this research is the fact that the city did not have an already established Congolese community and had very little in terms of refugee related services available. The importance of dispersal and a segregated support system are paramount to this research in that it created the liminal space where asylum seekers were forced to negotiate their existence.

1.4 Conceptual Framework

To explore the objectives set out in 1.2, this research follows a framework based on the relationship between the idea of the refugee experience and the asylum process. This is explored further in the literature review. The entire process is an integral part of the refugee experience in the UK, and specifically the review of policy and legislation will present how asylum policy and practice produces the liminal space in which asylum seekers must live for the duration of their asylum claim. Conceptually this liminal space is the focus of the research. Expressly, this paper shows how social

networks and social capital are used by asylum seekers as a support mechanism during the period that they inhabit the liminal space. It is in this space that the conceptual typologies introduced in the literature review will be investigated to understand whether they can improve knowledge of the lives led by asylum seekers.

There is a rich academic body of research on concepts such as social networks and capital; equally there is an emerging amount of research that applies these concepts to migrants and refugees (Griffiths et al. 2005, Hynes 2007, Zetter et al. 2006). As this thesis focuses on asylum seekers, it is important to investigate whether these concepts are applicable to the circumstances of the participants in this research and whether newer interpretations need to be proposed that can provide a theoretical context to the findings of this research. Defining and critically exploring concepts in the first two chapters provides the tools for analysing the findings in the empirical chapters (Chapters 5 through 8).

The first objective of critically exploring concepts such as social networks, social capital and liminality is realised by defining the timeline of the 'asylum journey' and identifying the existence of friendship ties and social networks throughout the migratory experience and how they develop. By adopting phenomenological research methods, using interviews with refugees to show their experiences at various stages of the asylum process; the research places the experiences of the participants as part of the concept of the 'refugee experience' (Agier 2008). As a counter balance the research presents the actual process of dispersal and how it was implemented and managed in Coventry. This enables an understanding, throughout the research process, on the impact of asylum legislation on asylum seekers and how they develop friendship ties as a means of support.

The next objective focuses on defining the social network and how it fits and functions within the liminal space. The first task is to identify the factors that lead a series of friendship ties into becoming a social network. Understanding what motivates the participants to be involved and what benefits they gain from being in a social network is a fundamental feature of this thesis. An underlying concept of the research is the role that trust plays in bringing people together and how that helps the development of the social network (Hynes 2007; Ryan 2008). Part of this

research investigates how dispersal brought forward individuals, liminal experts, who were able to recognise the value of friendship ties and social networks as a means of negotiating passage through the liminal space. These individuals have the ability to draw on numerous relationships of ‘weak ties’ that are used for the benefit of the network.

The third objective focuses outward and analyses how the social network interacts with agencies in Coventry who provide services to asylum seekers. How social capital is identified and mobilised within the network is explored. Social networks are considered vital reservoirs of social capital (Putnam 1993). Research suggests that for refugees’ social capital and social networks are synonymous (Griffiths et al. 2005). The third objective identifies the *push-pull* factors that define the work of the social network as a response to asylum legislation. Importantly, this objective builds on having defined the social network to demonstrate how social capital is sourced and shared amongst its members. Conceptually, Putnam’s ideas on both bonding and bridging¹ are looked at and how these play an important role in the development of the social network, a form of the “art of the weak” (de Certeau 1984). This objective also explores what happens when someone exits the asylum process and is no longer supported by NASS². This section brings to the fore the importance of social networks to asylum seekers and discusses the relationship with the concepts of integration (Ager and Strang 2002; 2008) and social exclusion. By looking at an individual network this thesis is able to produce intimate examples of how exclusion develops from daily experiences which can erode trust and have indelible consequences on an individual’s ability to integrate. This is presented in a manner that demonstrates the role that the social network plays in aiding individuals to negotiate passage.

¹ Although bonding and bridging stem from Putnam (2007) this research incorporates more recent work that has made the terms more applicable to migrants linkages. These include Collyer (2004), Ryan (2008) among others.

² NASS, or National Asylum Support System, was the Home Office department directly responsible for the support of asylum seekers which was set up in 1999.

1.5 Relevance of Research/Contributions

This research demands attention as it provides further insight into the life experiences of dispersed asylum seekers. The key finding shows that for the participants in this research the social network is an essential, and the sole bridging and plugging mechanism for gaps in the asylum process. An awareness of the effectiveness of social networks by service providers, is discussed. The manner in which the research was undertaken provides a wide range of evidence which reveals the day to day lives of asylum seekers and enhances an understanding of the refugee experience in the UK. It also demonstrates how asylum seekers actively use friendships as a means of supporting each other.

1.6 Methods

The phenomenological approach, as advocated by Berger (1966), was used as a means to examine the production of common sense knowledge and how it is disseminated and internalised. This was a logical research method to use given the aims and objectives of the study. Participants in the research were asked to compile a friendship tree and asked to talk about how they met people and the relationships they formed. The use of phenomenological enquiry in achieving the research objectives fits in the framework of attempting to understand the experiences of asylum seekers by listening to how they share their stories, comprehending how they internalise these experiences and how the experiences influence their decision making.³

1.7 Congolese Asylum Seekers in Coventry

The asylum seekers involved in this research are predominantly from the Kivu region of the Democratic Republic of Congo. The DR Congo is located in central Africa and is one of the largest African countries. The history of DR Congo (known as Zaire prior to 1997) has been dominated by conflict, repression and corruption (Rotberg 2004).

³ This will be further explored by incorporating Appadurai's approach showing how an individual makes sense of their surroundings (1988)

After ruling the country from 1965, Mobutu Sese Seko was overthrown by a rebellion led by Laurent Kabila who was supported by Rwandan and Ugandan armies.

A year after overthrowing Mobutu, the Ugandans and Rwandans turned against Kabila when he demanded that they leave DR Congo territory. A conflict ensued mainly in the Kivu region in the north east of the country. The conflict encompassed a variety of different militias with shifting allegiances, the Rwandan army, its allies and its pursuit of former Interahamwe (Rwandan Hutu militia responsible for leading the genocide in Rwanda against Tutsis in 1994) hiding in DR Congo. The conflict concluded in April 2003 with a South African imposed peace process (Weismann 2004). However, instability still reigns in the Kivu region. By the end of the war up to 3.5 million people had been killed in the conflict (International Peace Committee 2003) and a further 3.4 million were displaced.

This conflict created a large displacement of people inside DR Congo and also led to a diaspora into Europe and North America. The participants in this research arrived in the UK after 2000 and claimed asylum. Upon application for asylum and support from the government they were subject to dispersal and were subsequently dispersed to Coventry.

1.8 Setting the Scene for the Research

The reasons for pursuing this research are based on my own experiences working with asylum seekers and refugees in the UK since 1999. Having worked in Coventry, I know how the asylum process operated locally. Over time I managed to build a large number of contacts within the different asylum/refugee communities. Working on the frontline with asylum seekers enabled me to develop an understanding of the experiences of people being dispersed to the city (the implications of this on the research are discussed in the Chapter 4). I developed an interest in the daily life experiences of dispersed asylum seekers and, in particular, how they developed knowledge that helped them. I understood the manner in which the asylum process operated from the standpoint of the government, but I was more interested in learning how someone with little experience of living in the UK made sense of the dispersal system and the strategies they created in order to cope.

1.9 Outline of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into two main parts and nine chapters. A general synopsis of the structure and composition of the chapters is outlined in this section.

Part One presents the historical, theoretical and epistemological background that underpins the study.

Chapter 2 explores the policy and legislation affecting asylum seekers in the UK, in particular policy that impacts on the experience of settlement. This chapter describes how the evolution of asylum policy, particularly during the New Labour government, created an exclusionary situation for asylum seekers in the UK. The chapter shows the historical progression of asylum legislation and how policy was developed and implemented at a national level in the UK.

Chapter 3 looks at the background on the current debates of the key conceptual ideas with which the research engages. It provides a discussion of the refugee experience and the associated survival strategies that refugees have adopted in order to negotiate their journey to countries of asylum. Concepts such as social networks, social capital and community organisations are presented to highlight the strategies that refugees adopt to exist in unfamiliar environments. Also included is a discussion of integration as one of the main problems that refugees face once through the liminal stage and through the process of settlement.

Chapter 4 focuses on the epistemological framework of the research. This chapter examines the issues associated with researching refugees and presents the rationale for the use of phenomenological research methods with refugees. Furthermore, the chapter presents the research structure, including: how the research was undertaken; friendship trees; the size of the sample; engagement with the participants; researching in a second language; analysis of data; matters of location and the role and the position of the researcher (including the role of the researcher who worked in the city with refugees). The chapter also considers the ethical and methodological considerations when conducting research with refugees.

Part Two of the thesis has two strands; the first provides a clear focus on how dispersal and asylum policy was executed in Coventry. The second strand contains the empirical chapters on the refugee experience. I have chosen to contextualise the objectives by making the chapters linear, mirroring the passage through the asylum process.

Chapter 5 builds an understanding of the way that dispersal was introduced and managed in Coventry. By explaining how the dispersal policy unfolded in Coventry the various actors intrinsic in the placement and support of asylum seekers are introduced and their participation in providing the knowledge to individuals to increase social participation is examined.

Chapter 6 focuses on network development and evolution connected to issues of proximity and dispersal. The chapter reveals how social networks are not just restricted to the time participants enter the asylum process but are evident throughout other stages before they make a formal application for asylum. The erosion of trust is explored as a key element in explaining the long term impact that social networks may play in moving new status refugees from being socially excluded.

Chapter 7 explores the functions of the network including the roles of individuals. It focuses internally on the framework of the *social network* in Coventry that forms the basis of this research. This starts with the key node or central figure of the network and includes the roles and functions of the participants. The chapter highlights the key factors that bind the social network, looks at whether membership in the group is exclusive or restrictive, and outlines how social capital is developed and shared amongst the members and whether the network overlaps with other networks and organisations.

In Chapter 8 an investigation is presented on the crucial role the network plays for research participants in the asylum system. This section will look at how the social network acts as a mechanism for plugging gaps for asylum seekers as well as bridging between asylum and refugee statuses. In addition, the external relations of the social network are examined. This chapter is based on evidence from participants which

places the relevance and role of the social network within the framework of asylum legislation. The evidence discussed in this chapter establishes how the social capital that exists in the social network is used to support its members during periods of strain. It also provides compelling evidence that the statutory delivery of support for asylum seekers is problematic and that social networks, though informal, do provide an essential service. Evidence is provided that shows how the transition stage from asylum seeker to refugee is problematic and highlights the importance of the social network in this phase but also questions the long term impact that the social network will have on the lives of the participants.

The conclusion in Chapter 9 brings the thesis together, by reviewing the key findings of each of the empirical chapters. These key findings are examined against the aim and key objectives of this research and provides a platform for further research in these areas.

Part One- Foundations

This part discusses the epistemological, historical and theoretical foundations of the research. The first chapter sets the scene by identifying refugees, asylum seekers and the evolution of UK asylum legislation with particular reference to the implementation of restrictive asylum policy. The second chapter examines the conceptual tools and theories used in this research, in particular scrutinising the concepts that identify the space that the participants in this research occupy and the coping strategies that they adopt. The third chapter discusses methodological and ethical topics related to researching refugees in general and this research in particular as well as questioning the role of the researcher, and the impact that the research will have on the research participants.

Chapter 2: Refugees, Legislation and Policy

2.1 Introduction

The overall aim of this chapter is to critically explore the policy framework within which this research is placed, by providing one side of the dual narrative approach. The chapter begins with a discussion of how refugees are defined within immigration legislation, then follows with a look at the evolution of UK immigration legislation and in particular asylum policy. An exploration of how liminal space is created by the policy of dispersal is also discussed. In addition, against the backdrop of the political circumstances which have led to asylum seekers being dispersed to Coventry, the *wider picture* of a country which politically and socially is distrustful and suspicious of asylum seekers is presented.⁴ Part of the aim of this chapter is to present how legislation and policy has resulted in a repressive atmosphere in which asylum seekers are not only excluded from statutory services but are also excluded by members of the local communities and services based where they were dispersed to due to political and media misinformation. Having looked at dispersal, the chapter briefly turns to a discussion on refugee integration and social exclusion. These contested concepts form part of a UK government discourse which has had an impact both on policy and on asylum seekers.

Table 1 History of British Immigration Legislation: key points

1905 Aliens Act	The act led to the exclusion of ‘undesirable aliens’. These were people who did not have the means to support themselves (or their families). As a result they would become a burden on the state.
-----------------	--

⁴ A public survey conducted about asylum seekers, refugees by IPSOS in 2002 showed that attitudes towards refugees and asylum seekers were quite negative and that understanding the scope of numbers coming to the UK were grossly overestimated (IPSOS, Social Research Institute, 2002, http://www.icar.org.uk/Asylum_Seekers_and_Media_Briefing_ICAR.pdf).

1919 Aliens Restriction Act	This act led to strengthening the position of the Home Secretary in deporting ‘aliens’ who were residing in the UK. The legislation also made it a criminal offence for aliens to be agitators in the trade union movement.
1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act	The act brought into effect controlled entry into UK. This was by the imposition of a voucher scheme made available for Commonwealth citizens based on professional competencies (such as skills and academic qualifications).
1968 Commonwealth Immigrants Act	This act led to clarifying who had the right to abode in the UK. It defined those who had right to abode as those born or naturalised in the UK (including UK born grandparent)
1971 Immigration Act	This act led to the formulating of immigration rules to be vested in the Home Secretary. It also led to the curtailing of primary immigration from Commonwealth into the UK. It also led to the mandatory implementation of those without right to abode to have work permits.
1981 British Nationality Act	This brought into effect children born in Britain but not of British citizens would have the automatic right to nationality rescinded.
1987 Carriers Liability Act	This act enabled the Government to be able to impose fines on airlines who accept passengers who do not have the correct documentation.

1988 Immigration Act	This act led to the Government to have the Right to family reunion for male workers from the Commonwealth to be withdrawn. Also the deportation of those without appropriate documentation made easier.
1993 Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act	This act brought into effect the withdrawal of the appeal rights of visitors and students immigration appeal rights. It also enabled the 1951 UN Charter for Refugees incorporated into law. This means that now there is in place a process to assess asylum claims.
1996 Asylum and Immigration Act	The implementation of law that leads to asylum seekers (and other groups) being made excluded from non-contributory benefits.
1999 Asylum and Immigration Act	This act brought into effect that asylum seekers were now separated from mainstream support system, NASS. It also brought into law that Immigration officers had heightened ability to enforce controls for asylum seekers. There was also the imposition of more stringent carrier restrictions, cutting amount of legal aid available to asylum seekers and creation of a single appeal stage.
2002 Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act	Introduced further restrictions on the Immigration Appeals Tribunal to assess claims based on human rights grounds. The act brought into effect Section 55 (which was asylum claimants not claiming asylum as soon as possible refusal of NASS

	support).
2004 Asylum and Immigration (Treatment of Claimants, etc.) Act	Made it illegal to enter the UK without a valid passport. Led to the implementation of a new Asylum and Immigration Tribunal to speed up decision making on asylum cases.
2006 Asylum and Immigration Act ⁵	Act enabled further reduction in the right to appeal and increased the role of non-Home Office officials to prevent illegal employment.

2.2 The Refugee Framework and Definitions

Before discussing the legislative and policy framework it is important to be clear on definitions and understandings of refugees and asylum. The 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees is the key legal document in defining who is a refugee, their rights and the legal obligations of states (www.UNHCR.org). A refugee is defined as:

A person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being

⁵ No further Immigration Acts have been inserted as the research was conducted before any subsequent legislation was implemented.

outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.⁶

The UK is one of 134 countries who have signed the 1951 Convention. As a signatory of the Convention the UK has three clear responsibilities to refugees' provision:

- Protection - this is the implementation of policies and procedures that protect refugees;
- Equal rights - legal processes implemented that will enable applicants to become recognised refugees and invest in them the same rights as other citizens;
- Non-refoulement - the legal means to prevent applicants from being returned to countries in which the individual's personal safety cannot be guaranteed (Convention Relating To the Status of Refugees, UNHCR 1951).

The Convention and how it is applied also affects the settlement of refugees in Western Europe. In the UK, the Convention is effected by restricting the definition to a small number of potential refugees and not providing protection in all circumstances (Harvey 2000). For example a number of participants in this research lodged appeals under the Human Rights Act as their initial claims had been refused, because it did not fall under the terms of the Convention.⁷

This restrictiveness of the Convention is analysed by Tuitt (1996), who argues that the Convention was not formulated solely for humanitarian purposes. Instead it was devised as a means of reducing the financial burden placed on third party countries due to the increase in refugees fleeing from conflict and human rights abuses in other areas of the world. Important to this thesis is Tuitt's premise that asylum law restricts the recognition of refugees under the Convention definition, which in turn

⁶ Article 1 of the Convention as amended by the 1967 Protocol provides this definition of a refugee

⁷ For participants who had their asylum claim refused and were making an appeal under the Human Rights Act any positive outcome was temporary. This is due to the fact that asylum seekers could only be granted refugee status if the merits of their case fell within the 1951 Convention definitions. However, if claimants were granted status under the Human Rights Act leave to remain would only be granted in a temporary capacity.

denies the refugee individual identity. She further expands on this argument by highlighting that by the Convention imposing a single identity on a diverse range of experiences it side-lines a large number of people who may consider themselves refugees but do not meet the strict Convention definition⁸ (Tuitt 1996).

An asylum seeker is a person who has formally applied for asylum and therefore wants to be recognised as a refugee, but whose application has not yet been decided. In the UK the use of the term asylum seeker in a legal sense refers to an individual applicant who has made a claim for refugee status with the Home Office (The original office responsible for processing asylum claims, the Immigration Nationality Directorate, was amalgamated into the Home Office in April, 2007). While the Home Office deliberates the merits of an individuals' case they will be given asylum seeker status (Refugee Council 2002d). As is discussed in the empirical chapters, the status of asylum seeker brings with it limited rights and limited access to support from the state and the voluntary sector. The 1951 Refugee Convention is based upon the understanding that individuals cannot always be guaranteed personal safety in their home country by their own government. The UNHCR (United Nations High Commission for Refugees 1951) point out that individuals migrate for numerous reasons; however it is the need for humanitarian protection that provides a legal differentiation for refugees. The UNHCR states that the flight of refugees is due to factors such as economic, ethnic, political, environment of upheaval or unrest and human rights abuses. It must also be recognised that the specific reason for departure may be difficult to discern (Convention Relating To the Status of Refugees, UNHCR 1951).

Following in this vein Spencer (1994), in her research into refugees in the UK, concurs that migration flows into the country can be broken down into three categories; settlement, temporary labour and asylum seekers and refugees. Spencer also points out that trying to accurately distinguish between these three can prove problematic. Kunz (1973; 1981) argues that in the case of refugees and asylum

⁸ It is now widely known that the Refugee Convention criteria does not recognise a range of experiences that people claiming refugee status have endured. This includes victims of rape and child soldiers. In the UK, cases that fall outside of the Convention criteria are tested under different articles of the Human Rights Act.

seekers, the circumstances which led to their departure from their country of origin and their personal background will have a direct influence on the settlement process in a third country. The settlement process will be different from other migrants, due to the extreme experiences of the refugee. It is not only the background experiences of the individual that influence the settlement process, gender also has an impact on this process. Kofman et al (2000) demonstrate that how refugees are defined is biased towards women. Women's activity, particularly in states where the social norms restrict their movements, is often in informal social movements, which are not always recognised as political (73). The refugee determination process embodies gendered assumptions that do not allow women's specific experiences to be dealt with appropriately (Crawley 1997).

Globally the number of migrants doubled in the thirty years between 1970 and 2000 (IOM, 2005:397). Prior to 1960, developing countries generated a large volume of refugees. Western countries were not overly concerned about the situation as the majority of the refugees were resettled in the same region (Zolberg et al. 1989:228). Since the Second World War civilians have increasingly become targets of human rights abuses and account for 90 percent of deaths in contemporary conflicts (Castles 2003:50). Defining refugees based on the Geneva Convention is becoming increasingly difficult as many claimants do not fit the model enshrined in the convention. The process of refugee determination is based on the assumption that it is possible to make clear cut distinctions between refugees and "economic migrants", and between forced and voluntary movement, distinctions that in reality are increasingly blurred (Bloch 1999).

At the end of 2010 the UNHCR estimated that there were around 27.5 million internally displaced people (IDPs) and a further 15.4 million people who could be classified as refugees (UNHCR 2011:2). In spite of its humanitarian basis, refugee policy has often been an arm of foreign policy, and political and strategic considerations inform individual countries' decisions about whom to admit (Joly 1996).

Conflict and forced migration are an integral part of the North - South division, (Castles 2003: 5). Within a field that is convoluted and confusing, this is part of

what the UNHCR describe as the asylum – immigration nexus (UNHCR 2006: 56). Refugee flows are often perceived as *unruly* since they result from events such as strife, abrupt changes in regime, arbitrary governmental decisions, or international war, all of which are generally considered singular and unpredictable occurrences (Zolberg et al. 1989).

There are a number of academics who have argued that the evolution of asylum legislation in Europe has been marked by restrictionism, non-integration and selective harmonisation and temporary protection (Bunyan and Webber 1999; Joly 2001; Levy 1999). The period since the late 1980s has witnessed a transformation of the UK from a marginal recipient of asylum seekers to one of the most significant in the European Union (EU) (UNHCR 2004; Zetter et al., 2003a). The increase in the numbers of asylum seekers arriving in the UK has seen a related increase in the development of restrictive asylum regimes (Berkowitz 2000; Shah and Doebbler 1999). This has coincided with member states pressuring the EU to harmonise laws and policies within EU institutions which would enable a coordinated approach to curbing the number of asylum seekers claiming asylum in Europe. (Bloch et al. 2000; Sommerville 2008; Squire 2009; Zetter et al. 2003).

The media perception of asylum seekers as essentially economic migrants was based on statistics which showed that the number of economic migrants entering the EU was down but that the number of asylum claimants was up markedly in the 1980's and 90's (Joly 1996). Joly (1996) further argues that in fact governments also interpreted them as economic migrants using different means to enter the UK she argues that what is overlooked is that in the past there were migrants who could have been refugees but never applied as such as they were allowed to enter the EU without ever needing to use this route. The media portrayal of asylum seekers choosing to come to the UK over other possible destinations is misleading, research concludes that smuggler networks rather than refugees were decisive in determining their destination (Lewis 2005; Koser and Pinkerton 2002, Robinson 2002).

The public perception of asylum seekers (abetted by media interpretations) as economic migrants masquerading as asylum seekers and as a result by-passing immigration control and government legislation has led to the implementation of

more restrictive legislation on asylum seekers, whereas initial restrictions were geared towards immigration in general (Ferris 1993). EU states could not prevent all asylum seekers from entering because they were signatories of the Convention. However, by using restrictive interpretations of the Convention, hardening of border controls, coupled with national and EU measures, it became possible to restrict entry to possible claimants. This resulted in limiting the number of applicants and more so the number of applicants granted refugee status (Boswell 2001; Collinson 1995; de Wenden 1994).

Internationally and nationally, asylum legislation and policy has steadily been evolving to keep in check the growing number of individuals wanting to claim asylum reaching Northern countries. Regardless of the validity of refugee claims, governments have increasingly sought to reduce the legislative and legal channels that prospective refugees can utilise. The restrictiveness of asylum legislation plays a major role in how asylum seekers in this research develop social networks (the legislative process is explained in depth in this chapter and presents how they operate in Coventry in Chapter Five). As a result, asylum seekers in the UK are forced to live for an undefined period of time with an ambiguous legal status which prevents them from having the same rights as UK citizens. For the purposes of this research, understanding the increasingly restrictive legislative framework is integral as it provides the arena in which social networks germinate and grow.

2.3 British Immigration Legislation to 1999

Over the last 20 years, successive legislation has attempted to control the asylum process and discourage people from claiming asylum in the UK (see Table 2.1). The exclusion of 'undesirable aliens' from welfare has been a key element of immigration policy since the 1905 Aliens Act (Humphries and Cohen 2004). After the Second World War there was substantial immigration into Britain from the Indian sub-continent and the Caribbean as labour migration was initially encouraged to cover labour shortages. However, in the 1970's and 80's saw successive governments introduced legislation to curb the number of primary immigrants (single unattached or the key earner of a family) to the country.

In 1987 the introduction of the Immigration (Carriers Liability) Act effected visa restrictions in an effort to reduce the number of potential asylum seekers entering the UK (Harvey 2000). Home Office statistics showed that despite the Act the number of asylum claimants steadily rose from 4000 in 1988 to over 45000 in 1991 (Home Office 1999). In 1991 the Government attempted to introduce a new Bill in an effort to address the growing number of claimants. They reasoned that the rise in claimants was due to unfounded claims. With the approaching election the bill was set-aside until the next sitting of Parliament. It was reintroduced and provided the basis of the 1993 Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act.

Numerous researchers have argued that the 1993 Act was restrictive in its aims and that it was an attempt to limit the number of asylum seekers claiming in the UK whether their plight was genuine or not (Grenier 1996; Randall 1994). Tuitt (1996) furthers this argument in that she states that the 1993 Act led to a re-evaluation of refugees in which they became classified as the lowest form of migrant.⁹

The 1996 Act made Local Authority (LA) social services the central agents for the provision of subsistence for asylum seekers, which removed benefits for in-country applicants. This involved making decisions about eligibility based on immigration grounds rather than eligibility. This requirement to establish credibility led to a relationship based upon suspicion rather than trust (Hynes 2007; 2011).

The increasing restrictiveness of asylum and immigration policy in the 1990's made welfare even more central as it set up a parallel system of social support for asylum seekers and tied entitlement benefits more tightly to immigration status. Geddes (2000) outlined that the UK's increasingly restrictive asylum legislation was mirrored throughout Europe as the EU moved towards developing a common asylum policy.

⁹ It is worth noting that restrictive policy measures implemented by New Labour after they came into power in 1997 were in fact not 'new'. Restrictive measures can be traced back at least to the Tories' 1993 Asylum and Immigration Act (Bloch 2000; Schuster and Solomos 1999).

Until the 1993 Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act the UK had no domestic asylum legislation. The Geneva Convention was ratified in 1954 but no legislation was passed to anchor it in domestic law (Schuster and Solomos 1999). It was also apparent that policy and legislation was formulated in an ad hoc manner. It was restrictive and formulated hastily without much reflection when there were surges in asylum claims (Bloch 1999; Joly 1996b; Kaye 1994; Schuster and Solomos 1999; Spencer 1998). Hanson (2000:235) pointed out that asylum policy appears to be in a cycle of unending restrictionism.

The punitive nature of asylum reception practices in the UK is relatively widely charted in the literature, including that of academics and researchers (Bloch and Schuster 2005; Flynn 2005; Phillimore 2006;2008; Sales 2002; 2007; Schuster 2003a; 2005b) as well as agencies involved in the provision of support to those seeking asylum (Independent Asylum Commission 2008).

2.4 The Circumstances leading up to the Implementation of the 1999 Asylum and Immigration Act

2.4.1 Pull and Push Factors to 1999

The assumption that welfare acts as a magnet for asylum seekers is without empirical justification (Bloch and Schuster 2005) yet this was used as the reason to make drastic reductions in the welfare entitlement of asylum seekers (Thrandhardt 1999). Until 2001 the curtailment of welfare in Northern Europe had not had a significant impact on the numbers seeking asylum, while Southern European countries, in spite of their less comprehensive welfare provisions, had become countries of immigration and were seeing steadily increasing numbers of asylum applicants (Sitaropoulos 2000; Vincenzi 2000). Central to the debate on asylum has been the perception that ‘pull factors’ exist that make Britain a more attractive destination for asylum seekers than other countries. Consequently, a number of measures that reduce such pull factors have been introduced, which typically centred on lowering support and excluding asylum seekers (Somerville 2006). Independent research refutes alleged generosity of receiving UK benefits as a pull factor of asylum seekers to the UK (Gilbert and Koser 2003; Robinson and Sergott 2002). Studies have shown that

migration is not driven by the search for welfare benefits and that 'benefit tourism' is not widespread (Somerville 2007: 42).

Faist (2000) argues that there are a range of factors that influence the decision making of asylum seekers in deciding on a destination. Involvement in social networks is one such element (Crisp 1999; Koser, 2002; Zetter 2003). Other factors like colonial links (Bocker and Havinga 1997), already established family links (Koser 1997) and kinship networks (Bloch 1999) play a role in the decision making of migrants.

In response to growing public concern over the number of migrants trying to enter the UK, implementation of legislation on visa restrictions, carriers' liability and increased border surveillance made it more difficult for migrants to enter the country. This has pushed migrants to resort to using human traffickers and smugglers to arrange passage into Europe (Koser 1997; Morrison 1998). Political pressure led to successive governments introducing legislation aimed at controlling the legal entry of migrants into the UK (Sales 2007; Somerville 2007). The result forced migrants to resort to less stable forms of travel. These forms are invariably illegal and involve using clandestine agents and are expensive and dangerous (Koser 2002).

Focusing on the UK, restrictionist legislation included stricter border controls inside and outside the UK (Zetter et al. 2006). As a result people wanting to claim asylum sought illegal means to get to the UK (Anderson and Rogaly 2005; Bloch and Chimienti 2011; Jordan and Duvell 2002; Schuster 2011). Further to this, expulsions and deportations became a prominent facet of enforcing modern migration policies (Anderson et al. 2011; Bloch and Schuster 2005; Gibney 2008).

2.4.2 Negative Media/Politics

The literature also shows the difficulties asylum seekers experience due to the negative public attitude towards them. There is a body of literature which has presented how the development of restrictionist immigration policy is linked to the anti-immigrant attitude of the British public and the role that the media plays in

exacerbating the problems that asylum poses for the UK (Finney 2004). Politicians have frequently stated that asylum seekers and refugees receive better treatment in the UK than elsewhere (Stevens 1998). In fact the evidence provided by Stevens (1998) shows that historically the UK government asylum policy and legislation has consistently put the needs of the state before the interests of the refugee. More focus and financial resources have been spent on tightening border controls and the deterrence of asylum seekers than on humanitarian protection (Stevens 1998). In the UK the media focus on asylum seekers indicates that the “migration crisis” is generally perceived as one of forced migration (Castles 2003: 4). The extent of negative media on asylum by UK newspapers is regularly cited by organisations supporting refugees as one of the biggest problems affecting the quality of life of asylum seekers and refugees in the UK (ICAR 2004; Lewis 2005; Ouseley 2005; Phillips 2006; and Hewitt 2005).

Castles points out that immigrants have become the focus for insecurities brought by global and national changes yet in reality the “real causes are invisible, complex and difficult to influence” (2000: 128). Politicians have pandered to the negative media. Statham suggests that politicians appear to believe in the “racist public thesis” that there are untapped resources of public grievances against asylum seekers, verging in many cases on racism or outright xenophobia and that their policy proposals must compete for this political territory (2003: 167). Kaye suggests that political parties have been successful in developing a moral consensus against asylum seekers. He points to evidence that politicians are controlling the debate and deciding the direction that it should follow (Kaye 1994). Following on from this moral consensus, British politicians have been able to publicly label asylum seekers as bogus. Use of this term implies that asylum seekers arriving do not have a genuine reason for seeking refuge in the UK (Schuster 2001).

The majority of asylum seekers arriving in the UK in the 1990s are spontaneous or non-quota refugees’ (Sales 2007:145). In other words they are not part of the Gateway Programme in which people are chosen by the UNHCR to be resettled to a series of partner countries. They travel independently, often using illegal channels and must make claims for asylum upon arrival at their destination. Their status is

insecure and has become more so as legislation has whittled away their rights, while a hostile media contributes to creating a negative environment for them. The repercussion of negative media portrayals and political exploitation by politicians has misled public opinion. Grillo (2005) explored the reactions in Saltdean (East Sussex) and found almost hysterical opposition driven by a desire to defend middle class privileges alongside a narrative of local white nationalism. The actual scale of placement of asylum seekers was disproportionate to the perceptions of the UK public.

2.4.3 Post 1999 Arrival of Asylum Seekers

An anti-asylum political agenda was not just restricted to the UK. Across Europe at the turn of the millennium, parties on the left and right were placing asylum as a key agenda item (Schuster 2000). In the UK the Conservative Party identified asylum as a major election issue. The then Conservative leader William Hague stated in the lead up to 2001 general election;

Britain is no longer just a safe haven. Britain has been turned into a soft-touch.... The people who are losing out most are genuine refugees, who are forced to wait for months or years in a queue along with thousands of bogus claimants. (Interview with Jeremy Paxman, Newsnight, 31 May 1999, in Schuster 2001)

In the UK, New Labour accepted the premise of asylum being a serious issue and moved towards an exclusion-oriented policy (Schuster 2001). The introduction of the 1999 Asylum and Immigration Act was in part to counter the Tory notion that Britain was a 'soft touch'. Both Tony Blair and Jack Straw spoke openly of the need to rewrite the 1951 Geneva Convention (Grabrielatos et al. 2008).

It was increasingly common to find asylum seekers referred to as benefits cheats, parasites, frauds (Schmarotzer in Campaign against racism and facism, CARF 2001) in the national press. CARF identified that national tabloids such as the Sun and the Daily Mail were some of the most outspoken anti asylum media outlets and were known to use toxic vocabulary to describe them (CARF 2001). As a backdrop to the

heightened media scaremongering it was easy for politicians to link asylum and welfare and develop a repressive oriented asylum debate (Greenslade 2008; Kaye 1994; 1998).

In the lead up to the 2001 election the Race and Violent Crime Task Force reported that the rise in race related attacks was directly linked to the political rhetoric on asylum and immigration (Observer May 22, 2001). Interestingly Schuster (2001) asserts that there is a well-established link between racism or “race relations” and immigration. That it is constructed on the assumption that there is a threshold of tolerance which, if overstepped, will lead to racist violence. Yet a contradiction in terms arises in that the introduction of more restrictive policies, rather than alleviating tensions, may enhance and reinforce the idea of legitimate fears about immigration. The work of Leudar et al (2008) and Finney and Peach (2004) presents how this situation would impact how the UK public views migrant communities.

In 2002 when the asylum numbers were at their peak a very public ‘symbol’ of those numbers became a media staple. The refugee transit camp at Sangatte in the Pas de Calais (France) produced visual images of chaos and desperation and became indelibly linked to the surge in the numbers of asylum seekers. The political priority of reducing numbers was strongly reinforced by the desperate situation in Sangatte (Griffiths et al. 2005; Thomson 2003).

The interconnected relationship of the media and government in developing negative imagery of asylum seekers and compounding their social exclusion is demonstrated by Lewis (2005), MORI (2002), and Crawley (2005). By making exaggerated claims about asylum seekers in the media, public opinions were swayed and demands were made of politicians to provide solutions to the *problem*. Finney and Robinson (2008) further contextualise the negative asylum discourse by looking at the effect at a local level in two dispersal cities (Leeds and Cardiff). This point is of importance to this research as the national media reporting of asylum was generally far more negative than local press in Coventry (this is discussed more broadly in Chapter four).

2.4.4 Government Reaction

What is important for this research is examining the link between the negative media portrayal of asylum seekers and the introduction of increasingly restrictive asylum legislation. Anti-asylum public discontent is based on the assumption about the levels of benefit support with which the asylum seekers are provided. Political discourse is most explicit in emphasising the amount of welfare benefit given to asylum seekers. Historically in Europe the welfare state provides migrants (with residents' status) with most forms of state provision. Exclusion has existed where marginalised groups such as migrants are entitled to certain welfare support but barred from other forms (Bommes 1999; Williams 1996). Williams described how the welfare state, by restricting access to welfare benefits, defines those who are members of the nation state and those who are not (Williams 1996).

Sales (2007) points out that since the early 1990's the government has been introducing policy designed to erode asylum seekers' benefit entitlement therefore pushing them further into exclusion.¹⁰ In the UK, voluntary sector agencies and community organisations are being increasingly drawn into the provision of support for asylum seekers as their state support is curtailed. These organisations have a limited budget and have had to redirect their focus from advocacy in order to provide legal and welfare support. Increasingly, the government's view on where the responsibility of meeting the basic needs of asylum seekers fell to the voluntary sector and community organisations (Sales 2005). Schuster (2005) points out that these organisations are often forced to turn their focus away from other activities, including cultural, social, educational and political activities to focus on providing basic needs support for asylum seekers. Yet, when the government started to look at the integration of refugees, RCOs were seen as key actors in facilitating the process (Ager and Strang 2002) After coming to power in 1997 New Labour continued the trend set by successive Tory governments by implementing increasingly restrictive asylum policy (Griffiths 2005; Hynes 2007).

2.4.5 New Labour and Asylum

The first term of the Labour government was seen as an efficiency drive aimed at sorting out the (asylum) backlog.¹¹ The backlog of unresolved claims was increasing in size, and Labour was of the opinion that something had to be done about it (Robinson and Andersson 2003). Therefore the 1999 Act was aimed at dealing with a growing backlog of asylum claimants as well as demagnetizing the attraction of coming to the UK by implementing a broad range of measures which would discourage potential asylum seekers.

The 1999 Act was enacted to establish measures for speeding up the processing of asylum claims, controlling entry and reducing the incentives for “economic migration” (Audit Commission 2000b:9). Deportation and detention become ‘essential’ instruments in the “on-going attempt to control or manage migration to Britain” (Bloch and Schuster 2005).

2.4.6 Demagnetising the UK: New Support, Accommodation and Dispersal

The key point in the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act in relation to this thesis was twofold: new support arrangements and dispersal. The introduction of new support arrangements separated asylum seekers from the mainstream benefits system (Home Office 1998a) as well as provided accommodation only in areas outside London and the South East. There was an explicit assumption that genuine asylum seekers would not be concerned about how they received support or where they were forced to live. The Government contended that the new legislation would stop the UK from being an attractive destination for asylum seekers, and as a result lead to fewer people coming to the UK to claim asylum (Squire 2009).

¹¹ The rhetoric of bringing order to chaos was not matched with resources. The backlog of asylum cases worsened during the period 1997-2001. This can be attributed in part to self-imposed spending restrictions from 1997 to 1999 (Griffiths et al. 2005).

2.4.7 Asylum Support

The introduction of NASS was to disconnect “the performance of these tasks from the ethos of professions like social work and healthcare and the cultures of local authorities and the NHS” (Duvell and Jordan 2002, quoted in Sales 2005:156). NASS replaced the role local authorities played in the support of asylum seekers until 2000. Many local authorities had established specific asylum teams composed of social workers and other professionals to specialise in evaluating and providing support (Duvell and Jordan 2002; Sales and Hek 2004). With the inception of NASS the role of social workers was incorporated into the regional consortia operating the dispersal system. This intensified the ethical issues such as reporting and curtailing support (Dunkerley et al. 2006), where local government employees were obliged to report on asylum seekers where before there was a code of confidentiality between workers and clients.

The built-in element of deterrence at the policy design stage was expanded upon and a system of support was created with an inherently exclusionary logic from its inception. The benefits system was considered to be a *pull factor* and as a result support packages were instituted at 70 percent of Income Support levels (Refugee Council). In addition the Act centralised asylum support within the Home Office, moving asylum seekers out of mainstream social support and onto a separate form of support.

Each piece of new legislation has created a different system of support alongside previous arrangements “leaving a complex tangle of law provision and regulation” (Mayor of London, 2004b:8). The trend has been to separate asylum seekers from society on arrival with the presumption that most would fail. Another aspect was to make status more temporary, thus extending the insecurity veil for those granted some form of status. Asylum seekers were the first group compelled to carry an identity card, the Asylum Registration Card (ARC) that includes biometric information. Their reporting arrangements often include voice recognition over the telephone, electronic finger checks or electronic tagging (or a combination of all three) (Boswell 2001; Maughan 2010; Somerville 2007).

2.4.8 Dispersal

The majority of asylum seekers in the 1990s were based in London (Carey - Wood et al. 1995). Dispersal was in part an effort to alleviate pressure on Local Authority housing stock, particularly in the South East and to promote the ethos of 'burden sharing' (Sales 2007:148). This was in line with European moves towards burden sharing; or as it is now called "sharing the balance of responsibility" (Geddes 2000: 29). In the London area local authorities' social housing stock was running almost at capacity. It was also recognized that in other areas of the country significant social housing was available. By moving asylum seekers, outside of London, the Government reasoned that they would reduce the pressure on local authorities in Greater London as well as make financial savings in accommodation by placing asylum seekers in other regions in the UK. Compulsory dispersal was brought in despite problems in previous attempts (Robinson et al. 2003). Government discourse moved away from discussing asylum seekers as a burden, to alleviating the burden placed on the southeast as most asylum seekers lived in this area (Griffiths et al. 2005; Hynes 2011). The Home Office positioned dispersal within this ethos to alleviate pressure on local authorities in London and the South East. This was further developed by linking the aim of reducing social tensions arising from competition for scarce resources and 'visible' concentrations of ethnic minorities (Robinson et al. 2003: 164). For local authorities in London and the South East in the 1990's, dwindling council accommodation stock and inflated rents in the private landlord sector forced local authorities to institute dispersal by stealth through renting cheap accommodation through private landlords in other areas (Boswell 2001; Savage 2005). Dispersal was used on an ad hoc basis in the 1970s and 1980s in order to relieve inter-ethnic tension, most notably where there was a sudden increase in the numbers of Ugandan Asian and Vietnamese refugees (Joly 1996).

The primary aims of dispersal were deterrence: the 1999 Act suggested that the arrangements were needed to ensure "genuine asylum seekers were not left 'destitute', while minimising the attractions of the UK to economic migrants" (Home Office 1998a:3). The second aim was to spread the number of asylum seekers across the UK which would save the government money (Hynes 2011).

Although dispersal was explicitly set up by New Labour, to ease the financial and administrative strain on public provision in the South East, it can also be interpreted as a central dimension of a deterrent rationality that is developed by punitive means (Boswell 2001; Maughan 2010; Squire 2009). This is partly reflected in the history of asylum policy and the gradual reduction of support for asylum seekers over a series of Asylum bills introduced by both Tory and Labour governments. Until 1996 the Home Office was responsible for the support of asylum seekers. As part of the trend towards more restrictive legislation the 1996 Act withdrew the responsibility of the government to provide welfare benefits for asylum seekers. This led to asylum seekers being unable to support themselves thus becoming destitute. Homeless charities led challenges in the High Court to try to overturn the ruling. That year the High Court ruled that local authorities were now responsible for destitute asylum seekers in their locale. Thus the cost of support moved from the state welfare system to local authority budgets (Hynes 2011; Maughan 2010; Squire 2009).

Despite criticism over dispersal, the Government claimed that those “who are genuinely fleeing persecution” would “not be overly concerned about whether that support was provided in cash or in kind, nor about the location in which they were supported” (Home Office 1998a: 5). Dispersed to disadvantaged areas, often with limited experience of immigration, many asylum seekers found themselves isolated from other members of their community (Duvell 2005: 18).

2.4.9 Co-option of Regional Consortia

The evidence for a dispersal policy came from existing informal arrangements between local authorities. The Local Government Association (LGA) argued in 1997 that sending asylum seekers away from the Southeast and London could work (Goodson and Phillimore 2006, 2008; Hynes 2007). This was based on feasibility studies that London borough housing departments had pushed for. The LGA considered that local authorities close to airports and ports were under increased pressure to provide support to asylum seekers; the solution being that if the Home Office were to take on responsibility and implement dispersal concentration levels would be reduced (Schuster 2004).

Regional consortia were established to manage the accommodation and subsistence of asylum seekers (Audit Commission 2002; Zetter 2005). The role of consortia was strictly determined by central government and the key characteristic of these regional bodies was that they had responsibility without ownership, which remained with the Home Office (Harrison 2003). The Consortia comprised regional representation from NASS, representatives from the privately contracted housing providers, key officers from each local authority in the region, the Primary Care Trust, the police, the fire service, Home Office and contracted voluntary sector agencies. The role was to ensure that dispersal into the regions was adequately monitored and managed by regional actors (Coventry City Council 2003: b).

2.4.10 Impact of Dispersal on Asylum Seekers

Dispersal has attracted much opposition (Squire 2009; Stansfield 2001). Robinson et al. (2003) suggest that opposition was particularly widespread between 2002 and 2003. The impact of this policy, it is argued, resulted in blunting the ability of individuals to access services, maintain or establish social networks and fuel a sense of 'belonging' and 'inclusion' in the UK (Sales 2007). Dispersal was not a compulsory scheme but was the only means of support for those who were deemed destitute (Boswell 2003; 320). Asylum seekers had the choice of opting into dispersal if they had no other means of accommodating themselves. By December 2004, 40,750 asylum seekers in the UK received subsistence support in NASS accommodation (dispersed); while 20,875 received subsistence only (Heath and Jeffries 2006). By 2007, 36,785 were supported in dispersal accommodation while 10,935 received subsistence only.

The Audit Commission (2002) was extremely critical of NASS and its ability to actually manage the asylum support provision (Hynes 2011). Somerville (2007), Zetter (2005) and Allsopp et al. (2014) are but a few of many examples of researchers who demonstrated the shortcomings of dispersal and the negative impact it had on asylum seekers. Furthermore, regionally based research such as Carter et al. (2003), Lewis (2007), and Brown (2007) looked at the impact that dispersal had on asylum seekers in Yorkshire. They showed how gaps in service provision led to a litany of

problems which were due to poor local management of the dispersal process and lack of accountability by accommodation providers.

Perhaps the most obvious way in which asylum seekers were marginalised through the process of dispersal was due to the policing role that the NASS officials play in implementing the initiative (Squire 2009). Asylum seekers are not given any choice in where they are allocated accommodation. There is an enforced compliance as failure to travel will be considered an act of non-compliance, the result being that the asylum seekers will be refused NASS support and invariably made destitute with no recourse to public funds (Gibney 2004; Squire 2009). Accommodation providers have a responsibility to monitor asylum seekers to ensure that they are compliant with the terms of their legal status and the contractual obligations of NASS support.¹²

It is also important to note that the NASS system, like the asylum system as a whole, has faced a range of logistical and administrative difficulties, and in this respect many of the processes that are experienced as punitive by asylum seekers are simply a result of poor administration and design (Audit Commission 2002; Boswell 2001). Nevertheless, the administrative and logistical difficulties that have emerged in the carrying out of dispersal needs further critical consideration. The administrative incompetence is evident not only in the delay in dispersing but also in the chaotic provision of subsistence support by NASS. To say that such failures are intentional would clearly be a step too far (as well as impossible to prove or disprove) (Squire 2009: 116).

Legal representation for asylum seekers was remodelled when the Legal Services Commission (LSC) became responsible for commissioning the provision of legal aid. Legislation has cut back drastically the amount of legal aid available to asylum seekers (Somerville 2006). From 1999, asylum seekers were only entitled to 7 hours of legal aid to fight their asylum claim. The quality of primary healthcare provision for asylum seekers has also been affected (Coventry City Council 2003). In dispersal

¹² This was highlighted in an interview with the city council head of Housing Policy and Services. In an interview with the head of WMCARS this was also confirmed.

cities there is widespread evidence of asylum seekers being refused access to GP patient lists (Coker 2001).

By the time that dispersal was implemented in the UK the full weight of the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act was beginning to be felt not only by asylum seekers but grass roots agencies who were witnessing the impact on a community based level. It brought about the incarnation of a government agency with the sole task of supporting asylum seekers (NASS). The Act had co-opted a wide range of agencies that had a history of working on opposite sides and it filled vacancies in unused and unwanted housing (Griffiths et al. 2005). Voluntary sector agencies such as Refugee Action and the Refugee Council were awarded Home Office funding to provide asylum support and emergency accommodation for freshly dispersed asylum seekers. They were now working with the Home Office and local authorities rather than in direct confrontation with them.

2.4.11 Role of the Voluntary Sector

A key aspect of recent immigration policy has been described by Zetter and Pearl as the co-option and incorporation of the voluntary sector through offering them an explicit role in service provision (Zetter and Pearl 2000: 676). The establishment of NASS created a dilemma for voluntary sector agencies working with refugees and asylum seekers about the role they would play in the new structures (Bloch and Schuster 2002:411). Traditionally, voluntary sector agencies worked with asylum seekers without any direct links with government. As part of the new act, a number of refugee specific voluntary sector agencies successfully bid for funding from the Home Office to offer accommodation and advice services; and in response the Refugee Council set up the Inter Agency Partnership (IAP). The IAP was a cross boundary partnership that looked to build a broad platform able to provide support for asylum seekers previously provided by the government. NGOs such as the Refugee Council were involved in direct negotiations with the Home Office to develop services within the dispersal process. While publicly denouncing the scheme in the lead up to the 1999 Act, the Refugee Council was involved in the formulation of the process of dispersal and the development of the mechanisms to enable the Act to be realised. The reasoning was that it was better to be involved rather than letting

private companies monopolise the scheme and as a result further increase the marginalisation of asylum seekers (Bloch and Schuster 2002). Researchers expressed concern over the range of voluntary, public, private and refugee welfare agencies which had become incorporated as operative agents of the punitive technology of dispersal (Gibney 2004; Griffiths et al. 2005). Examples of this co-option include agencies such as the Refugee Council and Refugee Action receiving Home Office funding to run accommodation and support schemes for asylum seekers. To receive the funding the agencies would have had to present a business plan that was acceptable to the Home Office, and submit to periodic auditing by Home Office officials. Therefore the Home Office is drawing the terms of reference of the services that these agencies are delivering. This has created pressure on these agencies advocating on behalf of asylum seekers, in that they are not strictly independent of the Home Office. Historically these agencies had only acted on an advocacy basis for asylum seekers and refugees. Recognising the potential problems that asylum seekers would face under the new legislative arrangements voluntary agencies had to refocus their service models. This meant that they had to develop and implement new services such as accommodation and support, as well as continuing with their original services (Refugee Council 2002; 2009; Wilson 2001).

Some voluntary agencies argued that involvement in the execution of “a system that is directly antagonistic to the interests of refugees” (Cohen 2003) would give it legitimacy. The result is that asylum seekers find it difficult to distinguish the role of voluntary agencies from the official NASS bodies, and tend to see the organisation as part of a general oppressive NASS system (Hynes 2007). The role of refugee agencies as reception assistants was to provide advice and support for asylum seekers. Agency workers were required to ensure that applicants answer them as truthfully as possible and to probe them on their stories. This made it difficult for asylum seekers to distinguish the difference between advice workers and an immigration officer (Sales 2007). The shift of voluntary sector agencies contracted to work with asylum seekers from a rights based approach to a more professionalised involvement in providing contracted services has also had implications for their campaigning role (Griffiths et al. 2005).

When dispersal came into effect voluntary sector agencies, such as the Refugee Council and Refugee Action, were contracted by the Home Office to provide emergency accommodation for asylum seekers who had claimed for NASS support as well as the delivery of ‘one stop shop’ advice and guidance for all asylum seekers (Maughan 2010, Somerville 2007). They were also responsible for the provision of a basic package of subsistence and accommodation for destitute asylum seekers (Squire 2009). Botero (2006) found that many refugees were reluctant to have further involvement with these organisations when they left the NASS system on completion of their asylum claim.

2.5 Social Exclusion, Integration and Settlement

Contested concepts such as social exclusion and integration feature in the literature as a means of describing the impact of government led policy on asylum and refugees. This section presents how government policy utilised these concepts and how they affected the participants. The concepts of integration and social exclusion act as two contrasting poles between which the participants in this research find themselves caught. For the research to define the space that asylum seekers inhabit between the two concepts it is important to review them. The execution of a more punitive asylum policy did not necessarily speed up the decision making process on asylum claims. Asylum seekers often spent years waiting for a decision on their asylum application. Though the theory of dispersal was that asylum seekers were only temporarily being accommodated, the reality was often different. Asylum seekers could be placed in a dispersal city for a number of years before a decision was finally made on their asylum case. In this respect it is important to consider the literature on settlement and integration as relevant to this research.

2.5.1 Social Exclusion

It (social exclusion) is a multi-dimensional process of progressive social rupture, detaching groups and individuals from social relations and institutions and preventing them from full participation in the normal, normatively prescribed activities of the society in which they live (Silver 2007:15).

Social exclusion has become widely used in both academia and in social policy since the 1990s (Hills 2002). The term originated in France (Yepez del Castillo 1994). It is used to describe the phenomenon when the social bonds in society dissolve and people become vulnerable because they are not protected by universal social rights and safeguarding. Social exclusion is a term which is applied to a wide spectrum of groups in society. It can be as a result of someone's social class or education. Also, it can refer to situations in which people are excluded due to their disability, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, income, ethnicity and age (Salvation Army 2008). Levitas (1998) argues that the concept of social exclusion had three disadvantages: a danger of stigmatising already excluded groups; not looking at the reason why these groups experience exclusion in the first place; and that the number of those socially excluded is much lower than those affected by poverty. Social exclusion differs from poverty in that people can be socially excluded but not living in poverty. They may be excluded socially due to their ethnic background, language, disability or other reasons.

Social exclusion became a central focus of the New Labour government after its election victory in 1997 (Anderson and Sim 2000; Fairclough 2000). In the mid 1990's New Labour identified that to enhance its electoral appeal it would need to alter its approach on taxation and spending. This would be achieved by adopting 'third way politics' which focused on the importance of "the equality of opportunity" instead of the "equality of outcome" (Giddens 1998). This depended on New Labour pursuing a policy shift which hinged on Labour's growing acceptance of the need to reconcile economic efficiency and the free market economy with social justice, rejecting nationalisation and public ownership, to support its social democratic programme of strong public services and limited redistribution (lankellychase.org.uk). New Labour chose to alter the focus of policy from poverty to social inclusion and equality of opportunity, together with an emphasis on social obligations rather than social rights (Lister 1998). Social inclusion was seen as the inverse of social exclusion, a process that improved the access of disadvantaged groups to take part in society (World Bank), but one of the weaknesses of New Labour's social inclusion platform was that it was conceptually weak beyond the labour market (lankellychase.org.uk). Therefore social inclusion was promoted as a process where the excluded or "those who lacked the means, the materials and

otherwise, (could) participate in economic, social, cultural and political life in Britain” (Peter Mandelson quoted in Levitas 1999:1). From a policy standpoint, New Labour focused much of its policy debate on promoting inclusion as a basis for solving a range of social problems in disadvantaged communities. Therefore social inclusion was seen as the solution to the problem of social exclusion. To oversee this, the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) was set up within the Cabinet Office and operated between 1998 and 2006.

2.5.2 Social Exclusion and Immigration

On the face of it, refugees and asylum seekers commonly experience multiple problems of social exclusion including material poverty, poor quality housing, discrimination, poor diets and problematic access to health and social care services (Bloch, 2000; Duke, Sales, and Gregory, 1999; Geddes, 2003; Hek, 2005; Schellekens, 2001; Zetter et al., 2002; Zetter and Pearl, 2000). Much of the literature identifies both refugees and asylum seekers as at risk of social exclusion (Goodson and Phillimore 2006; 2008 and Griffiths 2005; Hynes 2007; Sales 2007). Paradoxically, however, this vulnerability to exclusion is itself linked to asylum and refugee policy (Ager and Strang 2008).

According to Young (2002: 8) “the under arching (policy) discourse (of the White Paper Secure Borders, Safe Haven 1998) is social inclusion.” The aim was to promote social inclusion for new immigrants but also British citizens, in particular those from elements of society who felt alienated by the political process (focus was on those whose physical living conditions and standards of living left them socially excluded) (Home Office 2002a: 10). This demonstrates the contradictions of New Labour policy that concentrated on social inclusion of those with immigration status while at the same time imposing restrictive rights on asylum seekers which promoted their social exclusion.

For both Hynes (2007) and Sales (2005), asylum seekers’ risk of social exclusion was based on the fact that their rights were restricted due to their immigration status. They both highlight how immigration status (in this case being an asylum seeker) was a factor in deciding eligibility for social inclusion schemes. As asylum seekers

they were exempt from social inclusion schemes.¹³ Government policy recognised that refugees were at risk of suffering from social exclusion. Yet asylum seekers, due to their immigration status as temporary residents in the UK, do not have access to the same rights as UK citizens including ¹⁴ as a result access to any social inclusion schemes aimed at overcoming the problems that the group in question faces. Entitlement to refugee integration support/social inclusion schemes is only implemented when an asylum seeker receives refugee status.

As established earlier, the dichotomy of social inclusion vs. social exclusion lies at the centre of the asylum seekers' experience. This ineligibility for social inclusion schemes led Hynes to describe asylum seekers as suffering a state sponsored form of social exclusion (Hynes 2007). For asylum seekers these include both formal exclusions (e.g. ineligibility for certain forms of benefits, restrictions on political participation) and informal processes, such as the impact of poverty and poor language skills on the ability to access services. Asylum raises contradictions between the promotion of inclusion, which was at the centre of New Labour policy and the exclusions promoted by immigration policy (Hills and Stewart 2002; Macgregor 1999). What emerges is that New Labour's Asylum legislation and its social inclusion policies were incompatible and led to asylum seekers being socially excluded (Hynes 2007, Sales 2005).

Levitas (1998) identifies three discourses around social exclusion; firstly, redistributive - where poverty is seen as inhibiting social participation and the exercise of full citizenship; secondly, social integrationist - which emphasises integration through paid work and, thirdly, the moral underclass - which stresses moral and cultural exclusion and notions of the 'undeserving' poor. The

¹³ An example of this in Coventry was the Supporting People Funding, which was a supported housing initiative from the ODPM (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister); and administered by the local authority. Asylum seekers were ineligible for this scheme due to their immigration status, yet refugees were eligible. The Coventry Refugee Centre ran a Supporting People funded scheme for refugees alongside its advocacy and advice scheme for asylum seekers.

¹⁴ This is an example of where Immigration rules take precedence over other forms of legislation.

predominant discourse of New Labour was social integration (Home Office 2002a:37) but this route was denied to asylum seekers who were increasingly perceived in terms of a moral underclass. The SEU in its 2004 report identified asylum seekers as being at high risk of exclusion (Hynes 2007). The importance of this is that it was asylum legislation and policy that created this exclusion.

For Burchardt et al. (2002: 31), the fact that asylum seekers are at risk of social exclusion is not accidental but a result of policy. Politicians have manufactured a ‘moral consensus’ against asylum seekers through the use of language such as an “abusive claimant” (Morris 2002: 91) that denies the legitimacy of their rights to be included. Furthermore, as spending on immigration controls escalates, the funding for refugee integration is less than one per cent of the spending on asylum (Somerville 2007: 45). This differential indicates that exclusion of the one rather than inclusion of the other has been the priority.

Dwyer and Brown (2005) and Lewis (2007) and Phillimore (2006) provide examples of exclusion in West Yorkshire and the West Midlands. Other examples of the exclusion experienced by asylum seekers included racial harassment and violence, limited access to local shops, community centres and amenities, and limited opportunities to seek support, leading to isolation, vulnerability, fear for their safety, stress and depression (Duke, Sales and Gregory, 1999; Sales, 2002; Woodhead, 2000).

The 1999 White Paper (which led to the 1999 Asylum and Immigration Act) was the most wide ranging official statement on New Labour immigration policy, it promoted social inclusion of the deserving while placing stronger boundaries of exclusion around those deemed undeserving. Asylum seekers inclusion in mainstream society is denied either permanently (through deportation) or temporarily (until they have won the right to remain). This is particularly apparent in relation to asylum seekers (Sales 2007). Basing inclusion and cohesion on the exclusion of others raised fundamental contradictions at a number of levels. First the subjection of asylum seekers to a punitive and stigmatising regime on entry to the UK produced profound dislocation and anxiety to people already experiencing severe loss as a result of exile. The experience of detention or forced dispersal prevented people from forming the

links with communities that are part of the process of building a new life or from becoming part of *cohesive* communities. Dispersal involves multiple exclusions through poverty, separation from community and difficulties in accessing services (Hynes 2007; Phillimore and Goodson 2006).

Sales (2005) provides examples of exclusion for asylum seekers due to legislation. She also presents how dispersal created issues around higher levels of xenophobia. The implementation of the policy was led by the availability of housing rather than the original plans of “clusters” based on language and ethnic groups (Hynes 2007). Housing in dispersal areas was inadequate, generally unpopular and hard to let and concentrated in deprived areas. The Audit Commission (2000a) found inadequate support structures outside of London both from statutory and voluntary sectors.

The social exclusion of asylum seekers was assured primarily by the actions of New Labour, but based on a long standing trend in policy (Phillimore and Goodson 2006). Increasingly, restrictive asylum legislation meant that asylum seekers became more isolated from society while existing within it. As Squire points out “what can be said is that these failures (of government policy) are likely to be of less concern where asylum seekers are assumed to be 'culpable' and 'threatening' subjects who abuse the asylum system, because those who are effectively punished are not perceived as having a right to complain” (2009:116). She further points out that “the punitive techniques are not so much deliberate dimensions of dispersal as they are evidence of the technical embedding of a logic of selective opposition, which makes exclusionary marks on culpable subjects on an everyday level” (116). The inadequacies of the management and delivery of support in the asylum system further exacerbated the social exclusion of asylum seekers (Gibney 2004; Maughan 2010; Sales 2007).

Co-opting voluntary sector agencies (Griffiths et al. 2005), and restricting funding to agencies that could provide support to dispersed asylum seekers further promoted the phenomenon of asylum seekers living parallel lives in mixed communities (Cantle 2001). As an obligation of having a NASS contract, accommodation providers were required to monitor the movements of asylum seekers and report any irregularities to the Home Office. This requirement further extended to local

authorities, the NHS, education and other government agencies after the 2004 Asylum and Immigration Act, though it was never enforced.

Given this and the limitations of the actions of the groups attempting to promote 'inclusion', one option for dispersed asylum seekers is the adoption of more informal responses such as developing social networks. To date there has been little research on this, a gap which this thesis seeks to fill.

2.5.3 Government led Refugee Integration Strategy

A further example of the liminal spaces opened up by the contradictions between inclusion and exclusion in New Labour policy was the Refugee Integration Strategy. Integration was presented as a strategy to prevent refugees becoming socially excluded. A refugee integration strategy would work along the same lines as a social inclusion strategy but would be specific to the particular needs of refugees.¹⁵ The need for a Refugee Integration Strategy was not a new phenomenon as McFarland and Walsh (1989) demonstrate. What was needed was a Refugee Integration strategy that ran alongside New Labour's Social Inclusion policy. By studying the settlement of refugees in the Strathclyde area, McFarland and Walsh found that the two major obstacles which prevented inclusion of refugees were the attitude of Government towards asylum seekers and refugees; and the poor coordination between central government, local government and the voluntary sector.

The concept of integration is problematic as it is used with wildly differing meanings (Ager and Strang 2007). For the purposes of this thesis Ager and Strang's definition of refugee integration as based on key domains that constitute successful integration will be used (2008: 166). The key domains used to measure successful integration are: achievement and access across the sectors of employment, housing, education and health; assumptions and practice regarding citizenship and rights; processes of social connection within and between groups within the community; and structural

¹⁵ A primary example of the overlapping of policy between Refugee Integration and Social Inclusion is found in the final title of the West Midland refugee integration strategy; A Regional Strategy for the Social Inclusion of Refugees & Asylum Seekers in the West Midlands.

barriers to such connection related to language, culture and the local environment (166). The need to develop and implement an integration strategy was based on the recognition that refugees experiences social exclusion (Ager and Strang 2008). Integration looked at the positive attributes that refugees possessed and how it was important for the communities to fully integrate them to enable an enrichment of both parties. At that point (though the National Refugee Integration Strategy is a Home Office sponsored document) any support for refugees became the interest of the DCLG (Department of Communities and Local Government, which replaced the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in 2007).¹⁶

The strategy looked at introducing a series of indicators which could be used by agencies to identify shortcomings in service provision and develop specific rectifying schemes. Following on from this strategy regional consortiums took it upon themselves to develop regionally specific refugee integration strategies. The West Midlands released their own strategy in 2006 (WMSPARS 2006), which included Coventry.

The National Integration Strategy was explicit in its recognition of social networks as key to the integration of refugees (Ager and Strang 2004). Phillimore also looks at indicators for refugee integration (Phillimore and Goodson 2006). Cheung and Phillimore (2013) provide an excellent document on refugee integration which looked at primarily social capital and employment. What is unique about this paper is that it was able to draw on a large amount of statistical data which showed a strong correlation between social capital of refugees and being able to find employment (among other support services). This ties into Ager and Strang's model of important actors that are crucial in the integration process.

¹⁶ On one side there is a government department committed to ending social exclusion by creating policy that aims to create less isolated communities. Refugees were highlighted by New Labour as potentially at risk of social exclusion. However, the flip side is that living in the same communities of refugees are asylum seekers who are marginalised and isolated and therefore at risk of social exclusion. Yet, due to their immigration status they were not considered at risk. Paradoxically this presents two government departments who seem to have conflicting agendas.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter recounts one half of the dual narrative, by presenting asylum policy and the implementation of asylum legislation. It contains a discussion of the legislative and policy standpoint, providing a background to the history and the extent to which New Labour went in their effort to develop a system aimed at discouraging potential asylum seekers from *choosing* to come to the UK. Coupled with poor and incorrect representation in the media, asylum seekers have become a marginalised and demonised segment of the UK population. As a result they have become socially excluded. The emerging literature interprets dispersal as a multi layered process that involves a variety of different actors. This aspect is important as it may play an important role in the manner in which social networks amongst asylum seekers develop. The process of dispersal further deepened the level of social exclusion that asylum seekers face due to the manner in which it was initiated and managed.

However this chapter also reveals how the enactment of New Labour asylum legislation and social inclusion policy created the liminal space in which social networks and social capital could emerge within refugee communities.

The evolution of asylum legislation and policy, as presented in this chapter, created a unique environment within which asylum seekers existed. The research builds on this by exploring how on a day to day basis policy and legislation has influenced the manner in which social networks and social capital evolved within this landscape.

Chapter 3: The Refugee Experience

3.1 Introduction

Whereas Chapter 2 revealed how the imposition of dispersal created a legislated space within which asylum seekers were forced to exist; this chapter examines the nature of the refugee experience. Specifically, the key concepts connected to the conceptual framework of the research are presented.

An overview of the refugee experience is given initially, followed by a discussion on the concept of liminal space, specifically, how it applies to and impacts the lives of asylum seekers. An introduction and critical discussion of the role social networks and social capital play for the asylum seeker is also presented. In particular, understanding how such strategies are adopted by asylum seekers as a means of negotiating passage while in the liminal stage is explored. Liminal experts who shape and manage the social network are identified, and an investigation of trust as a key form of social capital and its relationship to social networks and other forms of social capital are discussed. Finally, to round out the chapter, the role of refugee community organizations is addressed.

3.2 Refugee Experience

The term refugee experience is widely used to describe “the human consequences - personal, social, economic, cultural and political - of forced migration” (Ager 1999a: 2). As such it is important within the dual narrative as it provides a conceptual tool to explore the interaction of asylum policy with the lived experience of an individual.

3.2.1 Strengths of the Refugee Experience

The refugee label is powerful, both in its use to define human experience and a category of people, but also in terms of the identity and subjectivity of those who bear the label. At the same time they can be proud of being a *refugee* and having survived unspeakable horrors; but it also marks a lack of homeland and of previous

social status and identity and self-worth, a lack reinforced by racist abuse in all its guises (O'Neill and Spybey 2003:8). Hynes (2007) argues that an active construction of the refugee experience by asylum seekers in the UK was based not on a common sense of solidarity but on the necessity to invoke a particular identity in order to access services. This is particularly important for asylum seekers who are attempting to assert their right to refugee status and thus to protection and rights. Following on from this Castles (2003:21) argues that the notion of a sociology of "exile, displacement or belonging", places too much emphasis on the subjective and cultural aspects of forced migration, neglecting its structural dimension.

Refugees' loss has many dimensions both emotional and material. Refugees are torn, often violently, from their past life and thrust into a new environment where they do not understand the rules of social life and where they may be treated with suspicion (Sales 2007:85). They may experience cultural bereavement (Ahern et al. 1999:228). They may have faced trauma and violence directly or indirectly, which can involve a breakdown of trust in individuals and institutions (Hynes 2003). Refugees lose control over important elements in their lives and their subsequent experiences often intensify their dependence on others and the sense of living in limbo (Sales 2007:86). They can spend protracted time in refugee camps unable to return or make a new life in exile (UNHCR 2006:105). Respect for human dignity is usually the first casualty (Harrell-Bond 1999a:141) and they can experience profound loss of individuality, self-esteem and independence (Callamard 1999:203). Yet refugees are "ordinary people experiencing extraordinary events" (Ahern et al. 1999: 231). Importantly, for this research, is that the refugee experience presents the possibility of using a time line to look at how lives adapt and change over time. This research investigates how asylum seekers are dynamic actors within the asylum process.

3.2.2 Weaknesses of the Refugee Experience

The refugee experience is a controversial notion that needs to be understood in the context of an appreciation of the common resilience of refugee communities and the resources that exist within them for responding to the challenges of forced migration (Ager 1999b). It is important to avoid creating an image of the refugees as a "generic and essentialised figure" (Callamard 1999:197). Turton (2003) rejects the notion of

the refugee experience. This rejection is based on there not being a generic experience, as the individual experiences of refugees differ for a multitude of reasons. Tuitt (1996) suggests that forcing people to fit a particular group of persecuted peoples focuses the attention on the individual reason for their persecution rather than their need. Baines (2004: 65) argues that this focus on persecution compels refugees to appear vulnerable in order to be recognised as authentic. Malkki criticizes the concept as homogenous and demonstrates its weakness by underscoring issues of agency and victimhood (Malkki 2002). An example of the problems of the homogeneity of the concept is that it does not include asylum seekers. Refugees are forced migrants, and the term asylum seeker is a legal construct to identify a certain group of forced migrants.

3.2.3 Incorporating the Refugee Experience into the Research

Despite these criticisms the concept of the refugee experience is important in that it can be used to present the day to day lives of asylum seekers, providing them with personality and humanity to counter the hegemonic view of the *refugee*. Apart from their lived shared existence as asylum seekers, it is also important to focus research on the individuality of the participants, highlighting their personal convictions, motivations and aspirations throughout the refugee experience. However such a focus needs to be extended through:

- 1) An understanding of the experiences of asylum seekers living under a restrictive asylum support apparatus. It shows the interrelationship between the asylum system and asylum seekers which develops a unique symbiotic situation.
- 2) Seeing the refugee experience as a journey that has a continuum beyond claiming asylum in a third country. The journey is set in a continually changing political landscape where asylum seekers need to be adaptable to change in order to survive.
- 3) Paying attention to how concepts such as liminality, social networks and social capital can be used to enhance the understanding of the refugee experience. A

weakness in the literature is that the asylum process does not figure as part of the refugee experience.

3.3 Liminality

As introduced in earlier chapters, the stage that asylum seekers need to negotiate passage through has been termed a “liminal space” (Hynes 2007). The Oxford dictionary describes the origins of the word from Latin and refers to it as “Relating to a transitional or initial stage of a process; or occupying a position at, or on both sides of, a boundary of a threshold¹⁷”. As introduced in Chapter 2, policy creates a liminal space, and, as such, existing in this liminal space is an integral stage in the lives of asylum seekers. As a result, living in and navigating this space is a key element of the refugee experience. For its relevancy to the refugee experience, the term has been used to describe the lives of refugees living in refugee camps and detention centres in previous literature (Chavez 1992; Hynes 2007; Long 1993; Malkki 1995).

For Hynes, liminality is considered a particular state experienced by people as they pass over the threshold of one phase of their life to another (Hynes 2011:2). For Thomassen liminality can have traits that are temporal or spatial and can be used to describe individuals, groups and societies (Thomassen 2009: 17). Importantly, Thomassen asserts that there is a scale or degree to which an individual or group experiences liminality. Therefore, “there are degrees of liminality, and...the degree depends on the extent to which the liminal experience can be weighed against persisting structures.” (Thomassen 2009: 17-18). Significant to this research is Turner’s allusion to the fact that a liminal state can take on a more permanent character (Turner, from Thomassen 2009: 15).

In his work on liminality in refugee camps, Turner (1999) presented how traditional hierarchies are challenged and how communities reform due to the unstable and new circumstances. He highlights that younger men who are adaptable, quick to recognise changing circumstances and establish space and stability are challenging

¹⁷ <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/liminal>

the old structures. He termed these individuals “liminal experts”, able to make use of the suspension of social structures to try to change things to their own advantage” (1999:5). The aspect of a liminal state potentially becoming a permanent profile for individuals sits with the prolonged period that individuals spend in the asylum system. Importantly, when describing typologies of permanent liminality, Szokolczai shows how “people will look at concrete individuals for guidance” in a liminal stage, where reliable and stable institutions cease to function (2009: 156). Hynes (2007) suggests that liminal experts exist in asylum seeking communities in the UK. The idea of the liminal expert and role in the refugee experience (within the asylum seeker context) needs further exploration. In refugee camps as well as in the asylum process (in the UK), refugees are put into situations which are difficult for them to comprehend. In these situations traditional forms of governance and support do not exist. Liminal experts, who understand their new surroundings, have identified that there is a need for someone able to support other refugees.

3.3.1 Abject Cosmopolitans and Abject Spaces

There is a growing body of work that discusses abject cosmopolitans and abject spaces in a similar manner to liminality, when researching migrant groups. The work of McGregor and Primorac (2010), Doyle (2009) and Nyers (2003) looks at the experiences of marginal, illegal and undocumented immigrants. Mbiba's work (2011) further builds on this area by looking at the Zimbabwean community in the UK and explores the role of entrepreneurial ship plays for migrants. Abject cosmopolitans provide a strong body of evidence that it is important to adopt when looking at refugees in the UK. However, as this research is on asylum seekers I felt that the descriptions of abject cosmopolitans and space as too broad to describe the space that asylum seekers existed in. The abject space includes all forms of immigration policy exclusion which migrants have suffered. This paper focuses exclusively on dispersal and asylum seekers; therefore it is the particularities of one form of immigration legislation and how it affects one specific group of migrants that led to the decision to concentrate on using the liminal space in the research. However, the use of abject space and cosmopolitans would provide a useful concept to use if there was further research on this specific group of participants once they ceased to be classified as asylum seekers but continued to live in the UK. The strength of

literature on abject cosmopolitan in this part is that it would allow better understanding of how this group of Congolese interacted with the broader UK based Congolese population. A key area to explore would be the role of entrepreneurship for Congolese refugees in a manner similar to Mbiba's (2011) work on Zimbabweans in the UK.

The literature demonstrates how asylum status brings with it its own liminality (Griffiths, et al. 2005; Hynes, 2007, 2011; Sales 2005; Zetter, 2006). Yet the literature does not discuss it within the refugee experience. This research attempts to address this. The imposition of a punitive asylum system is an integral feature of the refugee experience of those based in the UK. This intersection of policy and the refugee experience has resulted in the emergence of a liminal stage where trust is eroded and developed and asylum seekers start to foster coping strategies. The research explores the relationship between these concepts.

3.3.2 Structuration and Structure and Agency

In sociology understanding structure and agency is a key area of discussion. It is recognised that social structure and individual actions (agency) are the two main protagonists. However, the literature fractures over which aspect has greater importance (Giddens 1979).

For Berger and Luckmann (1967), it is society which forms individuals. As a means of trying to present an approach that balances structure and agency, Giddens (1984) introduced the concept of Structuration which was an effort to develop a concept to incorporate both structure and agency in the analysis of social systems but without either having more influence than the other. For Giddens, structuration theory recognises the interaction of meaning, standards and values, and power and infers the existence of a dynamic relationship between structure and agency. Giddens argues that just as an individual's autonomy is influenced by structure, structures are maintained and adapted through the exercise of agency. The interface at which an actor meets a structure is termed "structuration."

For Bakewell (2010) structuration failed to offer any significant advances for migration theory because it could not provide a satisfactory account of the

relationship between structure and agency. Following in the vein of Bakewell, I decided against using this concept as I felt that asylum seekers do not have any influence on the development of the structures (the imposition of punitive asylum legislation) they exist in. Part of the problem with the asylum process imposed on asylum seekers is that there was no space for them to influence any adaptations in the structure.

Bakewell (2010) is also equally critical of the migration literature as it did engage successfully with the structure and agency debate. This paper will use Bakewell as a starting point to present how asylum seekers use agency in the form of social networks as survival strategy in the face of asylum legislation.

3.4 Developing coping mechanisms

The following section critically discusses the concepts of social networks and social capital as ways of understanding the coping mechanisms used to navigate the liminal space of the refugee experience. It explores the origins of the concepts and how they have been applied to develop better understanding of the lives of migrants and refugees. It also looks at Refugee Community Organisations as coping mechanisms to help refugees in new living environments.

3.4.1 Social Networks

Social networks are a framework which offer a means of demonstrating the coping methods asylum seekers use to negotiate the liminal stage that is created by dispersal.

Early academic discussion on social networks can be found in Toennies (1887) work on establishing the two forms of human interaction (community and society). Focusing on European rural – urban migration he identified and labelled two strands; *gemeinschaft*, where social groups can exist as personal and direct social ties that bind people who share ideas, values and beliefs. The other strand, *gesellschaft*, consists of a social linkages base which may be impersonal, formal, and instrumental.

Durkheim (1893) argued that in social phenomena there are instances of situations arising where groups of individuals find themselves conducting relationships which are, in reality, impossible to define their actions as that of individual actors. He forged this theory by using the ideas of mechanical solidarity and organic solidarity. He felt that traditional societies in which individuals' differences are kept to a minimum are forms of mechanical society, while organic solidarity, alternatively, is found in modern society. Here the idea is that cooperation germinates in a situation where people are drawn together from a wide variety of backgrounds that often have no connection or correlation.

Social networks are a broad area which, for the purposes of this research, needs defining. A social network is an environment where individuals have been drawn together with the intent of a common interest. Wasserman and Faust (1994) describe a social network as consisting of a series of different actors who have interrelated links (or ties). These links, between actors, can be as substantial as those between organisations, or be based on personal relationships between individuals. Social networks are a method of evaluating and understanding the dynamics and function of these relationships (Wasserman and Faust 1994), and are based on dynamic and fluid relationships--be they strong, weak, positive or negative--that interconnect people globally, regionally, nationally or locally. For Putnam (1993) the ethnic and cultural characteristics of social networks can be broken down into two typologies: exclusive and inclusive. Exclusive networks are formed by people of the same ethnicity or from the same country of origin, ethnic bonds were reinforced amongst groups who shared a common language. Inclusive networks are characterised by people forming connections based on common interests, related to work, sport, leisure and faith. Putnam (1993) also stresses that there needs to be a receptive environment which enables social networks to flourish. Putnam's study of social networks in Italy demonstrates that social networks evolve in an environment in which the government is sympathetic and supportive and civil society is structured as well as motivated to facilitate the formation of community organisations abetting social integration.

Social network research in relation to refugees and asylum seekers has its base in studies of 'chain migration' (Macdonald and Macdonald 1974; Tilley and Brown

1967). This research demonstrates the role that social networks play in transnational migration (Faist and Ozveren 2004). Crisp (1999) argues that social networks can play a role in the choices that migrants make, while further research has also noted that networks are imperative in trying to understand the migration patterns of migrants (Castles and Miller 2003; Jordan and Duvell, 2002; Portes 1998). Boyd goes on to describe how networks not only influence the geographical patterns of migration but also provide support in obtaining employment, finding accommodation as well as financial and personal support (1989:651). In fact, Portes (1995) goes as far as to suggest that networks play a substantial role in the development of permanent communities in third countries.

For Williams (2006), migration influences the development of migratory networks, diasporas and transnational communities. She goes on to explain that these networks range from established entities to relationships that may be loose in organisation and based on brief encounters. This assertion is backed up by the work of Farah and Mama (1999), Farmanian (1992), Fuglerud (1999), McDowell (1996) and Morrison (1998) among others.

Vertovec (2001), Smith (2001) and Robinson (1999) discuss the concept of transnationalism and the maintenance of national identity even though residence is now in a third country. This concept is played out in communities where traditional differences in politics exist yet where there is unity due to the precarious nature of living in exile (Walbeck 1999). Further to this, work has been undertaken that presents the concept of transnational communities creating a space (not to be confused with the liminal space described in this research) which is not physical; a “complex product of the ever-shifting geography of social relations present and past” (Appadurai 2001: 8; Massey 1992; Robinson 1999).

3.4.2 Social Networks and the Refugee Experience

The core element of this research is to show how being an asylum seeker is an integral part of the refugee experience and how social networks are a key feature of this stage. There is a growing body of literature investigating the phenomenon of social networks in research on forced migration (Lamba and Krahn 2003; Koser

2002; Williams 2006). For Baker (1990), social networks are similar to relationship webs. Using Thomas and Znaniecki's (1918) seminal work on Polish immigrants in Chicago, Marx (1990) develops an understanding of the social world of refugees as a means of being able to count the stages of resettlement and establishment of formal associations.

In the case of refugees, however, research specifies that repressive and unfavourable circumstances can also be the spawning ground of social networks. This refutes Putnam's point regarding the need for receptive environments for social networks to flourish. That social networks evolved under stressful and repressive immigration and in socially excluded environments points to their role as a survival tactic; that is given the need, people can alter their behaviour to adapt (Griffiths et al. 2005; Hynes 2007). At this point it is important to point out that research from Gryzmalakazłowska (2005) presents clearly that social networks do not start as a response to a specific situation, but that they develop networks that are appropriate to their needs.

The transnational character of refugees is recognised in literature on forced migration (Hynes 2007:249); based on the understanding that forced migrants exist within "transnational spaces" (Boswell and Crisp 2004: 16; Castles 2003:27). Harrell Bond (1986) uses the term "over-socialized concept of man" which explains how the demands of individual survival undermined social values. Starting in refugee camps Hynes (2007) expands upon this idea by arguing that networks of refugees develop and carry on when they arrive in the UK. For this reason social networks of asylum seekers were, in this instance, intrinsically linked to the negative feature of the containment and control of refugees (Crosby 2006).

Marx (1990) describes social worlds as the sum of all migrants' relationships and the forces that impinge on them at a particular time. Marx recognises that there is an element of uniqueness in the refugee experience which influenced the development of this social world which he could not appreciate (as he did not have the experience of being a refugee). He shows that by applying network analysis to these social worlds, important aspects of the refugee experience could be uncovered. For Marx, combining network analysis with the "social worlds" of refugees enable research to

understand the interaction between the decision making of refugees and the outside factors that necessitated the direction these decisions took.

This research is guided by how social networks are defined in the studies of Baker (1990) and Marx (1990). Baker's premise that social networks is based on a series of web based relationships is especially important. Marx argues that the particularities of forced migration create unique circumstances in which social networks develop. Both Baker's and Marx's works are especially important for this research because they present how social networks function for refugees and their particular characteristics due to being comprised of refugees. This demonstrates that social networks play an important role in the refugee experience as they respond to the particular needs of refugees. Perceptions of the meaning of the term "social networks" were varied but co-exist with the idea of imagined communities (Anderson 1991) or contingent communities (Kelly 2003), in which members may not have met before. As already reviewed, Griffiths et al. (2005) suggest social networks amongst refugees and asylum seekers in the UK are more significant than RCO's in the support of dispersed asylum seekers. For Cheng and Phillimore a social network is measured by how frequently contacts are made with friends, relatives and a range of organisations (Cheung and Phillimore 2013: 523).

3.4.3 Strength of Weak Ties

The concept of the "strength of weak ties" (Granovetter 1973: 1360-80) relates to the increased mobility that individuals have with many weak ties. Weak ties are those relationships that develop through social networks, while strong ties are those established through more formal relationships. The focus of Granovetter's work is on how individuals with many weak ties have higher success rates in finding employment. The relevance for asylum seekers is that those with a wider range of weak ties may be better placed to support themselves while going through the asylum process. This is an important consideration for this research as it grounds the type of relationships (through the use of social networks) that are formed by asylum seekers. For Koser and Pinkerton (2002) defining social networks incorporates the idea of weak ties, which includes a range of individuals from friends and family to 'agents' or people who will be involved in the migratory process.

For Hynes, social networks are identified as friends, family and acquaintances with which individuals come into contact. These relationships could include people they met (even briefly) while going through the asylum process (Hynes 2011). She also posits that a key element of these ties is the basis of trust. This is related to the 'strength of weak ties' which describes these types of relationships as brief encounters (Hynes, 2011: 157) but based on shared experience of the asylum process. In my research, I define social networks as groups of people who have developed personal relationships based on trust within and through the asylum process. The relationship is initially developed out of 'weak ties' but this may not always be the case as the amount of time that they spend together may alter the nature of their relationships. The social network is based on individuals who may have frequent contact with other members of the social network and those who may interact with other members infrequently.

Marx (1990) found that there is a continuum between total destruction of social networks (of refugees) due to forced migration at one end of the spectrum and the persistence of social networks at the other end. This coincides with Granovetter's (1973) emphasis on the strength of weak ties in relation to possible mobility opportunities, in that through dispersed individuals enter and exit a series of social networks as they are moved (by NASS) around the UK. Kelly's (2003) use of the term 'contingent communities', (which was formulated from her work with Bosnian refugees in the West Midlands), is similar to Marx' hypothesis of social networks across the forced migration spectrum.

Early work by Loizos (1999), Duke (1996), Summerfield (1996; 1998) and Crisp (1999), among others, demonstrated that refugees are active actors in solving their daily problems. Studies such as Hynes (2007) and Williams (2006) demonstrate that even while living in restrictive circumstances, asylum seekers use social networks in a tactical manner to improve their collective security. Rather than being passive, asylum seekers are active in securing their survival in a repressive asylum system.

To support this active strategy, De Certeau (1984: 37) describes a tactic as 'an art of the weak' and goes on to highlight that individuals adopt tactics to exist within repressive situations. This is important for this research because it supports that

asylum seekers develop social networks as a tactic of survival. If they were part of a refugee community organisation they would be able to use strategy to participate in the dominant system, but as asylum seekers they are denied this right. Social belonging for Castles (2003:20) involves multiple affiliations. The sense of belonging in Castles' study refers not only to the situation within the UK but also the temporal and spatial expansion included individual histories and circumstances within countries of origin.

Research conducted by the Refugee Council identifies that the services offered by social networks are the same as those available from RCOs and a number of refugee related NGOs (Basis Project, Refugee Council 2009). They provide orientation, helping the newly arrived develop a knowledge of their new environment. Social networks supply information on where to collect weekly NASS support, where to shop, and basic survival techniques. Information on rights with respect to their asylum claim, legal support basic information and guidance is offered. This is reinforced with more general advice on social and economic circumstances. At the end of the process, networks provide information about deportation and how to negotiate this and other potential crisis situations (Griffiths 2005; Hynes 2007; Williams 2006).

Paramount is the support that networks give as a means to overcome the instability of living in a de-humanised system. Studies of social networks pay attention to the types of relationships that social networks generate (Atfield 2004). Social networks enable asylum seekers to retain a modicum of humanity; they also provide the support necessary to facilitate integration into the local community. A later section on integration focuses on whether social networks actually facilitate integration.

Upon being dispersed, through luck or resourcefulness, some asylum seekers establish social networks. Hynes (2007; 2011) data results indicate that little institutional or political trust is restored due to dispersal and the asylum process. Asylum seekers are maintained in a liminal state during dispersal and that affects the potential for restoration of trust. Asylum seekers resist liminality of dispersal through maintaining and creating social networks, which is of particular relevance for this research as one of the aims is an assessment of the effectiveness of social

networks in creating an inclusive environment and knowledge of the area in which participants are based.

For Zetter (2003; 2006) and Griffiths et al. (2005), erosion of state support for asylum seekers in particular has made the material resources that are available in social networks particularly important. Zetter (2006) argues that the general lack of resources in bonded social networks of asylum seekers and refugees is a source of conflict within and between certain communities as the struggle over resources can lead to distrust and social differentiation. Both Griffiths and Zetter agree that social networks and social capital are a coping strategy, and a resource for the disempowered who have no other social capital.

3.4.4 Social Networks and Integration

Integration is a contested concept (Ager 2008; Boswell 2003; Robinson 1998; Zetter et al 2002), yet there is a growing discussion in the literature on the role that social networks play in the integration of refugees. As explained in Chapter 2, refugee integration as government policy has been restricted to refugees, due to their immigration status asylum seekers have been prevented from participating. Based on the literature review of studies on social networks and integration, I propose in the liminal stage of the immigration process social networks act as an agent of integration for asylum seekers.

This research focuses on a group of asylum seekers who are outside the formal legislative framework of integration. By investigating how social networks evolve and how they support asylum seekers, this study looks at what measures are adopted by social networks that facilitate integration. To demonstrate one needs to bear in mind aspects of integration as two-way, non-linear and subjective. Zetter's et al. (2002) typology of integration captures the complexity of the process of integration. It is based on four clusters of indicators relating to the legal, statutory, functional and social domains.

Social domains are concerned with the more informal processes of integration, such as participation in social networks, the acquisition of social capital and the sense of identity and belonging within the host society. The concept of social integration

indicates also, as Zetter et al. put it, the extent to which “refugees are active participants in the receiving societies” (2002:139). This conception of the social domain has been adapted for this study to take into consideration the ways that space and locality may affect refugees’ experiences of integration, particularly in relation to the access to services, development of social networks and sense of social belonging.

For example, social networks created and maintained by refugees can have an enabling effect on their integration in other areas (such as in the labour market). This approach is based on the recognition that refugees (individually or collectively) can be active agents in the process of integration rather than simply passive recipients of agency led integration strategies and services. Some of these social domains can have a negative influence in the integration of refugees. The legal process can facilitate or undermine refugees’ participation in social networks or their sense of belonging. Indeed some of the goals of legal integration may work against the aspirations towards social integration (Zetter 2002).

Research on the role of networks in the process of integration has been lacking (Boswell and Crisp 2004:16; Castles 2002: 76). Furthermore, features such as the local labour market, location specific policies for political participation, local community relations and the ethnic make-up of a particular area can all play a part in the shaping experiences of integration. Thus, dispersal policies and the social geography of integration mean that locality effects are highly significant for refugees’ experiences of integration, in terms of access to appropriate services, access to social networks, sense of belonging and risk of social exclusion. Work by Collyer (2008) proves the effectiveness of weak ties in helping migrants establish themselves, facilitating the movement into employment as well as other factors such as accommodation.

This research investigates whether social networks possess integrative facets that may be at work prior to asylum seekers becoming refugees. Schaefer et al. (quoted in Oakley 1992) made an important differentiation between emotional, informational and instrumental support, which could include companionship and socialising. These varying types of support may be provided by diverse people in varied ways and

at different times, and for forced migrants these forms of support may cross national boundaries. Emotional support may also be available from friends who live outside one's immediate environment, (Granovetter 1973; Wellman 1979). In this way, transnational links with people 'back home' may continue to play a supportive role even after migration (Coleman 1990: 310).

Ager and Strang's (2004a) framework for assessing refugees' integration places great emphasis on social relationships in the definition and achievement of refugees' integration into British society, suggesting that it is the nature of relationships that most clearly defined a sense of integration. In this case the impact of dispersal can also significantly affect social relationships within and attachment to areas, especially if it involves (anticipation of) involuntary resettlements (Ager and Strang 2004b). Phillimore and Cheung's work (2013) reveals that for refugees it appeared access to social networks had a positive effect on one's ability to find employment and health.

Another approach that this research could have taken was to use Sustainable Livelihood Approach (SLA), in place of social networks. It has the potential to provide interesting interpretations for this research. For Cowen and Shenton (1998) SLA takes on two different forms:

1. Immanent development (or what people are doing anyway): this denotes a broad process of advancement in human societies driven by a host of factors including advances in science, medicine, the arts, communication, governance etc. It is facilitated by processes such as globalisation (an international integration) which helps share new ideas and technologies.
2. Intentional (or Interventionist) development: this is a focussed and directed process whereby government and non-government organisations implement development projects and programmes (typically a set of related projects) to help the poor. The projects are usually time and resource bound, but have an assumption that the gains achieved would continue after the project had ended (Morse and McNamara 2013:15).

However, I decided that it had too much of a development related focus to be of relevance. Much of the writing looked at the multitude of factors that contributed to the inequalities of underdevelopment as experienced in the global south, including: human, natural, physical, financial and social factors which hinder people being able to have sustainable livelihoods. While the situation of asylum seekers shares a number of common traits which can be found in sustainable livelihoods, there are key differences. In this research there is no environmental considerations and the overriding restrictive measure that hinders the livelihoods of the participants is the imposition of asylum legislation.

3.5 Social Capital

3.5.1 Introduction

This section, following the discussion on social networks, presents an overview of research on the concept of social capital. The origins of the concept and how it has been applied to research in migration and refugees is discussed. The evolution of academic interpretations of social capital over time is also presented. In the case of migration and refugees these changes in interpretation mirror the evolving nature of the migratory process.

Social capital refers to connections among individuals - social networks and norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that rise from them (Putnam 2000). These are seen as highly productive in establishing social stability and a range of other normatively defined goals. Social capital is created by entering into social relations or associations which generate mutual duties, expectations and trust through which social goods can be exchanged and controlled collectively (Nauck 2001). Therefore, social capital describes the types of relations between individuals that can improve an individual's circumstances. However, there arises an interesting question, which comes first, social capital or social networks. This research uses this interpretation of social capital as the quantifiable support and resources that can be provided by a social network, but also explores how individuals without networks share social capital. (Foley and Edwards 1999).

For Putnam (2000), social capital can be divided into three types: bonds, bridges and linkages. Bonds refer to those internal linkages that straddle homogenous groups such as family, friends and others who have a similar cultural or ethnic background. Bridges moves to a next tier of external heterogeneous relationships that may or may not share a common identity. This group includes: colleagues, associates, friends of friends, distant friends and other associates. The third group consists of people who may have linkages but are of a different social class. Bridging and bonding capital have become a starting point for assessing the value and function of social networks.

For Hanifan (1916) social capital encompasses the value of relations and commitment within networks. Coleman (1988) introduced social capital as a means of describing relationships between individuals in families and communities which have a direct influence in improving academic performance. Putnam (2000) in his work on civic wealth in Italy used social capital as a means of describing the various networks that individuals act within. It is through voluntary organisations and the informal networks that they spawn, that bonds are created.

3.5.2 Social Capital and Trust

There is a relationship between liminality and the concept of trust for asylum seekers. Forms of trust are eroded by the asylum process and asylum seekers are forced to rely on other forms of trust to enable them to engage with coping mechanisms. As a result trust becomes the key form of social capital on which all relationships are based. This form of trust is between other asylum seekers who are sharing a similar experience. Lack of trust is accepted as a key by-product of the refugee experience (Sales 2007). Definitions of trust are broad and can have a wide range of meanings across academic disciplines (Hynes 2011), and that understanding its meaning may encompass personal, gendered and cultural differences (Muecke 1999; Peteet quoted in Hynes 2011:32).

The literature on migration divides trust into four specific areas: social, institutional, political and restorative. For Togeby (2004), social trust refers to an individual's ability to develop a level of trust with other individuals. Institutional trust focuses on the relationship, or lack of one between an individual and the state (Demos 2003).

Hynes (2007; 2011) demonstrates how the asylum experience erodes an individual's confidence in the asylum process. Political trust is tied to an individual's relationship with government and the democratic process, and whether it is transparent and trustworthy (Newton 2006). The final form is restorative and refers to how an individual may be able to reconcile trust (Daniel and Knudsen 1995; Voutira and Harrell-Bond 1995) in institutions. Hynes outlines how restorative trust may have further complications for refugees who may have suffered formal and informal exclusion in a third country (Hynes 2011). For this research the role that trust plays in the developing and breakdown of relationships in the liminal stage are explored. As is discussed later in this chapter, social trust figures prominently in the literature on social capital (Newton 2006; Putnam 2003; Sen 2006).

In Putnam's' concept of social capital (1993) trust is a defining characteristic. In the case of refugees and asylum seekers Hynes (2003) contends that they mistrust and are mistrusted. As a starting point, others argue that high levels of mistrust can be generated by the political economy of aid at the global level (Bond 1995; Voutira and Harrell-Bond 1995). Studies on refugee social networks show that even within marginalised communities social capital can take on different forms (Hynes 2011). In the case of refugees, trust as social capital exists amongst its members and is borne out of the engrained mistrust of outside institutions. This mistrust develops over the asylum journey and the refugee experience. The empirical chapters, in this study, build on the importance that trust as a form of social capital plays in underpinning the social network that forms the basis of this research. Trust is important as it relates strongly to other concepts that form the basis of this research. As part of the refugee experience, trust is a highly valued commodity that forms the basis of how relationships form. In a liminal state refugees are suspicious of their environment and need for support, but have few trustworthy contacts. What is important for this research is how institutional trust is eroded in the liminal space and how that has long term implications. While as a counterbalance social trust is created and sustained within the social network.

3.5.3 Social Capital and Migration

The relevance of social networks as a means of mobilising and supporting social capital (and as a result, social support) is becoming accepted and frequently seen as synonymous (Ryan 2008). As a sociological concept, social capital is posited in different ways. Based on the literature review of studies on social networks and integration, an assessment can be made that in the liminal stage social networks act as an agent of integration, this can especially be seen in the work of Coleman (1990), Putnam (2000; Putnam et al., 1993) and Bourdieu (1986). While social capital is increasingly being used in relation to migration, Coleman (1990) and Putnam (2000) focus largely on local associations, communities and neighbourhoods. The applicability of this analysis to migrants, particularly those newly arrived, cannot be simply taken for granted. For example, alongside the social capital generated within long-established communities there may also be distrust of outsiders and exclusion of newcomers, especially forced migrants.

For Ryan (2008) the work of Coleman and Putnam is problematic when applied to the social capital of migrants. For her, both Coleman (1990) and Putnam (2007) focused on stable communities with sustainable social relationships, they viewed individual mobility as potentially destructive; which in effect contradicted the understanding of social capital of forced migrants. By contrast the living circumstances of migrants, particularly newer migrants, are seen as much more fluid and unstable, and as a result the needs of individuals are altered depending on changes in their living situation (Morgan 1990).

Through citing a number of sources, Ryan (2008) argues the inherent weaknesses in the research of Putnam and Coleman. One premise put forth is that migrant social capital is specific and adaptable due to the changing environment of factors such as immigration policy, employment patterns and where individuals live. This includes the fact that rather than having rooted local formations, migrant networks are spread across wide geographical areas (and include transnational ties) (Portes 1995). It is thus also important to differentiate capital spatially, and to recognise how the spatial dispersal of capital may change over time, through the life course (Ryan 2008). Furthermore, Coleman and Putnam make the assumption that high levels of social

capital may compensate for low levels of socio-economic disadvantage. To counter this Ryan looks to the work of Kelly and Lusia (2006) which describe migrant communities as complex and diverse. Therefore, it is impossible to develop one typology of social capital (such as Putnam's) to describe a particular group; a broader understanding of the range of aspects which can impact migrants' ability to develop social capital is needed.

As a means of theorising social capital in terms of explaining individual's disparate relations with social networks, Bourdieu (1986) highlights three forms of capital that individuals possess: economic, cultural and social. He argues that participation in networks is a time consuming activity. Economic capital refers to monetary assets of the individual drawn from income and any other material wealth. Cultural capital alludes to one's symbolic assets such as education and possible class background. Therefore, Bourdieu (1986) argues that social capital is the breadth of social networks with which one has access. What is important is that to successfully negotiate the migratory process individuals will need to draw on all three forms of capital. It is becoming increasingly difficult to migrate, which means that individuals need to recognise that they must adapt and follow less trodden paths. Chapters 6-8 in this study identify the forms of social capital as described by Bourdieu but also present how these forms of social capital potentially need to adapt to changing circumstances.

Following in the vein of Bourdieu, Schaefer-McDaniel (2004) highlights different forms of support that can be defined as social capital. They are: emotional, informational, and instrumental support. These three strands are important for this research because they highlight the breadth of the capital that exists in the social network and provides the basis used to describe the varying types of functions. For Cheung and Philimore, "social capital is the concrete help and resources garnered from networks" (2013: 483).

3.5.4 Strong and Weak Ties

As introduced earlier, Granovetter's (1973) use of strong and weak ties provides an opening in which to investigate academic work published on the types of

relationships and social capital that exist in social networks. Granovetter's work has been expanded upon by a wide cross section of academics and includes those with a focus on migration.

3.5.5 Strong Ties

Palloni et al. (2001) suggest that in families with members who have already migrated more members were more likely to follow. Social ties provide linkages to encourage migration but the fact that a family settles in an area and establishes roots is the social capital which will support newly arrived forced migrants. For migrants who maintain strong ties with groups of people from a similar background there is evidence that they can become socially disadvantaged (Wierzbicki 2004). This is supported by the work of Griffiths et al. (2005). Migration researchers frequently assume that newly arrived migrants enter seamlessly into pre-existing networks which provide for their needs (Wierzbicki 2004). For my research this is pertinent as the social network is based on a regional affinity which binds the participants, yet it is not just this tie that binds them but also being an asylum seeker dispersed to Coventry.

For Portes (1995) there are four distinct processes which enhance the operation of social capital through social networks: assistance based simply on "values"; reciprocity; "bounded solidarity" through which members of a particular group supported each other; and 'enforceable trust' backed up by certain sanctions.

Yet in Europe the political landscape has shifted to increased restrictionism (Bloch and Schuster 2002) which has had an impact on migration. Collyer (2005) in his research on Algerian migration to the UK argues that new migration restrictions have affected the operation of social capital through social networks for migrants. There are three responses:

First, restrictions have prevented social networks acting as a physical pole of attraction for new migrants as it becomes more and more difficult for new migrants to join family and friends. Secondly, post-entry restrictions have increased the dependence of new migrants on social

networks. Thirdly, restrictions have arguably encouraged potential migrants to turn to smugglers to overcome such constraints.(Collyer 2005: 5)

Due to increasing policy restrictionism, the role of strong links of social capital has thus diminished. Collyer's (2005) work on Algerians in the UK is a case in point. He argues that the traditional route for Algerians is to France but increasingly new migrants are choosing to go to countries such as the UK where they cannot rely on an established network of family ties to help them settle. He argues that the weak ties in countries like the UK are more able to work around new legislation and provide a more flexible form of social capital.

3.5.6 Weak Ties

In 1999, Espinosa and Massey were criticising the fact that most migratory research on social capital focused on strong ties such as family. Fortunately there is a growing body of research on migrants in Europe that investigates the role weak links of social capital play in understanding migration (Collyer 2005; Ryan et al. 2008; Sigona 2011; Williams 2006). These works stem from the work of Granovetter (1973) and his proposition of the importance of "weak ties".

As Bourdieu (1986) suggests, social ties may be most effective when they result in access to those who have more resources and knowledge. Furthermore, people from the same ethnic group may have differential access to these forms of bridging capital (as taken from Putnam 1993). Therefore (as was demonstrated in Collyer 2005) migrants often have the opportunity to choose whether they prefer to use stronger or weaker ties in migrating, but these choices are based on financial and personal circumstances.

Lin describes strong ties as useful for maintaining resources ("expressive action") while weak ties are more important for gaining resources ("instrumental action") (2001: 76). As described by Zetter (2005) and Griffiths et al. (2005) RCOs ability to support asylum seekers was limited due to finite resources and the distance from London, and was relegated to an advocating role. However, social networks in

dispersal cities were at the forefront of supporting and shaping the lives of asylum seekers.

This research questions whether weak ties are a long term classification of links or whether over time, the profile of links will evolve into something different. Weak ties refer to the benefit of being adaptable due the mobility of its actors. For asylum seekers, dispersal in most respects removes this mobility and forces people to remain in one area (and under a punitive immigration directive). Can concepts such as bridging capital and weak ties apply for the duration of the asylum process or do new relationships evolve?

3.5.7 Weak Ties and Friendship Ties

The uniqueness of the asylum process is that it puts people in temporary spaces where they have little time to create networks. Weak ties is a concept that can be applied to this situation, though it refers more closely to ties based on infrequent contact, and lack of emotional closeness. The research explores how weak ties can be applied to the initial relationships that asylum seekers develop in the initial stages of dispersal. Although, at first, they resembled weak ties, I have chosen to call these “friendship ties,” as the participants referred to the ties as friends. Also, over time these weak ties had the capacity to evolve into strong ties.

3.5.8 Social Capital, RCOs, Networks and the Refugee Experience

Increasingly, as discussed, immigration control has affected the migratory patterns of individuals. Migrants have had to draw on a broader form of social capital and choose less established routes into Europe. For refugees the situation is similar. The role of social capital and the refugee experience is based in the effects of tighter legislation. Tighter border controls and further measures to prevent potential asylum seekers from entering Europe are only one side of these punitive controls; the social support framework in which asylum seekers are forced to live has also impacted the role of social capital.

Rothstein and Kumlin (2001) argue that experience with institutions influences social capital. In the case of asylum seekers Hynes (2007) demonstrates how the asylum process imposes liminality on claimants. She explains that in relation to social capital the compulsory character of dispersal ensured that there was no room for the restoration of social trust. NASS and the Home Office harbour considerable suspicion of RCOs (refugee community organisations), though they did finance most of the establishment of RCOs prior to 2006, as they were seen as the mainstay of local integration policy. The lack of trust in the system forces asylum seekers to draw on the social capital that exists in their social networks. This is particularly marked in dispersal cities where asylum seekers form new communities with few, if any, established links.

Griffiths et al. (2005) show that relationships between RCO's and the community they are assumed to represent are nonetheless problematic. This was primarily due to the dispersal process sending asylum seekers away from areas with established RCOs. Dissatisfied with the "definitional confusion" and competing theoretical perspectives of the term "social capital" he used the term critically. He finally concluded that the initial "positive orientation" to the concept of social capital reduced as their research progressed, with the concept ultimately conceived only as a useful metaphor for the benefits which were particular in social networks (2005: 8). Zetter is very critical of approaches that focus on disadvantaged groups' generation of social capital at the expense of consideration of their material welfare, suggesting there is a risk that "marginalised populations internalise social capital to fill the chasm left by withdrawal of state support" (Zetter et al. 2006:11).

The value of social capital that exists in the social networks of asylum seekers is destabilised by the dispersal process. Hynes (2007) argues that in the absence of political belonging, asylum seekers who are able to have recourse to social networks it becomes the most important way in which they are able to create a sense of *belonging*. Dispersal policy in the first instance unwittingly destroyed or disabled social networks established in pre dispersal accommodation centres. For Marx (1990), when refugee social networks are disrupted the members become isolated and are at risk of being marginalised.

The element of trust is a valued commodity and is considered the underpinning form of social capital. The relevance of this literature is that it provides a starting point for this research in that social capital can be described as the function of a social network for asylum seekers and refugees. Binding the social network together is trust in friends who are also going through the asylum process. This research expands on Foley and Edwards' (1989) view that social capital represents the different types of support and guidance that exist within a social network.

3.6 Refugee Community Organisations (RCOs)

Though this research focuses on the social networks of asylum seekers it is important to review the literature on both refugee and migrant community organisations, as it is important to be able to discern not only the differences, but also any similarities between the two. Research shows that community organisations made up of migrants from similar geographical origins are highly effective in supporting integration into the new society (Collyer 2008). The classical sociological interpretation of the role of migrant associations has been highly influential in the study of refugee organisations. However, one of the problems in the literature hinges on the relationship between refugee organisations and the communities they are assumed to represent, as dispersal reveals that RCOs have only limited effectiveness once individuals have moved to areas that are distant from where the RCO is based (Griffiths et al. 2005:11).

A review of literature on immigrant community organisations provides valuable insight into the dynamics of social networks of newly settled communities. It provides a basis to develop a model to compare with the development of social networks which try to function within restrictive asylum legislation.

Gold's (1992) research on migrant associations in North America showed that there was a shift from the dominant assimilation models of pre-World War Two which assumed that the existence of these organisations meant an inability to assimilate. By the 1960's there developed a more pronounced appreciation of the value of the role these groups played in the settlement process. This work led to an acceptance that migrant organisations were integral to supporting new migrants and helping them to

assimilate in their new environment. However, assimilation models were probably an incorrect benchmark to use when assessing the extent of migrant settlement and socio economic interaction (Griffiths et al. 2005). Castles et al (2003:63) incorporates the use of integration as a term to measure the complete participation of minorities in the host society while at the same time allowing for the retention of their distinctive cultural identities.

Modern understanding of migrant associations is drawn from Durkheim (1893) who concludes that modern organic solidarity had resulted in the freeing of the individual from social bonds. Occupational groups supply a much needed sense of belonging and identity for individuals let loose from the traditional forms of solidarity (Griffiths; 2005:12). Toennies argues that the importance of migratory associations was secondary to the development of primary community relationships. This stems from Toennies (1887) believing that the study of migrant associations was principally concerned with the issue of identity in migrant communities. Later Rex (1987) challenged this viewpoint by incorporating the work of Durkheim (1893) arguing that in advanced societies migrant organisations could positively provide a tangible sense of identity.

Rex recognised that Toennies argument emanated from the assimilationist assumption of organisations not providing any support to migrant settlement in their adoptive environment. He argues that migrant associations were in fact modes of adaptation for new migrants. From this basis they provided an arena to develop new relationships and an understanding of norms of their new environment. Rather than marginalise individuals in a foreign country, Rex (1987:17) contends that the migrant associations had the potential to play an important role in the integration of individuals both within the migrant community and within the wider social setting. The significance of Rex's work is his argument that anthropological analysis is not concise enough in explaining the exact nature of a migrant association. Griffiths (2005) expands on Rex by outlining that migrant associations are essentially modes of adaptation to new social relationships and norms. While assimilation dictated immersion of migrants into a host society where identity fused with the dominant society, integration was more a process of settlement by association. Migrants were

encouraged to participate in society while maintaining their distinctive cultural identities. (Castles et al. 2003)

Past research on refugees highlights the role community organisations play in providing support for forced migrants. Over time there have been a series of terms used to describe refugee community organisations. Joly (1996) when looking at European Asylum Policy and the impact on Vietnamese and Chilean refugees in France and the UK introduces the term refugee associations. Gold (1992) terms these groups refugee organisations from his research on Soviet Jews and Vietnamese refugees in the US. Salinas et al. (1987) used the term refugee-based organisations as a term from his work on refugee settlement in the UK.

Zetter and Pearl (2000, 2002) define refugee community organisations as “organisations rooted within, and supported by, the ethnic or national refugee/asylum seeker communities they serve. Essentially, these are established by the refugees and asylum seekers themselves – or by their pre-established communities” (2002: 676). Historical accounts of pre and post-World War Two refugee settlement in UK (in this case Poles and Armenians) point to the role of community organisations in connecting social bodies amongst refugees (Sword 1989; Talai 1989). The Home Office have, through their own sponsored research, recognised the importance of community organisations in the Vietnamese settlement programme of the 1970's and 1980's (Jones 1982). What is clear in the use of any terminology is the rooting of organisational forms in broader social relationships (Griffiths et al. 2005:11).

The British Home Office places emphasis on the role of refugee community organisations and they are seen as having great potential for supporting the integration of recognised refugees into British society (Ager and Strang; 2004; Griffiths 2005; Zetter 2006). In London, and in some of the major cities where refugees have a long history of settlement, organisations exist for some ethnic groups, for example the Vietnamese and Somali communities, and they have a significant role in supporting newly-arrived refugees. They may offer culturally specific services that are well-matched to their target group and can offer invaluable

support. However, in the majority of cities in Britain where refugees are now living, these organisations either do not exist or are only now being formed. Formally constituted refugee organisations are able to make use of charitable funding and can bid for government tenders to provide social care. A large problem is that although funding is available from the Home Office for RCOs the eligibility criteria is strict and that funding is short term¹⁸. Most refugee organisations, however, are not formally structured and so cannot take up funding opportunities. They may provide an excellent service but they are usually chronically under resourced and may have a mobile and unstable membership (Zetter and Pearl 2000).

Without the pools of experience and resources that community organisations can provide, most refugees rely on resources within their own transnational fields and networks of weak ties. Some forced migrants arrive in Britain to join already-established communities. They enjoy the support of trusted members of transnational communities living in Britain. All attempt to build their own networks of weak ties that are more or less supportive, depending on the individual's social capital.

It should always be kept in mind that informal networks should never be expected to replace state welfare provision, but “where integration does not work in an optimal way, there is also a need to look at the internal resources of the refugee communities themselves” (Valtonen 1998: 41).

More recently Phillimore (2012) published work on RCOs, her findings show they are an important player in providing support as they have an excellent understanding of the particular needs of refugees and also have the trust of these communities. However, due to the manner in which funding is provided to the support sector RCOs tend not to win contracts against more competitive bids from other service providers. Another concern is the labeling stigma that can be attached to RCOs (Piacentini 2012) and how that can impact on the lives of refugees and asylum seekers. She suggests that the, “focus on “refugeeness” fails to attend to internal diversity,

¹⁸ From meeting with Refugee Centre deputy manager.

specifically relating to changing and differentiated immigration status within such associations” (Piacentini 2012:1).

Refugee Community Organisations (RCO's) exist in Coventry, but I was aware of the existence of smaller groups of asylum seekers who had no formal foundations and seemed to work outside traditional lines of communication. Having identified the group as a possible social network, it was important to be able to differentiate between the two entities. Griffiths (2005) looks at the role RCOs played in the settlement of refugees in the UK. He shows how over time there has been an evolution in the terminology used to describe what he terms Refugee Community Organisations. Part of the problem for RCOs is tied to their inability to effectively advocate and campaign on behalf of asylum seekers due to funding restrictions, as most RCOs funding came from state contracts which clearly defined to whom the RCOs could provide support. Griffiths et al. (2005) are critical of the assumed importance of Refugee Community Organisations during the dispersal policy of the UK government post 1999. Researchers questioned the widely accepted paradigm of RCO's being instrumental in supporting newly dispersed asylum seekers to areas outside of London. Their research revealed a lack of understanding on the role of RCO's, and the emergence of smaller and less formalised social networks, whose work went largely undocumented (and unappreciated). This research provides further evidence of the manner in which RCOs are linked to social networks.

Griffiths et al.'s (2005) conclusions were that many of the perceived notions about RCOs were unfounded. In particular, since the 1999 Asylum and Immigration Act, the role of RCO's needs in-depth analysis. This need for further analysis is particularly poignant due to the policy of dispersal of asylum seekers to cities outside of London. Dispersal has meant that asylum seekers are sent to areas where previously the presence of asylum seekers or refugees was minimal. To make the situation more complicated, many of these cities did not contain pre-existing communities from the asylum seeking countries. In this sort of environment establishing RCOs would be tenuous and long winded. As this section demonstrates it is important to note that RCOs have been researched thoroughly, and proven ineffective for dispersed asylum seekers, yet social networks have remained under explored.

3.7 Conclusion: Key concepts and how they develop the conceptual framework:

The key concepts that form the basis of the conceptual framework of this research are discussed herein. The chapter explores the debates and presents other concepts that may have been useful but were discarded in favour of those more fitting to the aims of this research. In each of the concepts discussed here there are gaps in the literature that this research will fill.

The first point is to recognise that the refugee experience is the landscape in which this research is based. The manner in which the research was conducted develops an understanding of the lives of asylum seekers from their own point of view. There is a gap in the literature, in that the asylum process does not figure within the work on the refugee experience. The trials and tribulations of asylum seekers in the refugee experience comprise the rest of the conceptual analysis presented.

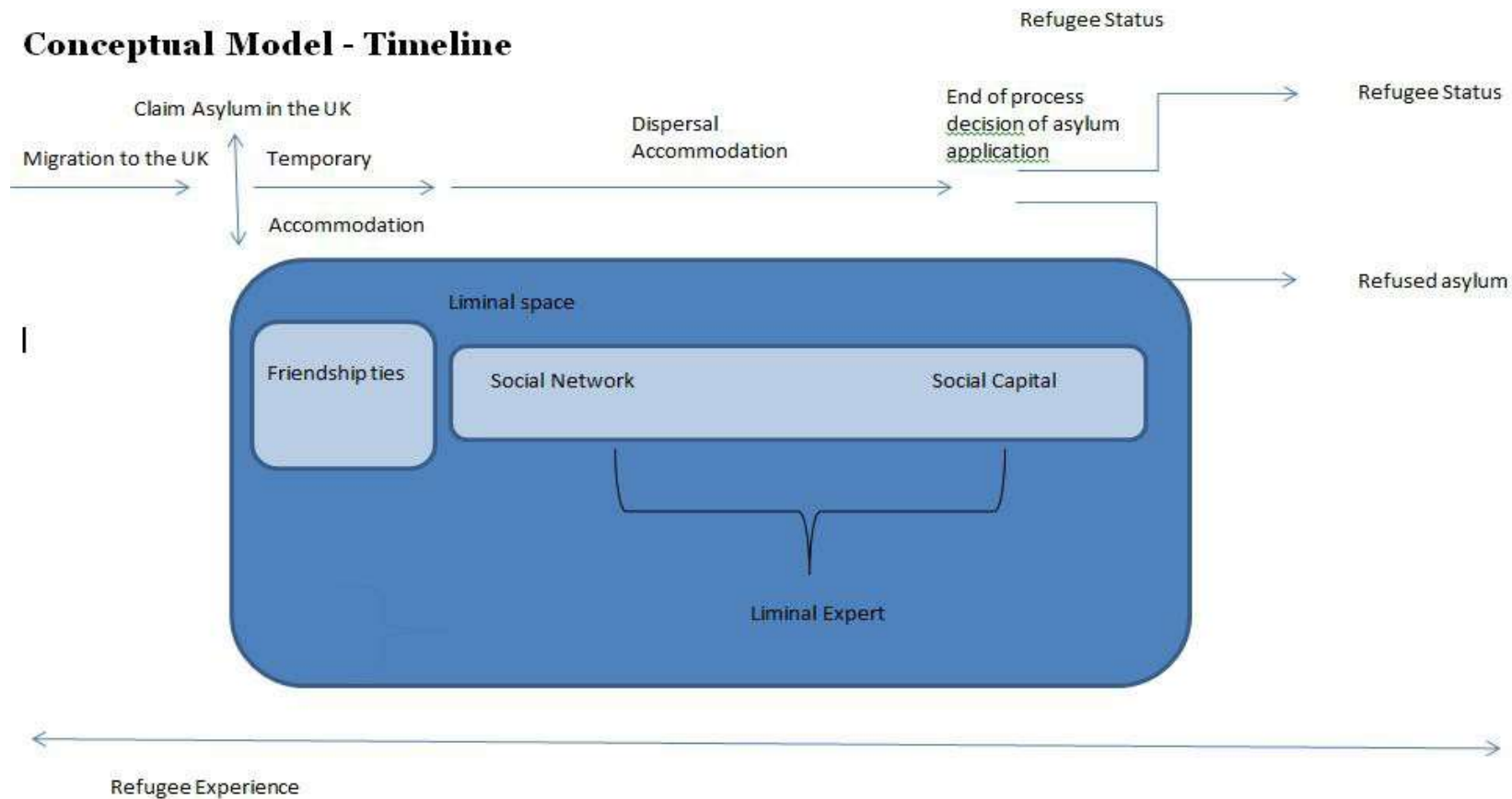
Liminality and the liminal space that asylum seekers inhabit while they are dispersed is examined. This is important as this space provides the backdrop on which the research present the restrictiveness of the asylum process and the strategies that asylum seekers develop as a response. Liminality describes the space created by the structure of the asylum process. The relationship in this paper between structure and agency reveals that the asylum process is punitive and inflexible. The liminal space is the space created by the dispersal and is the point of interface between structure and agency. Asylum seekers are unable to lobby for any changes and need to resort to using agency to ensure their livelihood in the liminal space.

This leads to the third point of coping strategies. For asylum seekers, the creation of social networks are not inevitable but they do form a particular dimension in the asylum process. There is a growing body of literature on the social networks of asylum seekers but there is a gap in studies in exploring how they develop and function in dispersal sites. By focusing on the development and function of social networks the research will be able to identify key individuals who play an integral role in the asylum process. It will also provide space to explore relationships and how, over time, they evolve from weak ties to something more enduring.

Following on from this is the role that social capital plays in the daily lives of asylum seekers. Building on literature that discusses the types of social capital that exist in migrant communities (Collyer 2005; Ryan 2008; and Zetter 2006), this research seeks to identify the types of social capital that exist in migrant groups and what this says about current academic understandings of social capital. Using both Bourdieu's (1986) and Schaefer-McDaniels (2004) ideas of what social capital is, provides the tools to understand how social capital is developed and used in the social network. Underpinning this is the recognition from the literature of the importance of trust as a form of social capital. It demonstrates how the asylum process has eroded the institutional trust of asylum seekers yet at the same time increasing the reliance of new form of social trust with other members in the social network. This is a key point as it will allow us to explore the long term implications of living in the asylum process. The literature identifies social capital as the support and resources in a social network, examples are presented and discussed which demonstrate the range of activities which can be considered social capital.

The range of skills and understanding that such experts need and how the asylum process may shape their role and their importance will be explored in Chapters 6-8.

Conceptual Model - Timeline



Dual Narrative – The refugee experience which begins before individuals arrive in the UK continues through the asylum process and beyond. This framework juxtaposes the refugee experience with the asylum process to demonstrate how liminal space emerges and how it defines the manner in which asylum seekers develop relationships with others

Timeline is defined by the amount of time an individual is an asylum seeker. This can range from a few months to a number of years.

Figure 1: Conceptual model of research

Chapter 4: Research Methods

4.1 Introduction

There I was sitting with them, talking to the participants about their lives in Coventry. They were expressive, vibrant but most interestingly comfortable. We talked about Congo and where they were from, their lives there, work, school and social activities. After a while we talked about living in Coventry and being an asylum seeker in the UK. My interest was piqued by the type of questions that they posed of me. It was the manner in which questions were posed, they were convinced about a certain topic but in actual fact they were wrong, they were asking a quantifying question of what was for them an accepted norm. Later that night I reflected on the evening unable to make sense of where they learnt about what they *knew*. I had been working with refugees in the UK long enough to know that they often understood processes and their rights, but that key aspects were misunderstood and that that meant that they had heightened expectations (Author 2007).

It was exposure to situations like this that led me to pursue this research. I wanted to research asylum seekers' development of understanding of the asylum process and living in Coventry.

The choices of methodology and methods used to achieve the aims and objectives for this study are reviewed in this chapter on research strategy. The overall strategy based on phenomenology, friendship trees and longitudinal research as the methods and methodology used in the research are discussed first, followed by an in depth look at case study methodology including the sourcing and interviewing of participants. Subsequently, an outline of how the data was collected and analysed is presented, followed by the chapter's conclusion detailing the ethics and politics of researching refugees and asylum seekers and the limitations of the research.

4.1.1 Research Strategy; Phenomenology Epistemological Standpoint

In order to answer the research questions a particular methodology was needed. Berger and Luckman's (1966) theory of phenomenology which focuses on social knowledge provides the cornerstone for this research. The theory is a means to explore the production of common-sense knowledge by the individual and how it is disseminated and internalised (Berger 1967). This was a logical research approach to use given that the research aims to understand how asylum seekers learn about living within the asylum process. The use of phenomenological enquiry in achieving the research objectives fits in the framework of trying to understand the experiences of asylum seekers by listening to how they present their stories, comprehending how they internalise these experiences and how these experiences influence their decision making.

This research draws out evidence by various methods in order to develop an in-depth insight of the perceptions and development of understanding within asylum seekers. I felt that phenomenological research methods would provide valued and original results. As the basis of the research was to investigate asylum seekers' own experiences of settlement in Coventry, by understanding their relationship with social networks and the support provided by them, it was decided that the more indirect format that phenomenological inquiry provides would better facilitate the research objectives.

As established thus far, this research concentrates on developing further understanding of the refugee experience of living under dispersal legislation. The focus is on the participants' descriptions of how they make sense of their circumstances and develop strategies to negotiate passage while waiting for a decision on their asylum claim. This involves the processes involved in building a world out of others. "With the false hope of a firm foundation gone, with the world displaced by worlds that are but versions, with substance dissolved into function, and with the given acknowledged as taken, we face the questions how worlds are made, tested, and known"(Goodman 1978:6-7). Asylum seekers in the dispersal system are constantly faced with building and rebuilding their lives upon arriving in the UK and then at every subsequent destination on the *dispersal voyage*.

Berger and Luckman (1966) demonstrate how individuals make sense of their world and internalise this understanding and use it in their everyday life. The advantage of Berger and Luckman's work is that it provides a unique way of investigating the daily lives of asylum seekers. It can produce understanding of how asylum seekers make sense of their surroundings. Appadurai's (2001) study of how people from outside developed societies view the world is another important consideration in the research. This is given careful consideration in this respect because of the overlapping layers of experiences between the perspective of the outsider of western cultures and that of the experiences of asylum seekers in a confusing and foreign support regime that is dispersal.

By adopting a phenomenological approach I decided I would be able to step out of the policy driven research approach and look at the participants as individuals, and develop an awareness of the conditions that shape their daily lives and how they develop means to overcome difficulties that they encounter. The fact that they live within a restrictive immigration policy is important to the research outcome but is not central to the research process in that the line of inquiry does not focus on dispersal but how lives are lived and constructed.

Rather than pursuing research that devises a line of questions to respond to specific research purposes (Cederberg 2006), I adopted a method to collect a broader range of information. I felt that by using a phenomenological approach of generating data I may uncover never before considered data on social networks. Hacking's (1999) work on how we socially make sense of the world had a strong influence on the direction of the methodological process of this research. His view of social constructivism as implicit provides an angle from which the final chapter looks at the interaction between social networks, social capital, dispersal and social exclusion and integration.

4.1.2 ting a Phenomenological Inquiry

There are different forms of phenomenology; philosophical, hermeneutical, social, psychological, existential and transcendental (Berger and Luckman 1966). Phenomenology is based on an understanding of the world that is constructed, as

people are the creative agents in building a social world, and intersubjective in that individuals experience the world with and through others (Berger and Luckman 1966; O'Leary 2004; Van Manen 2002).

Phenomenological study is based on the premise that to make sense of the world, research needs to be conducted on human phenomena without attaching emphasis to other concerns such as the reality of experience, causes etc. Instead, researchers need to develop an understanding of people's direct experience. Phenomenological research draws specifically from research tools such as interviews, written documents, art, etc. Each of these tools is used to draw out personal experiences of certain phenomena (Moustakas 2000; O'Leary 2004).

While in phenomenological research the individual is central in the collection of data, it is the descriptions provided in the data collection which are of interest to the researcher. Phenomenological research is most commonly used when studying *constructs* to understand the experiences of living within them. In the case of this research, the construct is the dispersal system of asylum seekers in which they are subject to live under and seeks to understand their mostly unrecognized experience. Phenomenological research attempts to focus on the direct experience and separate it from reality by looking at the situation from a subjective lens. This is done by *bracketing* the reality in an effort to avoid the contamination of what the *world* assumes the people (or situation) to be, or supposed to be (or mean) (Berger and Luckman 1966). In phenomenological inquiry the construct, when separated from its constructed meaning, is often referred to as an *object*. Phenomena, which are the focus of phenomenology, actually sit at the intersection of people and objects, and at the centre of individuals lived experience of these *objects* (O'Leary 2004). Therefore, dispersal is the object, and social networks the phenomena. In the case of this research the interest is not causes of dispersal or what is dispersal, but exploring the experience of dispersal. The intent is to study the experience of the relationship between the individual and the object. It is this direct awareness of living under dispersal that the research is investigating. The value of phenomenological methods to the research is enhanced, because the findings of interviews with asylum seekers can be contrasted with the different stages of the asylum process and the manner in which dispersal was implemented.

The strengths of phenomenological research are that it offers a unique way of researching dispersal. Taken to its philosophical extreme it can be argued that it provides the basis on which to learn understanding of consciousness, truth and existing knowledge (Van Manen 2002). In this sense it is effective in studying daily life as an asylum seeker dispersed to Coventry. The benefits of this research could be broad and not just applicable to academic research as it provides understanding of the lived experience of being an asylum seeker. This may be used to refocus methods and procedures of working with asylum seekers. Any study which explores stressful existences, such as being an asylum seeker, would not be complete without understanding the actual lived experience. From a phenomenological point of view we are primarily interested in the subjective experiences of our subjects or informants, in other words, able to report on how something is seen from their particular view, perspective or vantage point (Sokolowski 1999).

Phenomenological inquiry can provide a way of examining and comprehending phenomena. For Van Manen (2002) there is phenomena in the social world which is of importance and that this can be researched. Therefore phenomenological inquiry could be well suited to looking at the dynamics of social networks of asylum seekers.

The value of qualitative research is that by focusing on smaller data sets, with closer analysis of the subjects it can uncover more information of the lived situation on the ground of asylum seekers. In the case of the participants in this research, the truth is from their perspective and has been gained by their daily experiences of being asylum seekers living in Coventry. This “truth” (Silverman 2001) would never be uncovered based on quantitative data analysis. The adoption of a phenomenological approach in this thesis is that it provides another means of developing knowledge of how asylum seekers learn about their environment. Phenomenological approach uncovers the truth as how asylum seekers see their own situation. I have adopted research methods that avoid direct questions and focus solely on asylum seekers. It shows asylum seekers to be ordinary people (Turton 2003). This observation is pertinent in that service delivery expects asylum seekers to be anything but ordinary, and able to completely understand a legislative process and comply fully with its procedural expectations. Asylum seekers are expected to overcome the difficulties of living in an environment where they must speak a second language (usually) and live

in stressful conditions (always) (Goodson and Phillimore 2008; Hynes 2007; Sales 2008; Squire 2009).

As indicated earlier, published research on dispersal from across all sectors focuses on the manner in which, under dispersal, asylum seekers are supported (Audit Commission 2000; Zetter 2005). Qualitative study allows for a broader analysis of life in a dispersal city as experienced by asylum seekers.

A powerful draw to conducting a qualitative study with asylum seekers is the lack of accurate quantitative data. It has already been documented that there is a lack of reliable data; statistical, geographical, socio-demographic characteristics of forced migrants available at international, national and local levels (Bloch 1999; Robinson 1998; Stewart 2004). Particularly since the mid 1990's, research data has focused on the growing number of asylum applicants (Castles 2003; Gibney 2001). The generation of data by governments of the rise in applicants has provided a justification to implement increasingly deterrent oriented legislation (Crisp 1999).

In conducting research in social sciences three basic elements provide the basis of methodological inquiry. These are: the research participants, data collection methods and then the intended approach of analysis of the data followed by a report of the findings. In phenomenological research the emphasis is on generating a number of phenomenological descriptions from sources (in this case Congolese asylum seekers) and then attempting to make sense of the descriptions (Van Manen 2002). This thesis uses three areas of phenomenological inquiry; collecting experiences, description and interviewing (Van Manen 2002). By using the development of friendship trees the participants were given the opportunity to describe their experiences.

4.2 Case Study as a Strategy

4.2.1 Rationale for a Single Case Study.

It was decided that the focus of the research would be on social network. It was a difficult decision to make as previous research on social networks has cited that a key area for further research would be to research linkages between social networks. However, I felt that it was equally important to understand how a social network develops and functions in a dispersal city. To adequately undertake this meant that it was key to focus on only one network, and focus on it internally rather than focusing on how it develops links externally. The research was based on an in-depth analysis of the lives of asylum seekers and there was concern that broadening the scope to include further case studies would result in being unable to achieve the aims and objectives of the research. The requirements of the research were to focus on the dynamics within one social network rather than the linkages across multiple networks.

4.2.2 Matters of location- Why Coventry?

Coventry is one of the key dispersal cities and is featured in past research (Kelly 2003; Phillimore and Goodson 2006). Apart from building on this research, I wanted to draw on my own understanding of the city as I spent time working as the Asylum and Refugee Coordinator for the local authority. I felt that the experiences and knowledge gained while working there provided me with a strong foundation on which to base the research. This position provided me with exposure to a broad range of actors involved in the dispersal and settlement of asylum seekers in the city. I had experience with the dispersal of asylum seekers to the city, managing an actual NASS contract (which included issues such as housing procurement, housing management, financial costings, performance monitoring). From a strategic context it permitted me to be involved in the West Midlands Regional Asylum Support network (WMSPARS). In the city I was the recognised liaison for work in the asylum and refugee sector. I had input in the development of services for refugees and asylum seekers in sectors such as Health, Housing, Education, and Community Cohesion.

My position as the Asylum/Refugee Coordinator also provided a drawback for the research as it meant a potential conflict of interest. To avoid this I left the position several months before commencing the interview process with the participants. In reference to my relationship with the participants this is discussed later in this chapter. One benefit of having been the Asylum /Refugee Coordinator was that I knew the stakeholders who were the actors in the dispersal and delivery of support for asylum seekers in the West Midlands. Having these stakeholders interviewed as part of this research was essential to better contextualise the data that was produced from interviews with the participants (who were asylum seekers). Also, I was able to choose a cross section of stakeholders who were able to respond more broadly on the situation in Coventry (and in the West Midlands) by providing their expertise in key areas like: dispersal, housing, community safety, local authority overview, observations from the Regional Authority, also included were two key figures from the local voluntary sector¹⁹.

4.2.3 Why the Congolese Community?

To conduct a qualitative form of research the sample needed to be small. I felt that focusing on Congolese asylum seekers was interesting and pertinent as they have not formed the basis of any research on asylum seekers in the UK to the date when the research on this thesis began (2009). There has been a growing amount of literature on other nationalities; Zimbabweans (Doyle 2009; Mbiba 2001; McGregor 2008), Ethiopians (Collyer 2005); Colombians (Torres 2003); Turkish speaking women (Hatzidimitriadou and Gülfem Çakir 2009); Ethiopians (Papadopoulos, Lees, Lay, and . Gebrehiwot 2004); Somalis (Valentine, Sporton, Bang, and Nielsen 2009) to name but a few.

In addition, my decision to choose Congolese asylum seekers as the focus for the research was reinforced by a chance encounter in a shop in Coventry where I helped a French speaking African woman who couldn't speak English buy some goods for her child. We struck up a conversation which carried on as we walked out of the

¹⁹ The list of stakeholders interviewed in this research is found on page 13_____.

shop and into the neighbourhood square. She then introduced me to her friend, who would eventually become the gatekeeper/research aide for this research. It quickly became apparent that the key participant and I shared common experiences and interests. I could understand his experiences and was always willing to listen to him. It was through him that I started the research process. We spent a great deal of time discussing the research and what would be the best way to learn how individuals heard about living in Coventry as asylum seekers and how they developed a sense of their *world*. Introductions to the other participants happened through this initial contact. The research was eventually based on a core of fifteen participants as it became obvious that further analysis of the network would have mushroomed to other parts of the UK, Belgium, Germany, and Cameroon and back to Congo. For the scope of the thesis, the research needed to remain focused on Coventry. I based my decision on choosing to pursue the research with this group because I was very well versed on the socio/economic and political situation in the country. I felt that I had a strong relationship already with members of the community and was not seen as a threat by those that I knew. The disadvantages of this approach were that I was aware that there was another Congolese social network group apart from the one with which I was acquainted. Yet I felt that as I already had established contact with this one group and quickly became familiar with the participants that it was more advantageous and expedient to pursue the research with this group.

Having identified Coventry and its Congolese community as the case study the methods used were to conduct a series of four interviews with each of the participants over a one year period. In these interviews the participants were asked to compile a friendship tree which highlighted the relationships that they developed over the period of the research.

4.3 Researching Networks: The Friendship Tree

Working with refugees in the UK for a number of years exposed me to the phenomenon of their development of understanding how the asylum process functioned. When working directly with asylum seekers and refugees I was intrigued by the range of knowledge they possessed about the types of services available to them and what rights they had. Lengthy conversations with a colleague, Lea

Esterhuizen, led me to focus on how one could research the development of awareness without using methods which may be familiar to participants who may have already been involved in research.

I felt that previous research on refugees may have been compromised by the participants actually being aware of the aims of the research and therefore providing *compromised information*. As a result I decided that it would be original to adopt a more subjective approach which moved away from asking direct questions. The reasoning was that by asking refugees to focus on their own lives and not ask leading questions, new uncovered information might arise.

In conversation with Esterhuizen it was decided that the idea of using a friendship tree could prove an effective tool in achieving the research aim of being able to explore the social network. I found that by adapting the development of a *family tree* and changing the focus to a *friendship tree* I would be able to trace the development of social networks amongst Congolese asylum seekers in Coventry. Asylum seekers participating in the research were asked to record their time in Coventry by building a friendship tree which began with their first contact in Coventry. The tree would progress from that point and build up to further contacts. By using the term friend I felt that it would resonate with the client to focus on knowledge found within their own circle of friends rather than experiences with agencies.

In the first set of interviews participants were presented with the model of a tree. I went through the model and explained how it functioned. I showed how to use the lower branches of the tree to show the first people that they met. Then to add subsequent people met farther out on the same branch (as the person who introduced them). Each person met would be placed on the tree at a point where they were introduced to the participant and indicating who had made the introduction. Other methods of researching social networks could have been adopted, for instance focus groups, or semi-formal interviews, but I felt that I wanted to gain subjective evidence as it would better contextualise the refugee experience. By using other methods it was felt that we may be moving away from getting evidence of how asylum seekers make sense of their surroundings and the situation that they

find themselves in. See Appendix for three examples of friendship trees of the participants.

4.3.1 Sample

Participants for the research were identified by existing contacts with Congolese asylum seekers living in Coventry. One key contact was able to provide introductions with all the participants. The sample comprised of fifteen people and the selection of participants was established by the introductions provided by the key participant. The key participant developed an initial friendship tree after our first interview, which contained over 40 people. I contacted the majority of these people and was able to secure 20 people willing to act as participants. Of the 20 I was able to choose 15 that I felt would be able to continue with the interviews for a year and ensure that the sample was broad and included single men and women as well as families. The breakdown was nine males and six females and included a couple who had children. It was taken into account that the key node was the gatekeeper, but more importantly the fact that he was the liminal expert (and one of the key areas of investigation of this research) meant that his participation was permitted. I adopted pseudonyms for the participants. Furthermore, they were all asked to provide as little personal information so as not to be identifiable to the Home Office. What is possible to share is that all the participants were from either North, South Kivu, Equateur, Maniema and Kinshasa. Those who were from Kinshasa were originally from the eastern Congo. The predominant language was Swahili but there were those able to speak Lingala, among a number of other languages. They were primarily university educated; some had studied in Belgium and France.

The field research was conducted between October 2007 and January 2009. Each participant was interviewed a total of four times, the interviews took place approximately every three months. Due to predominantly logistical reasons, it was difficult to strictly follow a set of programmed dates from the outset of the research. The main problem was trying to agree upon appropriate times which were convenient for the individual participants.

I recognised that even though the participants were not working they led busy lives, which was part of their personal process of rebuilding. Therefore, agreeing upon mutually convenient times to conduct the interviews was essential. Flexibility was also required as often participants were late to interviews or had to completely reschedule (often at the last minute).

The participants were all based in the Hillfields area of the city, which is just to the northeast of the city centre. It is a low income area with a high number of ethnic minorities. Historically it has been a base for the African Caribbean community and the Asian Muslim population. Since 2000 the population has changed to include other migrant communities such as Iraqi Kurds, Somalis, and French speaking Africans as well as eastern Europeans. The participant sample included individuals who were in receipt of support and accommodation from all four of the NASS contracted providers, this enabled the research to shed light on the varying levels of support provided. Several of the participants were in receipt of Section 4 support²⁰, and two over the course of the research received refugee status.

The adoption of friendship trees provided a useful tool in accounting for the evolution of the social network. However, the interview process produced illuminating evidence of personal experiences in the asylum system that made clear the importance of the social network.

4.4 Interview Process

I tried to make sure that the interviews were as informal as possible, trying to avoid any similarities to interviews conducted by Home Office officials. It was important for the participants to feel as comfortable as possible. My initial research method was to give them cameras to take photos of the neighborhood where they lived and to try to explain their impressions of the locale. I had to abandon this approach as the

²⁰ Section 4 support was given to asylum seekers who had been refused asylum and had lodged an appeal, or was given to asylum seekers who had exhausted all appeal rights and the Home Office wanted to remove, however at that point in time it was impossible for them to return to their country of origin.

results were inconclusive and difficult to draw out any meaningful data. It did act as an effective icebreaker as it established a positive relationship between me and the participants.

At the beginning of the research the participants were briefed that I wanted them to describe the friends they made, what they learnt from these individuals and if they were introduced to other people. When explaining this I also provided an example so that they understood my request. I provided them with pads of paper and pens. When we met, I initially asked a series of questions which were not focused on the research but were designed to make the participant feel comfortable. Once I felt that the moment was right I would move the conversation to the friendship trees. When the participant produced the *tree* I would ask them to explain it. I would ask for them to talk about who they met, how and where. After the first few interviews I realized that without more specific questions I was at risk of not gathering enough data. I recognized that the trees were an original and fairly effective interview tool but that I needed to add some more objective questions to clarify certain parts of the interviews. What I decided to do was to continue to be open and allow the participants to talk about their trees. However, if I felt that there were certain points that they spoke about that needed more information I would ask them in as a non-direct manner as possible. For example, rather than ask “what exactly happened at this point (sic)?” I would ask in a more general manner; “can you please tell me more about what you did.....”

The format of the interviews would start with asking them to tell me about their friendship trees. In the later interviews the starting point would be updating the trees to show any changes. Rather than having any fixed questions I focused any further questions based on the information that was being provided (or in some cases not provided, if the participant was being vague). I would in these instances ask questions in a format, “Can you please tell me more about such and such?” I would also ask questions in a similar open manner about what they learnt from people and experiences.

Although the research plan was initially supposed to be focused on learning how freshly dispersed asylum seekers adjust to living in Coventry over a one year period; this, unfortunately, was not the case as most had been in the city for some time. I felt that this was a serious drawback for the research but after analysis of the initial data I realised that the longer the participants had been in the asylum system the richer the data provided. What I decided to do was ask participants to start their friendship trees at the point when they arrived in Coventry. I also asked them to try and give a time frame of three months segments that they could add to their trees to show time scales. I chose three months as that was the frequency of my intended interviews.

4.5 Analysis

Each interview was recorded on a dictaphone and the data was then transcribed and analysed. The process of data analysis is an attempt to synthesise the data generated and in recognizing, as mentioned previously, that the very nature of phenomenology is learning about experiences of phenomena. There is a prospect that there are different ways of experiencing dispersal. By having fifteen participants the number was high enough to ensure variation yet avoid saturation.

The data accumulated ensured that there was a wide range of experiences of dispersal. The range included similar experiences, due to all participants being part of the same social network. There were also unconnected experiences which needed to be put within the context of personal circumstances (Moustakas 1994). What phenomenological research is trying to establish is not the dissimilarities between individual's experiences but their extent. This is done through a process of identifying themes that reduce unimportant dissimilarities and integrate the essential nature within the various descriptions (Van Manen 2002). Further to this was the need to bind the experiences to the dual narrative nature of the research by being able to identify the linkages in the asylum dispersal process with the stage of specific experiences of each participant. Rather than use qualitative software analysis I chose to create folders filled with recipe cards on which I noted the participant's

experience of the asylum process for each stage. Then when analysing participant's comments I noticed that there were re-occurring themes specific to the particular stage of the asylum process. I chose not to use qualitative analysis software such as NVIVO because the interviews were in French and I felt that translation would make accurate analysis problematic. Advice on data analysis taken from Bryman and Burgess (2002), Silverman (2001 and 2006) and Mason (2002) influenced my adoption of key tools such as the use of recipe cards; and large boards where I could move people to monitor progression and highlight linkages. Recurrent themes were then grouped to enable a broader understanding.

After identifying the limitations of the friendship tree I started to review the interviews looking for commonalities of the themes related to the experiences of the participants. Once this was identified I began to take quotes and themes from each interview that were related to specific stages of the asylum journey and compile stage specific evidence. In trying to contextualise the findings within the refugee experience and to identify the framework of the social network and forms of social capital, I developed sections for each of these concepts. I would review quotes and then place them in the corresponding concept section. As the interviews were structured to encourage asylum seekers to provide broad narratives of their lives in Coventry, it provided a way of understanding their experiences, from their viewpoint. I feel that the strengths of this approach were due to the data I gathered being extremely rich in detail. It also provided participants with the opportunity to speak fairly openly. Because of this it enabled me to have a window view of understanding how they were experiencing their lives as asylum seekers. A major weakness of the research was the use of longitudinal research. The amount of data I gathered was superfluous and the manner in which I analysed the data was cumbersome. In the future I would consider just conducting two interviews with a longer period of time between interviews. I would also consider different types of interview tactics, as I think that the friendship tree was original but that in reality it proved to be no more than something that provided a model of the links that people make. More important was the accompanying conversations that provided the most important data.

4.5.1 Defining a Social Network and Social Capital

The research needed to develop a series of indicators to identify both social networks and social capital. Defining social networks is based on developing an understanding of the flow of contacts between participants. Based on the work of Williams and Durrance (2008) the key indicators were the frequency of contact between individuals and the overlapping of contacts among individuals. When a group is identified it is important to find the ties, if any, that link the individuals together, for example, does someone have more than four friends in common? How frequently do these individuals meet, do they meet individually, and do they meet as a group.

Social network analysis is a way of creating a visual picture of social capital through drawing connections between people and the characteristics of these connections (rsablogs.org.uk/2009-n.p.). This is the strength of using friendship trees within the context of trying to define the relationship between social networks and capital. By using Babbie (2013), the following indicators were identified as appropriate for this research: perceptions of ability to influence events; frequency of seeing friends; the number of close friends; exchange of help; perceived control and satisfaction with life; trust in other people who are like them; doing favours; perception of shared values; or fear of crime. The ability to monitor how the network evolved over time and to identify how links were made with other outside networks in Coventry was a benefit of longitudinal study.

As part of the interview process the participants were asked to describe their trees, the friends that they made and what they learned from these friendships. Unexpectedly, the breadth of negative experiences provided by the participants of the network in the interviews was startling. This came about as participants gave examples of what was learned from their friends in relation to being asylum seekers. It was on this information that the analysis of all the data was decided, it being more relevant to the research aims and objectives.

Included in Appendix, are examples of participant's friendship trees. Each of them demonstrates the importance that the network has on the individual's life as the linkages to others is almost entirely restricted to other members of the group. The

implications are discussed in the empirical chapters. As the research was designed to monitor the experiences over a year, the trees should show how asylum seekers develop an understanding of living in a dispersal city, through the development of their social network(s). The friendship trees were useful in that they grow upwards, showing how social networks develop over time and provide knowledge, introductions and friendship. Also they reach back in time, into the roots of the tree presenting contacts made through family and friends in the Congo, Europe and the US or in the UK prior to being dispersed to Coventry. The strength of the friendship trees was that it could be used to show *cross pollination* into other social networks of dispersed asylum seekers and links with transnational networks.

4.6 Longitudinal Research

This research involved multiple interviews staged periodically over what was initially supposed to be one year. The interviews with the participants were to monitor longitudinally how they develop new understanding and mobilise this understanding. How networks evolved posed a number of questions, primarily around how long it was going to take to accumulate information. However, rather than these preliminary concerns being at the forefront of my research, the initial interviews with participants produced a large amount of information which was longitudinal yet retrospective and stretched back over several years. More importantly, for this research, the longitudinal information straddled all the different stages of the asylum journey of the participants. This unexpected development meant that I was able to draw on a dual longitudinal reservoir of information. A drawback of retrospective data is that it can provide too much information and make it difficult to focus on the aims and objectives of the research.

Once the research ended I was able to delve fully into monitoring the development of knowledge by the participants during the actual research timeline. Although our interviews over a one year period did produce evidence of evolving knowledge, the value of comments by participants about experiences over the course of the whole asylum process proved more valuable for the purposes of the research objectives.

4.7 Interviews with Key Actors

4.7.1 Avoiding the Pitfalls of Researching Asylum Seekers: Participant Skepticism and Ensuring Personal Safety and Dignity in the Research

It was from the experience of working with asylum seekers and refugees that I became aware of how they felt over-researched and this provides the rationale behind the decision to adopt an original research method. In Coventry there are a number of asylum seekers who figure in almost all research undertaken. This is because they work closely with the key local voluntary sector agency providing support to asylum seekers. When researchers approach the agency for potential participants to interview, their names are put forward.

In terms of social research, Smith's (1999) seminal work on research and indigenous peoples describes research as a dirty word with its vestiges entwined with imperialism/colonialism. To overcome this, the research had to incorporate key elements of the ethics guidelines but also be developed in consultation with the key participant. It was clear that for the research to proceed there were several key points which needed to be recognised and strategies devised to ensure that the research could proceed. As a visible outsider, I needed to develop a sense of legitimacy with the participants to develop their trust. By being a French speaker and having worked with Congolese refugee groups previously, some affinity and confidence was established. It emerged that actively trying to strike up conversations with participants proved to be more effective in developing trust than previously envisaged.

Having the key participant accompany me reinforced this development of trust. The rationale of the research was transparent. Before each interview the research was explained to the participant, this was followed by probing questions to ascertain whether they fully understood the research rationale. Both the key participant and I clarified that the research was academic and would have no bearing on their asylum application. They were also made aware that they should not have high expectations that it would improve their living and asylum circumstances. Being open with the participants about the nature of the research as well as involving them in the

research has already been used by Robinson and Sergott (2002) who felt that being open was a means of developing trust. By the time the research was in the third and fourth cycle it was apparent from the way the interview progressed that rapport was increasing and therefore trust had increased.

4.7.2 Participation of Asylum Seekers

Powerless or marginalised groups are often the focus of social research (Beresford 1996, May 2001). As Beresford argues (1996), the research process is firmly out of the control of service users of welfare and social care. As a result the findings do not literally convey the concerns, experiences and aspirations of the researched.

For the refugee, research can be a negative experience as often they are left with a notion of disempowerment. Since the late 1980's some academic arguments have supported the stance that it is imperative that refugees have more of an input into research in which they are the main focus. This argument includes input into all aspects of the issues that refugees need to negotiate (which directly affect them) (Indra 1989; Smith 1999) expounds the importance of the indigenous researcher. Supporting this is Chambers (1983) highlighting that rather than relying on European and North American experts to dominate the agenda, reliance should be placed on the local expertise of rural people who have developed knowledge over generations. The importance of refugees in developing understanding of their situation and providing solutions has been supported by Indra (1989) and Harrell-Bond (1992). I developed links with a local voluntary sector agency that centred on African and the African Caribbean community. The agency was keen on developing links with newly arrived African asylum seekers, as a first step I arranged to conduct my interviews on their premises. Through the key node, I enabled the agency to develop links with the social network.

With the exception of the key participant (who had been involved in a policy research paper on medical care), the other participants had never been involved in any UK based research. Feelings about it were negative in that the true value was not for them but the researchers and institutions that conducted the research. This scepticism was entwined with disillusionment with agencies attempting to 'work

with' them. The participants were aware of stories of past research conducted on asylum seekers which had no personal benefit. The focus of the comments made by the participants about this other piece of research was the perception that it stole their *voices* because the researcher never provided feedback after the interview(s). In fact there was no contact with the researcher after the interviews.

4.7.3 Engagement with Participants: Methods for the Phenomenological Study of Asylum Seekers

A key point in describing phenomena is the researcher's own experiences of the object that will provide the direction for the research. As outlined previously, I felt that asylum seekers voices had not been properly evaluated in previous research on dispersal. I felt that my own experiences needed to be far removed from the process in order to provide analysis of data and a report that was as free of any input of my own understanding of dispersal (Van Manen 2002). Therefore, the starting point was to interview the key informant about his experience of dispersal through the construction of a friendship tree, which was based solely on the development of his world, free of any influence that I may have on the research findings. From there introductions to others and their descriptions of dispersal then began a process of accumulating different experiences. The descriptions developed over a year and it was important to monitor change and how descriptions evolved longitudinally. Participants were instructed to focus directly on the experience. The data generated was then saved for the second stage of the research. Descriptions needed to focus directly on a particular situation or event and avoid using casual explanations (Moustakas 2000; O'Leary 2004).

Studying human experiences provides the basis for the accumulation of data when researching human activity in social sciences. When applying the phenomenological approach to research the researcher is interested in gathering a wide cross section of human experiences in relation to a certain reality or phenomena. The most common method here is to ask participants to write down their experiences. The participant is asked to provide vivid explanations which include emotional and sensory impact (Berger and Luckman 1967; Moustakas 1994; Sokolowski 2000).

4.7.4 Befriending and Building Confidence

In order to ensure the effectiveness of this research it was imperative that I adopt an approach of befriending participants. This meant attending social functions and being on hand to provide advice and support. This is akin to Rogers (2004) approach of *hanging out* with asylum seekers. At this point it becomes a more personal experience and provides a setting where it is the asylum seekers who develop the research agenda (Smith 1999). User involvement ensures that as a result the research cannot be positivist in approach as the researcher (for the purposes of methodology and personal convictions) cannot remain neutral. As a result the manner in which this research has been conducted is with asylum seekers rather than on, for or about them. I was also conscious of the ethics of friendship, with regard to my role in the research. Ethics of friendship made me aware of the significant advantages of the manner in which I was conducting the research but also how it could change my role and the experiences of those I was studying (Taylor 2011).

An area that needs to be considered when studying asylum seekers is the dichotomy of the researcher being either an *insider* or an *outsider*. Both Smith (1999) and Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002) emphasise the fact that the credibility of research on indigenous peoples rests on the research being conducted by an individual from within the community (insider). This standpoint is reinforced by Robson's (2002) viewpoint that credibility is derived by being an insider as well as an outsider. This is demonstrated by how I ended up researching the social network. Introductions were made in an informal setting by a *gatekeeper*. As a French speaker, I was able to communicate directly with the participants. I attended a number of community functions and after time became accepted by the participants. For some participants the interview also provided a backdrop for them to have someone else to talk to. Conversations were broad and not entirely related to being an asylum seeker or the social network, but often about day to day living and pop culture.

I would not consider that I became an insider with the participants; rather, over time they would recognise me at functions and began to trust me. However, I was not directly experiencing the same events as them and this was recognised not only by me but by the participants as well. I was conscious that developing friendships could

compromise the research. I outlined this to the key node at the beginning of the research. I made it clear the importance of keeping a professional distance. I therefore kept distance from the participants where I was not asked to directly help them. By getting the community center involved I was able to avert any direct requests for assistance.

4.7.5 Interviewing Experiences

In this longitudinal process of research, with each participant being interviewed four times, there were sixty interviews, which were all recorded. The interview in phenomenological inquiry performs the role of providing the means of gathering data to furnish research findings which are lavish in detail (Van Manen 2002). This is done by compiling and scrutinising a range of material which can be narrative extracts, stories or anecdotes. However, to ensure that the quality of the data is properly documented and analysed the researcher needs to fully consider the research question before the interview takes place. In phenomenological enquiry the use of unstructured open ended interview methods will not provide adequate data to answer the research question. Therefore, there is a need to ensure that the research question determines the method of data collection rather than the reverse (Van Manen 2002). The aim is to gather rich descriptions of the phenomena being researched.

When interviewing the participants the goal is to draw out rich descriptions of the lived experience. In other words, rather than explore how or why something is, you would ask your respondents to tell you what it feels like, what it reminds them of and how they would describe it. This is done in a dialogic manner where the interviewee is encouraged to further explore the various aspects of their reflections (O’Leary 2004, Van Manen 2002). It may involve digging below the surface of the words to understand the meaning behind them. Sometimes this was done by trying to find the word in another language (between Swahili and French), or just getting the participant to re-iterate the comment.

The interviews had a varied dynamic. The first and second rounds of interviews were between the participant, the key participant and I. The presence of the key

participant was to provide for the development of trust, and put the participant at ease. I wanted the participant to feel confident and recount their story without feeling hindered but I did note that by having the key participant present impacted the interview, but I was also aware that the participants felt comfortable around him. With that in mind, I decided that the drawbacks of his presence were outweighed by the benefits of having him present in the interviews. However, for the final two rounds I was often alone with the participant. This method appeared to work well in terms of developing a trust as I was able to interview participants on their own in later stages of the research. As well as the role of instilling trust, the key participant also provided the starting point of the friendship tree. Interviews were usually more than one hour but they never exceeded two hours. I was aware of the need not to take up too much of the participant's time but frequently the interview provided participants with someone to talk to and they were happy to continue beyond an hour.

By using friendship trees participants were able to explain how they created their own world. Often the interviews provided amusing scenarios for the participants because it made them reflect on situations that they had never before considered. By focusing on living in Coventry I managed to avoid well documented themes researching refugees of remembering pasts and imagining futures (Anderson 1991; Connerton 1989). The style of the interviews was open to a point but focused on the development of the friendship tree. Participants described contacts they made within the social network and what they learned from each particular link. The explanations were rich in that they explained circumstances and reasons for acting certain ways, reasons about why specific choices were made. Repeat interviews provided an opportunity to further develop the trees which showed that there had been further development in the established links. Some of the participants were characteristic in that their tree did not grow, while others trees expanded as they entered other arenas, such as attending college, where they could meet other people.

4.7.6 Research in a Second Language

The research was conducted in French, which I speak fluently. The participants were comfortable to be interviewed in French, they were aware that I was Canadian and

had worked in French speaking areas in Africa. The other languages involved were Swahili and Lingala. Fortunately, those who spoke one of these two languages insisted on being interviewed in French. If there were situations where they came into difficulty the key participant was there to clarify as he was proficient in all these languages. The implications for cross language research were therefore anticipated (Temple and Young 2004). Employing someone who speaks the same language as the participant does not automatically instill confidence. However, the dynamic of the group meant that the key participant was a close friend of the participants and had their trust.

Personal considerations about the participant in relation to the interpreter needed to be considered. If the participant came from a country such as DR Congo where there is civil strife, the interpreter's politics, or ethnicity may be unknown and therefore treated with suspicion. The interpreter may be viewed with suspicion or as an *outsider* who does not have the interests of the individual at heart, a common response by asylum seekers about the use of interpreters in the UK. By using men to act as interpreters when interviewing female applicants had the potential to foster suspicion that their information was not fully being disclosed or was altered in the translation process. Being part of the UK government apparatus and therefore committed to discrediting them are examples that were given regarding a lack of trust in interpreters (Refugee Council 2009).

Fortunately, as mentioned earlier, in this research the key participant spoke all three languages. It was also clear that he was respected by the participants. I recorded the interviews in French. For my part, any language misunderstanding was solved by asking the key participant to use Swahili or Lingala. Then my confidence that the participant fully understood the question and context of the subject matter was confirmed by asking similar supplementary questions. Prior to starting the research, I considered whether there would be any bias in the manner in which the participants volunteered information. However, upon reflection it was decided that because of the use of phenomenological methods in collecting data, any bias the key participant might have would potentially be negligible. This was because of the generalness of the questions that I asked, and that they were about the participants lives, therefore any direct questions that might have been seen to be investigative and

therefore unsettling were avoided. As the interviews were open, free of direct questions, the key participant would be unable to push participants towards responding in a specific manner which would be the case with a specific line of subject focused questions.

4.7.7 Participation of Non-Asylum Seeking Actors

As a counter balance to the epistemological standpoint and in an effort to provide a broader overview of the particular dynamics of how dispersal was implemented and managed in Coventry the research also included interviews with four stakeholders. The first was the Head of Housing and Policy Services, Coventry City Council. The importance of this interviewee was that he oversaw the delivery of a NASS accommodation/support contract. Furthermore, he was able to provide concise information with regards to any issues that arose in relation to the role that the local authority played in delivering services to asylum seekers and any strategic initiatives that may have an impact on the lives of asylum seekers. Three representatives from the voluntary sector were interviewed. They were specifically chosen as their organisations worked directly with asylum seekers in Coventry and were well placed to provide clear and informative comment on the situation on the ground. It was felt that the richness of the data from the participants would benefit from the information provided by the interviews with the stake holders.

4.7.8 Interviews with Stakeholders

I felt that as the research was examining the lives of asylum seekers it was important to interview a number of people who I considered key stakeholders in the dispersal of asylum seekers to Coventry. These people were either based in Coventry or Birmingham. The group included people from the West Midlands Regional Authority, Coventry City Council as well as a number of people who worked for voluntary sector agencies locally. I was interested in understanding their knowledge of social networks and the difficulties that asylum seekers faced living in Coventry. The questions that I asked in the interviews were focussed on; the quality of asylum support and accommodation management delivered by NASS, the difficulties of accessing local services, destitution, social exclusion and integration. The interviews

with stakeholders were conducted in a fairly structured manner yet it is important that they all knew me as I had worked closely with them for a number of years previously. This familiarity allowed me to ask specific questions. I had let them know in advance of the questions I was going to ask so that they could prepare. A series of questions were arranged prior to the interviews.

4.7.9 Other Methods Used- Photographs

As introduced earlier, another icebreaking approach that I attempted was to provide the participants with cameras to take pictures of their surroundings. The idea was to encourage asylum seekers to use photos as a vehicle for describing their lives as asylum seekers living in Coventry. The methodology was still within a phenomenological framework where it was intended that the participants would be allowed to talk about the importance of each of the photos that they took with little (if any) guiding questions from the interviewer. After an initial testing of this approach I felt that the information provided was too broad and did not fit the aims and objectives of the research, therefore I decided to not pursue this approach. Instead I decided to use the approach to build familiarity between the participants and myself. The photos in this thesis are the product of this attempted line of enquiry. These photos were specifically chosen for their soberness, they portray the participant's neighbourhood as being in a state of urban decay. I felt that including them in the text helped visually place the area where the participants lived in the minds of readers. It was also a chance for the participants to provide their own contribution to the thesis.

4.8 Ethics and Politics of Researching Refugees

4.8.1 Interviewees: Matters of Position and Ethics

Due to the power imbalance which can emerge during research (Marshall and Batten 2004) it was imperative that strategies were adopted which developed trust. A written and verbal explanation of the research project was provided to each person interviewed, stressing the research was not linked to official government agencies and that participation was completely voluntary. These explanations were translated

into French to avoid misunderstanding. Fortunately the use of the information and consent forms did not deter any participants. These forms were kept by me in a security box in my home, and were not to be shared with anyone. The provision of information and an informed consent form prior to the interview meant that the interview was productive from the beginning as individuals were aware of the ethical considerations in the research process.

I was aware that there were a number of participants who wanted to be interviewed but were wary of the assurances of anonymity. The issue of *on-going consent* (as the process was longitudinal and covered a full year) was a constant ethical concern. Over the year an individual's circumstances could change, this meant that in several cases their personal situation became more marginal and unstable. During the interviews, participants were informed prior to each meeting that they were under no obligation to answer questions which made them feel uncomfortable. Total anonymity for the participants was assured at the beginning of the research process. Another major factor was assuring the participants that the research was not in any way involved with their asylum claim and was not being passed on to the Home Office. In discussion with the key participant it was agreed that my confidentiality could not be assured as there had been concern from some participants about whether I would join the Home Office at the end of the research. The key participant was able to explain and convince the participants that this was never going to be the case. Close analysis of this scenario led me to recognise the importance of the key informant in helping me develop a level of trust of the participants.

Abiding by research ethics has been a cornerstone to the research process. The research guidelines that have been used are from the British Sociological Association, the Economic and Social Research Council and the Social Research Association. Most importantly, the use of The Refugee Studies Centre (Oxford) ethical guidelines specifically devised to be used when researching refugees. The RSC guidelines have provided a basis for reflection of the appropriateness of positioning in the research, and the vulnerability of the asylum seekers involved in the research. It has been important to reflect on personal conduct and its implications in the research process. Also, it provided impetus in the development of the process of ethical reflection when conducting research.

When conducting research on asylum seekers the researcher needs to recognise that the participant may have suffered potentially traumatic experiences during three phases of the refugee journey. First, they have probably suffered personal loss in their country of origin. This may include losing friends and family members in violent circumstances. Second, the journey to the UK is fraught with obstacles which can have an increased traumatic effect on individuals. This may be the conditions of the journey, fear of being discovered by authorities and trusting *agents*.

Finally, in the UK the asylum process is unwelcoming and riddled with visible inconsistencies. The dual impact of the hindrances as a result of asylum and the experiences of loss on the individual needs to be appreciated by the observer. To be sure that the research aim is answered consideration needs to be given to adopting the most appropriate type of research methodology while taking into account the individuals personal circumstances. At a later stage these same considerations need to be applied; when evaluating the research data and in dissemination of the findings. These both need to be done in a manner that is mutually agreeable with the participants.

Research has found that asylum legislation and the asylum process are based on suspicion (Hynes 2007) that is all pervasive and at the individual level affects all aspects of the everyday life of an asylum seeker. In the interview situation the issue of suspicion arose frequently. The methodology employed attempted to avoid replication of anything experienced in the asylum process. It was clear that all participants had a well-entrenched mistrust of the system which in the interview often emerged in comments which showed frustration and anguish. Every step was taken to ensure that interviews were far removed from anything resembling a Home Office interview. Questions were indirect and interviews took place in an informal setting. The participants experiences of previous interviews were all based on a power relationship where they were treated as either *under suspicion*, *lacking credibility* or even *vulnerable* and therefore in need of assistance.

The research interviews had to not only avoid the type of questions which could invoke reliving traumatic past experiences but also avoid questions which challenged the participants' asylum credibility. The participant had to feel comfortable,

confident and relatively in control in the interview. This was the opposite of the feelings that some of the participants explained they felt when being interviewed by local agencies.

Research has also shown that the asylum system is poorly executed and managed (Audit Commission 2000). By adopting a phenomenological perspective which centers on social networks, the attempt has been to avoid pitfalls which could have a personal impact on the participant and subsequently the research findings. By focussing on past events, the participant may be taken to a point which forces them to reflect (and sometimes disclose) painful past experiences which are traumatic. If it is assessed that it is ethical to ask participants to openly discuss traumatic experiences, then questions on delicate subjects were put into the context of the research aims and objectives. In the case of this research it was not necessary. While all efforts were made to avoid asking questions about the past, participants did often speak of their experiences in Congo and during the journey to the UK.

The concept of *harm* is prominent within ethical research on refugees and asylum seekers. In the UK the current political climate firmly puts asylum in an environment of deterrence and as a result any research on asylum seekers needs to consider deeply whether any harm will come to the participants as a result of the research. Harm in this case needs to be applied in a broader context than just within its impact on a realist perspective. Harm can be avoided by ensuring that identities are protected and that any of the findings of the research do not have a negative impact on the participant. The asylum system imposes economic marginality forcing people to exist on a benefit system which supports people below the poverty level (Refugee Council 2002). When interviewing I made sure that the participants did not spend any money, that food and drink were available and that subsequent costs such as transport and childcare were taken care of. By incorporating the Family Centre I managed to invite the participants into an environment which was committed to listening to and developing services for Africans run by Africans.

Rather than being charitable, which has its own ethical drawbacks, I decided to pursue trying to link the participants with an agency which could help them. In working with the key participant and the Family Centre management it was agreed

that it may be beneficial for participants to have access to a place where they learn English and computing skills and have access to a welcoming environment where they could spend time. Disbelief and mistrust of asylum seekers by most agencies as well as a *charity* approach adopted by the voluntary sector impacted on the dignity of individuals. Therefore, what was recognised here was that, on one hand, there was an entrenched mistrust of asylum seekers but, on the other hand, asylum seekers mistrusted due to their experiences. Furthermore, charity given to asylum seekers was resented by the UK public as asylum seekers weren't to be trusted; and asylum seekers resented charity as they felt disempowered, not appreciated for the skills they had and disillusioned at being prevented from using their skills.

This research moves away from placing refugees within the framework of being vulnerable. By encouraging the participants to become actively involved in the Family Centre they were able to use the facilities to further themselves professionally and personally. A common opinion of asylum seekers, refugees and representatives of RCO's pointed towards the *resilience* of refugees or the fact that they are not a group to be automatically pitied, or to be on the end of a *charity approach*, or labelled as *vulnerable* or *victims* (Baycan 2003). From a personal standpoint, issues of empowerment were a frequent concern as it conflicted with the ethical research guidelines.

4.8.2 Leaving the Field

Since finishing the research, contact has been maintained with the key participant. It has been difficult to remain in touch with all the participants, as some have moved out of Coventry and have eventually disappeared. What was agreed upon with the participants at the beginning of the research was that they would be informed when the research was finished. At that point the findings would be shared and discussed. I also discussed arranging a follow up meeting after the thesis was passed to discuss any further actions. Participants agreed that this would be a good idea. Six months after the conclusion of the interviews I arranged meeting with the participants to present the initial findings. At the meeting the participants were positive about the findings and wanted to be kept informed once the research was finished.

4.9 Strengths, Weaknesses and Limitations of Strategy

The strength of the phenomenological approach was that it enabled the researcher to understand how the participants viewed their situation. Rather than relying on the views of a service provider, or an asylum seeker answering a series of well-defined questions; the participants were able to provide dialogue that afforded key information which was presented in a broader discourse which enabled the researcher to understand the contextual framework. It made grasping how participants made sense of their surroundings, and the factors that influenced decision making and the logic behind the end results. The main thrust of this research looks at how relationships develop inside the network. Comprehending how relationships are developed and fostered provides an important academic contribution to understanding the dynamics of how social networks evolve and function within the asylum system.

Because the aim of the research was to focus within one social network, it could be considered that a key weakness was that the research did not look at how the social network was linked to other social networks. Taking this one step further another weakness would be that the parameters of the research did not include assessing the possible links that participants had with other social networks in Coventry. By focusing on one social network the research may be perceived as possibly over emphasising the importance of the key node as he can also be seen as the gatekeeper. In trying to establish the boundaries of the network I realized that I could identify from the interviews linkages that some participants made that were restricted to the participant and did not appear in the linkages of others. I identified that these linkages were people on the outside of the network and this defined the boundaries. Also from the interviews, through the frequency of contact with the participants, names of others repeatedly arose, from that I was able to develop an idea of the members of the network and the boundaries of the network. I was aware of this problem but having finished the interviews I felt that this was not the case and that more importantly the key node presented an important interpretation of the concept of liminal expert. Additionally, the fact that I wanted to conduct an in depth longitudinal study meant that the focus could only be on one network, otherwise the scope of the research would be too broad and difficult to cover sufficiently.

The drawback for this form of research was that the longitudinal approach was compromised by the fact that no participant in the research had freshly arrived in the city. Efforts had been undertaken to include new arrivals to the city, but the two who had initially agreed to be part of the research withdrew at the last moment. I was unable to get a response from them as to why they decided to withdraw. However, it was informative that the friendship links seemed to stop growing outwards. Instead there was an increased emphasis on solidifying relationships across the network rather than branching outwards. These findings reinforced the observations that are discussed in Chapter 8.

There were drawbacks to using the friendship trees, in that although it did provide evidence that the group of friends was a social network it did not directly answer the aims and objectives of the research. It was only in the open ended conversations that a wealth of supplementary evidence emerged. I would argue that starting the interviews with a discussion on the progression of the friendship tree acted as an effective icebreaker and enabled the interview to provide enough space for the participants to talk about their experiences.

In terms of representativeness, there was an effort to try and create parity amongst the participants in terms of gender. There was not a wide cross section in age, but even the initial scoping of potential participants showed the majority were between the ages of eighteen and forty five. By limiting the focus of the research to Congolese participants, any findings would have to be treated as possibly reflective of only Congolese asylum seekers and that the experiences of other asylum seekers of different nationalities may be different.

4.10 Conclusion

This chapter outlines the objectives of the research and justifies the choices in methodology and methods adopted to achieve the aims. The research's origins rest in my own desire to understand how asylum seekers develop social networks. Having read extensively on refugees as well as having first-hand experience of research in the area, I was compelled to look for another method to adopt for my research.

The research was based on the development of friendship trees by the participants. The choice of basing the research in Coventry was motivated by personal knowledge and familiarity with not only the city but also the process of dispersal itself locally and within the West Midlands region.

Conscious of the impact of dispersal on asylum seekers I have had to consider the repercussions my research may have on the lives of the participants. I have respected and followed research guidance and best practice when researching asylum seekers. I have reflected on positioning myself in the research. By adopting a phenomenological approach to this research, I explore how Congolese asylum seekers develop knowledge of living in Coventry under the dispersal policy. The empirical work demonstrates how through social networks they negotiate their lives and develop social capital to offset the impact of an increasingly restrictive support.

Part 2: Empirical chapters

Chapter 5: The Coventry Experience

5.1 Introduction

Before stepping into a dual narrative format, this chapter connects to the empirical chapters and the Literature Review and Research Methods chapters. The research is based in Coventry, a city in the West Midlands of the United Kingdom. As a means of further contextualising the findings of the research a clear understanding of how dispersal operated in Coventry is important, and is provided through a discussion of dispersal policy at a national level and showing how it was carried out in Coventry. The chapter goes on to identify the various actors involved and the impact dispersal has had on the city, including the difficulties that ensued in understanding the asylum process and developing a coordinated response. However firstly, the history and background to the city is set out.

Image removed for copyright reasons

Figure 2: Coventry: note that the red spot is Hillfields. From: <http://www.weather-forecast.com/locations/Coventry>

Image removed for copyright reasons

Figure 3: Map of England and Wales. Coventry is flagged in red. Map from: <https://www.google.co.uk/maps/place/Coventry/@52.4136708,-3.7563024,7z/>

5.2 Historical Background of Migration to Coventry up to Dispersal in 1999

Being *sent to Coventry* is a common English idiom that most likely has its roots in the Civil War. In *The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England*, Edward Hyde describes how in the 1640's captured Royalist soldiers were interned in the Parliamentarian stronghold of Coventry, where the residents were quite inhospitable (Clarendon 1955). As an idiom its meaning was explained more broadly in the Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue (Grose 1811).

To send one to Coventry; a punishment inflicted by officers of the army on such of their brethren as are testy, or have been guilty of improper behaviour, not worthy of the cognisance of a court martial. The person

sent to Coventry is considered as absent; no one must speak to or answer any question he asks, except relative to duty, under penalty of being also sent to the same place. On a proper submission, the penitent is recalled and welcomed by the mess, as just returned from a journey to Coventry (Grose 1811²¹).

The use of “Sent to Coventry” to convey a sense of being sent somewhere undesirable and where people are ostracised by the resident population has become common usage in the English language. Giving this research the title of *Being sent to Coventry* seemed logical as asylum seekers were being placed in the city on a no choice basis (Hynes 2011) History repeating itself? The process of dispersal was introduced by New Labour in an effort to alleviate the pressures that asylum accommodation was imposing on local authorities in London and the South-East (Hynes 2011:44). The Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 introduced eligibility criteria for asylum applicants which meant that in order to receive government support claimants had to accept the first offer of accommodation (geographically) with no input into the placement decision as defined in Chapter 4.

Coventry is a city of 316,900 people.²² According to the 2011 census the ethnic breakdown is: 73.8% White (66.6% White British), 16.3%, Asian, 5.5% Black, 2.7% Mixed Race and 1.6% Other. Coventry has a long history of migration particularly after the beginning of the industrial revolution. Two factors attracted migrants. First was the number of mines that opened in the areas north of the city around Bedworth. Second was the development of industry, in particular the production of vehicles, bicycles and tools. Initially the migrants were from Ireland, Scotland and the north of England (Fox 1947). At the conclusion of the Second World War the numbers of migrants from the Caribbean grew, this was also a period when the migrant population of Asians, primarily from former colonies in East Africa and then from India began to settle, particularly in the Foleshill area to the north of the city. The

²¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sent_to_Coventry

²² [2011 Census: Key Statistics for Local Authorities in England and Wales](#). ONS. Retrieved 25 December 2012

Caribbean community was initially based in Hillfields but over time spread to other areas of the city (McGrory 1993).

By 1999 the city was experiencing a downturn in employment prospects in traditional areas of employment. Most of the car manufacturers had relocated overseas and as a result the many smaller vehicle related businesses which had supported the bigger manufacturers had also closed or relocated. The local authority and strategic partnership had invested in regenerating the business prospects of the city by focusing on attracting service related businesses, light manufacturing and engineering businesses to the city. Plans were also put into effect to regenerate the city and improve the quality of accommodation in the city in an effort to attract outside investment and business (Coventry Local Strategic Partnership 2003).

In 1999 the social housing situation in Coventry was in a period of transition. The city council had become a stock transfer authority²³. This meant that the entire stock of council accommodation had been sold off to Whitefriars, a newly created registered social housing organisation. In Coventry the main areas of social housing were concentrated in Willenhall, Stoke Aldermoor, Tile Hill, Wood End and Hillfields. Areas such as Wood End were to receive major regeneration under the New Deals for Communities scheme.²⁴

5.2.1 The Dispersal Process

In the lead up to the enactment of the 1999 Act, local authorities had been approached to participate in the accommodation and support of NASS designated asylum seekers. Contract negotiations were protracted and there was a fear that the deadline to meet the April 1, 2000 dispersal commencement had led the Home Office to broaden its accommodation negotiations to include private accommodation consortiums (interview with West Midlands Strategic Partnership for Asylum &

²³ In 2002 when the stock transfer occurred, Whitefriars took on over 20,000 council properties.

"Housing Corporation Assessment" (pdf). Housing Corporation. August 2006.

http://www.housingcorp.gov.uk/upload/pdf/HCA_Whitefriars_Housing_Group_20060808093326.pdf. Retrieved 2010-02-10

²⁴ The NDC was part of the greater Coventry Regeneration Scheme (LSP 2003).

Refugee Support representative August 2003). NASS also approached local authorities to become involved in dispersal as they had noted that the availability of cheap accommodation was also prevalent in local authority housing stock (as well as the privately rented sector). Local authorities who decided to become involved in the dispersal process were managed through the establishment of regional bodies (in the case of Coventry the regional consortium of the West Midlands). Local authorities who participated in the NASS contracts felt compelled to be involved as that would give them a stake-holding role in dispersal and as a result be able to influence the way dispersal operated in the city (Asylum and Refugee Strategy Coventry City Council 2003). The Home Office made the Coventry local authority aware that due to the large number of private rental housing stock that was unoccupied they would be pursuing arrangements with private accommodation groups about a large scale contract. The Home Office also wanted to know whether the local authority would be interested in entering into a contract for social housing stock as certain areas of the city had a high amount of vacant accommodation, Hillfields being one (interview with Coventry City Council Housing Strategy Manager).

Roughly 1600 asylum seekers were dispersed to Coventry by NASS between late 2001 and mid 2002 (Coventry City Council 2003). This figure didn't include asylum seekers supported in emergency accommodation pending being placed in NASS accommodation or those on Section 4 support²⁵, as they had been refused asylum and had submitted an appeal or fresh claim²⁶ or those who had claimed asylum prior to 1999 and had been dispersed and supported by local authorities from outside Coventry. The total number of asylum seekers living in Coventry was not absolutely clear as statistics for those in temporary accommodation and unaccompanied minors

²⁵ Section 4 support is the support given to asylum seekers who have been taken off NASS support. This was offered to asylum seekers who have had their cases refused and are entitled to Section 4 pending their return to their country of origin; or have had their NASS support withdrawn due to an infraction of the regulations that they must follow as an asylum seekers.

²⁶ These numbers are based on those given in the Asylum and Refugee Strategy, Coventry City Council, 2003

living in the city, but supported by other local authorities, were incomplete (interview with WMCARS Coordinator).²⁷

The impact of this in Coventry was that when dispersal did come into effect there were four different organisations tendering out accommodation contracts in the city. The local authority, as part of a wider West Midlands Local Authority Consortium, had a contract for over 700 units of accommodation (Asylum Strategy, Coventry City Council 2003).²⁸ There were also three private accommodation groups which had secured contracts from NASS that were nationally based and straddled several regions of the UK. The four groups concentrated on finding properties in the Hillfields area as well as the surrounding areas. This was because at that time the Hillfields area was unpopular with local people looking for social housing (and also private rental sector) as it was considered unsafe compared to other areas of the city. A lack of long-term security due to the area's regeneration, was another reason for applying for accommodation elsewhere (interview with WMCARS representative).

5.2.2 Placement (Dispersal) of Asylum Seekers in Hillfields

Due to the unpopularity of Hillfields a disproportionately high level of cheaper vacant accommodation was available. Unwittingly, the lack of coordination when dispersal did begin caused the area to experience a surge in new residents from highly diverse backgrounds. Little work had been done to inform the local population of dispersal. The local authority was aware of its own contract numbers but was not prepared for higher levels due to placements by other accommodation providers. This created local tension. In particular there was a perception that asylum seekers were getting priority placements in social housing. Local press and resident

²⁷ The number of unaccompanied minors living in the city was difficult to calculate. In 2007 there were less than 25 living in the city who were being looked after by Coventry social services. However there were also an unknown number of youths aged 16-18 who were placed in the city and looked after by other local authorities such as Warwickshire, Kent and Hillingdon. In 2007, an information sharing agreement across authorities indicated that the number living in Coventry was between 60 and 70.

²⁸ The length of the first NASS housing contract was for 5 years; however it was given several extensions until 2007 in order to accommodate a new bidding process.

associations reported and complained about the perceived situation that local residents who had waited for years for council properties were being passed over by newly arrived asylum seekers (Interview with Coventry City Council Housing Strategy Manager).

There are many people who have lived in this neighbourhood for years. They have had their name on the council housing list for years. Now all these asylum seekers have come and apparently been put at the top of the list. We want answers. (interview with Manager at Osaba Family Centre)

The placement of asylum seekers in areas suffering from economic deprivation such as Hillfields, has led to participants experiencing anti-social behavior and verbal racist abuse.

I think that people look at me and they think that because I am an asylum seeker I shouldn't be here. I have had people shout bad things at me in the street. It hurts. (Adele, Female 22)

Hillfields was a community in transition; the number of asylum seekers and refugees had changed its profile. Shops had reopened, primarily run by refugees. The more established residents resented the new arrivals to the area. Because of the high level of social housing, the area was wrongly highlighted as an example of asylum seekers being given priority on LA housing lists.

Some of the people in the shops here are very friendly and help me. In some shops the people are really rude and watch me as if I'm trying to steal. (Claude, Male 26)

This negative press created a level of resentment and contempt for asylum seekers (Finney 2004; Hewitt 2005; Lewis 2005; Ouseley 2005; Phillips 2005). Participants provided a wide range of examples of how they felt they were being treated with contempt. Experiences when shopping and actions by the general public which furthered these feelings reinforced the negative experience of being an asylum

seeker. Through social networks participants developed knowledge of where they could travel in relative security and shop without being singled out.

In reality the council and Whitefriars were able to show that asylum seekers were not getting priority accommodation placements by providing evidence from its accommodation allocation statistics. The local authority's (Managed by Whitefriars) NASS contract consisted of a mix of private and social landlord properties. Regarding properties which had been allocated for demolition, an agreement was in place with the largest social landlord (Whitefriars) to make them available for NASS supported asylum seekers. The catch was the agreement were considered temporary as the asylum accommodation contract would have expired by the scheduled date for demolition of the buildings. It also released the responsibility of Whitefriars to reallocate accommodation to the tenants upon the demolition of the property (Interview with Coventry City Council Housing representative May 2004). Regardless of efforts to assuage local discontent over the perceived preferential treatment of asylum seekers, simmering discontent continued. As Squire (2009) points out, asylum seekers were largely housed in deprived areas which had low housing value and poor access to public services. Dispersal tends to aggravate existing pressures particularly since additional resources are not adequately injected into the area to support new arrivals. This placement in areas of deprivation underlines the marginality that asylum seekers experience. As is discussed in Chapters 6-8, being placed in poorer areas which suffered historically from a lack of investment in social regeneration schemes meant that asylum seekers were further pushed to the margins (Hynes 2007) This meant living liminal in already marginalised communities that had experienced decades of underinvestment.

In areas such as Hillfields, a community which has had limited local and central government investment in regeneration, the dispersal of asylum seekers has led to suspicion between communities. The established migrant communities there were unwelcoming as they saw increased competition for an already small pot of funding for schemes in the community (Deputy Manager Coventry Refugee Centre, 2006).

This process goes against both the explicit policy goal of reducing inter-ethnic tension and the explicit policy goal of aiding integration because it tends to generate hostility towards asylum seekers by more established residents (Boswell 2003; Savage 2005). In Coventry there is evidence that a similar situation was taking place (Ward, ICAR, 2007).

Despite a mutually agreed ceiling on dispersal numbers outlined in the NASS contracts (a 1 to 200 ratio of dispersed asylum seekers to the total population of the city), the nature of dispersal through several accommodation contracts meant that by 2004 the number of NASS supported asylum seekers was exceeding pre-agreed levels. The private providers had placed more asylum seekers in the city than had been agreed upon in the allocated amount. The Home Office fined the private providers but also imposed a complete moratorium on dispersal to the city. This included not only the guilty private housing provider but also the City Council. The local authority contract suffered as it didn't receive any new asylum seekers for over 15 months (Coventry Asylum Strategy 2006, draft)²⁹ until the number of dispersed asylum seekers fell to below the 1 to 200 ratio.

NASS contracted housing providers were supposed to provide an induction for all asylum seekers in their accommodation as part of their contract, but this was not evident. The induction was supposed to include not only information on health and safety in accommodation but also how to report problems, access asylum support. Asylum seekers were being sent to two local voluntary sector agencies to receive induction, advice and support. Paradoxically the agency which had been given the contract to provide advice and guidance for NASS supported asylum seekers was based in Digbeth, Birmingham, over 30km away and unreachable for most asylum seekers because the cost of the bus was beyond the agency's weekly budget. The local

²⁹ From a financial standpoint the suspension of dispersal to Coventry meant that the local authority lost money. The contract was based on money being paid by NASS for bed spaces occupied. With the suspension, as soon as an asylum seeker was moved by NASS out of the local authorities' accommodation, the vacant bed space was not filled.

agencies that supported asylum seekers received funding from the local authority and grants from Big Lottery and other funding bodies.³⁰

We receive most asylum seekers sent to Coventry. As you can see by this piece of paper, private accommodation providers are referring their clients to us for advice and support. The fact that we exist shows that there is a problem in the provision of support for asylum seekers in the city. Why do they need to go to Birmingham for advice when it is simply too far? Private accommodation providers need to be giving a better quality of accommodation and service to asylum seekers. (Deputy Manager of the Coventry Refugee Centre, October 2005)

Therefore, outside the voluntary sector agencies, there was no provision of information on what was available to asylum seekers in the city in terms of health, social, cultural and education services. Rather than receiving an induction from accommodation staff the information usually given was limited to health and safety in the property and directions to the local post office where they could collect their support package every two weeks. Another problem was that any form of induction or paperwork was always in English. It was evident that asylum seekers were poorly informed about their rights and about where they could access information and support.

Asylum seekers do not know much about Coventry. When they arrive here, very few have heard about Coventry before (Interview with Manager of Coventry Peace House, at a local shelter for homelessness January 2006).

³⁰ It was apparent from interviews with agencies involved in the dispersal of asylum seekers to Coventry that private accommodation providers were not fulfilling their responsibilities in terms of supporting tenants.

Figure 4: Taken by Espoir, male aged 28, Hillfields, accompanied with the comment that the pictures look nicer than the actual area.



5.3 Hillfields

Areas just north of the city centre had been designated as the centre of the first stage of regeneration of the city. This area included Hillfields, which by 1999 was a lower income, multi-ethnic population area. It suffered from high unemployment and high levels of crime³¹. Hillfields has a population of 9,140 and is one of the most disadvantaged areas not only in Coventry but the entire West Midlands region with immigrants accounting for 35% of residents, as well as an unemployment rate of 28.20%. Hillfields is ranked among the 186 most deprived wards in England by the UK Department of the Environment. High unemployment particularly in the different immigrant communities has attributed to low levels of education and low professional skills which are tied to limited available employment and poor application of equal opportunities policies by local employers. Furthermore, the area

³¹ Hillfields was highlighted as one of the 10 most dangerous places to live in the UK (Something to do, Cov Gov". 2010-11-25. http://www.coventry.gov.uk/ccm/cms-service/stream/asset/?asset_id=20405016. Retrieved 2010-11-25)

suffers from substandard private and social housing (http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/archive/urban2/urban/initiative/programmes/coventry.html). The skyline was punctuated with a number of social housing tower blocks (former council stock). In the new regeneration plan the tower blocks were to be leveled and replaced by a mix of private and social housing (Coventry City Council Housing Strategy 2003).

Asylum seekers were supposed to be placed in areas of “low tension” (based on outcomes of the Cantle Report 2001, from the riots in Oldham). In Coventry the majority of asylum seekers were placed in Hillfields and to a lesser extent Foleshill and Stoke Aldermoor. These three areas had already established ethnic minority populations but were mainly impoverished. Hillfields experiences social upheaval and resources were already limited and stretched. The arrival of already marginalised groups (asylum seekers) unsettled existing residents worried that there would be more competition for scarce resources (Interview with the deputy manager of the Refugee Centre 2007). Added to the issue about the areas where dispersed asylum seekers were housed, were on-going problems with the quality of accommodation provided to asylum seekers. The local authority properties had to meet a minimum standard. NASS standards on the other hand were lower than the local authority minimum standard for acceptable accommodation. The contract with the council included properties in a tower block building which was scheduled for demolition as part of a regeneration scheme. However, for the length of the contract this building was maintained but had problems with plumbing and electricity which was too expensive to properly repair so temporary repairs were an on-going situation (Interview with caseworker at Coventry Refugee Centre August 2006). Also, the tower blocks were in an area with high levels of prostitution and homelessness and high instances of substance abuse. As a result the building had to be cleared of discarded syringes every morning by council staff. (Interview with Hate Crime Coordinator, Coventry City Council September 2006).

We have a particular problem with a tower block in Hillfields where there are constant problems with the safety of residents at stake. We have had asylum seekers who live there complain about how unsafe it is in the evenings with prostitutes and drug takers coming into the

building to stay out of the cold. To make the situation worse the building is constantly suffering from poor plumbing. The Council and Whitefriars seem not to be interested in solving the problem. (interview with Deputy Manager of Coventry Refugee Centre, January 2007)

5.3.1 Poor Accommodation

One of the private housing providers lost its contract due to poor quality accommodation. NASS had a responsibility to inspect homes but were slow to make visits. On a number of occasions council staff were called in to inspect properties and condemned several properties which were unsafe due to faulty electrical circuitry, fire hazards, overcrowding or structural problems (Interview with Head of Housing, Coventry City Council 2007). When applying for a contract with NASS, housing providers had to make sure that their properties met a minimum standard. What was evident in Coventry was that NASS did not conduct inspections on all the properties as the number closed down by the council showed that NASS housing providers were maximising their profits through provision of less expensive sub-standard accommodation.

The NASS contracts were over-priced and created an imbalance in the housing market as the Home Office were willing to rent from private landlords at above market rent levels (Interview with the Housing Strategy Manager, Coventry City Council 2007). This added to the existing tension around access to housing. There was also ample evidence that NASS accommodation providers were sub-contracting down a chain to smaller providers (Interview with the Housing Strategy Manager, Coventry City Council 2007). This could explain why quality control was weak.

Lack of statistics about dispersal numbers to the city resulted in the local authority being unable to develop the services needed for the new arrivals which further deepened the problem of social exclusion. A prime example was the need to have adequate translation provision. The number of languages, over 50, of those dispersed meant there were problems in accessing interpreters locally. The city was unprepared for such a broad range of new languages. Prior to the commencement of dispersal the city had signed up to a document which outlined the acceptable languages, and

which highlighted the languages the city had the resources to deal with (Asylum Strategy, Coventry City Council 2003). Many dispersed asylum seekers suffered from isolation and social exclusion due to there being no recognition of their particular language.³²

Housing aside there are other areas which exacerbated the social exclusion of asylum seekers; health, education and employment. Dispersal was done with little consultation with local authorities, police and the Primary Care Trust (PCT). The problems were particularly acute for the local PCT. It was evident that local surgeries (doctors) were refusing to take on asylum seekers due to the extra costs of translation and for logistical reasons. This was attributed to lack of places or the availability of appropriate interpreters. The local PCT was not prepared for the rapid growth in numbers of asylum seekers in the Foleshill and Hillfields areas. Eventually the local PCT set up a specific refugee unit which shared premises with the unit for the homeless.³³ The local health authority was not informed in advance of dispersal and as a result was unable to properly develop appropriate services. Service development became more a process of reacting rather than forward planning.

We simply do not have the resources to provide an adequate service for all asylum seekers in the city. We are undergoing a massive service review in the next couple of years. In the meantime we do what we can. (interview with Coordinator at Anchor Centre, PCT, a health centre for refugees and asylum seekers, September 2007)

Hygiene issues related to lack of adequate support were the most common problem facing asylum seekers. This problem was due to several facets. First the quality of accommodation for asylum seekers was often substandard and did not meet the

³² According to the Coventry Refugee Centre Deputy Manager, asylum seekers dispersed to the city were allocated on a reference number basis and were not allocated based on language/ethnicity basis. There was much lobbying by the voluntary sector in the West Midlands to ensure that the Home Office rectified this problem.

³³ The specialist service, The Anchor Centre, was actually a shared service for both asylum seekers and the homeless. It was based in the Coventry and Warwickshire Hospital which is in Hillfields and as a result local for most asylum seekers dispersed to Coventry.

minimum standards that were required by the local authority.³⁴ Also the weekly subsistence allowance given to asylum seekers was low and meant that they could not buy enough provisions to cover their needs. This was the result of living in an unfamiliar environment. Asylum seekers had to be resourceful and learn where they could buy cheap food and amenities. For male asylum seekers this was often the first time that they had lived alone and did not know how to cook or look after their accommodation. They did not know how to cook meant that they would spend more on pre prepared foods (or even *take aways*) that were easy to cook. These are more expensive than foods that need preparation and less nutritious.

Local health workers complained that they had health fears over asylum seekers in Hillfields due to the inadequacies of their diet. This was seen as so serious that funding was allocated to run cooking and healthy eating workshops in Hillfields (Asylum Draft Strategy Coventry City Council, 2006). Mental health issues were not catered for as there was little local support available. The mental health issues ranged from extreme psychotic episodes as a result of surviving conflict and torture, to depression as a result of the asylum process. Asylum seekers fortunate enough to get support had to go to Birmingham for treatment (Interview with Coordinator, Anchor Centre 2007).

The local education department had been able to develop a functional link with NASS and was able to develop a fast and effective service in which new arrivals were screened and offered placements in schools in areas of dispersal. As a locality, the ability to ensure that children had places in schools and making sure that they were in class soon after arriving in the city was successful.³⁵ Adult education services were developed and delivered in a short term manner, there needed to be a more long-

³⁴ NASS applied a minimum standard required of their properties which was more basic than the minimum required by the local authority. This problem was compounded by the lack of NASS staff available to maintain inspections of all properties in the West Midlands.

³⁵ The LEA was informed by NASS of new family placements in Coventry. The LEA set up a specialist team who made contact with newly dispersed families. The teams used workers with the required language skills, this team helped families find school places for children. The support also included further help with school supplies, and other settling in issues (Interview with deputy manager of the Coventry Refugee Centre 2007)

term focus but this was difficult due to the temporary nature of asylum and dispersal. For adults ESOL provision was covered by over 30 providers in the city but demand outstripped supply. Difficulty in delivering services due to the nature of dispersal led to reluctance to implement further services as funding is based on showing retention in the services. The problem was being able to ensure students remained in class. Most of the schools were some distance from dispersal areas and there was limited extra funding available to pay for travel cards. Also the nature of dispersal acted against asylum seekers staying on courses as they were frequently moved around (Asylum Strategy Coventry City Council, 2003). Interestingly, hate crime was most paramount in areas of permanent settlement of refugees rather than dispersal areas (temporary accommodation). There were isolated incidents of hate crime toward asylum seekers (Coventry Hate Crime Strategy 2005). If asylum seekers were fortunate enough to gain refugee status they would have to leave their NASS property and apply for new housing. For families, this meant being moved to the available properties on estates on the periphery of the city. These areas were primarily white, with high unemployment among residents. It was here that hate crime levels were pronounced and that the city council encountered difficulties trying to quell attacks and build understanding about refugees in these areas. Also, refugees did not stay in these areas and tried to return to (dispersal) areas where they felt safer (Hate Crime Strategy, Coventry City Council 2005).



Figure 5: Coventry Refugee Centre, taken by Juliette, female aged 29

5.4 Local Organisational Response

The local authority established an asylum strategic partnership aimed at ensuring the dispersal of asylum seekers to the city flowed without incident. This partnership drew on bringing together all agencies (both statutory and non-statutory) in the city that currently and potentially could work with asylum seekers and refugees. This partnership was responsible for ensuring greater awareness about the dispersal of asylum seekers to the city for both agencies and the general public. It also created a number of asylum and refugee related initiatives aimed at improving the services available in the city. The key asylum/refugee voluntary agency in the city was the Coventry Refugee Centre which was primarily funded by the local council but also received funding from a variety of sources which were specific for time related projects. The Centre ran projects for young people, medical referrals, ESOL placements, and refugee accommodation support and asylum advice.³⁶ There had

³⁶ The asylum advice section was the most used section of the CRC. It posed an interesting problem as there was no Home Office funded asylum support agency in the city. The nearest was the Refugee Council in Birmingham, at the time of writing it would cost an asylum seeker £6 (return) to get to Birmingham for an appointment. Considering that the weekly support provided by NASS for a single

briefly been another agency that received funding from NASS to provide advice and support to dispersed asylum seekers but it had been closed.³⁷ Further to this the Coventry Peace House was an agency active in welcoming asylum seekers and refugees to the city. This agency provided support and guidance for asylum seekers but more importantly ran a small shelter able to help a limited number of people who were homeless.³⁸

The Asylum and Refugee local partnership was formed around five themes, accommodation, education, health, unaccompanied minors and integration. Each theme group comprised of local agencies that provided services for asylum seekers and refugees. Working from the targets laid out in the Asylum and Refugee Strategy these groups worked to introduce services which would improve the lives of asylum seekers dispersed to the city. The partnership was very successful in gaining funding for a series of integration related schemes in a series of wards in the city. Other successes included pushing for an asylum seeker specific surgery in Hillfields, facilitating the referral and support of asylum seeking children in local schools, ESOL coordination of local further education colleges. The partnership developed an information pack to be given to newly dispersed asylum seekers that was comprehensive in detailing all the services available to them and where they were

adult in 2007 was £37 per week, this meant that it was unlikely that an asylum seeker would be able to afford the bus fare. Furthermore when asylum seekers were in need of accessing advice services it was usually when there was a breakdown in support and they did not have any money (Figures supplied by CRC deputy manager 2007).

³⁷ The Midland Refugee Council provided advice but was closed by the City Council due to an investigation into financial impropriety in 2004.

³⁸ After the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 was put into practice the number of asylum seekers who fell afoul of Section 55 (not claiming asylum as soon as possible) created a visible homelessness problem. The local authority was unable to provide accommodation due to Immigration legislation preventing local authorities from providing support. Small shelters such as the Peace House were at the forefront of providing accommodation. The local Asylum strategic partnership tried to coordinate member agencies to develop a means of identifying the number of homeless asylum seekers residing in the city, which by the end of 2004 estimated the number at over 250. Work was conducted with Shelter to try and develop a temporary solution but was not successful due to the lack of political support.

located in the city. The information packet was translated into the key six refugee languages spoken in the city.³⁹

In general there was a lot of good will from local agencies in developing and providing services for asylum seekers. Agencies understood the problems of dealing with NASS and (NASS contracted) private accommodation providers.

We work hard for asylum seekers here in Coventry. There is a lot of work being done by organisations here; helping ensure people get their NASS support, getting into ESOL classes, finding a GP, immigration help, organising cultural events, clubs for young people, preventing hate crime. Do we make life better for them? Let's not fool ourselves, maybe...maybe not. (Deputy Manager of the Coventry Refugee Centre 2006)

This quote is interesting in that while it is recognised that the local partnership seemed to be effective in creating local initiatives to offset the difficulties imposed by Asylum Legislation there is also recognition of the limitations. Chapters 6-8 present evidence that the assumption of effectiveness of local agencies is not mirrored by asylum seekers. Chapters 6-8 demonstrate that while voluntary sector agencies did provide support to asylum seekers, social networks were still an essential entity that provided direct support to asylum seekers or acted as a bridging mechanism for asylum seekers to link into asylum specific services offered in the city by stakeholders.

The strategic partnership was also active in trying to mobilise locally based RCOs. This included developing a local forum for all RCOs based in the city. The forum was seen as a way of developing a link between Coventry based agencies and new emerging communities in the city. There was no local Congolese RCO, the closest was based in Birmingham. The membership of the New Communities Forum was primarily based on groups that identified themselves based on their country of

³⁹ The languages were: Arabic, Sorani (Kurdish), Somali, French, Pashto and Farsi.

origin. The New Communities Forum was established in 2006 with the intent of providing a two way link between new migrant communities in the city as well as providing a means for local agencies to establish contact with these groups. The initiative was based on trying to prevent social exclusion of new groups, and to facilitate integration and understanding.

Image removed for copyright reasons

Figure 6: The different wards of Coventry (Hillfields is in the centre). From:
http://www.politicsresources.net/area/uk/loc04/Pages/coventry/election_results_2004.html

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter briefly presents the difficulties faced by service providers as a result of dispersal to Coventry. From the point of view of service delivery, dispersal to Coventry was complicated due to structural problems, the manner in which it was implemented and the different actors engaged in the process.⁴⁰ Lack of coordination between the Home Office and local authorities meant that it was difficult to have a complete picture of dispersal in the city. This was exacerbated by the Home Office using a range of private accommodation providers who were reluctant to work with the local authority. It showed that the process of service delivery was compromised by the inability to predict the numbers of new arrivals and the lack of quality control on services that were being provided. The lack of forward planning resulted in concentrated numbers of asylum seekers in areas which were not prepared for new arrivals.

As Squires (2009) points out the combination of legislative change and the delivery of dispersal through a myriad of different actors has only created a more punitive situation for asylum seekers. Whether this was planned or not is irrelevant. What is important is to understand the particular local context that developed due to dispersal and how it influenced the development and formation of social networks among asylum seekers. This chapter demonstrates that it was not just dispersal as a policy which created difficulties for asylum seekers it was the manner in which it was implemented. This includes the sub-contracting of services and the manner in which these contracts were managed and monitored. As a city Coventry had developed what was perceived to be a coordinated multi-agency partnership that would help cover

⁴⁰ The manner in which dispersal was implemented and managed by the Home Office was similar across the UK. Similarly most local authorities who received asylum seekers set up local strategic partnerships as a means of combining local voluntary and statutory agencies to develop a local service response. These local partnerships were supported by larger regional partnerships.

any of the failings of dispersal and support marginalised asylum seekers. Chapters 6-8 show that despite these initiatives, social networks continued to be integral in the lives of dispersed asylum seekers.



Figure 7: This is the main square where on warmer days participants would spend the day, taken by Claude, male aged 25, Hillfields

Chapter 6: On the Road to Coventry

6.1 Introduction

For this chapter, the development and evolution of friendship ties and the social network amongst asylum seekers and refugees is reviewed. Evidence of contact with social networks prior to entering the asylum process is also explored, along with a look at how friendship trees develop in emergency accommodation and how dispersal accommodation social networks can be forged. Integral to understanding how friendship trees and social networks develop, is in identifying the details of the particularities of the asylum process that have an impact on the manner in which both develop. Therefore, this chapter provides an examination of the structure of friendship ties and the social network, understanding their structure, what draws people together as well as investigating the importance of key individuals in the formation of the two groups. In addition, an outline of the linear path that asylum seekers follow through the asylum process is presented in chronological order.

The first stage of dispersal for asylum seekers involves temporary accommodation. The interviews conducted for this study produced important evidence of how vital the emergency accommodation (pre dispersal) stage was in the lives of asylum seekers. The initial aim of the research was to follow asylum seekers over a twelve month period in Coventry. The asylum seekers involved in the research were all in the second phase of the dispersal stage (NASS accommodation). However, the findings from the interviews presented key evidence of the role of ties outside of the initial research timeline. It became clear that to be able to fully understand the interaction between the asylum process and social networks of asylum seekers analysis of data needed to begin at the point of arrival in the UK, if not before, as evidence also emerged of interaction with social networks at stages before entering the UK. Therefore, it is important to present the outcome of following asylum seekers through the initial stages of the asylum process and how they came into contact with other networks and entered into or developed friendship ties. Finally some participants in this research had already been living in the UK as asylum seekers for some years before being sent to Coventry. This chapter therefore investigates the

early stages of the refugee experience in the UK and how friendship ties and networks form.

This section also presents how the social network developed, who the key individuals were and what were the underlying themes that underpinned the strength of the relationships in the network. The participants in this research were dispersed to Coventry and are now in receipt of NASS support. The section also looks at how the network developed and presents how the research methods were adopted, to identify and understand the evolution of relationships in the network. It then discusses how participants entered the network and what their personal motivations were in joining.

6.2 Arrival and Bewilderment

During the asylum process a claimant will probably reside in several locales before finally receiving a decision on their claim by the Home Office. Being unaccustomed to living in the UK and having language difficulties, the constant change of cities, and accommodation, puts asylum seekers in a state of isolation. This means asylum seekers have to develop mechanisms which enable them to adapt to changes in surroundings and in some cases circumstances. Social networks provide one mechanism that aids adaptation and the development of knowledge.

When I arrived at Heathrow I was so afraid, my chaperone took me through customs and left me just outside the main door. I watched him disappear into the crowds. I felt so alone, I sat on my luggage. I didn't ask anyone any questions because I was afraid I'd be sent straight home. I started to walk I went through this long tunnel; it was so loud and scary. I kept walking; eventually I was stopped by the police. I couldn't understand them; they took me to the station and put me in a cell. After a few hours someone who spoke French came and explained what was going on. (Claude, Male 26)

This comment encapsulates a common thread from all of the participants, that of bewilderment upon arriving in the UK. Unfortunately I was unable to draw out much

information with regard to the journey to the UK, but I was able to gather ample evidence that participants did arrive in the UK with elevated levels of stress and fear of the unknown. Unsure of where to go, a sense of abandonment was a common feeling for new arrivals. Some participants volunteered that they had been accompanied to the UK, but that the relationship terminated in the arrivals terminal.

As discussed earlier, developing trust with the participants was time bound; as they became more familiar with me they did volunteer further information, but providing any information which described coming to the UK was, not surprisingly, absent. Nevertheless, it became obvious that transnational networks exist in the lives of the participants and play a variety of different roles (at different stages of the migratory process). The participant in this comment had the advantage of *someone* (an agent) helping him get to the UK, but who quickly abandoned him at the airport. The fact that the individual did not know what to do from that point suggests that the process that brought him did not extend further than getting the participant to the UK. As was identified by Koser and Pinkerton (2002) and Williams (2006), social networks are involved in the migratory process and ties to these networks may be temporary, weak and involve friends, family or agents. The quote also demonstrates that some participants may have used social networks in the migratory process but that the networks have boundaries outside of which people are left unsupported and vulnerable.

After I went through Immigration at Heathrow I didn't know what to do. I had a phone number of someone in London that my family knew. I called him. He arranged to meet me near the airport on the road. He took me to Croydon where I made my application for asylum.
(Bernadette, Female 24)

This quote shows that some asylum seekers find themselves in spaces where they have no access and no social networks. Spaces where participants had no access to social networks was a common thread of the provided data. For this participant, passage through this space between networks was facilitated by a phone number. Interestingly, the fact that the family member knew that they had to take the

participant to Croydon to claim asylum demonstrates that there is an existing knowledge of the process of how to claim asylum in the UK.

Participants alluded to making links to social networks through friends and family outside the asylum system. This could be people based here in the UK, the EU, US or back in Africa;

My brother has lived in Germany for nearly 8 years. He has friends with family here in the UK. I phoned them and they came to visit me.
(Jean, Male 27)

My sister lives in Cameroon now. She contacted some friends in Birmingham when I phoned her from the hostel. They helped me get a move to Coventry so I could be close to them. (Dada, Female 28)

Both of these quotes reveal the operation of the Congolese diaspora; people migrate to a wide range of countries, contacts across borders are maintained and these links have enabled the participants to contact other Congolese in the UK who may be in a position to provide assistance. The key node also highlighted that he was able to trace, through family in Congo, a former business associate of his father who had migrated to the UK many years previously. The key node had been able to locate the individual, now living in Leicester. He was not Congolese but a Ugandan Asian who had fled Uganda in the early 1970's and set up a new business in Goma (eastern DR Congo). He later moved to the UK because of family links he had in Leicester. The key node was able to re-establish contact with this friend in Leicester and develop linkages. This demonstration of layering of social networks which can be intertwined with older family based networks links to the work of Wasserman and Faust (1994) of social networks being dynamic as they are adaptable. This example shows that accessing social networks can also be based on tracing *long lost* friends and family with whom contact may have been lost for many years.

6.3 Temporary Accommodation

Asylum seekers find themselves on a steep learning curve once they arrive in the UK. Trying to absorb everything is just not possible primarily due to the fact that at the point of entry asylum seekers are saturated with information regarding their claim. Interviews with participants in this research showed that they experience difficulties communicating and have little understanding of judicial and asylum procedural process. Upon applying for asylum in the UK, asylum seekers are given the choice of making accommodation arrangements with friends and family in the UK or applying for accommodation and support from NASS. The second option takes the asylum seeker through the *dispersal journey*. Following participants, as part of the dual narrative approach, through this initial stage of the dispersal process reveals how the participants develop ties as a reaction to the circumstances that they find themselves in. Once the asylum seeker has formally applied for NASS support, they are placed in *temporary accommodation* (TA) for the time it takes NASS to process their application and decide whether they are eligible (for NASS support). Eligibility takes into account Section 55 of the 2002 Act in which asylum seekers need to demonstrate that they have claimed asylum as quickly as possible. It is in temporary accommodation that asylum seekers have their first experience of asylum accommodation and support. For participants in the research being placed in accommodation with such a diverse group of people under restrictive circumstances proved to be a shock to the system. This research revealed that homelessness among asylum seekers in this period is related to individuals being unable to tolerate group living and the poor quality of provision.

When people claim asylum in the UK, they are put in a confusing situation. We find that our clients are uninformed about their rights and how the asylum process works. We feel that this is a deliberate strategy of NASS to destabilise asylum seekers. Destabilising asylum seekers is beneficial to NASS as it breaks them down and makes them become compliant. (interview with the deputy manager of the Coventry Refugee Centre June 2007)

It could be concluded that TA is the first stage that “breaks the asylum seekers down”. It places individuals in a situation in which they see their aspirations blunted as a result of their reception by the host (UK) government. It is apparent that at this point asylum seekers begin to lose faith in the formal support system and begin to explore alternative avenues. Friendship ties offer an avenue of adaptation which is in the control of the asylum seeker and not reliant on external actors. This possibility of relying on those who may be trusted is an idea developed and discussed further in Chapters 7 and 8.

6.4 Circumstances of Isolation

The testimonies of the participants indicate that the first days in TA were varied. Many stayed in the building, afraid to venture out because they were exhausted and felt relatively safe in their room. Some ventured outside but did not go far from the hostel. The findings are not clear as to what the asylum seekers’ expectations of the accommodation were prior to coming to the UK. What does become apparent from the research is that there were many issues for which they were unprepared. To begin with the weather was seen as having an impact on their outlook. Those who arrived in the winter or had been sent to the north of England found it difficult to adapt to cold weather. The role that the bleakness of the weather played cannot be underestimated as it was a common and re-occurring theme that all participants mentioned.

I didn’t see the sun for many weeks, it rained on and off but it was always grey. (Serge, Male 29)

Another factor which comes into play in TA is geography. In some instances the hostels and homes that participants found themselves in were isolated and in areas where there were no other ethnic minorities. Fear of the unknown and stories of violence and racism ensured that some participants were reluctant to leave their rooms. This coupled with the fact that in many cases the hostels were full board, meant that they did not need to venture out to buy food.

Boredom is an underlying sentiment that comes out of the interviews with participants. To prevent boredom some participants would attempt forays into the area around the hostel. This was usually after being in the hostel for a couple of weeks. Knowledge of the basic local geography was passed on between residents of the hostel. One aspect that cannot be overlooked is the amount of self-confidence that participants gained by being able to navigate their environs and learn about survival;

I never realised how cold it could be. I used to put all my clothes on and go for long walks around the hostel. Walking the streets made me learn about where I was. I felt better than just sitting in the hostel watching TV and being really bored. There were places that made me afraid but I never went back there, I liked walking on the streets looking at the shops and all the people. (Espoir, Male 28)

The most common thread from all participants was the feeling of isolation upon arrival and an enormous sense of confusion. This sentiment was due mainly to lack of language skills and a clear understanding of their circumstances;

I arrived at Heathrow and claimed asylum. I was taken to Croydon. I was then taken to a hostel in Stockwell. I was really scared; I had been in the same cab as another asylum seeker who scared me. I couldn't speak any English and no one spoke to me in French or Lingala. At the hostel the person in charge was very unfriendly; he tried to speak to me. When he realised I didn't speak English he took my bags and motioned for me to follow him. He took me to my room. I didn't understand, I was scared. I stayed in the room for two days. I didn't eat. I didn't realise that I was expected to eat in the canteen downstairs. After two days someone came to my room and opened the door. It was another asylum seeker who spoke French. (Antoine, Male 25)

It was the noise that scared me. All day and night, people yelling, loud music. I just wanted to stay in bed and keep the light off. (Adolphe, Male 33)

These three quotes show a range of emotions experienced by asylum seekers new to the UK--the bewilderment, frustration and isolation that they were experiencing. Isolation, as defined by these quotes, demonstrates a spectrum of experiences which can be attributed to the inability to: communicate with others (regardless of whether they are officials or other asylum seekers), find a peaceful space to reflect, and (as a result of being unable to communicate) to comprehend how life in the hostel functions.

The type of accommodation an asylum seeker is placed in does have an impact on the individual's ability to establish friends and enter into a social network. In large hostels, asylum seekers have a better chance of meeting someone who speaks their language or is from the Congo. By being placed in a single dwelling there will obviously be less chance of being partnered with others who are French speakers and/or are from the Congo. That said, a number of participants found living in hostels a very trying experience which in some cases led to fights and conflicts with others who did not respect their *space*.

Most hostels provide three meals per day so for many getting used to the type of food provided was an issue. As already mentioned most males could not cook or do laundry and were in need of help. Food served at hostels was invariable western. The food was not familiar to the participants and this led to initial digestion related problems. Food was often described as "this or that with chips" and almost always deep fried.

In the hostel the food was provided each day. It was great at first but after a couple of weeks it made me sick. Everything was fried, chips, chicken etc. I went into the kitchen once and saw that everything was coming from the freezer in plastic bags. I longed for the food of my country, because I started to get sick. I had to go to the doctor a couple of times because of stomach ailments. (Joseph, Male 40)

Learned knowledge varied for participants and depended on those with whom they came in contact. A few of the participants received a partial induction by someone who worked at the TA. They thought that they understood most of the induction,

though they didn't understand all of the concepts and functions presented to them. Participants felt too embarrassed to ask questions of the staff for fear of still not understanding and being seen as not very intelligent. They also did not trust less-than-friendly hostel staff, and did not want to look vulnerable to other asylum seekers in the hostel;

I wanted to know when I could contact my solicitor. I spoke English but the woman at the hostel had a strong accent. She was polite at first but I didn't understand her. I asked the next day and the day after that but still didn't understand. I could see she was getting frustrated, I stopped asking her. (Claude, Male 26)

They had a system for washing clothes; take a token from the manager and a scoop of laundry soap. The manager showed all of us how to do it but it was over so fast. The machines kept on breaking because people just didn't understand how to use them. (Joseph, Male 40)

These two quotes demonstrate the feelings of isolation, confusion and frustration felt by many of the asylum seekers. The participants were placed in accommodation where staff were employed to provide support. Unfortunately the support-staff had little patience and demonstrated a lack of ability to work with people who spoke English as a second language.

For all the participants, the experience of TA was not an enjoyable one; in fact, the consensus ranged from very uncomfortable to a *living hell*. The general consensus from participants, was that the faster one became acquainted with one's surroundings the easier it was to get by.

Most of the participants stated that living in the hostel was their first encounter with a wide diversity of nationalities. A lack of awareness led to suspicion of everyone, this was exacerbated by the unfit support/accommodation arrangements.

One of the first things I learnt was that I should trust no one. Someone said that there were government agents everywhere. I had a bad experience with some Iraqis who were in the hostel. The conditions in

the hostel were terrible. The walls in my room had rot and there were burn marks all over the carpet. (Espoir, Male 28)

This quote presents an example of a participant being placed in an uncomfortable situation where he had to share his room with people he did not know, could not communicate with and could not as a result explain that he didn't want them to smoke in the room. Experiences like this only added to the building frustration of participants living in TA;

The room in the hostel was so cold. I only had one blanket, I asked for more but the manager didn't have any spare ones. I had the heat on full but it broke after a couple of weeks. The manager was really mad at me. He accused me of trying to break the heater. It didn't get fixed, after a couple of weeks sleeping with all my clothes on, I moved into a friend's room and slept on the floor. When the manager found that I was sleeping in a friend's room he called NASS. The NASS officer was not interested in the reasons why I was sleeping on the floor but that I was breaking the rules. He warned me that if this happened again I would be thrown out. (Ibis, Male 22)

Experiences adapting to new environments was another common theme to the period in Temporary Accommodation (TA). As discussed, exposure to unfamiliar weather meant that participants had to adapt quickly. Often they did not have appropriate clothing and were unable to afford it. There were many examples of participants turning on the heat to full, which often lead to heating systems breaking down. The following participant inadvertently left his accommodation because the heating did not work and the landlord did not want to fix it: he decided to take matters into his own hands;

I was living in this terrible hostel in Bradford. I phoned a friend in Ilford. He got a friend to come and pick me up. It was not for another three weeks that I realised what I had done. I didn't understand what to do, the landlord wanted me out and I didn't understand. In Ilford a friend explained that it would be difficult to appeal as I had

‘disappeared’. I spent a long time living on the floor in homes of friends doing whatever I could to get food. (Joseph, Male 40)

Frustration and not understanding the implications of their actions could cause problems for asylum seekers. This frustration caused some participants to stop pursuing a solution to their problems through formal channels and to resort to a solution outside of recognised channels. Unfortunately, once this approach has been taken the asylum seeker had, in the eyes of NASS, opted out of the system and their support was halted.

For most of the participants, TA was a more uncomfortable experience than dispersal accommodation. Its relation to friendship ties is that it proved to be the point where the participant’s faith in the asylum process began to erode, and recognition of the need for something to provide an underpinning of support was needed. This is where the use of friendship ties could make living arrangements easier for participants;

I often ask myself the question why? Why do they keep us in a place like that (TA), herded together like cattle. Nobody listened to us, nobody cared. We can’t survive like this something needs to be done. The only people who listen are people in the hostel with us. (Joseph, Male 40)

6.5 Existence of Friendship Ties

Once placed in TA, participants met an array of asylum seekers who had formed loose friendship ties with others in the hostel, or developed ties in the locale of the hostel. The friendship ties that existed were mainly based on the amount of time individuals had spent in the hostel. The longer asylum seekers spent in a hostel in one area, the more likely that they would try and familiarise themselves with the neighbourhood in which the hostel was situated. This situation led to greater familiarity with the locale and more potential to make links outside the hostel. Evidence of the concept of shared experience bonding asylum seekers is apparent. Another participant spent a week in the hostel in Ilford without any contact with other Congolese. By chance he went for a walk and found a thriving Congolese

community no more than 400m from the hostel. No one in the hostel had told him about this. The friendship ties developed with other asylum seekers in hostels and with other Congolese who lived in the vicinity of the hostels are both examples of bonding capital as described by Putnam (1993). These friendship ties are characterised by small groups of no more than ten people. Quite often they are, in fact, based on two or three people.

For newly arrived asylum seekers (from DRC) the first contact with friendship ties was usually a tie that wasn't Congolese based. At this confusing and depressing stage of the asylum process the individuals were lonely and quite vulnerable. As noted previously, this fragility was noticed by other asylum seekers. It is at this point where help and friendship was offered. For newly arrived asylum seekers it was these passing encounters that developed an awareness of what was needed to survive in their new surroundings;

I was put in a hostel that had about 40 people. I could see that there were small groups of residents who had become friends. They spent most of their time together. (Serge 29)

Most participants' encounters with friendship ties occurred within days of arriving in the UK. Many networks at this stage were weak and not Congolese specific, but were made up of a number of nationalities as this is a *short period* and people were put into HMOs (Houses in Multiple Occupation) with various nationalities. The manner in which these interactions with friendship ties were conducted is explored in the following section.

6.6 Evolution of Contacts

My first day in the hostel was upsetting. I stayed in my room and cried. I knew nothing of where my family was and I knew nothing of my new surroundings. I was the only African in my hostel. The second night a Kurd from Iraq took me by the hand and led me to another room. In the room were other Kurds eating a meal. They gave me food and made

me feel welcome. I became friends with one of the Kurds who spoke French as he had lived in Lebanon. (Serge, Male 29)

In some cases, as in this example, friendships were a result of being recognised as vulnerable by other asylum seekers who offered *kindness*. This was usually in the form of food and conversation. It was during the initial period of being an asylum seeker that specific factors, which pushed many participants into friendship ties, occurred. For some of the participants talking to someone in the hostel was the first time that they had a non-formal conversation since they arrived in the UK.

I arrived in at Heathrow..... I didn't know anybody or anything; I didn't even know where the UK was on the map. The only person I could talk to was the interpreter at the Home Office, but he wasn't friendly. After a few days in the hostel I just needed someone to talk to. I found Albert; he had been in the UK for a few months. We talked and talked. I started to realise that I wasn't alone, he had similar experiences. (Pascal, Male 25)

6.7 Evolution of Friendships

Isolation is the main motivating factor to develop friendships ties. There are examples of participants who came into contact with social networks and profited from their charity though they did not enter into them (nor was there the expectation that they would enter the network). These incidences with isolated individuals act as a means for some of the participants to recognise the value of developing a community of friends;

I saw that all the Iraqis spent all their time together. While most of us had no friends and were lonely they seemed to be in better spirits than us just because they had each other. (Joseph, Male 40)

Budding friendships yielded further understanding of how to survive in the UK. This form of social capital is the key benefit of developing friendship ties. Benefits included where to buy a mobile phone and phone cards and important information

about what and where to buy products for daily needs, i.e. hygiene, clothes, children's necessities. They could also learn about the asylum system, appropriate solicitors and how to collect benefits. Basic survival lessons included information about living in the UK, how to keep your head down, where not to go and when;

I became friends with a Somali man who was much older than me. We communicated in Swahili. He treated me like his younger brother. He took me to the local college to register for English classes. He also took me to his solicitor so that I could get legal help. We spent most of our time together, and I made a lot of friends through him. Life became easier as I now had friends to talk to and I felt more confident living in the hostel. (Ibis, Male 22)

Participants all had stories of how they forged friendships as a result of shared experience. There were two common paths to friendships: either arriving at the same time and being able to communicate; or upon arrival being taken under the wing of someone who had been in the UK for a longer period of time. A common thread amongst all participants was their experience that each time they arrived in a new dispersal area (whether placed in TA or DA) there was the feeling of being overwhelmed and not knowing what to expect. Building multiple friendships with others in the same hostel provided asylum seekers with the opportunity to develop a wide range of ties. This process was often aided by asylum seekers spending a prolonged period in the hostel.

The longer I stayed in the hostel the more friends I made which made it easier to pass the time. We could talk, explore. We shared what we knew. (Jean, Male 27)

In TA, some participants had the opportunity to associate with other Congolese or other francophone Africans. In some cases friendships were forged across languages, where a Congolese (French and Lingala), a Burundian (could speak French) and a Somali (could speak Kiswahili) became friends by traversing three languages. In this case the Burundian was the key node though it was obvious from the statements of the Congolese how close he felt to the Somali though they could not easily

communicate. Another aspect of the early stages of dispersal was the forming of bonds between individuals as almost a *rite of passage*. The experiences that they had endured brought them together and sealed their friendships;

My first friend that I made was on my second day in the hostel. He just approached me in the hallway. He asked me a question in English, when he saw that my English was not great he asked again in French. He was from Burundi. He asked me questions about where I was from and if I knew some people he may know, things like that. We had dinner together and talked until late that night. He introduced me to some of his friends in the hostel. We began to spend time together. It was comfortable to be a group. We talked and hung out together. (Antoine, Male 25)

During my time in the hostel we made friends with five more people from Congo and some others from Burundi and Rwanda. A couple of times the manager told us there was a new arrival from Congo, so we knew they were coming. Usually we were asked to help interpret for the manager as they had to explain the rules of living in the hostel. That is when we met them. It basically started there. (Serge, Male, 29)

The first things learned from these friendships were usually about the immediate surroundings and habitat. All the participants were nervous about their first few days in TA and were wary of everyone and everything. It took initial conversations with other occupants to start to identify with their surroundings and begin to understand how the more important aspects functioned.

Albert was interesting; he had lived in South Africa and spoke English very well. He helped me understand that it was important to not look out of place. He told me that there were a lot of asylum seekers who had been attacked by English people. He said that I needed to be aware of my surroundings and not stick out. He said I needed to be really careful with meeting girls as there had been a fight between asylum seekers and a local gang over girls. (Pascal, Male 25)

If a formula was to be put forward for starting a social network it must be the bringing together of people with a common bond. Such circumstances dictate a need for each other. Therefore the driving factor is the need for friendship, companionship and information on how to navigate the asylum process. People do not go out and actively contact others with the intent of starting a social network. Individuals recognise that newly arrived asylum seekers can benefit from the knowledge and experience that they possess. Based on these findings, it appears the circumstances of pre-dispersal mean that asylum seekers are isolated and develop friendships out of necessity to avoid isolation. It can further be pointed out that these friendships were initially based on sharing knowledge of ways to survive in the hostel.

Being isolated and then developing friendships with other residents in the hostel was not a straightforward experience. Isolation, conflicting personalities and other external pressures meant that friendships could be complex. There are even cases of fractures in the social networks due to personality clashes.

He was nice at first. We helped him sort out his paperwork and get a mobile phone. After a couple of days he changed and became really aggressive. He started calling people like me vermin and the reason why there was war in Congo. I was really hurt. He was still in the hostel when I was moved. I heard that he is now in Manchester, he has joined a church. (Jean, Male 27)

This comment illustrates that friendships can be tenuous and can fall victim to a number of issues. This sort of confrontation could also be due to the nature of living in cramped and inadequate accommodation coupled with other variables which create isolating factors. Just as important is that the quote demonstrates that friendship ties have enabled the participant to still know where the ex-friend is and what has become of him. These friendships also bridged together people who may have been on opposing sides of the conflict in the DRC.

The following quote is a strong demonstration of how the pressures of being an asylum seeker are internalised differently depending on the seeker. In this quote a couple face similar hardship but the husband has found it more difficult than the

wife to try and find external support. While the husband seems to be becoming depressed the wife has been able to make friends. These friendships enabled her to escape the isolation and she constructively used the benefits of the friendship to help support her husband.

I came here with my husband. He was a proud man and was frustrated by the lack of respect he received from the Immigration Officers. At the hostel, staff was always impolite. We did not speak English, and there was no one who spoke French. He was badly affected by what happened to us and became very distant. I met two other Congolese women who had been in the hostel for some time. We became good friends, spending much time together. I spend less time with my husband but I feel that I am supporting him better because my friends tell me where everything is, how things work...With my friends I feel strong. (Juliette, Female 29)

Unfortunately, the husband of this participant was experiencing difficulty adapting. Luckily for his wife she was able to make a few friends who made life in the hostel more tolerable. This account shows the positive influence that making friends and developing a network can bring someone as well as the isolation and depression that others may face if they are unable to make friends. It also demonstrates how women can develop friendships that provide moral comfort and support.

In this research the key node, Serge, started the social network in Coventry after being placed by NASS first in London and then Birmingham. He had been associated with friendship ties in the two cities. His comments on the importance of friendship ties in TA were informative.

I was friendly with the other men in my room. Ali was from Somalia and Jean was from Chad. They were Muslim but we got along. We went to College together and looked out for each other. We were in the same hostel for nearly nine months. After we were moved we stayed in touch. I went to visit them in Southampton. I like Southampton and would

like to move there. My friends said they would help me find somewhere to live. (Serge, Male 29)

This quote shows that Serge was able to develop friendships outside of the Congolese group. They spent a prolonged amount of time together which permitted them to develop strong friendships to the point that once they were dispersed they wanted to be sent to the same city (in this case Southampton). This quote demonstrates the agency of Serge in establishing friendships across nationalities. For this researcher it suggests a certain amount of individuality on the part of the key node and that building friendships was integral to survival, that no matter how desperate the situation, the key node preferred to choose his friends. The following quote builds on this;

It is obvious that in a hostel there isn't the possibility of anything else (but make friends). Everything is depressing but friends make you realise that you are not alone. I didn't make friends with everybody, there were people you could get along with and some others that you needed to avoid. (Serge, Male 29)

This element of choice was further discussed by other participants but within the context of friendships within the social network researched in Coventry. A point made by one of the participants was that while in TA making friends was the only thing that she could control in her life.

The only thing that I can do is choose my friends. (Dax, Female 30)

This provides interesting insight as it suggests that developing friendships may be an act of rebellion, living in the asylum system there is little room for independence as the choices of asylum seekers are dictated by the restrictiveness of asylum legislation and the liminal space that it creates.

Sometimes the friendship ties involved non-asylum seekers as was the case for the following participant who was placed in a hostel in Ilford, London.

In the hostel nobody talked to me, I tried to learn English by forcing myself to read the newspapers, there was nothing else to do. The hostel was so loud and dirty. I always used to take my walks in the park across the street from the hostel. One day I went in another direction, I found a Congolese shop. I couldn't believe it. I went in and met the owner. He was from Kinshasa, but we talked. He invited me to eat with his family. I met his friends; there were so many Congolese in Ilford. I wanted to stay there, but not in the hostel. I was only getting £10 per week. I helped out some of my friends in their businesses, it helped pay for meals and passed the time away. I was at my happiest in Ilford. (Adolphe, Male 33)

I was told I would be there for two weeks. I was there for nine months. (Serge, Male 29)

Temporary accommodation is supposed to be short term. Unfortunately, for all the participants it ended up being four months or more. Living in overcrowded, substandard and under managed accommodation proved a trying experience. On top of which adaptation difficulties and culture shock compounded the problem.

The actual amount of time spent in TA had a determinate role on the extent of one's ability to establish links with friendship ties. Those who stayed in TA for longer periods made links in the established community. Language is also a factor for facilitating friendship ties. Those who could speak more than one language also found it easier to make links with other asylum seekers.

In most cases, due to the nature of hostels, friendship ties included people from outside their ethnicity/language parameters. They were forced together, often this was not an amicable arrangement but in most cases participants were able to maintain relationships with others which in many cases endured after both people had moved on.

6.8 Transition to Dispersal Accommodation

After being in TA, asylum seekers are moved into Dispersal Accommodation (DA). Invariably this means moving between cities. Considering that asylum seekers are on a basic support package, the cost of staying in touch with friends in TA may be difficult. However all the participants maintained at least some links with friends they had made in TA. There were no defining trends on the durability of these links. A number of friends remained in touch while others were lost for a variety of reasons.

Not all my friends from when I was in the hostel are in touch. I know one friend went underground after he went to Bradford. He said he hated it there. (Adolphe, Male 33)

Once NASS processed an asylum seeker's support and accommodation application the applicant would be contacted and given information about where and when they would be moved. There does not seem to have been any uniform process when asylum seekers were moved from TA to DA. NASS would inform them that they had been allocated a property. As with any transition stage in the asylum journey, there were hurdles that the asylum seeker had to overcome. For the participants of this study being sent to Coventry was not a short journey. They were given time frames indicating when they were to be moved; in some cases, buses that they needed to catch, or how many bags of personal belongings they could take with them. As is often the case, lack of confidence communicating in English meant that the understanding of what they were supposed to do made it more likely that they would not succeed.

I received a letter from the NASS; it told me that I was being moved to Coventry the next day. The coach would pick me up at the hostel and take me and my family there. We were only allowed two bags. We had been in the hostel for six months; I had collected clothes for the children for school and for the winter. We had managed to buy some things. We had to leave a lot of stuff at the hostel. The hostel said they would save it for us but I can't afford to go to Middlesbrough to collect

it. A few months later a friend from Coventry drove me back to collect the stuff. (Adolphe, Male 25)

The confusion of being moved to a new address was a traumatic experience. To make the situation worse the negative experiences of having been housed in TA made participants wary of what awaited them. Being able to access support from a social network provided various forms of help through this stage from offering alternate accommodation to facilitating the collection of possessions from a former address.

One participant recounted how he flatly refused to go on the coach because he didn't trust NASS. He was evicted from the hostel. He had met some Congolese in Ilford where he was housed who took him in. By opting out of being moved his NASS support was terminated. Through his friends he managed to get some cash in hand work for a few months. He was eventually put in touch with a solicitor who made a fresh asylum claim.

Having managed to establish friendships in TA, participants were now faced with the prospect of being moved to another city in which they probably had no links. Participants were usually taken to the coach station in the city they were residing in and put onto a coach destined for Coventry. Once in Coventry the participants had to find their way to the property that they had been allocated by NASS.

I was given the address of my new house in Coventry when I was in Middlesbrough. I got a map of Coventry off the internet before I left. I walked to the house from the coach station. The house was locked and no one answered the phone at the agent's office. I slept in the passageway that night. The next day I met a Congolese on the street by accident. (Adolphe, Male 25)

This quote demonstrates that the transition between TA and DA did not always run smoothly. This also presents the case that the transition destabilises asylum seekers who do not have any sort of social network that can provide support, as the initial networks established in TA are tenuous and not supported by a wider range of contacts across the UK.

As a result, just by being forced to move, people were obliged to build new networks of friends, and, if possible, to maintain old ones. Over time a multitude of network links have developed across the country as people have been moved around in a process of cross germination.

For two of the participants, being sent to the same dispersal city enabled them to arrive with the confidence that they were not alone.

Once I learnt that we were being sent to Coventry together I felt better. I knew that it would be easier with someone else because I knew someone already. (Serge, Male 29)

Most participants were dispersed initially to other cities in the TA phase. Participants were able to remain in contact with mobile phones and use of the internet. It was interesting to note that even with distance, contact was maintained and that these links provided valuable assistance when in need (through useful contacts, support, links to home, and tracing people). The following quotes show that enduring friendships were established and efforts were made to maintain contact. Participants showed that they had a good knowledge of the use of telecommunications and the internet and found ingenious and cheap ways of remaining in contact.

I am still in touch with some of my friends from the hostel. My closest friend is now in Middlesborough. We e-mail each other and call once in a while. I went to visit him several months ago, he has received refugee status. His family has joined him. (Ibis, Male 22)

We still keep in touch with our small group. It is difficult to keep in close contact but we have visited each other. I definitely prefer it in Coventry. My friend in Liverpool gave my phone number to a friend of his who was sent to Birmingham. We have been in touch and I have invited him here for a meal. He has made friends in Birmingham through some of my friends here in Coventry. (Jean, Male 27)

I keep in touch with my friends by mobile phone and with the internet. We can go to the college and use the computers for free. A couple of the

centres in Hillfields let us use their computers for free if we show them our asylum seeker documentation. I have a mobile phone which is pay as you go. It is expensive but I prefer to use it to call friends as I like hearing their voice. (Dax, Female 30)

For the researcher, the evidence presented by participants about their awareness of social media and alternate forms of telecommunication is essential in considering the scope that social networks can play in the lives of asylum seekers and how these are maintained. The cost effectiveness that social media provides in maintaining links with friends, not only established in TA but beyond, cannot be underestimated.

Unfortunately there are individuals who have been unable to maintain links with friends from previous accommodation as the following quote shows:

We thought we would be able to stay in touch but it is expensive to make phone calls. Most are no longer asylum seekers and we have lost touch, I am not sure where they are. (Antoine, Male 25)

The evidence from this research shows that social networks formed in TA do not end but morph into smaller networks separated by distance, then hook into and reinforce networks in new dispersal sites or commence new networks where Congolese are not already accommodated. These fractured networks continue to have contact and develop geographical bonds when in need.

6.9 Dispersal and Developing Networks

The high turnover of occupants in hostels and the amount of moving around that asylum seekers experienced meant that they usually had little time to establish a wider web of friendships. As the decision making process is long, asylum seekers can spend long periods of time in Dispersal Accommodation (DA). Given that the numbers of asylum seekers is higher in DA and that they are there for longer periods of time, individuals will have the opportunity to build on smaller friendship ties to develop broader links. Rather than being placed in small hostels (in TA) asylum seekers are now being placed in dispersal areas where there are already a large

number of other asylum seekers. At this point the chance of meeting other Congolese increases. This is the point where links become a social network. In Griffith's et al (2005) work on refugee community organisations and dispersal they argue there was an overemphasis on the role played by RCOs and that the role that social networks play in the daily lives of asylum seekers was underestimated. Williams' (2007) work supports this assumption.

Due to the methodology incorporated in this research the participants were not exposed to the term *social network*, only the key participant was aware of the term as we had discussed it at length in the lead up to the interviews with participants. As a result, the terminology used by participants to describe others in this group was that of a friend. The term friend has a broad meaning and incorporated the spectrum of people from those that were obviously very close to others who had infrequent contact but were still part of the social network.

The sample was very small in order to narrow the research to address the research objectives. It focuses on one *network* rather than a broader spectrum of participants based in Coventry but who came from different countries. I was able to keep this focus as a result of developing a relationship with the key participant and through meeting his friends. By concentrating on something quite compact I was, as the researcher, able to describe its day to day functions, the life experiences of the participants; and subsequently demonstrate how it could be used as a building block towards further large scale research into the role of social networks. There is, however, evidence of the participants being involved in other networks or friendship webs in Coventry. As is discussed later there is also evidence that this particular social network has linkages across the UK as a result of the dispersal process.

6.10 Developing the Friendship Trees (forming of the social network)

The friendship trees were developed to encourage participants to construct a tree that linked their friends together; they would then be asked to talk about those friends and what they learned from them. From there the participants were to show how these friends would introduce them to others and as a result build a tree. Also,

integral to the tree was that a timeframe was built which reflected the longitudinal aspect of the research. This timeframe also delivered interesting results which had relevance to the direction discussed in Chapter 8. The key findings of this research are drawn from the interviews with the participants rather than the actual friendship trees alone. The friendship trees were used to trigger conversations and to elicit discussion around relationships

6.11 Findings from Friendship Trees

In the appendix, friendship trees from 3 participants can be found, representing social network trends that were apparent across the entire sample. The friendship trees are enveloped by a series of *circles* that encircle each other getting progressively larger. Each circle quantifies a period of time (around 3 months) and also corresponds with the frequency of each interview. As each participant was interviewed 4 times the circles show the links made in that time frame.

There is a base line at the bottom of each friendship tree which indicates the point at which the participant arrived in Coventry. Below the line there are linkages to other networks prior to arrival. This point of arrival in Coventry acts as the trunk of the tree. The linkages prior to arriving in Coventry act as the roots. The circles can be likened to the blossoming and growing process that a tree goes through.

The findings showed that, despite several outside links, the building of friendships became ever more entrenched within the network, almost like a tree which is self-pruning. This refers to how participants continued to make links within the social network, with new members or became even closer to people within the network that they already knew. The research was based on four interviews, however participants usually met everyone within the social network by at least the end of the third stage (interview) and as a result were not expanding their network beyond that point (there were no new links in the fourth interview). As time progressed, participants expanded their number of friendships to include a wider cross section of other network members. These new friendships were not really new acquaintances because they may have already met through social events but only begun to spend time together at a later stage.

Juliette developed close friendships with other women in the network first. In time she began to make further friendships with males in the network. She did have an outside link through the school parents group; however, over the course of the research it became obvious that these friendships were school specific and did not exist during school holidays.

The key participant, Serge's tree (see Figure 3) is interesting in that it shows the importance of his role in the network. The Friendship Trees of each of the participants show how important Serge is to them, it is through him that they either access directly into the network, or having been introduced by other members are in turn introduced by Serge to more members. The subsequent conversations showed how Serge was the key individual, always organising meetings; informing others about opportunities for training etc. The tree and the subsequent interviews demonstrate the importance of the liminal expert as integral to the functioning of the network. Serge made links with new network members through working as a volunteer at the CRC. He gained asylum and benefits training from the CRC which he was able to use in the network, providing advice and direction to other participants. He also attended college and joined a music and football club. However, the involvement in these clubs did not develop any close friendships outside the network. They offered leisure time that broke the monotony of everyday life.

This limit of expansion of the group in Coventry has an important influence on the relationship between the network and social exclusion (as discussed in Chapter 9). It is apparent that over time weak ties may change if people stay in Coventry for a number of years. It can be argued that due to the restrictiveness of the asylum regime, social trust of participants eroded to the point that they are more inclined to remain in their network and further foster relationships with other members of the network. The evidence of lack of outward growth in the fourth quarter of the research may be due to this scenario. There are other possible reasons such as all the other Congolese in the city are in another network, but this is unknown. The reluctance of participants to develop links outside the network in the long term indicates the need to encourage discussion on at what point the definition of weak ties in bridging capital is no longer applicable for the social network. Although it will maintain some of the traits of bridging capital, the relationships among the participants become

entrenched. As shown in Espoir's tree, in the third circle there is no activity. This was in part due to him having already developed a strong group of friends in the network; he was therefore not motivated to build more friendships.

6.12 Key node/Liminal Expert

The key node or central actor in the social network, Serge, had been in Coventry since 2002 which was 5 years before he drew his first tree.⁴¹ He was not the first Congolese asylum seeker sent to Coventry, in fact according to Serge there had been a number of Congolese placed in Coventry prior to 1999.

When I arrived I by chance met a couple who had arrived in Coventry in 1998. They were friendly and showed me where to shop and the best church to go to. They received refugee status six months after I arrived in Coventry, and they moved to London to be closer to family. I still go to visit them. There are other Congolese in Coventry; I have some contact with them. One can only try so much; some people are just not interested in being close, though we do talk from time to time. (Serge, Male 29)⁴²

Serge's role as key node evolved over time as newer Congolese asylum seekers arrived in Coventry. As people arrived he began to make acquaintances with asylum seekers primarily in the Hillfields area. One such instance of making friends was through finding out about a Congolese group performing in Birmingham, as he describes below.

Not long after I arrived in Coventry I heard about a Congolese group touring the UK. They were playing in Birmingham so I went to see them. It was a great experience as I met people who knew friends of

⁴¹ Still Serge's tree included at its base people who he had met when he first arrived in Coventry. This was included as it was felt it showed how he developed as a *liminal expert* by showing how relationships taught him how to bring people together and about living in the UK.

⁴² I tried to locate these people but it was difficult. What I could deduce from information supplied by Serge was that they had been placed in Coventry by a London Borough in the mid to late-1990's

mine in Congo. I even met someone who knew a friend I knew who was in England. The concert ended late and there were no more buses to Coventry. One of my new friends invited me to stay with him in Birmingham and then go back to Coventry the next morning. (Serge, Male 29)

The first interview with Serge laid the ground markers of his arrival and the tentative steps taken to develop the network. Subsequent interviews over the year showed a natural progression of meeting people and incorporating them into the network. In social network analysis the key actor in a social network is identified as the key node (Borgatti 2006), but the term liminal expert is much more applicable in this research. This is due to the role that Serge plays in the lives of the participants and the manner in which he supports the network. These traits are also evident in other liminal experts described in the literature (Hynes 2007).

Another aspect that needs to be considered is that of time. What emerges from interviewing Serge is that he recognised his opportunity and that he happened to be in *the right place at the right time*. Had he arrived at an earlier time there may have not been the opportunity to start the network. If he had arrived later there may have been someone else who would have started the network. This also applies to the other participants, as the nature of dispersal meant that at any given time there would be different potential members of the network each with their own qualities, needs and convictions.

6.13 of Key Node/Liminal Expert

Serge's role as the key node developed in part due to his personality. Outgoing and positive he has an easy demeanour that draws people to him. As a liminal expert he showed he was able to quickly understand any situation that he found himself in. Although he did not actively decide to set out and develop a social network, he came to understand the value in building a network that not only helped him but others in the network. He believed in bringing people together in an effort to enable them to help each other and provide a community which would help them through the asylum period.

I enjoy meeting people and introducing them to my other friends. I remember how lonely I was when I arrived and knew no one. I also remember how the Makuta's helped me when I came to Coventry. (Serge, Male 29)

Serge had a desire to help others but also recognised he gained from networking. He realised that if he wasn't visiting his friends and socialising he would not have much to do. As he was unable to work he had free time so he recognised the benefits the network gave him in terms of keeping active;

It occurred to me that it would be easy to stay at home and do nothing all day. I did it for a few days and I felt very depressed. I had only just arrived in the UK and I wasn't sure about what had happened to my family. The Makuta's were really supportive. We didn't even talk about home, but about funny things that had happened to us. After a while I realised that the more time I spent visiting people and out of the house the better I felt. (Serge, Male 29)

Through observation (of both Serge and the other participants) I was able to deduce that Serge, as the key node, was responsible for keeping the network together. He spent a lot of his time visiting friends, calling others and arranging social events which would take place at various asylum seekers' houses.

Meeting all these friends was just easy. We would meet at somebody's home and just talk. We come from all over Congo, as well as Rwanda and Burundi. I am sure some of us would never talk to each other if we were in Congo but that doesn't matter. What matters is that we are here. (Pascal, Male 25)

In Congo when I needed something I always used contacts from family and friends. Here it is the same. I don't trust the landlord or the neighbours. (Espoir, 28 Male)

By investing time in attending free training courses available to asylum seekers Serge was able to improve his knowledge. This training imparted to Serge an extensive

knowledge of the workings of the immigration system. He met with a number of solicitors and knows who are best with respect to Congolese claimants.⁴³ He has also acted as an informal interpreter for a series of local voluntary sector organisations and the local Health Service.⁴⁴ Time spent learning about the asylum system enabled him to better understand the situation he found himself in.

Serge came to realise that the skills and capacities of asylum seekers within the group could help the living conditions of their network members. He was aware of the background of most people in the group and what skills, expertise or knowledge they could contribute to the network/group. This demonstrates that the key node recognised that the strength of the social network is based on harnessing the collective social capital of the network. The strength of a collective was better than individuals acting alone. He was disillusioned with the asylum system and recognised its shortfalls; he felt that by looking for internal solutions many of the problems that asylum seekers encounter could be side stepped.

Most of us had a job in Congo. Espoir was an electrician and Daniel was a plumber. They seem to be always visiting people's home to fix things. We can't work so we don't have much to do, if I knew no one I would be so bored. (Antoine, Male 25)

Serge is very busy but I think that it gives him something to do. He is always calling people and arranging when we can meet as a group. If someone has a problem he always knows someone who can help. (Dada, Female 28)

⁴³ In Coventry voluntary sector agencies such as the Refugee Centre, Watch (Working Actively to Change Hillfields) and Osaba Family Centre, run regular training programs which are aimed at immigrant groups. Of particular pertinence for this research is the training supplied on understanding the social security system, accessing healthcare, understanding governance in the UK, starting a community organisation.

⁴⁴ This point is interesting in respect to the local NHS as he is not entitled to work and provides the service free of charge. There are also guidelines that the NHS has to follow in terms of appropriate and accredited interpreters. Serge is not accredited but has language skills which are not officially available in the city. If the local NHS were to get a Lingala speaker that person would have to be brought in from Birmingham which would be expensive, Serge learned English in school in Congo, since he has been in the UK he has taken further ESOL courses.

Obviously, participants had much to say about Serge and his capacity to bring people together. They could see his value as a friend and a human being rather than just a facilitator;

You cannot understand how alone and afraid I felt. I knew no one. I wasn't sure where my family was. I felt scared by the government officials and I'd never seen so many different people. Before I came here I had seen a few white people, and some Indians and Lebanese. But that was it. I was confused and did not know what I needed to do. When I met Serge, everything happened so fast. I met other people from my country. I could talk, and ask questions without being afraid.
(Dax, Female 30)

This quote contextualises the role that Serge played in the participant's integration into the social network. This participant paints a picture of confusion and fear. Serge is portrayed as a facilitator who guides the participant.

The key participant was the principal actor in Coventry but his work was only possible due to groundwork done elsewhere either by him or others. Serge's network of friends is based on his ability to build on the links between the Congolese who were already residing in Coventry and the contacts he had established prior to being dispersed to the city. For Serge, building the friendship network was not a conscious effort to develop a social network but a result of wanting to develop survival strategies based on friendship links.

I went and did some translating at the Refugee Centre where I met the Community Development worker. I learnt a lot about how the asylum system works and what you need to do. I did not like how a lot of things are done there but they do some good work. I use what I have learnt to help my friends, because they can get information right away rather than waiting in a chair for hours or having to make an appointment for next week. (Serge, Male 29)

This quote encapsulates the value that Serge brings to the social network. He has managed to find agencies where he can volunteer and has developed a broad knowledge of the asylum process which he can in turn use for the benefit of those in the social network. The role that Serge fills resonates with Turner's (2005) observation of social networks in refugee camps. He noted that traditional hierarchies were under threat due to the unstable circumstances in the camps and were being replaced by more mobile and adaptable individuals who were referred to as *liminal experts*. It can be suggested that liminal experts continue across the refugee journey and are an essential component of the social network in the asylum process. The descriptions provided by Serge present an individual who is motivated, quick learning, adaptable and highly resilient.

6.14 Entering a Social Network

Up to fifty Congolese had been dispersed to Coventry between 2000 and 2007 when the research began (statistics supplied by Coventry City Council), and many had established linkages and networks. However, many of the original members had continued on the asylum journey and had been moved away (through dispersal).

The nucleus of the social network which forms the focus of this study was drawn from loose connections of people who originate from the Democratic Republic of Congo. There was a linkage of several people from the eastern Congo near to the borders of Rwanda and Burundi. No direct friendships existed prior to flight from Congo. Contact with friends and relatives generated names of other people from the region already in the UK. In some cases family members still in DRC provided participants with phone numbers of Congolese asylum seekers in UK which enabled the participants to establish contact. That person then supplied other contact numbers, Serge's number being one of those included. The other members of the social network were associated by establishing contact once in Coventry.

Before coming here I was in Middlesbrough. When I told them I was going to Coventry, someone gave me Serge's phone number as he knew him from when he was in London. (Antoine, Male 25)

Having prior information about the individuals who were already engaged in the social network was the most common way that participants entered it. This is also an example of how over a prolonged period of time the linkages between asylum seekers across the UK will solidify. This is how the dispersal process, by moving asylum seekers around the country, can actually diminish isolation. When dispersal began there was a strong possibility that asylum seekers would not be able to establish social networks comprised of co-nationals in dispersal sites. This is because the number of other asylum seekers from the same country would be low. Only after repeated dispersal would the number of asylum seekers from the same country grow to a number possible to establish a social network. The structure of dispersal ensured that individuals would develop relationships with a number of people who would then be sent to another location. This constant element of being moved coupled with social media meant that people could remain in touch with friends already made in the UK. Also with people being dispersed around the country asylum seekers would build a network of friends who had been moved elsewhere in the UK. These linkages could be shared, so that when an asylum seeker is being dispersed to another city, someone may already have a friend in the destination city which would be used as a link for helping the newly arrived asylum seekers settle. This snowball effect meant that the more often someone was moved the greater the linkages between national networks grew. This indicated that for the participants, weak ties became strong ties as a result of being located for a prolonged period in Coventry. If they were moved elsewhere, because of the way that dispersal operates, participants would probably have a linkage in a new dispersal city to contact.

There are other ways of entry into the group. In the example below a participant was able to find a way into the social network from a voluntary sector agency;

At the Refugee Centre one of the caseworkers introduced me to Serge. He was there helping out. We talked and he showed me around Hillfields. (Joseph, Male 40)

Furthermore, there is also a random or *by chance* element to entering the social network. The following two quotes exemplify the by chance encounter in which other participants were able to integrate into the social network.

I had been in Coventry for a few days, one day I was in a shop and I heard two people speaking Lingala. So I spoke to them and they invited me for dinner that night. (Ibis Male 22)

Last month Gnakape arrived in Coventry, by coincidence he met Espoir at the Post Office. Espoir invited him over to Dada's for dinner. He met everyone there. It was a good evening as someone brought a video from Congo with music that everyone likes. Gnakape was lucky because later his landlord moved him to a flat in the same building as Dada. (Pascal, Male 25)

There was no evidence of participants having to wait to be accepted into the group. As it has been described as a group of friends, invitations were almost immediate from the point contact was established; from that time friendships were forged. An interesting observation from the first quote is that there is some overlapping with RCOs/ Voluntary sector agencies. An employee had introduced one of the participants to the key node, this indicates that not only do participants in the friendship group access the services of outside agencies but that these agencies appreciate the value of the friendship group enough to refer people to them.

At the college we can use the e-mail and MSN. We speak to friends all over the world. I know what is happening in Goma and Kinshasa. I talk to family in France and the US. I have been able to trace family with the internet. From meeting other Congolese in the UK we have been able to help each other make contact with people they may have known in Congo and family. (Dada, Female 28)

An interesting point about establishing contact is the use of social networking sites online such as Bebo and MySpace, and the use of MSN. All the participants had mobile phones and made use of cheap phone cards to call friends in the UK and abroad. Even though they were all subject to basic NASS support they had developed a complex knowledge of telecommunications which meant that they could keep in touch with each other at minimal cost.

6.15 Personal Motivations

In the case of the network in this study, the individuals who brought it together did not start with the intention of forming a social network, where members have specific roles as depicted in the literature. This supports the findings of Hynes (2007), Williams (2006) and Marx (1990). It was in fact more of a gradual organic process of forging links with other asylum seekers, mainly in Coventry, who were interested in building friendships. These friendships were based on trust, language and background. The functioning of a social network depends on the commitment of the individual members. In this research, participants recognised that the key node was essential for bringing together the members and undertaking the daily work needed to make it stick together, what I would describe as a facilitator. In this research the descriptions of Serge are that of a friend and a social events coordinator, yet from a theoretical standpoint, he is a liminal expert who by building a network of friends, recognised their individual skills and abilities.

Once I met my Congolese friends I was able to understand my situation better. I learnt that there are people in Coventry that I can go to for help. I learnt that most English people don't like asylum seekers and think they should go home. They don't know what it was like for me in Congo. (Claude, Male 26)

This quote demonstrates the comfort that the participant gets from the relationships he has developed through the social network. It also shows that in the social network there is awareness that the attitude of the British population towards asylum seekers is quite negative. This is an interesting point in that it may suggest that suspicion of outside agencies is not wholly based in personal experience but that discussion and advice within the network can also introduce or even reinforce these assumptions.

This network evolved organically, where friendships were of paramount importance. Only later, once a level of trust was established would individuals, given the right circumstances, help each other.

We used to hang out together. Then after Espoir's problem we started to talk to each other about lots of things... being an asylum seeker, the Congo, where our families were... Girls... (Adolphe, Male 33)

The interviews showed how the network is sewn together by layers of friendship. Members of the social network have a genuine affection for one another. However, the continuation of the network does rely on its members participating in group activities to a certain degree, though it is not mandatory. The evidence is that participants recognised the value that their friendship network provided in terms of support and guidance, and developing these friendships was the primary reason to enter the network.

This participation is not a specifically outlined job description. People act out of *la bonne volonté* (the best of intentions) and not out of obligation. The idea that *a friend in need is a friend indeed* does not figure in this milieu. They all recognise that they share the same marginal existence and as a result are willing to help each other. The experience of spending a prolonged period as an asylum seeker enabled many participants to recognise the times when people would need more help.

We are together because we are friends. We help each other as a result of our friendship. I know the asylum system doesn't work; I have personally experienced that as have all my friends. I look out for my friends because I know they do the same for me. (Bernadette, Female 24)

Over time the threshold of expectation of the asylum process diminished. This coincided with an ever increasing focus on the social network. Evidence is presented that the asylum seekers' expectations are eroded by the asylum process; expectations of the system are low (destroyed) and that the only meaningful solace is the network (friendship).

When I came here I did not want to start this (a group of friends or a social network). It just happened. I met a couple of people from Congo and we started talking. We went out and drank beers and became good

friends. We liked the same music and like Arsenal, though some of the new friends like Chelsea and Manchester United. We didn't talk much about being an asylum seeker. Then Espoir received a letter that he had been refused. All of a sudden that is all we talked about. (Serge, Male 29)

We found him a solicitor in London who could help him. We began to talk about living here in the UK. We also started to talk about Congo. We soon realised that we had more in common than beer and football. (Espoir, Male 28)

I don't really look at it as helping others. I live here in Coventry; none of us have a good existence. When we need something we try to help. (Jean, Male 27)

These quotes show friendships are forged because of common experiences and interests, they can talk about interests that are no different from those of UK citizens in the same venues as UK citizens. However, it is the underlying constraints of being an asylum seeker that draws them even closer, realising the value of their relationships and how it can make them stronger in the face of instability. The participants are motivated to meet people who they can relate to. This means people who may have a similar national background but also similar living circumstances.

In the social network there are strong friendships which are based on social and cultural commonalities, there is also an awareness of the asylum process and how it affects people outside the network. This following quote emphasises that for many participants there was a conception of a shared experience which drew them together and, if possible, a willingness to help those in need.

Although I don't speak Kurdish or any other language I know what it is like for all asylum seekers. They are my brothers if I see one of them in difficulty and I can be of assistance I wouldn't hesitate. (Pascal, Male 25)

6.16 Links between Networks/ Organisations

The key node is knowledgeable about a number of different networks in Coventry. He is also aware of the different RCOs in the city. He knows the key people in the different groups and is in contact with several. There doesn't appear to be social networks that antagonise each other. According to the Coventry City Council there were over 60 different social networks and refugee community organisations (Asylum Seeker Strategy 2003). In 2007 there were a number of functions funded by the Refugee Centre that the different social networks had planned together. Money was provided to rent a hall and pay for food and entertainment. This was seen as a positive experience by all participants. For the key node it enabled the development over time of trust and understanding with other groups of asylum seekers (not just Congolese groups).

Links with other social networks are not formal agreements. In certain instances an element of cooperation could be perceived based on *linking services*, where recognised expertise exists in one network but not in another, and where an amicable link allows sharing of services. This can be sharing household equipment (audio and visual equipment, books etc.), enabling individuals into funded schemes (extra academic learning, sporting activities, and venues for social events), information sharing, out of city linkages and contacts. In Coventry social networks formally interact during cultural events sponsored by voluntary organisations (such as Refugee Week and Peace Month).

It is recognised that other networks exist in Coventry. The fact that these networks and organisations can be brought together to organise functions shows that there is no serious animosity. As described in quotes throughout this research, participants recognised that outside their network there were other asylum seekers going through the same experiences.

6.17 Conclusion

In TA, asylum seekers are only able to develop limited relationships with people. The friendship ties cannot yet be considered a social network as at this point it is limited

to tenuous/weak friendship ties with fellow residents. For Cheung and Phillimore (2013) the strength of a social network is measured by how frequently contacts are made over a certain period of time (in that research it was based on a spectrum of more than twice a week to never). In TA the breadth of friendships is small, yet they spend time together on a daily basis. In defining a *Friendship Tree* I want to highlight that these relationships are similar to those in social networks but lack the breadth of membership due to the lack of access to others who could join. This lack of breadth of contacts is controlled by the asylum process, as a result of being placed in accommodation for a relatively short period of time in small hostels they have a limited reservoir to draw on to develop anything other than a small number of friendship ties. Asylum seekers develop a series of smaller friendship ties which are just a collection of friends or acquaintances who share a common experience.

At this first stage, the asylum seekers are isolated through language differences and unfamiliarity with their new surroundings. This is the beginning of a liminal existence where they know little of the system within which they are trying to exist. Evidence shows that people start networking as soon as they arrive in the UK. Immediate access into a Congolese social network is not guaranteed, as the first encounter with a network is dictated more by the first asylum seekers that one encounters. As a result, they will not necessarily join a social network but may benefit from one. An asylum seeker may benefit from the generosity of a friendship tie, initially being offered a meal for example, but after that any association with that network may cease. Joining a network would mean far more interaction with other individuals, including spending a significant amount of spare time together.

The friendship ties established in TA may have no logical link (ethnic, language commonality) other than a group of asylum seekers who have, over time, formed a bond which has brought them together. In most cases temporary accommodation is where new arrivals have their first encounter with friendship ties. Participants are usually confused over their new surroundings and do not have a strategy to help them cope. Many participants recounted how they were fed for several days by other asylum seekers because they had no idea how to cook or what to eat. Most participants developed friendship ties within a week of arriving in the UK.

Developing friendships is a very dynamic process. In conceptualizing friendships, social networks and social capital need to be recognised as fluid rather than static. By using the idea of the refugee experience and following the asylum seekers through the various stages of the asylum process, this dynamic process comes to the fore as participants are continually forced to adapt and evolve to enable themselves to negotiate their passage through the asylum process. The construction of friendship ties (and therefore networks) is a constant process of building, consolidating, curtailing and then re-starting. The key determinate is the practice of dispersal itself. In the TA stage key points emanating from published literature on social networks emerge. TA acts as a transitory stage before asylum seekers are placed in dispersal accommodation. Evidence is presented which demonstrates the existence of transnational networks, importantly the comments from participants shows these linkages are limited. From helping participants get to the UK, to helping them find a pathway into the TA stage of the asylum process, the evidence portrays the linkages as restricted to arrival and helping individuals move to the next stage of the refugee experience--dispersal. These points link back to the work primarily of Williams (2006) on the role of networks in migration but also the work of Castles and Miller (2003), Jordan and Duvell (2003), Portes (1995), among others.

The importance of this chapter is found in the words of the participants, which demonstrate that, if given the opportunity, asylum seekers will develop friendships as a means of finding security in an unstable environment. When presented with a living environment that was foreign, suffocating and frustrating individuals developed both loose and strong friendships with other asylum seekers. Friendship ties were established but did not progress into anything larger as there was neither the time nor number of like-minded individuals present to do so.

These liminal circumstances promoted the development of networking between asylum seekers, the harshness of their situation meant that individuals had to develop links outside of their own language groups. An inability to speak a common language was a major barrier for asylum seekers developing friendship trees. These friendship ties were based on a shared existence rather than identity based. It is extremely important to recognise that the turbulent living circumstances that asylum seekers lived in enabled the emergence of liminal experts. With traditional

leadership non-existent, a vacuum develops where individuals who are mobile and able to develop an understanding of their surroundings act as a hub drawing individuals together to pool their skills as social capital. As a first step this chapter shows how the turbulence that is the dispersal system lays a fertile ground for the emergence of liminal experts to develop forms of social networks as a means of enhancing the survival tactics of asylum seekers.

It could be argued that although participants were aware of the value of friendship ties and social networks prior to arriving in the UK. When participants were in TA they *learned* the significance of friendship ties and social capital within an asylum related context.

A dominant theme of this chapter is the frequently changing situation for asylum seekers in the asylum process. The result is that asylum seekers are prevented from establishing anything resembling stability and security. As a reaction, the contrasting narrative is that at each stage of the asylum process asylum seekers are forming friendship ties or social networks to provide respite from the difficulties that they face. This chapter presents evidence that questions Putnam's assertion that social networks need conducive environments that include supportive government (Putnam 1993). In fact, the views of Griffiths and Hynes on social networks emerging in even the most un-conducive of environments, which includes the imposition of a punitive support apparatus, are re-enforced here (Griffiths et al 2005; Hynes 2007).

The benefits of social networks for asylum seekers are that they are able to act as a support mechanism. This support mechanism is the social capital that exists in the network. Their first task is to provide a web of moral support for individuals, by bringing people together who are experiencing a similar situation. From this stage knowledge is developed which is shared between members for the good of both the individual and the network. The ability to provide help to individuals in extreme circumstances is possible, particularly when the network joins together as it is not financially strong. The reliance is on the goodwill of its members and calculating how to stretch the finite resources of the collective. As the experiences of the members broaden over time, so the resources and knowledge available to the network increase.

Sure, I used some of the money I earned to help some of my friends. They are still my friends but I feel upset that I have refugee status and they don't. They don't ask for money but if I can I will help. (Joseph, Male 40)

An important reflection in this chapter is that every aspect of the support provided through the social network is delivered in a social setting. Friends provide somewhere to stay, evening meals are with other friends, and the list goes on. The positive impact that these social settings provide for asylum seekers cannot be underestimated. Though this research defines the group as a social network by using typologies offered by Cheung and Phillimore (2013), Hynes (2007) and Williams (2006), it is important to note that for the participants in the first instance it is a group of friends. Loneliness is overcome by sharing knowledge and resources. Also, it is important to recognise that for established members of the social network the importance of friends is just as great as for newer arrivals who may have fewer resources to offer. The fact that there is someone to talk to is a valued and cherished commodity.

This chapter questions what exactly constitutes a conducive environment for the development of social networks. One fertile space which can help the formation of social networks is the liminal space of communal boredom that the asylum process places the asylum seekers in. With little else to do, individuals will strike up friendships with those around them. Having looked at the findings it can be argued that friendship is not only the most important form of social capital that exists in the network but that it is the element on which all other forms of social capital within the network are based. Friendship forms the basis of trust which is the key basis of trust for asylum seekers (Hynes 2007).

This chapter describes the basic structure and the motivations of the social network, and how it is brought together as a counter to the asylum process. This also fits with social networks identified as a survival strategy (Griffiths 2005; Hynes 2007; Williams 2006) or a coping mechanism and a resource for the disempowered (Zetter 2005).

It also presents how, through various means, people are drawn together to form a bond of friendship. The various means include links with transnational networks; UK based asylum networks as well as random encounters on the streets of Coventry. It shows how friendship binds people together and that the social setting that friendship fosters underpins any form of support that the social network offers its members.

There is no single process for joining the social network or clear code of conduct. Participants were free to develop links with other networks and develop friendships outside of the network.

There is no common trend as to the length and intensity of involvement in the social network. Participants' involvement varies from constant/exclusive *membership* to loose and periodic involvement. This could be due to participants' mobility, personal character, self-confidence, language skills and education levels. Some participants moved into other networks as their asylum claim was resolved and were either re-settled (as refugees) or re-dispersed (as Section 4 claimants). By having to move to new towns individuals have to re-establish themselves by building new friendships. These new friendships may be facilitated through the links of the social network which has mushroomed as a result of its members having been sent to so many different locales in the UK.

The chapter presents examples of how the asylum process is a liminal stage and shows its relationship with the development of the social network. The role of the liminal expert is integral to the existence of the social network. His importance in forming and coordinating the social network is demonstrated by how he understood the limitations of RCOs and his decision that the social network should remain as it was rather than formalising the network (and becoming an RCO). It is easier for asylum seekers to build a social network than a refugee community organisation. As discussed in this chapter, participants had tried to start an RCO but abandoned the idea when they realised the barriers they would have to overcome, which links to the findings of Piacentini (2012). The preference to remain as a network was based in the simplicity and fluidity of the network. The network was easy to establish and bring

members into and there was little responsibility for the upkeep. If members were moved elsewhere, the network was not adversely affected but had the ability to adapt to change. This further backs up the findings of Griffiths (2005) with regard to the notionalised assumption of the effectiveness of RCOs in dispersal. These findings show that asylum seekers understood the limitations of RCOs in being able to deliver support to dispersed asylum seekers, and that remaining as a social network was a far more effective option. It also suggests that the type of social capital that exists in a social network is of better value than RCO social capital for participants negotiating passage through the dispersal process.

This chapter focuses on the internal mechanisms of the social network, such as the use of friendship trees as a means of identifying the group. Importantly, more complex evidence of the key role that a liminal expert plays in the functioning of a social network is presented. By contextualising the social network and presenting how people become incorporated in and contribute to it, provides a further understanding of strategies used by asylum seekers within the refugee experience (Agier 2008).

Chapter 7: The Functions of the Network and the Roles of Individuals

7.1 Ties that Provide Support

Throughout the empirical chapters evidence is presented which explicates the types of social capital that exist in social networks. This chapter discusses social capital as a facet of friendship ties. Something as basic as friendship was considered social capital as it improved the lives of asylum seekers. The value that social capital provides asylum seekers is far more encompassing than just friendship, even in the pre dispersal stage of TA.

Participants recounted that many people left the hostels as they could not put up with the conditions. Though the evidence was vague it indicated that they left because they had somewhere to go where they thought that they would be better looked after because friendship links had been established. These links presented a form of social capital that existed outside of the hostel. Some participants had links with friends and relatives in the UK and could rely on these people to provide support when needed.

In the hostel the other occupants were awful. God does not let me judge them but I couldn't take it. I complained to anyone who would listen but it didn't change anything. I had a sister in Coventry. I moved in with her. She helped me apply for NASS to recognise this. It took six months for NASS to process the papers. While I was waiting I had no support, my sister looked after me. (Bernadette, Female 24)

This asylum seeker was able to draw on familial contact. What she didn't expect was that she would fall out of the NASS support cycle. It proved difficult to re-enter the system, she had to endure a prolonged period with no NASS subsistence support. Also she was forced to rely on someone who had little means to provide support.

The evidence supplied by the participants suggests that people who decided to leave temporary accommodation acted on impulse when deciding that the conditions were

unacceptable. They were also unaware of the extent of the problems they would encounter as a result of their actions. This situation shows how there are different forms of social capital that asylum seekers can draw upon, but that the forms vary depending on the individual and the circumstances that they find themselves in. For example, Bernadette was able to draw on the linkages of family to provide her with social capital while she went through the process of re-entering the asylum system. Other participants drew on the value of friendships in the hostel to bridge their immediate problems. In all situations the need to draw on these different forms of social capital are a result of the shortcomings of the asylum process.

For most participants, life in TA was punctuated by being moved to a new hostel at least once. One participant when being moved between TA locations was not collected by his NASS provider and was locked out of the property. He was let into the hostel by a friend and slept on the floor of an acquaintance until collected by NASS the next day. Administrative oversights have led to asylum seekers being made homeless. Social networks have been shown to provide a safety net for vulnerable asylum seekers until they can re-enter the asylum support system.

I had met some other Congolese in Leeds. They let me stay on their sofa until I could sort out my NASS support. They helped me contact Refugee Action. (Espoir, Male 28)

This comment shows that the participant had to enlist the support of a voluntary sector agency to re-enter the asylum process. In addition, friendship ties can offer social capital in the form of accommodation, but invariably the participants were unable to draw on this support and had to re-apply for NASS support. This indicates that the degree of social capital available is short term and inconsistent and does not completely serve the needs of the participants. It also suggests that the limits of social capital in friendship ties are due to the restrictiveness of the asylum system.

From a social capital standpoint the friendship trees demonstrate how bridging social capital operates and how weak ties are formed, maintained and become stronger between asylum seekers. Building on bridging capital identification, the friendship tree shows how social capital is pinpointed, pooled and exploited within

the group. It is at this point in the research that the group of friends becomes a social network.

7.2 Member Responsibilities

The dynamics of the roles of individual members of the network is important to note. Bringing people together to help support the collective could be construed to mean membership was based on individuals having defined roles and functions. This can be brought back to both Schaefer-McDaniel's (2004) identification of types of social capital as well as Bourdieu's (1986) similar work. In fact the key roles that people undertook were undefined and done on a voluntary basis. There is a sense of voluntary help, a communal sense of camaraderie due to sharing a common experience. Members pass down lessons learned to help new members. As a group of friends; the network has not clearly defined roles allotted to any member. Individuals will volunteer to help if they are in a position to help. Participants do not look upon helping others as work or obligatory.

I have a larger than average flat with a spare bed. I offer it to friends who may need somewhere to stay. I don't have to but I get really lonely and it helps having someone to talk to. (Dada, Female 28)

This quote demonstrates the dual nature of the notion of *helping* in the social network. It may seem insignificant that this participant is willing to provide somewhere to stay for someone in the network, but considering the fact that destitution is a common experience of asylum seekers, the offer carries considerable value. However, of equal importance is the company that having someone in the flat brings for the participant. The manner in which the participant explained this in the quote suggests that for her the prospect of having someone in the flat was more important. Secondary to this is the participant's awareness that if NASS officials discovered she was letting someone stay in her flat she would have her asylum support terminated.

This idea of helping is described at length by participants. As much as the desire to help is based on a *shared experience*, it also highlights that participants possess

skills, knowledge or capacity that can be of benefit to others. These are forms of social capital that underpin the effectiveness of the social network to support its members.

Participants explained that they are drawn together due to their circumstances and that being Congolese is only secondary. The act of helping is a natural reflex because they appreciate what it is like to live in the UK as an asylum seeker. There is a communal sense of camaraderie as a result of sharing a common experience.

Since I have been here our group of friends has grown. Some people have moved on but others have come. I miss some of those who have left. Being an asylum seeker in the UK is so difficult. I have to go by bus to the hospital for treatment every week. When Jean left I had no one to take me. Serge has made sure that there is always someone to take me. (Danielle, Female 24)

For this participant the network provided someone who could accompany her to the hospital. She had been ill for some time and spent time in a local hospital. After being discharged she was required to make weekly visits to the hospital. She was unable to get outside assistance to take her for her appointments. Serge was able to arrange for someone to accompany her to all her appointments.

Participants are also more inclined to help others within the network as it gave them something to do. Boredom is a constant element of asylum seekers' daily lives. This quote shows someone who has little to do to occupy her time. She wants to go to college yet she cannot afford to pay for the transport. This demonstrates the breakdown in services for asylum seekers. This participant has enrolled in an ESOL course but she needs a bus pass to get there. Her weekly support package is not enough for her to get to college. As she cannot attend classes to improve her ability to communicate in English her chance of building linkages outside the social network and avoiding social exclusion are reduced. Therefore, she is obliged to remain with her friends in the network.

There are a lot of days when I just stay in my flat and lie in bed. I go to the library almost every day anyway and the TV is boring. When I can be with friends I will. Sometimes we just watch TV or videos. It passes the time. (Adele, Female 22)

Considering the difficulties faced by asylum seekers in accessing ESOL it is noted that in this network there are people with a teaching background. This participant is frequently asked for help by others in the social network. As much as he is contributing to the social capital of the network he is also experiencing a positive return of his own self-esteem. He is increasingly busy and helping others is improving his own sense of self-worth.

When I came here I was really scared. When I met Serge he introduced me to his friends. I am studying at College, Computing and English. After about a year someone asked me to help them write their CV. Pretty soon I was teaching friends how to use computers, translating and writing letters. It's funny but until Nora asked me no one had asked me to do anything. (Adolphe, Male 33)

Rather than there being defined roles in the group, there are people with specific skills and expertise that can be called upon when needed. Just as important are the people in the network who do not have skills to contribute but are equally valued. Just a willingness to help others when needed was of value.

This quote shows that regardless of the situation participants were loyal to their friends and valued the bonds that had been forged in the network.

They are my friends. If they need help with something and I can help I will...I have been in the UK for five years now and know what it is like. I sometimes need help and there is someone to help. I don't have to help but I can't not help. (Pascal, Male 25)

Examples of other skills and attributes are born out in the following quotes. On one side they show that people in the network have local geographical knowledge which can help others, while the other side demonstrates having material that is useful to

others in the network., in this case a DVD player and space to invite others over for social events.

We look out for each other. If someone finds somewhere where food is cheap or can find food from Congo, word spreads. (Dada, Female 28)

Dada has a DVD. We all share DVDs from Africa. We go to her flat to watch the films. We make a meal and sit around and talk. (Danielle, Female 25)

Rather than distinct roles, all of these quotes emphasise that participants offer assistance in ad hoc manners, if they are able to help or have a solution to the problem they will help. If they cannot help they will ask someone else in the network. More important is that the support is delivered in a social setting where people are brought together as friends.

I don't consider it help. They are my friends; it is part of my friendship that I help others. We make each other's lives better. It is not easy living for so long in these conditions. Things are not getting better, and we do what we can. (Serge, Male 29)

It was hard to decipher whether participants were required to provide some form of input into the network, or whether they simply chose to do so. The interviews suggested that there was no direct demand to provide any support. Another point is that all participants were willing actors in the network. When asked for help they showed no reluctance. In situations like group functions participants were proactive in their actions, offering to buy drinks and food, or help setting up and organising events.

Not all participants were active members of the network or had daily interaction with the group. There were people who sat on the periphery and contributed little but were always supported in time of need. In this instance some participants were ambivalent as to whether these people merited membership in the network; while there were others frustrated by this.

There are a couple of friends who we don't see that often. They seem to come when they are really in need. I don't talk to them as I don't like how they always come when they need something but never contribute. They always want but never give. I am angry that there is always someone there to help them. (Joseph, Male 40)

Annie is young and I think she has had a hard life. She doesn't talk too much to the men but she has become close to several of the women. She is not really able to help anyone. Though she is a close friend to some and that is probably enough. (Dax, Female 30)

Members may become isolated if they do not interact with others in the social network, but due to the nature of the asylum process most have a lot of free time and look for something to do. Frustrated with their personal situation, the network provides someone to talk to who has a shared experience, can identify with that feeling of frustration, who can be trusted and in some cases can provide some help.

I meet up with my friends almost every day. I help cook food and run some errands. I don't do much and no one has ever asked me. I like to socialise with everyone. When we are feeling down it is important to talk. Think of the good times. I feel close to my friends, we make fun a lot of how we live in the UK. (Bernadette, Female 24)

It could be argued that the specific role that members have is to be themselves. The evidence from the participants is that friendship is the key driver of the network. Apart from the key node who links the different participants, there are few, if any, defined roles. It is more that there are people with skills who are more than willing to use them if needed.

7.3 Degrees of Closeness in Network

The key link was Serge. He did not have a specific role other than being the key point of contact acting as an information hub for all in the network. Serge's role was, by default, the person who actively tried to bring the individuals together and make

links among the people in the network. As the network is based on friendship, the difference between strong and weak members (of the social network) is based on how much each individual is in contact with others in the network. This alludes to Granovetter's idea of strong and weak ties. It was evident that in this network there were examples of individuals whose relationship (to the network) could be termed either weak or strong. For a variety of reasons which may be personal some participants are more active in the network than others. Links to the social network varied according to an individual's need. As the focal point of the network Serge remained a strong link throughout this research.

I am not sure what would happen if Serge was not here. I guess that someone else would be able to bring everyone together. He never seems to be down always positive and always looking for opportunities.
(Dax, Female 30)

There are links in the social network which are strong and people are close, meeting daily for companionship (commonality i.e. having children at school).

The friends I have here are like my family, they support me when I feel down. They helped me meet other people from the neighbourhood. It is this way that I met people who send their children to the same school as my daughter. (Juliette, Female 29)

Some links are weak and revert to only being used as emergency support (help with transit etc.). These people do not seem to feel any compunction about not being more involved in the network. Rather they chose to only rely on the linkages when they needed help. Weaker links in terms of interaction are due to individuals being involved in other activities and having a busy agenda, such as school, college, or employment (refugees and non-asylum seekers repeat). There are also others who, though it cannot be substantiated, could be suffering from depression and are infrequent participants in activities. Due to boredom during the asylum process being involved in a social network helped pass the time and build meaningful friendships. There was evidence that links fluctuate. Weak links can become strong

links over time as people's needs and circumstances change and vice versa as strong links become weak links.

When I first arrived I met Flora. We were very close and spent most days together. But she was moved to Wood End (in north Coventry); over time we saw less of each other. I met other people at college and she had a baby. We still see each other but not as much. (Juliette, Female 29)

I received refugee status three months ago. I was moved to Stoke Aldermoor. I have a flat from the Council and am now studying at College. I have made friends at College. I still see my friends in Hillfields but not as much. If they need me they know where I am. I will always be there for them but I need to start my life. (Pascal, Male 25)

Over the period of the research, participants' involvement in the network was never consistent. Depending on their circumstances they could have daily interaction with other members of the network or, if they had been moved for example, they may have less contact and may have become involved with another network often due to linkages within the network central to this research.

7.4 Learning about Daily Life in Coventry

Despite the emphasis on asylum seekers dispersed to Coventry, the findings of this research also provides illuminating evidence of how social networks sit within the broader asylum framework. Participants highlighted developing an awareness of social networks and friendship ties from early on in the asylum process. This awareness continues along an uninterrupted path beyond the confines of being an asylum seeker and onto refugee status. Whether as the active nodes within a network or as peripheral individuals who benefited from some form of support, be it once or several times, participants were able to demonstrate awareness of the existence of different networks encountered while in the asylum process.

This section shows, refugees apply their knowledge in their day to day existence. The caveat being that their day to day existence is dictated by living within the asylum system. Research has established that institutions influence social capital (Hynes 2007, Rothstien and Kumlin 2001) and, in the case of asylum seekers, social capital is used to cover the lack of state support (Zetter 2005).

In this section four distinct categories of support demonstrate that the nature of the social network means that these categories overlap. With friendship being the bonding feature of the social network this section explores to what extent friendship is the essence of survival for asylum seekers as it provides the moral support needed to overcome sustained periods of insecurity of identity.

7.5 Finding food

After accommodation the second most important aspect of support relates to food. For participants there emerged a strong cultural attachment to food. Living in the UK broke this aspect down with varied results. For the participants who were the first arrivals in Coventry there were no shops they were aware of that sold familiar foodstuffs. In the hostels they had been given a steady diet of food which they were not used to. As documented earlier, lack of a variety of food caused resentment amongst participants.

Little or no induction was given to the participants on how to live in Coventry. The first challenge for all participants was finding food. Many participants admitted to living off of take-away chicken for weeks on end. The problem was that on a limited amount of money it became too expensive to buy take-away meals. Also, the participants recounted that eating take-away food led to digestive problems.

For the male participants the problems were even more basic, as prior to coming to the UK most of them had never had to cook for themselves. This meant that there was an initial over reliance on eating at the take-away or buying pre-packaged foods.

When I arrived in Coventry the agent showed me around the house. He explained the safety procedures and gave me an emergency phone

number. He showed me the bathroom and the kitchen and showed me all the cooking material in the kitchen. I knew what everything was but it wasn't until I went back to the kitchen that I realised that I didn't know what to do with them. (Dax, Male 30)

Not knowing how to cook was part of a wider problem. Reverting to take-away meals highlighted that not only did most male participants not know how to cook, nor where to buy food and what to buy, but were also unaware of what were reasonable prices to pay for food. Up until 2004 no shops in the Hillfields area sold African produce. There were a number of smaller Kurdish shops (incidentally started by Iraqi/ Iranian refugees) which carried a small selection of African tinned food products. Otherwise there was a Sainsbury's in the city centre and the Coventry market.

Even for participants who could cook, it was difficult to find recognizable foodstuffs. This meant that their diet had to adjust to what was available. Unfamiliarity with what was being sold also meant that participants often spent beyond their means and budget. This was particularly the case when shopping at stores such as Sainsbury's. In 2003, two new shops opened that stocked African products. A Zimbabwean refugee opened a stall in the Coventry market, in 2004, which only sold African food stuffs. Word spread through the community and participants began to purchase most of their foods from these retailers.

This dilemma meant that people in the network who could cook played an essential role. These key people were almost all women. Many of the participants did learn to cook with the help of female friends, although when people gather and eat as a group it is often with women cooking the food.

When I came to Coventry I didn't know how to cook. The other men in the house were Iraqi and ate differently. They invited me to eat with them but I couldn't eat with them every day. I didn't know what to buy and didn't know how to cook. It was really lonely eating alone. (Espoir, Male 28)

This quote shows that the dynamics of food are complex. The participant links eating alone with isolation and despair. He obviously lived in an environment where mealtimes were a social event and now felt quite isolated. Over the period of four interviews a number of participants discussed a broadening of their understanding of cooking and gave pride in being able to invite people over to eat.

When I met Dada she saw that I had no clue about cooking. She cooked for me for many months. I watched and learned. Last week I invited her and several other friends to my house to eat. I invited the Somali and the Afghan who lived in the house to eat with us. It took a long time to cook everything but we had a great time. (Adolphe, Male 33)

Within the network, eating in groups was a focal point of the day. Sharing a meal brings people together and provides an environment where they can socialise. Many participant interviews contained comments on meeting for meals as something they looked forward to especially if they had spent the day having nothing to do.

A communal meal also provided a financial buffer for participants. By pooling money together it was possible to ensure that there was more food for everyone. This was particularly pertinent if there were people in the network who had did not have any money. This included members of the network who: may have been on Section 4 support and on very limited benefits; members who were at that point living outside the asylum process and not receiving any NASS support; or those who may have not received their benefits that week due to an administrative problem. Communal meals also brought the network together and provided a platform for individuals to talk. It was here where participants recounted what they had learnt about their environment. For those whose English was weakest and for newer arrivals, being around people who have had a longer exposure to the asylum system, the less formal setting and familiarity with others allowed individuals to ask questions without feeling uncomfortable.

When I first came to Coventry there was so much that I didn't know. Because I didn't speak much English I was nervous about asking the

agency questions. When I first went for a meal at Espoir's house I met so many people. They were friendly and had no problem answering my questions. (Jean, Male 27)

Even though men do learn to cook, there is a continued reliance on social events taking place where one of the residents is female. Men will buy food but women will still do the majority of preparing and cooking the food.

Weaker links profit from the support of stronger *weak links* in terms of providing food. The weaker links can gain in strength by the company that group-related meals provide. The quotes demonstrate that an evening of relaxed social interaction can provide a positive boost to an asylum seekers' morale. The knowledge learnt from these events increases the level of knowledge that individual asylum seekers have, and as a result makes them able to contribute more to the social network.

The social network provides a communal setting at meal times; it ensures there is enough food for those who do not have the means to feed themselves. It also provides a platform where people can learn how to cook and learn about living in Coventry. All this is delivered in a social setting where people can talk and escape from boredom and isolation.

7.6 College

The Refugee Centre provides an ESOL assessment service which not only provides an English Proficiency service but also helps asylum seekers find an ESOL provider and enrol. Unfortunately information about this service is not given to asylum seekers by their accommodation providers. The social network provided information and support for further education and ESOL.

There is a waiting list to get into ESOL, and some of the participants have to wait several months before they can enrol in class. The allotted course times are often not conducive to participants circumstances, the classes are often far away and in the evening or spaced over a day with long breaks between classes. Participants outlined that there were difficulties in attending classes and in managing to finish the module.

For some of the participants the classes were only accessible by bus and they weren't eligible for a bus pass. They could walk but it was over a half hour walk, which they would have to do in the dark. Two of the participants received help from friends who occasionally gave them the bus fare or they were driven by people connected to the network.

For women with children completing an ESOL class was difficult, due to: trying to fit classes around childcare, course times, distances expected to travel and the cost of public transport. Childcare is a barrier to attending College. There is evidence of sharing childcare within the network to ensure mothers get to college.

7.7 Laundry Club

The role of the social network as a mechanism of support for asylum seekers is best exemplified by the participant who managed to buy a washing machine. She invited friends to come and do their washing at her house (NASS does not install washing machines in their properties; a block of flats in Hillfields, where washing machines were not allowed. Asylum seekers were forced to take their clothing to the laundromat and pay for it to be washed). Her house became a hive of activity where members of the social network could always be found. It became the place where people in the social network could come and wash their clothes for less than the cost of using the laundromat. It was also somewhere where you could sit and talk with others in the network. If the machine broke down or needed replacing the network would pool together to get money for a replacement.

This was a place where, primarily, women could come together. They could talk about life in Congo but also trade stories about being in Coventry and pass on experiences which had an impact on their knowledge. Over time all participants became more confident about themselves and in *control* of their survival. There was continued desperation but participants understood their environment better. This example shows how the network incorporated functional support; the laundry, through moral support provided a relaxing venue to socialise.

7.8 8 Employment

It is illegal for asylum seekers to work and therefore the search for employment by participants who had received refugee status was not straightforward. They described how they had been to the Job Centre and also tried the local voluntary sector agency which helped people find work. The latter was invaluable in helping them write a CV and better understand the job sector. Unfortunately, since the EU Accession in 2004 and the subsequent arrival of Eastern Europeans there has been an increasing lack of work. Participants realised that despite some of them being highly qualified they would struggle to find work.

It was easy at first to get work in warehouses, but now it is not as easy because the Poles are here. (Adolphe, Male 33)

I trained in Rennes (France) as a doctor. I practiced in Congo before I came here for over 15 years. I was told that I would have to go back to medical school. It would be too expensive to do this even if I get refugee status. (Joseph, Male 40)

This frustration in a system which refuses to recognise their potentially marketable skills only reinforces the perception for participants that the system does not work for them, but against them. As a result the only means of support is from one's own community of friends and contacts. The most common area for finding employment is in the services industry. Participants alluded to having found work from time to time, through friends working in factories or warehouses, even though it was illegal to work. This situation is similar to that which Collyer (2005) highlights as the effectiveness of weak ties in helping to secure employment. For refugees finding it increasingly difficult to find work has led them to pursue links with a wider regional social network to find employment. A number of asylum seekers have used links to find *under the table* employment. Recognised refugees have used the outer limits of the network to find work in areas outside Coventry. This is predominantly in the West Midlands but also includes London, Yorkshire and the Northwest.

I had a friend in Blackburn who had work. He told me to come up there to work. I stayed there for a couple of months working in a warehouse. There is a lot of work there. It is not a nice place. I came back to Coventry because I found new work here and I missed my friends. A friend here in Coventry helped me get onto a forklift drivers course. It helped me find better work. (Claude, Male 26)

Introductions from friends are the main path used by participants to find work. Confidence in language skills would be the key reason this method is employed. Lack of confidence to go through an interview process is the reason for using a friend to bring someone in through the *backdoor*. The ineligibility to work is a key factor in the lives of the participants. Goodson and Phillimore's (2006) work on employment and social exclusion back up the findings in the research on the links between unemployment and social exclusion.

7.9 Formalising the Social Network

Serge realised that as a group they could create a more formal safety net. In the case of this social network they tried to become a formalised Refugee Community Organisation (RCO). The driving factor for doing this was the realisation that they may be able to receive financial help in the form of funding. The consensus was that if the group could get funding they would be able to better support the members of the network. Eventually the leading members of the network stopped the process as it became evident that they would not be eligible to receive any funding, as most of the members were asylum seekers and not eligible for help from funding bodies.

When we realised that most funding is not available for asylum seekers we began to realise that it was not really worth it. We weren't even sure about working with a number of the voluntary sector agencies as they said that they could get funding to work with us but we couldn't directly get any money. (Serge, Male 29)

There was quite a high level of frustration amongst some participants about funding. Statements made by participants indicate they recognised that there were agencies

who received funding to work with asylum seekers. The general feeling was that these agencies were, for the most part, not delivering an adequate service. Participants were unanimous in their conviction that they were better placed to work with asylum seekers due to a mix of experience, knowledge and trust.

I realise I bring everyone together, but we have no plan. I thought about setting up a Refugee Community Organisation through the Refugee Centre. But I couldn't get funding, and the only people who could get funding were the Refugee Centre. I am really annoyed that this would happen; it would be like in Birmingham where the Refugee Council hires white people to work with refugee communities. What do they know? (Serge, Male 29)

7.10 How the Social Network Functions

To review the process, the social network mobilises social capital, among other reasons, as reaction to external events. The development of the asylum process included a multi-level response in the provision of services to asylum seekers which included private accommodation businesses, a co-opted voluntary sector and local and central government departments. How asylum seekers develop essential survival based knowledge (social capital) through the use of social networks, along with recognizing the existence of advice and support they do not use is confirmed both through the Literature Review and participants. That is, as shown in this chapter, a choice exists for asylum seekers with social networks providing an informal avenue, while there are formal choices which asylum seekers are reluctant to use. In sum, asylum seekers used the network to address a variety of aspects of the asylum process.

Asylum seekers, and later refugees, are obliged to gather information from various sources which help them navigate through life in Coventry. The knowledge that asylum seekers develop is derived from acquaintances and forging friendships with other asylum seekers. Friendships aside there is a significant amount of knowledge which asylum seekers seek primarily in relation to their immigration status.

Despite the restrictions imposed by asylum legislation, there is provision of advice and guidance support available for asylum seekers. This support is provided by a cross section of agencies from the public sector, the voluntary sector and the private sector. This chapter gives insight on the structure of support made available to asylum seekers, the experiences of asylum seekers with these forms of support and an understanding of the reasons why they have become reluctant to use the support.

The rationale for the approach adopted in this chapter is that it presents the asylum seeker in the asylum process and demonstrates the challenges that claimants face. At the same time where individuals first come into contact with social networks, what knowledge was imparted and how it improved the individuals' life at that time is pinpointed in this chapter.

7.11 External Experiences of the Social Network

The reluctance to access outside forms of knowledge and communication are based on two aspects: personal experience and the experiences of friends and acquaintances (either direct or indirect). As discussed in Chapter 6, the friendships developed by members in the social network would include sharing experiences and, as a result, developing the individual knowledge of that network member. As well as this internal support and information sharing within the network, there are a number of agencies that provide support and advice for asylum seekers in Coventry.

7.12 Conclusion

One of the most important aspects of this chapter is that it demonstrates the type of social capital that is generated within the social network. When describing the capital that migrants' possess, as introduced in Chapter 3, Bourdieu (1986) identified three forms: social; economic and cultural. As shown herein, the rudimentary elements of social capital within this social network are presented as friendship and the support that flows from this. It serves a purpose as participants feel isolated and confused living in a dispersal city. Schaefer-McDaniel (2004) provides a breakdown of the

types of social capital: emotional; informational and instrumental. This chapter offers support of both Schaefer-McDaniel and Bourdieu's arguments and also contextualises them within the particularity that is the experience of being an asylum seeker existing within the dispersal process. While Bourdieu's three forms provide a general context in providing a description of the types of social capital, I feel that Schaefer-McDaniel's typology is more applicable to the situation in this research. This is because emotional, informational and instrumental are far more descriptive and more personable and therefore resonate more with the concept of the refugee experience.

By being able to identify the social network, the chapter shows how social capital is identified and mobilised. This takes the findings of Bourdieu (1986) and Schaefer-McDaniel (2004) in terms of applying their rational of social capital typology but within an asylum seeker context. Having identified the structure and functions of the social network this research moves towards an analysis of how social capital is mobilised as both a coping mechanism (Zetter 2005) and as part of an overall survival strategy (Griffiths 2005; Hynes 2007; Williams 2006).



Figure 8: Asylum seekers' accommodation. Taken by Espoir, male aged 29, Hillfields

Chapter 8: The Network as a Crucial Part of the Asylum System

8.1 Introduction

How institutional trust is eroded by exposure to the asylum process and the crucial role social networks play because of it, are discussed in this chapter. It specifically identifies how this erosion leads asylum seekers to deepen their development of social trust in the social network because they see how it benefits their lives. The chapter then investigates exactly how the social network plugs and bridges gaps in the asylum system. Finally it looks at how its effectiveness is due to its informality, and that it isn't a RCO.

8.2 Trust as Social Capital

As previously discussed, trust is the basis that underlines social capital within the social network. However, the notion of trust is also important in the external relations of the social network. Of relevance to this chapter is how trust is tenuous between the asylum seekers and the state. Trust is a two way street; trusting asylum seekers and in turn asylum seekers trusting British society and governance. The legal process of claiming asylum is based on the applicant proving that they have a valid case. The judicial process is based on suspicion of whether the applicant is telling the truth. The participants in this thesis recognise that they are viewed with suspicion. The asylum support system has purposely or inadvertently adopted this same stance, where asylum seekers are monitored closely to ensure that they stay within the strict confines of the restrictions of their status.

Disillusionment with the system leads asylum seekers to reject it (in terms of support) and look for solutions amongst themselves, hence the evolution of and increased reliance on social networks. The failings of the asylum system create a support vacuum which increases the importance of social networks. Asylum seekers, for their part, work within social networks as a means of maintaining their own sense of self-worth.

I am a qualified teacher, but I can't work here. I have been teaching many friends English at my flat. We get paper from Osaba (an African Caribbean Family Centre in Hillfields) and books from the library. Sometimes I am really tired but I enjoy it as I can see everyone is learning and they always come back. It gives me something to do and I feel better about myself. (Espoir, Male 28)

Involvement in the network allows them the opportunity to focus on something other than the boredom of their daily lives. It provides them with a contained community in which they are not judged. To survive they need to pool their limited resources. This creates a contained community which operates outside formal structures. In an effort to develop mechanisms to ensure their survival, social networks will evolve into entities which are socially excluded. Importantly, this demonstrates that the wealth of social capital is inward looking as trust in outside institutions is eroded.

As the research confirms, social networks provide an array of services which draw on the social capital of the group. The support to its members is often supposed to be provided by agencies contracted by NASS. However, due to mismanagement and neglect this does not happen. As there is ineffective monitoring of this process, the onus lies with social networks to cover the shortfalls of the system.

What are we supposed to do when someone doesn't receive their money. If we want to complain we need to go to Solihull (Home Office) which costs £5 to get there. So of course nobody goes. NASS aren't stupid to be there. The agent says he can't do anything and tells us to go to the Refugee Centre or get some friends to help us. At the Refugee Centre because you don't have an appointment you wait and wait. By the end of the day everyone is going home. Maybe someone will make some calls but they usually give you a bag of food and tell you to come back tomorrow. It is so inhuman and embarrassing. I haven't done anything wrong, it is someone else's fault but no one really cares that is why it continues. (Adolphe, Male 33)

This research shows that, informally, the asylum system recognises that social networks exist and can provide short term cover if the support mechanism fails to function properly. Accommodation agents advising asylum seekers to seek help from friends when NASS support does not arrive in time exemplifies this issue. This situation shows the importance of social networks in the overall NASS dispersal process. Even though it is an informal structure it can act as a bridging mechanism or safety net for asylum seekers to draw upon when the formal structures of NASS fail to function.

In Coventry there are a number of local initiatives that are indirectly interested in working with asylum seekers, often community empowerment schemes that look to building enhanced community relations. Unfortunately, in order to draw funding they are only allowed to work with groups (refugees only, excluding asylum seekers) that are specified by awarding bodies. Community development workers in Hillfields recognised that funding streams froze out asylum seeker social networks that could potentially become RCOs while not stopping others from working with them. This perpetuated dependency relationships (from Osaba Family Centre manager).

The members of the social network receive little monetary support, the existence of the social network has to be based on the ability to maximise the collective wealth of its members to ensure that everyone is cared for. It is a credit to the abilities of its members that the network manages to achieve what it does considering the financial constraints and the risk of having their asylum claim refused for working illegally. Those on Section 4 support receive vouchers only. They trade them within the social network to buy other necessities. Two participants alluded to their NASS agents being aware of this and unwilling to take them to task over this breach of regulations.

We are told not to trade these vouchers by the agent but they know we do it. I think they realise that the system stinks. I don't trust them though, if they treat you this badly then they would do anything.
(Danielle, Female 25)

Recognising the ability to deliver support in these conditions underlines the fact that the resources in the social network are not strictly monetary. The personal skills

needed to survive as asylum seekers are the most important element of the qualities of the social network. All the participants showed an ability to adapt quickly to changing situations. Survival tactics influence the decision making of their daily lives. Over time, key nodes in the network develop a good understanding of the environment in which they exist. They recognise opportunity and areas which are unproductive and best ignored.

Human qualities of believing in mutual support pervade the testimonies of the participants. They recognise this form of affluence above all else. Their self-worth as individuals has been put to the test and it is the attributes of working for each other and the recognition that to succeed they need to be tightly knit. Personal knowledge and skills are welcomed and nurtured, which, through sharing, can benefit the group. For the individual, being able to contribute skills enhances their own self-worth (which is often eroded due to being prevented from working).

I taught Espoir and Claude how to cook. It was the best thing I have done since I came here. I felt that I was doing something. Pretty soon there were others who wanted to learn. We meet and it is fun. I feel that I am a good cook and I would like to teach English people. (Dax, Female 30)

I stayed with a friend in Walsall after I was evicted from my flat in Birmingham. I had friends in Coventry and Manchester. I came here first as it was closer. Serge took me to the Law Centre and I have made a fresh claim. (Espoir, Male 28)

The network's survival rests in its ability to adapt to change whether due to changes in legislation or the personal circumstances of its members. If someone is *re-dispersed* to another city in the UK, that person will have to make new links in the new area. Those links may have already been put into motion prior to being moved as links between social networks amongst asylum seekers in the UK grow and evolve.

If someone receives refugee status they may remain in Coventry or chose to move elsewhere, it is the decision of the individual. In each case their relationship with the

network will change. There will probably be a short term, increased need for help (accommodation), and then a lessened need for the forms of support which the network provides (beyond friendship).

Through analysis of the support offered in this network it is possible to speculate that the size of the network is a key factor in its ability to provide support. The larger the number of network members, the greater the level of social capital. This research reveals participants have effectively overcome lack of income. When someone is made homeless, the fact that there are a number of people in the network means that an individual can be more than assured of somewhere to stay, and can be moved between properties to lessen the impact on any one individual. Further research on social networks would benefit from an analysis of several different networks that vary in size. As the members are not financially stable, a network with a substantial size is possibly better able to deal with need. In the case of this social network its size means that the loss of even one member would increase the responsibilities on others to a point where I would argue that it would be difficult to contribute.

8.3 Housing

8.3.1 On Arrival

In DA the participants were placed in smaller sized accommodation units. For families this meant single occupancy flats and houses. Single participants were housed in shared occupancy accommodation. The maximum number of asylum seekers in any one of these properties was five persons. All the participants concurred that DA marked an improvement in their living conditions

After being in a hostel for months where the noise never stopped the house in Coventry was a welcome change. I was in control of what I chose to eat, there were less people to deal with. It was better but it was not great. (Jean, Male 27)

This quote reinforces the notion that while the move into dispersal accommodation was a welcome change, in reality living circumstances were still far from ideal.

As described in Chapter 4, there were four NASS contracted accommodation providers in Coventry. One was the local authority whose stock was primarily social housing from the largest social housing provider in the city, Whitefriars. The three other agencies were private providers who sourced their portfolio entirely within the private rental sector. The agreed NASS standard for accommodation was inferior to the minimum standard accepted by the local authority for people given a council tenancy. Therefore accommodation provided by the local authority's contract was generally of better quality as it exceeded the minimum standard.⁴⁵ As highlighted in the council's Asylum Seeker Strategy (2003), there were serious concerns over the

⁴⁵ The minimum standard as specified in the NASS contract was inferior to the standard local authority minimum standard for social housing. This aspect is important because the quality of accommodation was a continual topic of conversation. NASS did have housing inspectors, but from a conversation I had with the deputy manager at the CRC I discovered that there were two NASS inspectors for the whole West Midlands. The suspension of dispersal to Coventry was due to private providers exceeding agreed numbers for the city. This would suggest that properties were acquired that NASS were not aware of and would therefore not have been inspected and approved by NASS.

quality of accommodation for dispersed asylum seekers. The participants of this research were vocal in their criticism of the quality of accommodation and provided evidence that being part of a social network was a way of ensuring that they were able to find alternate means of overcoming problems they encountered with their accommodation.

When dispersed to Coventry the first contact an asylum seeker will have is invariably with a representative of the NASS contracted accommodation provider. They meet at a designated point (usually the coach station or the accommodation offices in Coventry) and the representative takes them to their property.

They took me to my flat. They showed me my room and gave me a piece of paper with a map of Coventry; it showed their office, the Refugee Centre and where the shops are. They explained about the heating, how to use the cooker. They spoke with an accent which was difficult to understand. Before they left they made me sign a paper. (Jean, Male 27)

It was dark when I arrived in Coventry; we were taken to our house. They stayed for 10 minutes and left. He seemed in a hurry and said he would come back the next day. It was cold and we didn't know how to turn on the heat. He never came back; we had to find our way back to the agency office to get help. (Antoine, Male 25)

These quotes show a range of problems in the relationship between accommodation providers and asylum seekers right from the initial contact. The quotes show that there is an assumption on the part of the asylum seeker that the accommodation providers are supposed to provide some help, but that their expectations are greater than the amount of help received.

Examples provided by participants of their experiences explain the hostility and frustration they feel toward the accommodation providers. Faced with the prospect of continually being frustrated by the inaction of accommodation providers the

participants in this research pursued alternate means of finding solutions to their problems.

The agent said I should count myself as lucky having a house like this. He said that where I came from they don't have luxuries such as electricity and heating. It made me so angry, the heating didn't work and we were cold. Anyways what does he know about where I'm from?
(Serge, Male 29)

Not being aware of their rights, or not knowing who to complain to, places asylum seekers in a position of reluctant acceptance of their living circumstances. The power imbalance allows accommodation providers to treat asylum seekers contemptuously. This comment is indicative of someone who has little understanding of how people live outside the UK. It also infers an attitude that asylum seekers should be grateful for what they get regardless of how sub-standard it is.

Some participants received an induction about living in Coventry when they arrived. It turns out that this was from those who lived in accommodation provided by the Council's contract. Without an induction it is difficult for an asylum seeker to become established.

In our block of flats is Frank. He has an office on the fourth floor. He is friendly and always comes to help if we have a problem. He brought gifts for the children last Christmas. He has given us information but he usually refers us to the main office in town. (Bernadette, Female 24)

The quotes show that NCAA (NASS Contracted Accommodation Agents) interaction with asylum seekers is far from consistent. In Coventry, at the time of the research, there were three NCAAAs who were private accommodation providers. Coventry City Council was part of a West Midlands Regional Consortia contract with NASS. The last comment relates to staff from the Council's contract. The others are from a private provider. Responses from participants showed that private providers' level of support was poor while the council support was thought of as better. The Council

employee cited here was mentioned in a positive light by several of the participants as extremely helpful and approachable.

After repeated unsatisfactory outcomes with providers, participants became resentful and reluctant to continue approaching the providers when they needed assistance. It was felt that not only were providers not willing to help but that participants were made to feel uncomfortable about even asking for support.

I don't go to the agent anymore. They never do anything. They say that it isn't their job or that they are too busy. (Dada, Female 28)

I always feel uneasy asking them for help. They make me feel very uncomfortable. (Ibis, Male 22)

Participant feedback on the variety of services is consistent in its criticism of support from outside the social network. The majority of the asylum seekers comments were quite negative about most agencies.

The agency staff is very unfriendly. I feel very unwelcome when I go to their offices. The first time I went to them they did not have anyone who spoke English. They were really unfriendly and refused to talk to me, probably because I didn't speak English. I went back with someone who could translate to tell them that the heating didn't work. They said they would come to fix the heating the next day. They didn't come for over a week. (Juliette, Female 29)

The staff at the agency does not seem helpful and I do not like going there, they make me feel as if I am bothering them. (Antoine, Male 33)

These quotes are typical of comments made by a number of participants. If agency staff were unhelpful and unfriendly, asylum seekers were reluctant to approach them as it was seen to be futile. Since all lived under different NASS providers, there was evidence of a wide range in the quality of support. Lack of knowledge and insecurities due to language barriers meant that participants felt trapped. Furthermore, the type of comments made by the agency staff pointed to the fact that the agency staff

recognised that the vulnerability of their clients made it easy to provide misleading information to asylum seekers. This problem of housing providers not acting on the requests of participants was challenged by the key participant. This led to NASS getting involved on behalf of the provider. The normal practice for NASS inspectors, when dealing with a complaint, is to act in suspicion of the complainant.⁴⁶

I complained to the Asylum Coordinator at the Council. He contacted NASS and they made a visit to the house. I was upset that they were more interested in finding whether my friend was doing something wrong rather than the state of the house. Their first question was where he had found the money to buy a TV. They saw that the heating wasn't working and they asked the agent to fix it. They were friendly to the agent but treated us suspiciously. (Serge, Male 29)

NASS did recognise that the provider was making us live in a filthy house and we were moved to another house in Foleshill. (Espoir, Male 28)

Serge presents a situation where asylum seekers are placed in a system where suspicion is, above all, the mode of approach by the authorities. Though the housing provider was in the wrong and had been told by NASS to make the required repairs, by making a complaint directly to NASS the asylum seeker incurred the suspicions of NASS who used the opportunity to investigate the individual to ascertain if they were living within the strict framework of NASS support. The second quote is based on the key participant approaching the local authority to get involved in resolving a long standing housing problem. The family had, over a number of months, tried to get the provider to repair the house, but to no avail. Though this shows the problems posed

⁴⁶ The local council had implemented a housing accreditation scheme that encouraged landlords to register their properties. If the accommodation was accredited it could be advertised as such. The idea was to improve the quality of rented properties in the city by providing a quality mark. It was interesting that there were no properties in the NASS contracted private accommodation contract that were part of the scheme, Head of Housing, Coventry City Council.

by the housing providers it also exemplifies that those in the social network knew the agencies who could help resolve such issues.

I have been to the agent's office several times in the last two weeks. I need the heating to be fixed. They keep saying that they will come but they don't. They also will not replace the fridge which leaks water. They say that we broke it. (Espoir, Male 28)

In November I first went to the agency to ask them to fix the heating. There was no heating and hot water. We used to sit in the kitchen with the oven on to stay warm. They came and fixed it but it broke soon after. I went again to the agency but they said that they wouldn't fix it because we didn't treat the house well. All we did was keep the heating on high. I eventually went to a friend's house as it was warmer. (Claude, Male 26)

This raises a compelling point. Asylum seekers are able to complain about their accommodation, but the contracted agencies often negate their responsibilities to provide support to asylum seekers by redirecting the blame back at the occupants. It remains to be seen whether the blame rests with the accommodation agency not fulfilling its contractual obligations or NASS's inability to properly control its contractors and inspect its rented properties.

As in the case of TA, disgruntled asylum seekers in DA do leave their property if they can find an alternative. Often though, as shown in the following quote, it may be a reactionary decision that is only feasible in the short term but has long lasting implications on the individual's means of support.

I finally lost my temper and told the accommodation provider what I thought of his service. I threatened to leave. He told me to go ahead. I went to a friend's house to eat dinner and stayed the night. The next morning I went back to the house to find my things had been collected and put in a bag in front of the door. The lock on my room had been changed. I went back to the agency; they said they had thought I had

moved out. It was too late to get my room back as they had contacted NASS. I had to go to the Refugee Centre and reapply for NASS support. They weren't willing to give me somewhere to stay but gave me emergency vouchers. I went back to my friend's house and stayed on the floor of his room, for four months. (Joseph, Male 40)

Asylum seekers find themselves in a precarious situation where they are often housed in totally inadequate accommodation. They have a right to complain about the quality of the accommodation but unfortunately it usually proves difficult to get the problems rectified. Contractually the housing providers only need to provide a basic standard of accommodation; however, the accommodation often falls far short of an acceptable standard, which is reinforced by the cases outlined in this research.

Participants who decided to leave their accommodation were given somewhere to stay by other asylum seekers in the network. For this to occur the hosting asylum seeker would have to have both space and accommodation which would be assumed to be acceptable to both parties. The consequences of leaving the NASS provided accommodation and then having their support curtailed provides evidence that asylum seekers often act out of frustration and pursue immediate alternate means of finding basic needed provision rather than pursuing more formal and longer lasting means of resolution. Participants who moved from their NASS provided properties, on reflection, recognised that their actions had made their circumstances worse. They also revealed that they had taken the decision without much consultation except to ask their friend whether they could stay with them. Upon discussing their situation further within the network they discovered that there were members who would have warned them against leaving their accommodation and who would have provided pathways to help them resolve the problem.

Serge explained that I could go to the Refugee Centre and they would contact the agency on my behalf. They offered to go there with a translator so I could understand what was happening. He explained that I should not move out of the property unless I was evicted. (Juliette, Female 29)

Social networks provide asylum seekers with knowledge about their rights and what they can expect in their properties. Asylum seekers will also learn how to make the most of the accommodation; how to use the appliances etc. They will learn how to get any repairs undertaken and how and where they need to complain if necessary. Finally if they are in dire need of shelter there are people in the network who are willing to provide somewhere to sleep.

8.3.2 ess

Participants gave a broad range of examples of how one could become homeless and the actions they needed to undertake to overcome this vulnerability. As explained in earlier chapters, an asylum seeker can become homeless at varying points along the asylum journey.

At each stage there are a variety of reasons why someone may become homeless. This section explores why someone may have become homeless and what strategies were employed to survive. The emphasis is on the role of social networks in supporting individuals but it is equally important to look at the interaction between the asylum process and the social network. The asylum process creates unique situations which require extraordinary solutions. Asylum policy and procedures are in a constant evolution. It is difficult, even for people working in the system, to keep up with the changes. Issues such as not being able to speak or understand English properly and not understanding the process create a point at which an asylum seekers protection blanket unravels and they become vulnerable to destitution.

Lacking a full understanding of the asylum process and the restrictions imposed upon them puts asylum seekers in a dangerous predicament. Incorrect advice, offered not only by individuals within the social network but by statutory and voluntary sector agencies, only compounds this fragility. The benefits of social networks became evident to many asylum seekers, as they extended support to individuals who suffer from poor quality accommodation or eviction. In addition, the network is able to give advice for asylum seekers on how to avoid similar pitfalls in the future.

The key element of the comments from all participants was the lack of clear information given to them by people within the asylum process. This includes, immigration officers, people employed by accommodation providers, and employees of both statutory and voluntary sector agencies. At no point in the accommodation process were any participants offered orientation or an induction interview/pack about living in the property and services available in the local community.

In many instances if an individual were to look for information and guidance, depending on where they went, the information was incorrect or misleading.

I was told by the woman at the church that I could go to the Council's Housing Office to get somewhere to live. She said it was illegal that I had been made homeless. I went to the Council office; they told me that they couldn't help me. I thought that they were lying, but later Espoir explained that the woman at the church was wrong. (Adolphe, Male 33)

Often asylum seekers are the recipients of incorrect advice from agencies; which has led to increasing vulnerability.

My accommodation was so terrible, no heating and the shower didn't work. It was dirty and the other people in the property made no effort to clean up after themselves. I complained to the agency but they never did anything. I went to the Refugee Centre, they told me I should leave and go to the Council to get accommodation. I packed my things and went to the Council. They refused to help saying that because I was an asylum seeker they couldn't help me. I protested and was taken out of the building by a security officer. I slept at a friend's house that night. I went back to the Refugee Centre and they told me to go back to my house and they would talk to the agency, but it was too late my room had been given to someone else and NASS had stopped giving me support. (Antoine, Male 25)

Frequently, well-meaning individuals provide advice to asylum seekers without being fully aware of the restrictiveness and limited rights of asylum seekers. In the end it is the asylum seeker who suffers the consequences.

Even after living in the UK for up to seven years most of the participants exhibited a low level of understanding about the asylum process and their rights in terms of the responsibilities of the Home Office, contracted accommodation agencies, local government and voluntary sector agencies. Unable to discern the fundamental differences is an issue which constantly arose in the interviews.

When a decision is made on the asylum seeker's claim a series of paths emerge which a claimant must follow. If the claimant is fortunate enough to be granted Leave to Remain, they will have up to 28 days to transfer from NASS support and onto mainstream support, move out of the NASS property and into other accommodation. If the claimant has their application refused they will have a short period of time to move out of the NASS property and make the necessary arrangements to return to their country of origin.

At each stage there is uncertainty and upheaval which is stressful for the asylum seeker, making it difficult to fathom *what is going on*. There are restrictions which asylum seekers have to abide by when in the provided accommodation which carry punitive consequences if these rules are broken. In most cases the consequences lead to the asylum seeker being removed from the accommodation and the discontinuation of support. A lack of clear explanation of the system is compounded by the lack of translation of documents received by individuals from NASS and Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND), who make status decisions. This lack of understanding of process and responsibilities, both of external agencies and of the individual, led some of the participants to panic and act irrationally (which caused further problems for them).

By looking specifically at the distinct stages of the asylum process, the manner in which the asylum seekers are put into a situation of vulnerability can be demonstrated. However it is also possible to show the benefits of interacting within a social network as asylum seekers negotiate their way through these stages.

There is a lack of trust in accommodation providers, because of their link to the Home Office. This erosion of trust is furthered by the accommodation providers' lack of effort in supplying help when needed. The participants are aware that the agents have a link to NASS as they receive notice letters from the Home Office delivered by the agent and through knowledge drawn from the tenancy agreement forms.

Asylum seekers try to approach their current situation with an open mind but experiences have left them jaded. Continual negative experiences only reinforce their disillusionment with the system and in order to survive they look for alternative forms of support: social networks. Being treated with suspicion unsettles participants and affects their self-confidence. This increases their own misgivings of the system as a whole as they have difficulty differentiating between agencies. Wariness of the accommodation agents pervaded into other areas of service provision in the city. This apprehension was compounded by their own negative experiences with certain agencies (as well as the learned experiences of others).

I felt that it was unfair the way the agent treated me. Only when I spoke to the others did I realise that everyone is treated this way.
(Danielle, Female 25)

Reluctance to use certain forms of support was based on their own personal experiences or the experiences of others. The asylum process provides constant tests which gradually erode the ability of the asylum seeker to have faith in it. The erosion of faith is not just directed at the asylum process but all the actors who are either directly involved or on the periphery.

The agent told us that if we let friends stay with us even for a night that they would tell NASS and we would be refused asylum. (Pascal, Male 25)

Participants gave examples of problems which came up in their interaction with NASS and IND (Immigration and Nationality Directorate) that left them with a lack of faith in their asylum claim being treated fairly (through IND), and appropriately (by NASS). The length of time that it takes IND to make a decision on participants'

cases has further reduced the level of faith that people have in the system. This experience forms the lens through which asylum seekers judge other institutions, regardless of where they are based.

Interaction with NASS housing providers is a daunting experience, language; confidence and understanding of the system all increase the difficulties of these interactions. The social network affords support in the form of people who will accompany others to meetings to act as intermediaries or offer advice and guidance on how to interact with outside agencies.

8.4 Financial Support

Apart from accommodation, the other essential component of living as an asylum seeker is the financial support from NASS. Depending on the status of the asylum seeker this comes either in the form of vouchers or cash. In 2003, The Home Office introduced the ARC card which contained the biometric details of NASS supported asylum seekers. With this card they are able to withdraw their monthly support from the Post Office (depending on the individual this money could be withdrawn monthly or every two weeks). For other asylum seekers who made a fresh claim or were waiting to be removed and on Section 4 support the weekly amount of support in 2007 was £25 in vouchers.

Each participant in the study experienced failures, at least twice, in receiving their financial support. The reasons given for this shortcoming were unclear. The impact on the asylum seeker could be severe and was particularly pertinent for families.

I have two young children, we needed to buy food. We had run out of money a couple of days before so we were really desperate. Luckily for my children the school had offered to provide them with free breakfast and lunch. (Juliette, Female 29)

This frequently occurring procedural problem could not be dealt with quickly by NASS. There is evidence that NASS accommodation providers encouraged

participants to use friends to help them when they could not provide solutions themselves.

I have an ARC card which I take to the Post Office to get my money. A couple of times it hasn't worked. I called my support officer who said it will take a few days to get it sorted out. I once had to wait three weeks! The support officer has said that there is nothing he can do to help until the money comes through. He told me to ask my friends to help until things were sorted out. (Claude, Male 26)

In Section 4 accommodation I receive £25 in vouchers. Every few months the vouchers never come. The agent says there is a problem at the main office. I get angry and ask what am I to do until they arrive. They usually say to get friends to help me. (Serge, Male 29)

Each participant experienced having to live for up to 10 days without receiving vouchers therefore being unable to buy food. To compound the problem back payments to make up for the shortfall were not always forthcoming which increased the vulnerability of the participants. This situation uncovers several new angles on the relevance of social networks in dispersal communities. Research shows that the process is flawed and that frequently asylum seekers are left with insufficient funds to live on. Social networks are used to support these people though the individuals receive a limited benefit themselves (£38 per week). Most of the participants gave examples of how the social network offered support, such as, if they did not have enough food, participants could ask one of their friends to share what they had. Probably one of the most effective mechanisms, as discussed earlier, was to combine income to cook larger group (and ultimately cheaper) meals. Most important are the comments from the support officers who recognise that social networks exist and can provide temporary support.

This is not the only example of recognition by NASS contracted staff that social networks can provide support when needed. Participants recounted examples where it was suggested that they stay with friends while work was being carried out on their property or while they waited for the current tenant to vacate the property. This can

happen on arrival in Dispersal Accommodation where there is a lag period of a couple of days between tenants and they have been placed with friends rather than being re-housed by NASS provider.

The agent told me that while they were fixing the roof that I could be put in a house in Birmingham or I could try staying with a friend here in Coventry. (Ibis, Male 22)

After receiving a decision by the HO they have a few days to make alternate arrangements. Those who fail immediately find alternative arrangements, usually with friends in Coventry, until more permanent arrangements can be made. People move around as social capital is limited. As it means stretching their already limited support of £38 per week those who offer help can only do so for a short period of time

When I arrived in Coventry I was put in a house which was terrible. I complained to the agent. He agreed that the house was in terrible condition. I could stay in the house while they worked on it, there was no heating or hot water, or I could stay with a friend. I knew nobody in Coventry so I went to stay with a friend in Walsall. I told the agency and they were ok with this. (Pascal, Male 25)

What would happen if there was no social network to rely on? One participant provided this example of someone she knew:

I knew this Zambian woman who was really in a difficult situation. She was pregnant and had HIV. She had failed the asylum system. She was living in a local shelter, but could only be in the shelter at night. During the day she had nowhere to go. Penny told me about her, I found her in a park behind the shelter. She said she stayed in the park all day sleeping and resting. I invited her to my house for food. She can stay in my house during the day because it is warm here. (Juliette, Female 29)

This woman had no real links to social networks in Coventry. Further investigation revealed that her asylum application had been refused and that the Local Authority refused to help as she had no access to public funds. With her acute needs the only place that could help her was a shelter for the homeless. In the hope that they could find people to befriend her, the director of the shelter made links with a number of Refugee Community Organisations. The shelter was only able to provide limited support to the woman. The director was given the phone number of several people who could possibly help the woman. The director, by pursuing links through social networks, exemplifies the recognition by people working with asylum seekers of the value of social networks.

It is at this point the social network comes into its own as umbrella support. Over the longitudinal time line, the role of the social network was most significant when people were made homeless (and financially unable to support themselves). The social network is integral in helping asylum seekers understand the asylum process and what they are required to do once they have been refused asylum. Legally there is a period of time when asylum seekers have to leave their property but the time limit varies due to HO procedural problems. Some have had to vacate their property in 48 hours but are not willing to report to Solihull, and as a result go underground.

For refugees it is a similar experience in that there is a lot of paperwork to complete before moving on and they only have a few days to make the transition. There are no local government schemes to help refugees make the transition, so they can become vulnerable and homeless. For the refugee the problem is access and understanding of the law, housing, rights, access to benefits, support and employment.

Over the period of research a number of participants came to the end of their asylum claim, there were others who spent the entire time as Section 4 Claimants (Emergency Accommodation and vouchers for asylum appeals cases). Due to their circumstances it was imperative that they were involved with a social network. The confusion of the asylum process meant that someone who could identify with their predicament was a positive support mechanism in itself. For an asylum seeker in this predicament links with the dispersal network are essential for survival.

When I received my letter telling me that my asylum application had failed I just sat on the sofa and cried for a long time. I wanted to give up, but I couldn't go home. When Emile came to see me he reassured me that I had to fight, we spoke to Serge who knew a lawyer in London who could help. They said this lawyer was better than my (current) lawyer. They took me to the Refugee Centre who made some phone calls to the Home Office. I made a fresh application but was moved to another house in Coventry. I was lucky to stay in Coventry but my support was reduced from £38 per week to £25 in vouchers. Serge showed me how I could use the vouchers and trade them with other asylum seekers to get the things I need. (Jean, Male 27)

The bottom line, as shown in this chapter, is that faced with the prospect of homelessness and no financial support the only form of help is from the social network. Those who approached the voluntary sector went only as a last resort when social networks could not provide support. In these cases the social network involvement is not restricted to the immediate group but also to an outer ring within Coventry who can provide space to sleep, food etc.

When I was in Bradford I received notice from the Home Office that my application had been turned down. I didn't know what to do I contacted a friend in Ilford. They invited me to stay with them. I was there for nearly two years, staying on people's floors. I didn't really work for money but just to help buy food and pay for my bed. I received a lot of help from a local church. I used them as a mailing address. The church helped me find a lawyer who made a fresh application. I was then re-entered into the NASS system. I was then sent to Coventry. It is worse here than in Ilford, I receive vouchers that don't always arrive on time. The accommodation is not good; I share a room with a man from Afghanistan. He is very nice but we have completely different lifestyles. (Joseph, Male 40)

From the interviews there is evidence that the homeless get help from other social networks in Coventry as well as other Congolese groups in UK.

I have had several friends stay with me after they have failed their application. What do you expect me to say, no? I know where they came from and we had talked about back home. I know people here in the UK don't think we are real refugees. I believe in God and we were taught to help our friends particularly when they are most in need...For all I know it could be me next. (Claude, Male 26)

I know that if I get caught letting people stay with me that I will be evicted by the landlord and have my application rejected...but I am my brother's keeper. (Espoir, Male 28)

For refugees, difficulties accessing social housing and getting appropriate paperwork before they are evicted means that they use support within the network to find somewhere to stay until they can find alternate accommodation.

Joseph was lucky, he received refugee status. I was confused when he was evicted from his property. The Council told him that he would have to wait for a long time for a flat. He stays with me while he works and looks for somewhere to live. There is a man who works at the Refugee Centre who is helping him find somewhere to live. (Dada, Female 28)

For refugees and for asylum seekers who have had their claim refused there is a very real point where they become homeless before they can move onto another stage of state recognised support. The length of time that it takes to file an appeal and apply for section four support means that there is no other way for *failed asylum seekers* to find shelter than with friends. This is similar for refugees as they now have the same rights as British citizens but are unable to transition as they do not possess the needed National Insurance Number which would entitle them to work and social housing support. The alternative is to rely on friends living in NASS accommodation to provide shelter.

The networks are based on trust. This is particularly pertinent for people who have failed the system and are either living outside the asylum system or are on Section 4

support as the amount of support that they receive makes them even more vulnerable. Salient points for survival include; an increased emphasis on living by your wits; trying to learn how to get money for food; how to start a fresh claim; avoiding detection and being able to find activities to pass the time. For refugees, it is learning about the myriad of requirements which need to be completed in order to enter into the mainstream benefit/ support system.

In each instance of where there is a problem with dealing directly with the asylum system; the overriding problem is that of language. Evidence shows that people who fail do not understand the system and are not fully aware of the options available to them. The language issue is not just being able to understand English but being able to understand Home Office documents and the procedures laid out in them. They need to be able to respond to the Home Office documents in an appropriate and punctual manner.

There are organisations in Coventry able to help asylum seekers but feedback alluded to people being reluctant to use these organisations for a variety of reasons. The primary concern with using these organisations is time, they were usually busy and waiting for service is not an option in cases requiring a quick reaction.

8.5 Interaction with the Voluntary Sector

Reluctance to use certain agencies in the voluntary sector is borne out of the economic reality of being a NASS asylum seeker. The fact that the Refugee Council is based in Birmingham made it next to impossible to visit. There was no extra funding available to pay for bus fare, which means that on limited benefits the cost are impossible to justify.

I spent over ten pounds getting the bus to Birmingham to get help.
When I got there they couldn't help me or help pay for the bus. I will
not go back there. (Dax, Female 30)

Participants were explicit in their belief in their own ability to survive in Coventry. They confirm that the asylum process was the major hindrance to being in control of their own survival. The asylum process strips individuals of the ability to use their

own skills to survive in the UK. Granted that arriving in the UK as an asylum seeker is not an ideal base on which to start but having restricted access to state support, the right to work and being forced to live in a system of state instituted poverty only makes matters more tenuous.

The woman at the Refugee Centre was very nice; she said that I had to be firm at the Housing Centre, then they would give me a house in Hillfields. They offered me a flat in Wood End. I turned it down because I wanted Hillfields. I am still waiting for a house in Hillfields. That was last year and I am still waiting. I wish I had not listened to the woman at the Refugee Centre Centre. (Joseph, Male 40)

This comment is indicative of an advice worker not being aware of the situation when advising a refugee applying for social housing. As a result of taking the advice to persist in holding out for a property in a certain area the refugee lost priority. In this case the refugee was told that by turning down the offer he would be placed at the bottom of the housing list. The advice worker told him that the Council's housing officer was lying and that there were available places in Hillfields.

The Refugee Centre in Coventry is well thought of but there are some reservations. Participants are often faced with a problems that require immediate advice, however at the Refugee Centre they encounter prolonged periods of time waiting to be seen by an advisor or getting an appointment due to the high demand for the Centre's services. There is also a realisation that, no matter how well intentioned, the Refugee Centre's ability to provide support to asylum seekers is limited, and it may take time to provide resolution. Some participants received guidance which was incorrect and this jaded their opinion of the Refugee Centre.

Other agencies and support networks were recognised as limited in their scope. Participants gave examples of small community groups and church based groups providing somewhere for people to congregate and talk as well as seek information and support. These groups are well meaning but are not really equipped to provide support. These forums are usually staffed by volunteers who are not versed in

asylum legislation and policy. As a result the information they provide is usually inaccurate. This would lead to disillusionment and reluctance to return.

Participants showed an evolutionary understanding of living in Coventry. From the first interview it was obvious that over time they learned much, most of it coming from friends. The need to rely on the social network remained if participants did not feel confident with their language skills or they felt ill at ease having to go to outside agencies for help.

Even after a year I find it difficult to understand English. I can read a bit but it is difficult to understand people as they talk so quickly. I don't want to go to the Refugee Centre every time I don't understand something. I don't want to look stupid or have to wait for hours just to talk to someone. My friends help me understand all the letters I get from the Home Office. (Adolphe, Male 33)

8.6 Health

All of the participants in this research fled the DRC and surrounding regions due to war. Most experienced direct exposure to conflict and lost family or friends. The participants who talked about coming to the UK described a journey fraught with danger, from being caught to being exposed to extreme weather. Coupled with this, was the fact that they did not have much money and were living in poor accommodation. For the asylum seekers in this research there was a definite need for medical support. One of the dominant comments was the type of questioning from health workers which bordered on questioning participants' legitimacy to be in the UK.

The nurse at the surgery asked me so many questions that I got angry. I wanted to register at the surgery; she wanted to know where in Congo I was from and if I had any family there. Surely this isn't important. (Jean, Male 27)

When I go there they ask so many questions. I don't see them asking other people (non-asylum seekers) the same amount of questions.

They ask me questions which don't have anything to do with them.
What are they trying to do? (Adolphe, Male 33)

Several participants had tried to register with the GP in their area. The surgery refused to let them on to the register.

The woman at the surgery rejected me. The first question she asked me was whether I was an asylum seeker. She spoke to me very loudly and slowly that they were full. I was so angry because I speak English, while I was waiting in the queue someone asked to enrol and was given an application form, he was English. (Ibis, Male 22)

Through the social network, participants have all enrolled at a local health centre for migrants and homeless people. The key node in the social network had developed a contact with a worker in the centre. He not only shared the information within this network but had spoken to other asylum seekers in the community.

I know so many people who can't see a doctor. The surgery usually refuses to send them to the hospital. The people at the Meridian Centre are really friendly and always want to help. They give me pamphlets written in different languages about the Centre. I give them to everyone I know. (Espoir, Male 28)

Evidence shows that the participants' experience of healthcare was predominantly frustrating in that it was difficult even to get registered for adequate healthcare and once registered, being treated differently to other patients. Only when the local PCT established a dedicated centre did access change.

I needed to find a doctor who could help me. I was feeling really dizzy and had this desire to drink water. The GP just gave me tablets and sent me home. Serge took me to the Anchor Centre; they were friendly and saw that I wasn't well. They did tests and found that I was diabetic. (Ibis, Male 22)

All basic information is acquired directly from within the social network. For the participants knowledge of the Anchor Centre was consistent and all had registered there. This is a prime example of how the positive experience of one participant is shared with others in the network and leads to them deciding to use the same service, for basic healthcare and counselling for PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder).

8.7 Legal Aid

Asylum seekers involved in this research usually established contact with a legal representative prior to arriving in Coventry. The longer they were in Coventry the more apparent it became to them that they needed a lawyer who was based closer to where they were residing.

My solicitor is in London. I spend a lot of my money on going to see him in London. I also try to call him for updates. He is helpful but I spend a lot of money. (Dax, Female 30)

I have family waiting for me in Cameroon. I want them to come and join me here. A teacher at the college has been helping me do the paperwork. She told me that it wouldn't be difficult. We went to see a solicitor who said if I could pay him some money (!!!!) he would be able to get them here no problem. I managed to get some money, but then after a few months he said he couldn't get them here as I was an asylum seeker. (Espoir, Male 28)

Asylum seekers (at the time of the research) were only entitled to 7 hours of free legal aid. In this case the teacher had, with good intentions, helped the participant find a solicitor who could help. Unfortunately the teacher stressed that it wouldn't be that difficult, which gave the participant false hopes. The participant described the solicitor as someone who knew that it would not be possible to bring his family over and was only interested in getting money.

I managed to get a solicitor here in Coventry when I arrived here. Last week I received a letter from him that he could no longer help me as he

was not doing asylum work anymore. I now have a solicitor in Birmingham but it is expensive to get there. (Claude, Male 26)

Over the course of the research period the Legal Services Commission (LSC) rewrote the eligibility framework for legal aid for asylum seekers forcing many solicitors to stop providing asylum representation. The concern at the time was that without legal aid asylum seekers were finding it increasingly difficult to have a successful asylum application outcome.

Participants in the study were all registered with one of three solicitors, none of whom were in Coventry. Participants explained that they changed solicitors on the recommendation of people in the network. Experiences with solicitors varied from positive to poor. Participants dissatisfied with the counsel they were receiving were persuaded to change solicitors by asylum seekers whose experiences had been positive. Changing solicitors is not always based on the ability of the solicitor to help the client receive a positive decision on their asylum claim. Other reasons included: a more professional solicitor who treated the individual fairly, or one who kept in touch, and provided translation help. It was clear from the participants in the research that the choice of solicitor was dictated by the advice of other members of the social network. This also demonstrates that networks recognized the boundaries of their capabilities and recognized that there were outside agencies that were able to provide a professional support.

It is important to recognise that legal advice exists outside the strict confines of recognised legal service provision. One participant explained that they had been in touch with the local agency for HIV/ Aids sufferers (Terence Higgins Trust, THT) which provided informal support. Its two key workers were African and supplied information not only on HIV/AIDS but also where to go to for healthcare needs. Their link to the network was invaluable for several participants who experienced problems with a sick child. Therefore it is important to point out that legal advice was available outside the LSC framework, and therefore were offering services to asylum seekers but not getting funding to do so.

8.8 8 Perceptions of Vulnerability and Maintaining Dignity

Participants were explicit in maintaining their own dignity and conveying pride. They did not feel at ease with being seen as vulnerable, even if they were in a precarious situation. To be portrayed as a victim or labelled as vulnerable are characterisations which were unsettling for participants.

I went to a meeting as 'service user'. It made me feel ill to be sitting in this meeting. Everyone was talking about us as poor asylum seekers, vulnerable and unable to fend for ourselves...I am proud, I am not weak I can and want to look after myself. (Joseph, Male 40)

A majority of participants also described having a sense of personal pride and did not want to be seen as in need of handouts. They also described that they felt uncomfortable being portrayed as vulnerable as it was only in this context that people would offer to help them.

The fact that they were singled out for special treatment was unsettling for participants. They preferred to be less visible. Being asked for identification and asked questions which they felt were beyond what should be asked was troubling for them. The increased number of questions was seen as an effort to *catch them out* to see if they were valid asylum seekers. There was an effort by the provider to establish the asylum seekers legal and moral right to services rather than provide a service or provide treatment.

I met a family who took me to their church. It was ok until at Christmas the minister presented us to the congregation. He explained to everyone about our situation. He talked about our experiences in Congo, which I had told him. I didn't expect him to talk to everyone about it. He wanted people to help us but I was so angry and embarrassed. Everyone was looking at us. Later people were asking me about what happened to me in Congo. I don't want to talk about it; I don't want other people's charity. I can look after myself. (Adolphe, Male 33)

This quote brings up an interesting angle, the interaction between personal circumstance and maintaining dignity. As discussed earlier, asylum seekers found themselves in a situation where survival in the UK was out of their control. Legislation puts asylum seekers in a state of reliance on support from the government and other agencies.

With only minimal support asylum seekers found their personal lives precarious. What is removed is the legal possibility of self-sufficiency. Participants explained that while the level of support they received was inadequate they also felt uncomfortable with being provided support.

I know that if I didn't have to stay in this property and that I could work my life would be much easier. I have always been able to look after myself, but here I am not allowed to look after myself. (Antoine, Male 33)

This cannot be understated and is an area that would benefit from further research; how the asylum process disenfranchises asylum seekers and social networks give them a sense of empowerment. This is a clear example of the misfortune of their circumstances, yet the participants in this research are proud individuals. They have their dignity and are unsettled by the feeling that they are looked upon as helpless victims.

8.9 Finiteness of Support

The bringing together of people who share commonalities developed the social network. The comfort in being with people who share experiences and knowledge binds them even closer. The fact that they have each other's best interests at heart makes the sharing of positive and negative experiences even more salient. Understanding of the quality, capacity and intentions of agencies in Coventry was developed by comparing and contrasting personal experiences, which then informed the group as a whole about how to negotiate service provision. In the social network knowledge of rights grew as individuals shared experiences and learning. Although

there was a growing knowledge base within the social network that was used to help members there was also awareness of its limitations.

I have been here for three years. I have been to the agent three times for help, but they didn't really do anything. I started to learn about things from my friends. When I have a problem they can always help. I don't really go to the agent anymore. (Espoir, Male 28)

For this participant the realisation that he could learn from friends was a welcome relief. The less asylum seekers have to rely on contracted service provision the more content they are. For the research participants it could be argued that the more they could learn from within their network and the less they relied on external forces the more they felt in control of their own destiny.

In the network there is a growing understanding of the rights of asylum seekers. The network understands that agencies do have a role to play. If all avenues available to the network are exhausted, asylum seekers will go to an agency such as the Refugee Centre. In terms of advice the Refugee Centre will be the first agency to approach. However, if this agency is unable to help, participants will approach other agencies until they are able to resolve their problem. At this stage there is no differentiation between either voluntary or statutory sector agencies.

I met Serge at the Refugee Centre. I had been in Coventry for a couple of weeks and didn't understand anything. My agent did not help me with my (ARC) card, so I went to the Refugee Centre. I spent many hours there between appointments. Serge took me to his flat and helped me sort everything out. He introduced me to other Congolese. I don't need to go to the Refugee Centre anymore. (Danielle, Female 25)

Over time the knowledge base of the social network became substantial. The extent of knowledge and the capacity to support within the network had limitations and participants recognised that there were instances when solutions needed to be sought outside of their *comfort zone*.

We only go to the Refugee Centre if there is no other solution. Juliette had her children to feed. She didn't have anywhere to live. We couldn't help them forever. Espoir found out that she could get further NASS support if he helped her to reapply. (Serge, Male 29)

On one hand, the members were reliant on the knowledge within the group. Yet on the other hand, certain members were aware that the group did not have enough resources to offer help in every case. As discussed, Serge, the key node/liminal expert realised that the capacity to help was insufficient within the group. The key node, during his time in Coventry, developed a broad knowledge of outside services as a result of maintaining links through volunteering with local charitable organisations. So there are links between this network and others, both official and informal.

8.10 Leaving Dispersal Accommodation

The most precarious point on the asylum journey is when a participant reaches the end of the DA period. This is when there is a judicial decision on their asylum claim. It is at this point that the capacity of the social network is tested. Participants who have just been granted refugee status are as vulnerable to being made homeless, as exhibited in this chapter, as participants who have been given a negative asylum decision.

Homelessness during DA usually occurs at the point of termination of occupancy due to a decision made on the asylum claim by IND. Upon a decision being made on an asylum claim, an asylum seeker will receive notification of that decision and a termination of tenancy document. The length of time allowed in the property for persons who receive leave to remain is 28 days. For those whose asylum claim is refused the amount of time is no more than 21 days.⁴⁷

Examples given by participants who had gone through this stage showed that they did not understand letters they had received from the Home Office.

⁴⁷ From The Refugee Council Yellow Book

When I was made homeless I didn't understand anything. I could not read English. When someone translated the letter it said I had 21 days to leave the property. Two days later the landlord came and started to throw my stuff out of the house. I showed him the letter trying to explain that I still had time before I had to leave. Then he pointed to the date the letter was sent. It turned out the letter took three weeks to reach me. (Claude, Male 25)

Examples of participants experiencing difficulty in the asylum process as a result of failing to respond to correspondence from NASS and IND were common place. The underlying aspect was that most either did not speak English or did not understand English well enough to comprehend and respond. Others avoided the situation, preferring to adopt the attitude that the problems may go away if they were unaware of them.

I have saved all my mail but I don't understand what it says. I went to the Refugee Centre once so they could translate the document for me. I waited nearly all morning to see someone. I felt embarrassed and never went back. There were so many letters that I just gave up after a while, I never opened them and put them in a cupboard. (Dax, Female 30)

A number of participants were resourceful enough to look for someone in the network to translate for them. Those who did not ask for help from friends were generally unaware of the importance of the letters and the need to respond.

There were so many letters that I just lost interest and threw them in the bin. (Adele, Female 22)

At the stage of transition out of DA there are limited measures available to provide re-housing and these require close cooperation with NASS, IND and the asylum seekers solicitor. Of all the participants in the research who had been refused, not one of them managed to be re-housed by NASS in the required timeframe of 21 days to leave NASS accommodation and to make alternate accommodation arrangements. The result was that each of them had to spend time outside of the NASS support

system, bereft of accommodation and subsistence support. For the individual this meant that they were without *recourse to public funds* and had to make alternate arrangements. They were without accommodation, money and somewhere to keep their possessions.

I had been in the UK for over five years. I arrived with a suitcase but I had accumulated many things, stereo, TV, plates, cutlery, clothing and books. I couldn't just leave all of this. (Joseph, Male 40)

I had to leave most of my possessions. I moved some of it into a friend's flat while I tried to get help. I contacted my solicitor who told me to come to London, which I couldn't as my support had stopped. I found a friend who let me stay with him for a month until I could make an appeal. (Jean, Male 27)

A point drawn from this research is the lack of recognition of the value asylum seekers placed on their possessions. Often participants were put in positions where they had to sacrifice some or all of their possessions because they were to be moved or, as a result of losing their asylum claim, risked losing their tenancy. For many of the participants their possessions represented some of the remaining artefacts that give them happiness and position.

As shown in this research, the pathway out of DA by way of the social network is uniform regardless of the decision on the actual asylum application case. This is because the implementation of a comprehensive government sponsored system of transition for new status refugees does not exist.

To be eligible for social housing refugees need to have a National Insurance number. It usually takes at least twelve weeks from the point of application for a NI number to the date that the number is given; this is longer than the 28 day eviction period. Without a National Insurance number they will not be legally entitled to work. Small schemes exist which can help refugees in the transition period but in the experience of this research they were not equipped to provide adequate support.

Refugees end up staying with friends who are invariably asylum seekers, as the majority of people in the social network are asylum seekers. This is the same for asylum seekers who have been refused refugee status. They have had their tenancy and support terminated and been instructed to report to the HO. In the case of Coventry the closest Immigration office is in Solihull.

For all the participants who were forced into homelessness, the first stage of support was through friends within their immediate circle. As time passed the individual would move between friends and in some cases move out of the city. This movement was a result of knowing someone with available space to offer the individual.

I have been in the UK for seven years. I had been in Coventry for two years after I managed to lodge a fresh claim. Three times I have been made homeless. Each time I have been lucky to have friends who have been able to help me. Staying with friends is not easy, I try to help out, by cleaning and cooking but things can be stressful. I try to be easy but we all need our space. I once had to alternate between friends because they both had girlfriends and it isn't very nice sleeping in the same room. (Adolphe, Male 33)

The risk to the person providing the accommodation is great. The terms of their NASS tenancy stipulate that anyone who has people staying in their property without the consent of the agency risks eviction and being reported to NASS. This may even lead to having their asylum claim refused.

I have had many people stay with me. At first I didn't understand that it was dangerous for me. But I heard about someone in Birmingham who had their asylum claim refused because they hosted some friends who were failed. I still let people stay with me when there is a need. I can't say no because one day it could be me. (Antoine, Male 25)

For the host, the precariousness of housing others is compounded by having to help support the guests. As their support is curtailed, people staying with asylum seekers will have little in the way of money to help pay for food and other amenities. An

asylum seeker received less than £38 per week in 2007. This needed to be stretched to ensure that people staying with them could be supported.

I lived with a friend for nearly a year. It was ok as we got along really well. I didn't have much money but I helped by doing the cooking and cleaning. I heard of some people who had lots of arguments. It was sad as they were really good friends before, but the situation was too tense.
(Danielle, Female 25)

Some evidence showed that resources were pooled to help vulnerable people in the social network. The most obvious case was to ensure that individuals who were not in receipt of benefits would eat meals at different friend's houses.

Jean was made homeless when he was refused. I don't understand the Government. I know only a few people who have received refugee status. We don't trust the government because they don't seem to care about us. I trust Jean he stayed with me for a long time. He cooked and did the cleaning. I miss him as he was a better cook than me and was someone I could talk to. (Espoir, Male 28)

Jean was staying at Espoir's flat. He would visit us several times a week to eat with us. While we were helping him he was good company and we looked forward to him coming. He also went to eat at others' houses.
(Serge, Male 29)

An interesting aspect of this comment is not the recognition of helping someone in need, but the role of accompaniment in this situation. Money is limited which has an effect on the amount and quality of food available, yet the key theme is the importance given to having a meal that brings people together.

If someone was under threat, the social network provided help finding shelter at each stage of the asylum process. There was no uniformity in the process; friends just stepped in to help. The actions of the social network in providing accommodation were a reaction to changes in the immigration status of asylum seekers. The asylum

system does not have adequate structures to ensure that there is a *seamless* transition from one stage to another (asylum support stages).

8.11 Reaching the End of the Asylum Process and Beyond

A decision on an asylum seekers' claim for refugee status is posted to the individual informing them whether or not they have been granted leave to remain and the reason behind the decision. From then they will have either 9 or 28 days to quit their property and find alternate arrangements. The number of days that they can remain in their property is significant because being able to switch to an alternate form of support is not very well explained and involves understanding where to go to apply for alternate support. There is also the problem of being able to bridge this problem within the timeframe given.

For asylum seekers who are refused they have 9 days to make new arrangements. Invariably the logical step is to apply for Section 4 support, but it is not a seamless process. The first step is to make an application for Section 4, which can be done locally at the Coventry Refugee Centre. Once that application is made it will be sent to NASS for assessment, this process can take several weeks. During this time the asylum seeker will not have support and will be destitute. The individual will be informed by post if their Section 4 application has been accepted; logically this will be difficult for applicants as they will have no fixed abode. In some cases individuals will be making a Section 4 support application to get re-accommodated pending an appeal against their asylum decision. There are people who get to this stage and have their asylum application refused, they will be made homeless and will remain outside any formal support mechanism.

We have people, who come here to apply for Section 4, it is clear that the only way that they have found out about Section 4 is through friends. Unfortunately they do not understand the full ramifications of applying. In the short term they will be forced to find accommodation elsewhere. We cannot help them. We have never had any asylum seeker get the notice to quit with still nine days remaining (before they are evicted), and find alternate NASS accommodation within the timeframe. We

always advise people to try and find somewhere to stay with friends, who may also be asylum seekers. (CRC Deputy Manager)

Refugees are given 28 days to leave their NASS property as they need to enter into the main stream benefits and support system. There are no more restrictions on employment and entitlement, however problems still exist. The Home Office does not allocate any documentation about status other than a *leave to remain* document. In order to get work or be eligible for social housing individuals need a National Insurance number. Unfortunately, the process that refugees need to follow to be issued with a National Insurance number takes longer than 28 days.

Regardless whether it is refugees or asylum seekers who have had their claim refused they have a similar problem where they receive letters which are confusing to understand, in particular if their English is weak, and they receive them usually with very little time in which they can transfer onto alternate forms of support. This whole Home Office approach of giving 9 or 28 days is a sham as by the time the asylum seekers receives the letter, the actual time allotted is usually a day or two. (CRC Deputy Manager)

Becoming a refugee should be a liberating experience that signals an end to the hardship that individuals have experienced. Yet, people are often thrown into a situation where they finally receive recognised residency rights but are unable to exercise them fully. This is due to the Government's inability to provide a bridging mechanism that prevents people from becoming destitute. Paradoxically refugees are in a situation where they have existed in a liminal state and have now been given status but move into a far more precarious stage where they cannot access support for which they are legally entitled. In terms of the concept of the refugee experience it is important that it continues past the end of the asylum process.

I had to take George to the JobCentre to apply for a National Insurance Number (NIN). It took 8 weeks for him to get. He couldn't apply for a flat at the Council because he needed an NI number, so he stayed with

us for quite a while sleeping on the sofa. When he received his NI number he went to the Council and applied for a flat. They told him that he would have to wait because he was low priority. (Serge, Male 29)

For people who have had their asylum claim refused the options are restricted. If they elect to apply for Section 4 support there is still a period of time, pending a decision from the Home Office, where they will not receive any support. There are individuals who do not pursue applying for Section 4 support and elect to remain outside the system. In both of these instances these individuals will need to rely on alternate forms of support.

8.12 Becoming a Refugee yet Still Relying on the Social Network

Refugees now enjoy rights far beyond those for which asylum seekers are entitled. The need for the social network will alter as the individual requirements of new status refugees are different from asylum seekers. The transition period from asylum seeker to refugee often increases the reliance on the support of the social network. The mainstream benefits system cannot process the required documentation within the 28 day transition period implemented by NASS. For refugees, the extent of need for involvement in this social network depends not only on the financial circumstances of the individual but the personal linkages that they will feel for those who remain as asylum seekers.

Asylum seekers find themselves in an exceptional situation in which they are forced to live in society with legislated restrictions which forces them to live marginalised lives. As established throughout the study, the friendships forged through social networks are the most important element of helping individuals cope with life in the asylum process. Out of these friendships webs of cooperation have developed that enhance individuals' quality of life. These webs or networks pool together the skills and motivation of its members as social capital. This capital is used to overcome the

shortfalls of the imposed limited and restrictive asylum support from NASS. It is flawed to assume that once given leave to remain in the UK refugees will just step away from being asylum seekers and make a smooth transition. One aspect that has not been factored into this equation is the loyalty to friends. The trust and strong relationships that develop amongst individuals are possibly the only enduring and cherished aspect of their lives in the UK.

Having monitored the network for just over a year, a number of unanswered questions arose. Although I did not directly see any relationship problems in the network I would speculate that there must be a point where friendships which provide support could reach a breaking point. Friendships may fracture if individuals cannot rely on sufficient support from the network in times of distress. Individuals in the network have recognised levels of responsibility towards other members. I would argue that there must be a point at which social networks will fracture causing personal rifts.

Once through the stage of transition to mainstream benefits, the refugees involved in this research experienced varied examples of life as a refugee in Coventry. Those participants in the research who received refugee status during the period of the research found work primarily in factories packing food and in food preparation. The work was sourced through temporary employment agencies. In each case someone in the social network provided the contact to help the refugee find work. Work is low paid and there is little job security. The employment is not totally satisfactory but the participants who found work recognised that being employed offered a far better life than they experienced as an asylum seeker. They felt better about themselves as they were in control of their own lives and were allowed to make their own decisions.

Refugees involved in the research showed that their expectations of life in the UK had altered, they were positive as they were able to find work. They had aspirations of going back to University but the cost was a barrier which meant that they would not be able to contemplate this for some time. It also emerged that they were not eligible for home fees or any form of student support.

Wages for the refugees were low and meant that they remained living in low cost accommodation. There is evidence that members of the social network who were homeless were able to stay with refugees who had accommodation. There were numerous examples of gratuity in the form of buying food, nappies etc. It was also not uncommon to provide somewhere to sleep for those network members in difficulty.

Some refugees bought cars, although the cars were inexpensive models that needed work. This was a benefit however, as their employment was over 10 kilometres from Coventry and not well served by public transport (particularly at night). Having transport meant that individuals in the network could rely on the refugees when they needed help buying food, getting to college or official meetings.

My friends are still asylum seekers and they are the same as me. How can someone say I'm ok and they aren't? (Joseph, Male 40)

For many, links with the social network change once they receive refugee status. They still remain close friends with a number of asylum seekers. Interestingly, as refugees, they may become even more isolated as they do not have any friends in their new environments. They may not know anybody where they work, they may work night shifts and sleep during the day and not have much free time to spend with their friends. At this point the reliance on the social network goes back to how it was initially formed, as a group of friends.

Refugees in this study showed little inclination to move beyond their social network. During the period of the research the strong friendship links with other participants meant that the social network provided a safe environment to retreat into when needed. Moving into a new existence where individuals are constantly experiencing new environments and circumstances means that retreating into the social network provides an environment that they know and where they can relax.

The choices of the refugee are dictated by the knowledge they developed during their time as an asylum seeker. In particular the knowledge gained from interacting within the social network. Therefore finding work as a result of a contact through the social network or finding somewhere to live through another friend will be more common

than going to the Job Centre or finding accommodation by approaching letting agents. One of the participant involved in this research met a female living in Liverpool through another participant. The woman moved to Coventry and they now live together.

I lived with someone who is still an asylum seeker for a few months. When I had enough money I went to live with some friends who are refugees. I work now and it is far away. Things are still the same I still see everybody, usually on Wednesday night. (Joseph, Male 40)

The choices open to the refugees were restricted. They showed little inclination to move closer to work because they had little knowledge of those areas. They had limited interaction with government structures. I would argue that they did not consciously try to avoid government structures but chose alternate measures if they were available. It was clear that a residual suspicion of government existed. Refugees did not show any clear understanding of the varying types of government.

I have to pay Council tax now. Serge explained that the letters meant I had to pay. I thought the tax I paid on my salary was everything. Serge took me to this adviser at the Refugee Centre who explained everything. He gave me charts which explained who was what. It included phone numbers, though I don't think I will phone them.

(Joseph, Male 40)

This quote is interesting in that a refugee is learning about his responsibilities as a *tax payer* from an asylum seeker who does not have the same obligations. The learning process for all individuals does not end once they become refugees, but is on-going.

8.13 Long term Expectations of the Refugee

Refugees decided to immediately start looking for employment. Several did have aspirations to attend university but recognised that this would not be financially practical for the foreseeable future. They did not exhibit any real inclination to develop friendships beyond their current network. There was evidence given by one

refugee of someone who had moved to Birmingham and developed a new circle of friends. She now increasingly has only intermittent contact with the social network. Therefore it is difficult to conclude that there is any one model of refugee relationship with a social network after they receive refugee status. I would assume that the key factors of involvement in a social network include the individuals personal motivations; where they had been dispersed to and the strength of the social network they were in (if they were in any at all), their ability to find work and whether they receive social housing in an area far from the social network.

It was awful being an asylum seeker. I was treated badly by the agent and the government. I went to the Council for help but they turned me away. Nobody but my friends wanted to know me. Now I am a refugee it has all changed but in many ways it hasn't. Now everyone is friendly and wants to help. Even people who were not nice before are friendly and helpful. I am so full of anger. I haven't changed, there is no difference. (Ibis, Male 22)

An established Congolese who had been in the UK for five years had employment links in the informal sector and services industry. He helped others in finding work and providing introductions. Until 2004 money made by employed individuals was used to either send home or use within the social network. Social networks have become financially poorer as a result of the arrival of workers from new EU members from Eastern Europe from 2004 onwards. Labour contacts have changed and now employment agencies prefer to employ eastern Europeans over asylum seekers and refugees.

It is harder to get work now, before it was easy even for asylum seekers because there was so much work. Agencies were easy about letting us work. When the Poles came they took all the work and agencies didn't want to know us. Now if I want to work I need to go to Nuneaton, Daventry, Kettering and Burton. There is work but you need to travel. (Adolphe, Male 33)

I am able to work now but it makes me upset that I had to wait many years. I have seen that there are less jobs here now with all the Eastern Europeans. (Joseph, Male 40)

Refugees have moved elsewhere to find work, due to links in other social networks. But there seems to be a consensus that it is more competitive and that there is less security and opportunity. There is evidence that shows that social networks provide information and contacts within the labour market. A number of asylum seekers used links to find *under the table* employment. New status refugees used the outer limits of the network to find work in areas outside Coventry, predominantly in the West Midlands but also in London, Yorkshire and the Northwest.

The relationship between the refugee and a predominantly asylum seeker based social network is an area which needs further academic research. The impact that asylum policy has on refugees' ability to integrate into their local community and the extent to which social networks aid or abet the process, needs to be better understood.

8.14 A Social Network or an RCO?

We have seen earlier in this chapter that service providers advised asylum seekers to get help from their friends when unable to provide support. I believe that friends are in fact the social network. Even though the NASS accommodation provider recognises the effectiveness of social networks, they are generally viewed with suspicion by state institutions. This is because not much is known about them. By remaining unregistered (and becoming RCOs) they remain outside the formal framework of support. As the social network is not a formally recognized organization it did have limits in its ability to look after its members. This recognition gave it the validity that is enjoyed by Refugee Community Organisations. As Zetter (2006) points out, many RCOs are more likely to be social networks in form rather than name. Internally, the social network does not strive to be recognised. The key node had tried to start an RCO but decided against pursuing the idea when he was made aware of all the legal stipulations required. He also realised that he would find it difficult to receive funding as the majority of members (himself

included) were asylum seekers, and ineligible for funding from most awarding bodies. Becoming an RCO would mean developing trust in outside institutions as registration would have to be formalised and circulated to outside agencies. Also the restrictions of an RCO in helping asylum seekers (as it has to abide by the recognised regulations) would erode the social capital which constitutes the strength of the social network.

I realised that it was all just a cloud. There was no real benefit for us. I had spent many hours learning about community development and setting up community organisations. In Congo we work with our family and friends all the time. I realise that we can do that here.
(Serge, Male 29)

This research demonstrates that the social network's strength is its informality, which enables it to work outside any legislation. This informality means that it is only accountable to its members. As pointed out by the key node, becoming an RCO would require meeting in a formalised setting, and as a result the social network would not be able to help the members to the same extent. A network can choose its own agenda and is not restricted by funding guidelines and survival based on accessing funding. In the short term this is more convenient to the aims of the members but long term legitimacy would rest on achieving formal recognition. This would bring the social network and the community into a domain where they would not be perpetuating their own social exclusion. It could be visible to the rest of society. Asylum legislation prevents the self determination of asylum seekers and social networks.

The social network does not possess a charter, or any formal documentation which outlines its aims. As discussed, it began as a union of friends drawn together. They recognised that their precarious situation could be in part alleviated by drawing together their collective strengths and knowledge. In the long term the social network will have to adapt as its members' immigration status changes. This will ensure that it meets the changing needs of its members, for example if all the members become refugees, they will no longer be exempt from the mainstream social support structure. By being able to participate fully in society participants would in

theory need to remain within the confines of the social network. The network would be able to formalise as an RCO and apply for funding. However, the direction which the social network takes would be decided upon by its members. The social network is an effective mechanism in plugging and bridging gaps in the asylum process. However its effectiveness rests in its informality. If it was a RCO, the restrictiveness of eligibility criteria would prevent it from helping asylum seekers as effectively.

Social networks create their own social exclusion. The knowledge generated is based on individuals' experiences and perceptions and may not always be an accurate view of the actual situation. Granted there are problems with service provision in that the advice and support is not always correct, but examples of unfair treatment (whether purposely or accidentally) permeate the knowledge base of asylum seekers. By reverting to the social network and staying within its own nucleus, there is less need to participate in the local community. One on-going issue with community cohesion is the self-imposed isolation of migrant communities; social networks promote a similar situation though the reasons for this occurrence are layered. The quote below shows frustration from a participant who felt government employees do not appreciate social networks and make statements about changes in rights of the individual without appreciating the fracturing of communities.

Since I received refugee status I have been invited to be involved in a number of meetings with the Council and Home Office people. They keep on saying that as a refugee I can use their services and that I need to go to their offices. They say they can only help people like me who are refugees and not those who are not. They talk about strong communities but they split us. The council say they cannot help us yet we are in their city? I don't understand. (Joseph, Male 40)

It is important to stress that it is not because of the asylum regime that this social network developed. Past research highlights that social networks amongst migrants exist regardless of immigration status. What is key is the manner in which the social network evolved to act as a support mechanism for participants experiencing difficulties coping in the asylum process. The boundaries of the asylum process delineate a space where social networks can develop. The recognised UK race

relations framework and its efforts to empower community development through Refugee Community Organisations do not apply to social networks of asylum seekers. While RCOs can develop and foster social inclusion and community cohesion, asylum seekers have no recourse to public funds or legal legitimacy in the UK. For RCO's the relationship with the government is about cooperation while for asylum seekers the approach is about control.

The end goal of RCOs is not that different from social networks, empowering its own people and helping them establish themselves in the UK; the difference is that social networks do not set out with specific goals. As knowledge amongst members of the network increases so the realisation of their collective need becomes more apparent. The needs may be specific to being an asylum seeker but, remove the immigration legislation and there are commonalities with RCOs.

The role that an RCO can play in the lives of individuals who have received refugee status cannot be underestimated, yet, as demonstrated in this quote, participants are frustrated by the fact that only some members of the social network are actually refugees. Those who have received refugee status have a different and broader entitlement to support from statutory bodies. The fact that people in the network are now on two different support mechanisms creates confusion and further contempt of the government.

8.15 Being Suspicious by Remaining on the Margins

The legitimacy of social networks could be challenged as they are not formally recognised. The key node made comments about curtailing the pursuit of becoming an RCO as he felt it was counterproductive to the interests of the members. He had been warned by a community development worker at the Refugee Centre that he would be consigning his community to the margins of society as they would not be understood, and that by not participating would possibly be seen to be hiding something.

By being unable to formally participate in the local community cohesion framework social networks of asylum seekers will become invisible minorities in the community

that the general population knows little about. The general public's lack of understanding about the asylum system would lead to the assumption that these communities chose not to participate for possible reasons, which for them would seem suspicious.

Two mothers at the school club asked me why we don't go to the community meetings at the church hall. She said that people talk about how asylum seekers stay to themselves and that it is because we are hiding something. She said people think the Iraqis are terrorists because they are only men and don't talk to anyone but themselves. (Juliette, Female 29)

They don't understand how hard it is no matter how hard they think that living here is easy, it isn't. English people don't even realise that when they think they are welcoming you they aren't. (Pascal, Male 25)

The social network in this research has developed as a result of the dispersal of asylum seekers to Coventry. As a group of people there are a number who have received refugee status. It is probable that number will grow. On the other side many people will have their asylum claim rejected, though they may have to wait for a number of years to be returned as currently the UK does not return failed Congolese asylum seekers.



8.16 Conclusion

This chapter presents examples of how friendship trees and social networks are essential in bridging and plugging gaps for asylum seekers. The analysis of friendships show how social capital is developed and shared amongst individuals. Furthermore friendship trees adopt forms of social capital as described by Bourdieu(1986) and Schaefer- McDaniel (2004).

This analysis of friendships show how social capital is developed and shared amongst individuals. Furthermore friendship trees adopt forms of social capital as described by Bourdieu(1986) and Schaefer- McDaniel (2004).

I went to meet my local MP. He didn't have a clue about the asylum process. He was suspicious of me because I knew so much about NASS and the legal system. I told him he needed just to read books like the Refugee Council's Yellow Book. (Serge, Male 29)

This quote encapsulates much of what is presented in this chapter and the conclusions which can be drawn. It presents the strength that a liminal expert plays in the social network and shows that his importance is based on a clear understanding of the socio-legal situation that the participants find themselves in.

He is shown to be astute enough to understand the UK political process and approach the local MP to ask for support. His approach was based on knowledge obtained from reputable sources.⁴⁸ It also demonstrates that he lacks trust in the political process in the UK and was wary of the way he was treated by the MP.

The chapter provides a view of the daily lives of the participants and demonstrates the strength of the friendships in the social network. This aspect of presenting the refugee experience presents evidence that asylum seekers are treated with suspicion (Hynes 2011; Sales 2007). By focusing on the external experiences of the participants, this chapter shows the results have supported Marx's work on understanding the social world of refugees (1990).⁴⁹

The social network, as presented here, was used in a tactical manner to improve the collective security of the members (Hynes 2007; Williams 2006). The network is an active mechanism (rather than passive) and uses its weak ties to overcome difficulties faced by the participants.⁵⁰ This is particularly important in that the social networks do not have an entrenched strategy but rely on requests and decisions being taken and made by participants in an arbitrary and non-consultative manner.

This idea of weak ties able to apply tactics rather than a strategy is an important point. Likening social networks to a survival strategy (Griffiths 2005; Hynes 2007; Williams 2006) is to a certain extent correct but it also implies that there is an accepted framework and process that social networks adopt. This chapter demonstrates that within the social network support for individuals is imparted through friendship bonds and in effect it is an informal process and therefore not

⁴⁸ Throughout the last two chapters his knowledge of not only the asylum system but the more rudimentary manner in which service provision operated in Coventry was a cornerstone to understanding how social capital was harnessed and exploited in the social network.

⁴⁹ Marx contends that the uniqueness of the refugee experience influences the social worlds of refugees. That by applying network analysis unique aspects will be uncovered that account for the motivations and decision making of the participants

⁵⁰ Based on deCerteau's tactic of the art of the weak (1984) of using tactics to overcome a repressive system, as opposed to an RCO which will have a strategy developed to confront difficulties.

strategic in manner. Zetter's (2006) idea of social networks as a coping mechanism sits more closely with de Certeau's (1984) idea of the use of tactics to describe the actions of the social network.

The social network is relatively small and was very much in its infancy at the time of the research.⁵¹ As the asylum process is in a constant state of legislative and policy change the network needs to be adaptable to change. Chapters 6 and 7 discussed how the members of the social network decided to form an RCO but, in the end, abandoned the idea as their own immigration status would have made it difficult to maintain and would have affected their ability to continue to support their members in the existing manner. Considering the restrictions of forming an RCO, the flexibility by the network, as shown in this chapter, also demonstrates the strength of weak ties (Granovetter 1973).

Relationships, as discussed here, within a network exhibit high levels of what Putnam termed reciprocity and trustworthiness (Putnam 2000). The friendships, also discussed in Chapter 7, are the key form of social capital within the network. This capital is used in direct response to the restrictiveness of dispersal legislation. This supports the views of Togeby and Rothstein and Kumlin (2001; 2004) in that welfare institutions either build or erode social capital because people depend on needs tested and selective benefits. This research presents the argument that the social networks evolved to meet the immediate challenges those in the network face on a day to day level. Asylum restrictions do provide substandard welfare support and in turn enhance the need for social capital from the social network. This chapter also points to how the weak links of the social network allow it to work between the formal lines of support to aid its members.

The findings shown in this chapter also fall within the work of Ryan (2008) who cites social capital as specific and adaptable to a changing environment, where individuals live, but also subject to change due to changes in legislation and employment. Also mooted in this chapter by participants were links that existed between this network

⁵¹ The network is no older than 4 years and due to dispersal is constantly changing in composition and numbers as asylum seekers are dispersed to the city and then re-dispersed elsewhere.

and other UK based networks, as well as networks overseas, which highlight the social capital linkages of a transnational character (Portes 1995). A strength or weakness of this research is that it concentrated on a specific social network and therefore the findings cannot be considered indicative of all social networks of asylum seekers. For Ryan (2008) it is not possible to develop one typology but to have an understanding of a broader range of aspects that can impact on migrants' ability to develop social capital. This chapter offers a balanced presentation of quotes and analysis of the cause and effect process on how and why social networks form and confirms social capital as a means of survival.

In Chapter 7, I discuss Schaefer-McDaniel's (2004) three types of social capital (emotional; informational and instrumental) and show how such social capital was developed within the network. The evidence in this chapter builds further on this as it demonstrates how the social capital is mobilised. Many of the comments from participants in this research emphasise the notion of friendship and the support that individuals feel they derive from their friends. Emotional support can be as little as just having someone to talk to, avoiding boredom, someone who can offer advice and guidance or someone who can make a difference by providing support which can improve their life.

For Bourdieu (1986), social capital was but one of three forms of capital available to migrants⁵². For him social capital in this context is the breadth of social networks with which one can have access. In this instance, the situation is different to that of other migrants⁵³. The asylum legislative controls and dispersal have destroyed the economic (capital) wealth of asylum seekers. Cultural capital is demonstrated by the fact that the majority of members are from a similar background and that part of the friendship is based on cultural affinity. However, the relative economic capital is restored by sharing knowledge and support in kind.

⁵² The other forms are economic capital and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986).

⁵³ This also supports Ryan's (2008) assertions on how circumstances are affected by variables such as legislation and employment, and that defining a typology as a result was difficult.

Social networks, as confirmed in the research, offer a level of service provision that is arguably far more effective than the *official* service provision that exists for asylum seekers. It sits alongside agencies that are contracted to offer services. This means that social networks operate as an advice/support mechanism which provides for its own network and prevents people from always converging on underfunded and under staffed agencies for help. The intriguing and compelling aspect of this is that participants in the research were able to provide examples of when they had been told by providers to get help from their friends. This shows that the quality of provision available to asylum seekers was insufficient and that the service providers recognised that asylum seekers had social networks that could provide support.

Reluctance to use other forms of communication (i.e. agencies that provide advice and guidance as well as support for asylum seekers) is based on the experiences drawn from members of the social network. Within the network people discuss their situations and their own experiences with various agencies and other forms of communication.

Asylum seekers create their own communities. As the examples show, asylum seekers' exposure to services in Coventry provides the knowledge about what works and what doesn't. Further, negative experiences with agencies gradually erode confidence in the system and bind the network closer.

The view of the researcher is that the most important aspect that participants have learned from the social network is trust in friends, and the recognition that when all

else fails they can be assured that their friends will not abandon them.



Figure 10: Part of her route from the flat to the shops. Taken by Bernadette, female aged 24, Hillfields

Chapter 9: Conclusion

9.1 Introduction

The aim of this research was to investigate the interplay between the mechanisms of dispersal and the experiences of asylum seekers through identifying the role that friendship ties and social networks play in their daily lives. This multi-faceted aim to place the friendship ties and social networks within the restrictiveness of the asylum regime revealed a complex, evolving and adapting relationship between the two. The research offered in this dissertation details analysis of how friendship ties can develop into a social network, how they function and the relationships that develop in them. The research places the evolution of social networks within the concept of the refugee experience by presenting the lives of asylum seekers while in the liminal space of dispersal. It also shows that understood concepts of social networks and social capital cannot be directly applied to asylum seekers.

To sum up the findings of this research, this chapter returns to the major research questions outlined in the Introduction:

9.2 How can the Critical Exploration of Concepts such as Social Networks, Social Capital and Liminality Contribute to Ways of Understanding the Refugee Experience under Conditions of Dispersal?

Chapter 3 presents how accepted understandings of social networks and capital are limited in assessments of the asylum seekers lived experience. This research shows that concepts such as social networks, capital and liminality can provide a framework of understanding this lived experience. This understanding is further confirmed in the research through a focus on the binding relationship between the asylum process and the refugee experience. The research reveals how the asylum process opens a liminal space in which asylum seekers are forced to exist. The constraints of living in this liminal space have compelled asylum seekers to adopt strategies to manage these restrictive spaces. By using the friendship tree as a research method the thesis

presents not only how asylum seekers developed friendships and social networks but also the social capital that underpinned the network as a means of navigating this liminal space. Both the friendship ties and the social networks mobilise social capital to support each other. The key point here is that the imposition of dispersal placed a particular set of restrictions on asylum seekers, and to counter these constraints asylum seekers develop specific forms of social capital in their social networks to overcome the challenges. The research found that the function of the social network was formed because of the difficulties that its members experienced and how as a collective they shared their resources to develop specific forms of social capital. The research highlights that the linear nature of the asylum process is in fact dynamic: as asylum seekers continually have to adapt to the different stages of the asylum process, reorganising the social network and identifying new forms of social capital to cope with the pressures of life as an asylum seeker.

This study demonstrates how the asylum process is a key episode in the refugee experience for people who have come to the UK. Therefore, having to pass through the asylum process is an integral component of the refugee journey and is unique in that it cannot be applied to other forms of migrants. The empirical chapters show the asylum process as a journey that started upon arrival in the UK and continued until a decision was made by the Home Office on their asylum claim. It is only by juxtaposing the refugee experience with social networks and capital that the dynamic nature of the lives of asylum seekers is brought to the fore.

9.3 How Friendship Ties and Informal Networks Develop amongst Asylum Seekers and Refugees

This study starts with a review of comparable literature which emerged out of the initial work of Granovetter (1973). This body of work examines the idea of *weak ties*. Scholars (Collyer 2005, Sigona 2011, Williams, 2006, Ryan et al. 2008) accept that weak ties are important, such ties are often seen as a “tactic of the weak” (de Certeau 1984) rather than being *strong ties*. Yet this research offers several points to consider further. Demonstrating the dynamic nature of the social network shows that over time these ties transformed into strong friendships. It is possible to suggest that at

some point along the asylum journey these weak ties transformed into strong ties. Therefore it is important to note that the fluidity of the situation also dictates that the status of relationships will alter, i.e. weak ties becoming strong ties. The fact that asylum seekers may spend a number of years living in the same dispersal city waiting for a response from the Home Office on their asylum claim will have an effect on the ties that they have with others in the network. The longer people spend time together, the ties will transform to strong ties as relationships become stronger.

Although temporary accommodation is but a small part of this research it is important as it offers the first opportunity for asylum seekers to develop weak ties. At this stage asylum seekers have access to a small number of people, invariably limited to those staying in the same hostel, yet manage to develop weak ties with at least one or more individuals. Although there were examples of ties made across language and ethnic barriers, most of these friendship ties were established primarily due to a commonality shared between two people. The tie was strengthened further by the fact that they also shared being in the asylum process. Needing to understand the difficulties of being an asylum seeker draws people together. Furthermore, sharing understanding of the asylum process and identifying ideas that could help them enhances the value of these ties.

Equally significant, the weak links established at this stage may develop into more substantial relationships. The research established that the longer someone stays in TA the more likely it is that they will forge further friendships as they have access to a wider range of people. People begin to develop confidence and venture into the local community and have chance encounters with people from similar backgrounds, or they meet other asylum seekers who spend time in the hostel. The nature of the asylum process ensures a high turnover of people in TA. As a consequence asylum seekers will consistently develop friendship ties with other asylum seekers who will then move onto other dispersal areas. The result is that weak ties are established and then dispersed to other areas of the UK. These ties may not break but may remain through the use of social media, email and the telephone. As discussed these ties can provide a reservoir of contacts for asylum seekers as more ties are established and then moved on to other cities, the crossover permits asylum seekers to trade contacts who may be sent to the same city.

At the TA stage the fact that people are new to the asylum process, have exposure to a smaller number of people, coupled with this stage often being quite short in length means that the chances of developing or entering into a social network are rare. Instead asylum seekers only have the opportunity to develop friendship ties. These friendship ties are similar in form to weak ties (Granovetter 1973) but do possess one clearly different characteristic, that of long term friendship, or the potential for it. These friendships provided comfort and in the case of many participants continued even after both individuals had been dispersed to other cities. As discussed, the research found that these ties can be enduring and can lead to individuals moving cities based on the pull of friendships and the support that they offer. In this sense rather than refer to them as weak ties a new typology needs to be used to describe weak ties that transform into more enduring relationships. Granovetter's idea of the strength of weak ties is applicable to asylum seekers at the beginning of the asylum process. However, the longer they stay in the asylum process, and develop social networks that are underpinned by trust, these weak ties transform into something more enduring. The disillusionment which is a result of living as an asylum seeker in the UK pushes asylum seekers to seek solace with other asylum seekers. This shared experience meant that asylum seekers developed deep bonds that continued, as was presented in the final chapter, and as new status refugees were reluctant to move beyond the support of the social network.

The impact of being in close proximity to other people in the hostel means that friendships occur but, because the number of hostel residents is low and there is a high turnover, the chances of developing a social network are negligible. At this stage the relationships are weak ties; budding friendships may continue if the two individuals are dispersed together to the same city. Invariably, what happens is that weak ties are maintained by phone and social media as people are sent to different cities.

Once in a dispersal city asylum seekers may begin the process of developing networks by making contacts through the friendship ties of TA. In a dispersal city, asylum seekers will have access to a greater number of people and therefore be able to establish a network rather than just a small circle of friends. Aside from these contacts asylum seekers are able to make initial ties through chance encounters with

other asylum seekers. As dispersal sites are focused on specific areas within cities asylum seekers will usually be living in the same neighbourhood and, as a result, encounters will most likely occur during outings from the accommodation. Trips to the shops, local support services, word of mouth or even being placed in the same house are examples of how the process of developing social networks begins.

Essential to the development of the social network is the liminal expert. The extent of the role that the liminal expert plays in the social network cannot be underestimated and is a key finding of this research. At all stages of the research the liminal expert played a role in both the development of the social network and in most facets of the daily lives of the participants. The liminal expert was integral in the development and management of the network and in coordinating its members to develop social capital. The empirical chapters presented how the liminal expert came to understand the importance of developing a social network, from his own experiences and watching how other asylum seekers functioned. Through the empirical chapters the liminal expert is shown to have key character attributes which facilitate the functioning of the social network. He is outgoing friendly and supportive. He understands the impact of the asylum process and is constantly on the lookout for opportunities. In doing this he is shown to understand how to interact with outside agencies, knows where to go for advice and guidance. He is also keen to develop himself professionally by taking any form of training that is available to him. He does all this so that he will be better equipped to support other members of the network. With the knowledge that he gathers he will develop forms of social capital in the network. Overall the importance of the liminal expert to the network is that his commitment to the others develops the strong sense of trust that binds the network.

The liminal expert is crucial in bringing people together. The findings for this study provide evidence of how a liminal expert uses an outgoing personality to achieve his goals of developing a social network. By placing himself in contact with local voluntary agencies, he not only learns about the asylum process but is present when asylum seekers visit the agencies and as a result is well placed to develop relationships with these people (who may be prospective members of the network). The fact that asylum seekers have little to do means that just spending time *loitering* in public areas provides the possibility of meeting other asylum seekers. Initial ties

develop over time as asylum seekers acquire a broader range of acquaintances. These ties are based on a common feature, in the case of this research it is a tie to the Kivu region of eastern DR Congo, French speaking and being an asylum seeker. The key node is an important element as he actively brings people together. Existing literature does not emphasise the importance of the role that liminal experts play in social networks of asylum seekers. The importance of the liminal expert can be better expressed by concluding that the network in this research would not exist if it wasn't for the input of the liminal expert.

For the friendship ties and the social network that forms the basis of this research, the role that asylum policy plays in the actual formation is critical. Asylum policy introduced dispersal which is the liminal space (or stage) being referred here. It is a space where geographically asylum seekers are sent to reside while their asylum case is being processed; it is further contextualised by asylum seekers being placed in a separate form of social support. Asylum policy provides the framework that the individuals find themselves in and, as a result, controls the extent to which they can control the choice of who they develop ties with and ultimately social networks.

Being forced into a liminal space creates a common space in which asylum seekers meet. Living in similar neighbourhoods, frequenting the same NASS agents' office, the local voluntary sector agencies, churches and FE colleges, individuals will meet and develop friendships. Not being eligible for employment plus restrictions on other activities means that the asylum system creates a space where asylum seekers have little to do to in their daily lives. By creating friendships asylum seekers can, in part, overcome boredom from inactivity. The restrictiveness of the asylum process develops the liminal space that asylum seekers occupy; in this space asylum seekers are socially excluded. Negative experiences with the Home Office and other agencies connected to the asylum process created alienation and suspicion. Trust in agencies diminishes.

The isolation and loneliness is overcome by developing friendships. The isolation means that potential friendships are somewhat restricted to other asylum seekers or individuals who exist in proximity to others (by way of distance, language etc.). Making friends for asylum seekers is easy as they have no other commitments and

are able to spend a lot of time together. The shared reality of asylum binds them, they can identify with the difficulties as well as the fact that they share similar hopes for the future.

Social networks amongst migrants will always develop (Grzymala-Kazłowska 2005) and asylum seekers are no different. However the asylum process does have an impact on the role that the social network plays in the lives of its members. What emerges in this research is that the social network is also reactive to the asylum process. The social capital generated from inside the social network is used to help its members survive the asylum process. Rather than reject Putnam's view of the need for positive conditions I would suggest that the focus be on the relationship between the reasons that the social network has been developed and the types of social capital that are generated within the network as key. In this sense the external conditions dictated the reasons that individuals developed a social network, as they recognized that as a collective they have particular forms of capital that will help them. Social networks can develop in a multitude of settings, in the case of this research, the evidence points to social networks forming to counteract the restrictiveness of the asylum process, which would suggest that even the most restrictive of circumstances cannot prevent social networks from flourishing. Therefore, social capital is mobilized in response to external conditions and not just inherent in social networks. A liminal expert who can recognise opportunities that exist by developing a social network is a principal requirement. The research has demonstrated that the social capital (from the social network) for asylum seekers can be identified as responding to the pressing needs of the members, particularly as they face possible destitution.

Individuals can live as asylum seekers in a dispersal site for a number of years. The longer they spend in a city the more linkages they will develop. As introduced earlier, individuals such as the liminal expert are essential in drawing groups of people together to create a social network where contact between members is frequent and wide ranging. The longer they spend in a dispersal city, the more they learn about the area, yet they remain socially excluded. The friendships that they develop within the social network are the most enduring ties. The strength of these relationships is entrenched and continues when individuals exit the asylum process.

The existing academic knowledge discussed in the literature review enabled the research to develop a conceptual framework that enabled this research. It also demonstrated how pertinent the concepts presented in the literature review are in the lives of asylum seekers. In terms of the refugee experience this research has presented the day to day lives of asylum seekers. It identifies the importance that liminality plays in the development of social networks and social capital. It also shows how it develops a space where liminal experts can establish a presence, help develop social networks and generate social capital. Furthermore it has enabled the revision of concepts of social networks and social capital to reflect more on the situation faced by asylum seekers.

9.4 How these Relationships Facilitate the Settlement Process and Help in Developing an Understanding of the Local Environment Where Asylum Seekers are Accommodated.

What is particular to relationships facilitating the settlement process is that it is not just about the types of social capital but the basis on which participants developed relationships and networks. This research looked at the particularities of the social network researched and ascertained that it was developed as a response to the asylum process. Across the asylum process both friendship ties and social networks possess key facets that challenge current accepted assumptions on social networks and capital. As discussed, the concept of weak ties is an agreed manner to describe the initial relationships of asylum seekers but these relationships transform into more durable and lasting relationships as people progress through the asylum process.

A key aspect of this evolution of weak ties is that trust is the underlying form of social capital that binds the network. A shared experience draws people together and provides them with a platform to develop trust and friendship. Whilst in TA, asylum seekers quickly recognise the value of friendship ties as essential for several reasons. The impact that friendship can have on overcoming isolation cannot be over emphasised. From these ties asylum seekers can share past experiences to make sense of their current surroundings.

In TA friendship ties help asylum seekers during their initial stages in the UK. As they will only spend a short period of time in TA, the ties are brief but still provide individuals with basic knowledge of the asylum process and their surroundings. The ties also give access to linkages established with others who happen to be residing in the same hostel as the asylum seeker. Someone in the hostel may know people in the area where the asylum seeker is being dispersed to, thus paving the way to a tie that may help the settling in process upon arrival.

Entering into a social network in a dispersal city provides an asylum seeker with a broad range of contacts. In a social network there are people who are experiencing a similar situation and bringing these people together provides confidence and comfort. The liminal expert, with the help of others in the network, is able to recognise both the individual values of the members of the social network as well as the value that the collective presents to the individuals (of the social network) as a whole. By recognising the difficulties individuals face and how these have arisen due to the relationship with dispersal, liminal experts are able to exploit the social capital of the network to improve members' daily lives.

The liminal experts are able to quickly understand their surroundings. They are able to speak English and immerse themselves in local life, participating in the guise of volunteering with local voluntary agencies. This provides them with first-hand experience of how service provision is delivered in the city and how the national asylum system is managed. It also provides them with the opportunity to enrol in free professional training courses that are either offered directly by the agency or as part of the local voluntary sector on-going training scheme. Furthermore, it allows the liminal expert to develop ties with local individuals who may be able to provide further support and guidance not only for them but also the social network.

This places the liminal expert as the lynchpin behind the success and continuity of the social network. From a structural standpoint they recognise that the benefits a social network offers asylum seekers are more accessible than the benefits of a Refugee Community Organisation (see Griffiths et al. 2005). Funding restrictions mean that RCOs are unable to work directly with asylum seekers. Instead the liminal expert focuses in on the individual skills and resources that exist in the network.

Phillimore's work (2012) shows that RCOs are effective in working with refugees aiding their integration, however this research focuses on asylum seekers, who are outside the integration framework. This research shows that the social network adapted to meeting the particular needs of its members which were due to their immigration status.

The knowledge that the liminal experts gain by their connections in the community help social network members develop an understanding of living in Coventry. They learn about the asylum process and develop an understanding of their basic rights and entitlements. By coordinating social functions asylum seekers in the network are brought together, which is a positive experience. Strong friendships develop and are encouraged.

Within the social network the individual skills and competencies of members are mobilised. Former teachers and those with technical skills are put to use. This is a two sided initiative as the skills can help other individuals in the social network, but of equal importance is that it provides asylum seekers with the opportunity to contribute and feel a sense of self-worth. Within the network information and understanding is shared. Skills such as cooking and laundry are taught. Trust is the binding form of social capital in the network. Participants were able to develop strong relationships with each other without being suspicious. It created a space where participants could feel confident and could relax in the company of others. By frequently organising social evenings, participants could share their minimal income to ensure that they could eat more nutritional and substantial meals. This support could also be offered to more vulnerable participants who could not afford to feed themselves.

Accommodation could be provided to other members of the network who were destitute, even if by doing this participants risked having their asylum application revoked if discovered by authorities. Other forms of social capital included information sharing, mechanical and technical expertise, signposting and moral support. In this research the social network formed as a response to the asylum process and operated in the liminal space created by it.

Asylum seekers are constantly at risk of falling through the asylum support process which means that they become destitute. At this point social networks provide a support umbrella for members. Helping homeless members is a frequent occurrence and the support is shared across the network. Despite the pressures that accommodating someone may entail (fear of being found out by NASS which would mean eviction) participants looked upon it as positive as it gave them someone with which to spend time. The restrictions of the asylum process and helping the destitute meant that already limited supplies of food and other essentials were divided up and shared across the network. Recognising the precariousness of their immigration status meant that they identified with those less fortunate and were always willing to help as much as possible. Binding this network is the fact that they are friends and recognise their own potential vulnerability.

The settlement process starts before the asylum seeker becomes a refugee. As this research presents, asylum seekers can be living in the liminal space for several years and in that time, through the involvement in social networks, will develop a strong sense of community. They learn about living in their neighbourhood and the services available to them, for all intents and purposes they are technically passing through a stage of integration, as laid out by the Refugee Integration Strategy. Yet due to their legal status, the integrative process that they go through is via the social network, as they are restricted from any 'refugee specific integration schemes'. This research suggests that there is a degree of ambiguity about concepts such as exclusion and inclusion in relation to asylum seekers. The asylum process has created a liminal space where individual's immigration status dictates the extent of access to social inclusion schemes. Asylum seekers suffer from social exclusion due the restrictiveness of immigration legislation (in terms of asylum policy) and that due to their immigration status they are not eligible to access social inclusion schemes. However, once they receive refugee status, the restrictions on eligibility for social inclusion schemes are removed. To overcome social exclusion, asylum seekers develop social networks and mobilise social capital. The findings in this research show what social networks and social capital actually means to the participants and how they construct them through their daily lives, rather than whether they match up to an ideal or model. The literature shows that RCOs can provide support to refugees and aid their integration. As stated throughout, the findings of this paper

support the findings of Griffiths et al (2005) in questioning the importance of RCOs in the lives of asylum seekers. The trust that forms the basis of the network tightly binds it. As seen in Chapter 8, new status refugees will still revert to the social network for support. Moving forward, the findings of this paper sit as a precursor to Phillimore's (2012) work on RCOs, social networks and integration. Once asylum seekers have refugee status they can use RCOs to help find work and other forms of support. An RCO which has links, through having mutual members, friends (etc.) with a social network are more likely to be able to tie into the trust of the network. Therefore, there may be a bridge able to link the two entities. This is a nonresearched and important observation which should be examined in future research.

Having spent several years living in Coventry the social network has enabled asylum seekers to learn about living in Coventry and the UK. It has provided a support mechanism that offers support while existing in the liminal stage of dispersal. It also affords further support to individuals who have exited the system and are trying to re-enter by making a fresh asylum application or appealing their asylum decision. For refugees the social network plays an integral role in their permanent settlement in the city as it provides them with accommodation and support in the early stages of their transition. Much of the literature argues that the bridging mechanism between asylum and refugee status operated by the government does not function seamlessly (Ager and Strang 2004, 2008, Refugee Council 2009) yet this research shows how refugees do draw on the support of the social network until they are able to stand on their own feet. Until now research on social capital of refugees has concentrated on looking at ideas such as bonding and bridging as well as strong and weak ties (Ager and Strang 2004, Zetter, Griffiths et al 2005). However, no research highlights how social capital is shared across different forms of immigration status. Social networks do not sit within one classification of immigration status but straddle different categories. This means that members will have different immigration statuses which entail a variance of recognised rights across the membership of the network. This has a serious impact on the types of social capital needed (which are; emotional, informational and instrumental), to meet the needs of the network social capital must be consistent, but flexible. What is key for this research is that asylum seekers, who legally have the most restrictive entitlements, are supporting others who in theory have no restriction to rights.

The role that the social network plays in the settlement process straddles the rupture that is the end of the asylum process and the beginning of the refugee status stage. In facilitating the settlement process for refugees the social capital in the network can prove invaluable. The findings of this research support Ryan's (2008) assertion that migrant social capital is specific and adaptable due to a changing environment, which is of particular relevance when asylum seekers become refugees. This transition process is swift and as explained in Chapter 8, local support mechanisms cannot react quickly enough to support new status refugees. However, this research demonstrates that the social network can quickly adapt its social capital to meet the needs of refugees. The changing environment was the imposition of dispersal and an alternate support scheme which created the liminal space. In this space asylum seekers are compelled to create social networks and mobilise social capital to overcome the hardship of the living conditions. In Chapters 6-8 evidence is presented that resonates with Bourdieu's (1986) view on social capital of migrants having economic, social and cultural traits. However, it is Schaefer-McDaniel's (2004) model of social capital which consists of strands of emotional, informational and instrumental support that resonates closest to the findings of this research. Emotional support seems to be a key form of social capital, the participants presented evidence that the difficulties of being an asylum seeker in the UK created high levels of emotional distress (which is compounded by other experiences in the refugee journey). Just to have someone to talk to who understands your situation and listens to you is a valued commodity. Reinforcing the emotional support, informational and instrumental support provided social networks with capital that could be shared amongst its members. The trust that developed amongst members and the lack of trust of outside institutions led to individuals increasingly staying within the network.

9.5 The Role that Networks Play in Developing a Sense of *belonging* within a Dispersal City

The aspirations of participants in this research are to be granted refugee status and settle in the UK. After being dispersed to Coventry several Congolese asylum seekers were granted status and settled in the city. However, the process was not easy. The

difficulties of bridging from the end of the asylum process and onto mainstream support are fraught with problems that can make refugees destitute.

Due to the punitive nature of the asylum process, asylum seekers become suspicious of government institutions and other agencies who work in the asylum process. Negative media and public sentiment awakens asylum seekers to the fact that they are not completely welcome. Finally, the length of time it takes asylum seekers to go through the process slowly erodes faith and hope. These three points impact on participants' trust in institutions and society in general. The social network has been the main support for individuals while in the asylum process and when they exit it. The difficulty that individuals endure only conditions this lack of trust. At the same time trust in the social network is enhanced as it provides consistent support.

With this in mind the idea of *creating a sense of belonging* (or integration) is problematic. If the phrase is to be interpreted as developing a sense of belonging to the neighbourhood or the city of Coventry then the response is that, for the most part, it does not. When discussing integration, there is a notion of permanence which is just not the case for asylum seekers. The majority of the asylum seekers in this research will probably not receive refugee status and will be required to return to the DRC. Moreover, it is difficult to establish this sense of belonging amongst a group of people who do not enjoy the same level of access to resources as other members of the community. Asylum seekers do develop friendships with other Coventry residents outside of the network, and become aware of aspects of city life such as the football team etc.

However, if the term was rephrased to intimate that the social network creates another form of belonging, the answer would be in the affirmative. The asylum process is a liminal stage where individuals feel alienated and lost. The social network creates a family like surrounding that brings people together. In this research, ideas such as networks and social capital have a dual meaning within the refugee experience. These concepts help asylum seekers create a *sense of belonging* within the network that counteracts any external sense of not belonging.

The driving form of social capital in the network is friendship. The strong friendships between members are based on trust.

The sense of belonging is developed over time as asylum seekers continually have negative experiences of the asylum process and become increasingly disillusioned. However, the friendships developed in the social network yield loyalty to the others in the network. Recognising the collective nature of the network and how important it is to contribute fosters a lasting sense of responsibility. This sense of loyalty and friendship transcends the liminal stage of asylum and includes supporting members who are no longer asylum seekers. Supporting refugees demonstrates that social networks of asylum seekers transcend the asylum process. The fact that refugees look to the support of the social network demonstrates that the sense of belonging is with the social network. In the liminal stage asylum seekers suffer exclusion due to being on a separate and punitive form of support, they also face animosity from the media and the local population. In the social network they are bound by language, custom, national and regional identity but more importantly by the shared experience of being asylum seekers. The social network uses social capital as a means of negotiating space for asylum seekers. The relationship between the asylum process and the manner in which social networks evolve and develop social capital cannot be underestimated and is an integral component of the refugee experience.

Chapter 10: Key Findings and Recommendations:

10.1 Contributions to academic knowledge are:

- 1) The key contribution to knowledge is that the social network in this research is an essential, and the sole, bridging and plugging mechanism of gaps in the asylum system.**

This research presents the social network as support mechanism for asylum seekers passing through the asylum process. It shows how the social network is coordinated by a liminal expert who plays a key role in bringing the members of the social network together, recognising the skills that individuals in the network and mobilising them as forms of social capital. The liminal expert also has a well-developed understanding of external actors and agencies and is able to ensure that the social network can enable its members to overcome hardship. In certain cases that means knowing external groups who can supply support, however it is more likely that solutions are sourced from within the network. The study provides evidence that agencies contracted by the Home Office to provide support to asylum seekers recognise the effectiveness of social networks. Asylum seekers who participated in the research gave examples of when they were told by service providers to get help from their friends when agencies were unable to provide support. The network is a prime example of individuals' agency to develop a support mechanism in face of a punitive asylum process places asylum seekers in a multi-layered predicament. First is that the asylum process is limited in the extent of support available. Secondly, the support that is legally provided is poorly delivered. Both forms only exacerbate the marginalisation of asylum seekers.

- 2) The experience of asylum undermines individuals' ability to integrate once they gain refugee status, as their social field has become very narrow and they have lost trust in the state.**

The asylum process is a long and demoralising experience for asylum seekers. On one side institutional trust in the asylum process deteriorates the longer an individual stays in the system. This deterioration of trust is also applicable to most government and voluntary sector agencies, and is re-enforced by negative experiences. At the same time social trust within the network increases. As a result the network becomes the world of asylum seekers. This is exacerbated by structural and legal issues. The asylum process is not the reason that the social network developed. The states' treatment of asylum seekers and refugees which excludes creates a liminal space that leads the social network to develop social capital to specific to delivering support to the members of the social network.

3) From a methodological perspective that concepts such as liminality, social networks and social capital open up avenues of researching the lives of asylum seekers living in dispersal.

The concepts used in this research have been effective in providing the basis to understand the lives of the asylum seekers presented.

Key Findings: the findings presented refer back to the concepts that were highlighted in the Literature Review;

The existing academic knowledge discussed in the literature review enabled the researcher to develop a conceptual framework. It also demonstrates how pertinent the concepts presented in the literature review are in the lives of asylum seekers. The following findings from the research only enhance the academic understanding of these concepts in an asylum seeker context.

10.2 Refugee Experience

This study demonstrates how the asylum process is a key episode in the refugee experience for people who have come to the UK. It shows that having to pass through the asylum process is an integral component of the refugee journey and is unique in that it cannot be applied to the experiences of other forms of migrants.

10.3 Liminality

The research reveals how the asylum process opens a liminal space in which asylum seekers are forced to exist. For the friendship ties and the social network that forms the basis of this research, the role that asylum policy plays in the actual formation is critical. Asylum policy introduced dispersal which is the liminal space (or stage) being referred here. It identifies the importance that liminality plays in the development of social networks and social capital. It also shows how it develops a space where liminal experts can establish a presence, help develop social networks and generate social capital.

10.4 Social Network

The social network has been the main support for individuals while in the asylum process and continues to be when they exit it. Social networks form between asylum seekers as they begin their asylum journey. The thesis tells us how the social network operates within the asylum system and what function it performs. This social network did not develop as a result of asylum process, however its members and in particular the liminal expert recognised the potential of the network as a support mechanism. Friendships develop due to proximity and familiarity while existing in an alien environment. Friendship ties are common in the temporary emergency accommodation stage but asylum seekers find it easier to develop social networks in dispersal accommodation where the numbers of other asylum seekers are more numerous. Networks develop as a means of friendship. There is no defining point where a friendship tie becomes a social network, that point is difficult to define and somewhat fuzzy. What is important is that both are used to mobilise social capital to support asylum seekers.

What emerges in this research is that the social network is reactive to the asylum process, but is based on friendship. What at first was a series of weak ties evolves over the length of the asylum process where relations in the social network between members is much more in line with what would be considered strong friendships. Asylum seekers are constantly at risk of falling through the asylum support process which means that they become destitute. At this point social networks provide a

support umbrella for members. Having spent several years living in Coventry the social network has enabled asylum seekers to learn about living in Coventry and the UK. It has provided a support mechanism that provides support while existing in the liminal stage of dispersal. It also provides further support to individuals who have exited the system and are trying to re-enter by making a fresh asylum application or appealing their asylum decision.

10.5 Liminal Expert

Essential to the development of the social network is the liminal expert. The extent of the role that the liminal expert plays in the social network cannot be underestimated. This places the liminal expert as the lynchpin behind the success and continuity of the social network. The liminal expert was integral in the development and management of the network and in coordinating its members to develop social capital. He was responsible for coordinating the network, bringing people together. Internally he fostered friendships and organised social events to enhance closeness amongst the network members. Externally he developed a well-informed understanding of not only the mechanics of the asylum process but also of society in Coventry. As a result he was able to recognise external factors that threatened members of the social network and identify internal forms of social capital that could be generated to protect social network members.

10.6 Social Capital-Trust

Trust is the binding form of social capital in the network. A key aspect of this assertion is that trust is the underlying form of social capital that binds the network. However, the longer they stay in the asylum process, and develop social networks that are underpinned by trust, these weak ties transform into something more enduring. There are strong indications that at some point along the asylum journey these weak ties transformed into 'strong ties'. Due to the punitive nature of the asylum process asylum seekers become suspicious of government institutions and other agencies who work in the asylum process. Negative media and public sentiment awakens asylum seekers to the fact that they are not completely welcome. This leads to the erosion of institutional trust, while at the same social trust amongst members of the network increases.

10.7 Social Capital

The research has demonstrated that the social capital (from the social network) for asylum seekers can be identified as responding to the pressing needs of the members, particularly as they face destitution. As a collective they shared their resources to develop specific forms of social capital. This is a two sided initiative as the skills can help other individuals in the social network, but of equal importance is that it provides asylum seekers with the opportunity to contribute and feel a sense of self-worth. In Chapters 6-8 evidence is presented that resonates with Bourdieu's view on social capital of migrants having economic, social and cultural traits (1986). However, it is Schaefer-McDaniel's (2004) model of social capital which consists of strands of emotional, informational and instrumental support that resonates closest to the findings of this research. By using Schaefer-McDaniel's model, I was able to identify and categorise different forms of social capital in the network and how it was mobilised.

10.8 Refugee Integration

This research demonstrates that the settlement process starts before the asylum seeker becomes a refugee. It presents that asylum seekers can be living in the liminal space for several years and in that time, through the involvement in social networks, will develop a strong sense of community. They learn about living in their neighbourhood and the services available to them, for all intents and purposes they are technically passing through a stage of integration, similar to the process as laid out by the Refugee Integration Strategy. Ideas such as networks and social capital have a dual meaning within the refugee experience. These concepts help asylum seekers create a *sense of belonging* within the network that counteracts any external sense of not belonging.

10.9 Recommendations for future research

As this study focuses on Congolese asylum seekers, further research needs to be conducted to compare these findings with the social networks of other asylum seekers. Further research needs to adopt the methodological approach taken in this research and broaden the scope of analysis to include more than one social network.

This could include trying to look at a number of social networks in one dispersal site or investigating the links between social networks in different UK cities. This could be done by investigating one nationality of asylum seekers. In this research there was evidence of links with other social networks outside of Coventry. Also a comparative study of social networks of asylum seekers from non-Congolese backgrounds should be explored to show contrasting evidence which may give a broader understanding of social networks in the asylum process.

Use of the liminal space, social networks and social capital are effective means of investigating the lives of asylum seekers and develops a clear understanding of the day to day lives and the pressures experienced. By using these concepts enables research to investigate how asylum seekers are dynamic and that they are in a constant process of having to adapt to their changing environment. Through identifying the key forms of social capital---emotional, informational and instrumental---this research brings to the fore the importance of trust and friendships in the lives of asylum seekers. A number of recommendations for future research emerge from the findings of this research.

In addition, any further research on the social networks of asylum seekers needs to include analysis of the role of liminal experts. The importance of liminal experts in the asylum process has been discussed along with how the process creates an environment in which they flourish, it has also shown that they are integral to the development and functioning of the network.

In this respect it is important to understand the ties that bind other social networks, if they are similar and if they develop and use social capital in a similar fashion. In this respect additional research should revert its focus from the UK and investigate how social networks of internally displaced Congolese people in the DR Congo function (Autesserre 2010).

An important recommendation for supplementary policy related research is that the experience of asylum undermines individuals ability to integrate once they gain refugee status, as their social field has become very narrow and they have lost trust in the state. This form of research could be underpinned by developing an

understanding the role that the experience of liminality plays in developing trust within social networks of asylum seekers and the long term impact of liminality on integration of refugees. This includes understanding the intricacies of the different stages of immigration status and the possible impact on the nature of the social networks activities.

Bibliography

Africa Educational Trust, 2002. Refugees and asylum seekers in the learning and skills council London north area. Learning & Skills Council, London.

Ager, A., 1999. *Perspectives on the refugee experience, in refugees: Perspectives on the experience of forced migration*. Continuum.

Ager, A. and Strang, A., 2004. *Indicators of integration*. Home Office, London.

Ager, A. and Strang, A., 2008. Understanding integration: A conceptual framework. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 21(2), pp. 166-191.

Ager, A., Strang, A., O'May, F. and Garner, P., 2002. Indicators of integration: A conceptual analysis of refugee integration. Report to the Home Office on behalf of Michael Bell Associates.

Agier, M., 2002. Between war and city. *Ethnography*, 3(3), pp. 317-341.

Agier, M., 2008. *On the margins of the world: The refugee experience*. Polity.

Agozino, B., 2000. *Theoretical and methodological issues in migration research: Interdisciplinary, intergenerational and international perspectives*. Ashgate.

Ahearn, F., Loughry, M. and Ager, A., 1999. The experience of refugee children. In A. Ager (Ed.), *Refugees: Perspectives on the experience of forced migration*. pp. 215-236. Continuum.

Allsopp, J, Sigona, N. and Phillimore, J., 2014 Poverty among refugees and asylum seekers in the UK, IRiS WP Series, 01/14.

Anderson, B., 1991. *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. Verso.

Anderson, B., Gibney, M. and Paoletti, E., 2011. Citizenship, deportation and the boundaries of belonging, *Citizenship Studies* 15, pp. 547-63.

Anderson, B. and Rogaly, B., 2005. *Forced labour and migration to the UK*. COMPAS and TUC.

Anderson, I. and Sim, D., 2000. *Social exclusion and housing: Context and challenges*. Chartered Institute of Housing, London.

Anie, A. et. al., 2005. An exploration of factors affecting the successful dispersal of asylum seekers, Home Office Online Report 50/05, Home Office.

Anthias, F., 1998 Rethinking social divisions: Some notes towards a theoretical framework, *The Sociological Review*, 46(3), pp. 505-535.

Anthias, F., 2001a. New hybridities, old concepts: The limits of 'culture', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 24(4), pp. 619-641.

Anthias, F., 2001b. The material and the symbolic in theorizing social stratification: Issues of gender, ethnicity and class, *British Journal of Sociology*, 52(3), pp. 367-390.

Anthias, F., 2002. Where do I belong?, *Ethnicities*, 2(4), pp. 491-514.269.

- Appadurai, A., 1988. Introduction: Place and voice in anthropological theory. *Cultural Anthropology*, 3(1), pp. 16–20.
- Appadurai, A., 2001a. Deep democracy: urban governmentality and the horizon of politics. *Environment and Urbanization*, 13(2), pp. 23-43.
- Appadurai, A., 2001b. *Globalization*. Durham.
- Asylum Aid, 2002. White paper response, viewed on 27 March 2002, at: <http://www.asylumsupportinfo/whitepaperreponses/asylumaid.htm>
- Atfield, G., 2004. 'The migration two-step: Negotiating migration chains between Diyarbakir, Istanbul and London, [Report]
- Atfield, G, Brahmbhatt, K. and O'Toole, T., 2007. Refugees' experiences of integration. British Refugee Council and University of Birmingham, UK. at: http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/policy/position/2007/Integration_work.htm
- Audit Commission, 2000a. Another country: Implementing dispersal under the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999. Audit Commission, London.
- Audit Commission, 2000b. A new city: Supporting asylum seekers and refugees in London, Audit Commission, London.
- Autesserre, S., 2010. *The trouble with the Congo: Local violence and the failure of international peacebuilding* (Vol. 115). Cambridge University Press.
- Azimi, S. and Hynes, T., 2003 (March). Slowly but surely rights are denied: Why funding counts, in *Refugee women's news: Asylum in the UK - Out in the cold?*, Refugee Women's Association, London.
- Babbie, E., 2013. *The basics of social research*. Cengage Learning.
- Baines, E., 2004. *Vulnerable bodies: Gender, the UN and the global refugee crisis*. Ashgate Publishing Limited.
- Baker, R., 1990. The refugee experience: Communication and stress, recollections of a refugee survivor. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 3 (1), pp. 64-71. doi: 10.1093/jrs/3.1.64
- Bakewell, O., 2010. Some reflections on structure and agency in migration theory. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 36(10), pp.1689-1708.
- Banks, J., 2008. Constructing criminality: Discursive representations of asylum seekers and refugees, The European Society of Criminology Conference 2008, The University of Edinburgh.
- Baycan, F., 2003a. Out of the loop: The disempowerment of refugee women in urban regeneration, MA Urban Regeneration, University of Westminster
- Baycan, F., 2003 (September). Deconstructing 'refugee women', in *In-Exile*, Refugee Council, London.
- Becker, S. and Bryman, A., 2004. Understanding research for social policy and practice: Themes, methods and approaches. Policy Press.
- Beirens, H., Hughes, N., Hek, R. and Spicer, N., 2007. Preventing social exclusion of refugee and asylum seeking children: Building new networks. *Social Policy and Society*, 6, pp 219229, doi: 10.1017/S1474746406003484.

- Béland, D. and Hansen, R., 2000. Reforming the French welfare state: Solidarity, social exclusion and the three crises of citizenship. *West European Politics*, 23(1), pp. 47-64.
- Beresford, P. and Green, D., 1996. Income and wealth: An opportunity to reassess the UK poverty debate. *Critical Social Policy*, 16 (46), pp. 95- 109.
- Berg, B. L., 2007. *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences*. Pearson.
- Berger, P. L. and Luckmann, T., 1966. *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. Doubleday.
- Berkowitz, B., and Cashman, S., 2000. Building healthy communities: Lessons and challenges. *Community*, 3(2), pp. 1-7.
- Bernard, H. R., 1995. *Research methods in anthropology. Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Sage Publications.
- Berry, J.W., 1997. Immigration, acculturation, and adaptation. *Applied Psychology*, 46(1), pp. 5-34.
- Blaikie, N., 1993. *Approaches to social enquiry*. Polity Press.
- Bloch, A., (1996), A Survey of Refugee Resettlement: Some Theoretical and Methodological Issues, British Sociological Association Annual Conference, University of Reading.
- Bloch, A., 1997. Refugee migration and settlement: A case study of the London Borough of Newham, Ph.D. Thesis, Department of Social Policy and Politics, Goldsmiths College, University of London.
- Bloch, A., 1999. Carrying out a survey of refugees: Some methodological considerations and guidelines. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 12(4), pp. 367 -83.
- Bloch, A., 2000a. A new era or more of the same? Asylum policy in the UK. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 13(1), pp. 29-42.
- Bloch, A., 2000b. Refugee settlement in Britain: The impact of policy on participation. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 26(1), pp. 75-88.
- Bloch, A. and Chimienti, M., 2011. Irregular migration in a globalizing world. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 34, pp. 1271-85.
- Bloch, A., Galvin, T. and Harrell-Bond, B., 2000 Refugee women in Europe: Some aspects of the legal and policy dimensions. *International Migration*, 38(2), pp. 169-88.
- Bloch, A. and Schuster, L., 2002. Asylum and welfare: Contemporary debates. *Critical Social Policy*, 22(3), pp. 393-414.
- Bloch, A. and Schuster, L., 2005. At the extremes of exclusion: Deportation, detention and dispersal. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 28(3), pp. 491-512.
- Bloch, A., Sigona, N. and Zetter, R., 2009. *Young undocumented migrants in England*. PHF.
- Bloch, A., N. Sigona and Zetter, R., 2011. Migration routes and strategies of young undocumented migrants in England: A qualitative perspective. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 34, pp. 1286-302.
- Blunkett, D., 2001. Asylum, migration and citizenship – Home Secretary’s Statement to the House of Commons: 29 October, Immigration & Nationality Directorate, at: <http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/news.asp?NewsId=101&SectionId=3>

- Bocker, A. and Havinga, T., 1998. Asylum applications in the European Union: Patterns and trends and the effects of policy measures. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 11(3), pp. 245-66.
- Bommes, M., 1999, Migration und Nationaler Wohlfahrtsstaat: ein differenzierungstheoretischer Entwurf. Westdeutscher Verlag.
- Bommes, M. and Geddes, A., 2000. Immigration and welfare: Challenging the borders of the welfare state. Routledge.
- Boswell, C., 2001. Spreading the costs of asylum seekers: A critical assessment of dispersal policies in Germany and the UK. Anglo-German Foundation for the Study of Industrial Society, London.
- Boswell, C., 2003. Burden-sharing in the European Union: Lessons from the German and UK experience. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 16(3)
- Boswell, C., 2005. The ethics of refugee policy. Ashgate.
- Boswell, C. and Crisp, J., 2004. Poverty, international migration and asylum. Helsinki, Finland : United Nations University, World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU-WIDER), 34, p. 30.
- Botero, A., Lyon, F., Sepluveda, L., and Syrett, S., 2006. Refugees, new arrivals and enterprise, Centre for Enterprise and Economic Development Research (CEEDR), Middlesex University.
- Bott, E., 2002[1956]. Urban families: Conjugal roles and social networks, reprinted in J. Scott (ed.) *Social Networks*, pp. 331-72. Routledge.
- Bourdieu, P., 1967. *Reproduction*. Routledge.
- Bourdieu, P., 1977. *Outline of a theory of practice*. Cambridge University Press.
- Bourdieu, P., 1986[1979]. *Distinction: a social critique of the judgement of taste*. Routledge.
- Bourdieu, P., 1986. The forms of capital, in J. Richardson (ed.) *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, pp. 241-58. Greenwood Press.
- Bourdieu, P., 2003. *Firing back: against the tyranny of the market 2*. Verso.
- Bourdieu, P. and Wacquant, L. J. D., 1992. *An invitation to reflexive sociology*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bourdieu, P., The Forms of Capital, in Halsey et al., (1997), *Education: Culture, Economy, Society*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Boyd, M., 1989. Family and personal networks in international migration: Recent developments and new agendas. *International Migration Review*, 23(3), pp.638-672.
- Boyle, P. et al, 1998. *Exploring contemporary migration*. Longman.
- Brown, D., 2007. Employment and skills research into asylum seekers and refugees in Yorkshire and The Humber: A review of existing data and recommendations.
- Bryman, A., 1998. *Quantity and quality in social research*. Routledge.
- Bryman, A., 2012. *Social research methods*. Oxford University Press.
- Bryman, A. and Burgess, B. (Eds.), 2002. *Analyzing qualitative data*. Routledge.

- Bunyan and Webber, 1999. Intergovernmental cooperation on immigration and asylum. Churches Commission for Migrants in Europe. CCME Briefing Paper no. 19.
- Burchardt, T., 2004. Selective inclusion: Asylum seekers and other marginalised groups, in Hills, J. and K. Stewart, (eds.), *A More Equal Society? New Labour, Poverty, Inequality and Exclusion*. Policy Press.
- Burchardt, T. et al., 2002a. Degrees of exclusion: Developing a dynamic, multidimensional measure, in Hills, J. et al., (eds.), *Understanding Social Exclusion*. Oxford University Press.
- Burchardt, T. et al., 2002b. Introduction, in Hills, J. et al., (eds.), *Understanding Social Exclusion*. Oxford University Press.
- Burnett, A. and Peel, M., 2001. Asylum seekers and refugees in Britain. *British Medical Journal*, 322, pp.485-488.
- Callamard, 1999. A methodology for gender-sensitive research. Amnesty International, International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development.
- Calvar, J., 1999. Asylum seekers and refugees in the UK: The role of refugee community organisations and refugee agencies in the settlement process, Ph.D. Thesis, School of Social Sciences, Middlesex University.
- Camino, L.A. and Krulfeld, R.M., 1994. Reconstructing lives, recapturing meaning: Refugee identity, gender and culture change. Gordon & Breach Publishers.
- Carey-Wood, J., et al., (1995), The settlement of refugee in Britain, Home Office Research and Planning Unit report, HMSO, London.
- CARF (Campaign Against Racism and Fascism), 2001 How the tabloids harass refugees, CARF 61(Apr. /May), pp. 12-13.
- Carter, M. and El-Hassan, A.A., 2003. Between NASS and a hard place, The Housing Associations' Charitable Trust (HACT), London.
- Castles, S., 2000. *Ethnicity and globalization*. Sage.
- Castles, S., 2003. Towards a sociology of forced migration and social transformation. *Sociology*, 37(1), pp. 13-34.
- Castles, S., 2004. Why migration policies fail. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 27(2), pp.205-227.
- Castles, S., 2005. Transcript from the colloquium, Policy-driven research or research-driven policy? at the Forced Migration Student Conference, Oxford Brookes University (unpublished transcript).
- Castles, S. and Davidson, A., 2000. *Citizenship and migration: Globalization and the politics of belonging*. Palgrave.
- Castles, S. et al, 2003a. Integration: Mapping the field, Home Office Online Report 28/03, London.
- Castles, S. et al, 2003b. States of Conflict: Causes and patterns of forced migration to the EU and policy responses, IPPR, London.
- Castles, S. and Loughna, S., 2004. Globalization, migration and asylum, in George, V. and R.M. Page (eds.), *Global Social Problems and Global Social Policy*, Polity Press.

- Castles, S. and Miller, M.J., 2003. *The age of migration: International population movements in the modern world*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Castles, S. and Miller, M. J., 2009 (4th edition), *The age of migration. International population movements in the modern world*. Macmillan.
- Cederberg, M. (2005) *Everyday Racism in Malmö, Sweden. The experiences of Bosnians and Somalis*. Unpublished PhD Thesis, Nottingham Trent University, 2005.
- Cederberg, M. (2006) 'Institutional perceptions of the 'refugee' and refugees' experiences of Swedish society', *Studi Emigrazione*, (XLIII) 162: 379-396.
- Chambers, R. (1983). *Rural development: Putting the last first* (Vol. 198). London: Longman.
- Chavez, L.R. (1992) *Shadowed Lives: Undocumented Immigrants in American Society*. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers.
- Cheung, S. Y., & Phillimore, J. (2013). Refugees, social capital, and labour market integration in the UK. *Sociology*, 0038038513491467.
- https://www.childrensociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/tcs/Policy/asylum-inquiry/still_human_still_here.pdf
- Chimni, B. S., 2000. Globalization, humanitarianism and the erosion of refugee protection. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 13(3), pp. 243-263.
- Clarendon, E. H., 1955. *Selections from The history of the Rebellion and Civil Wars, and The life* (Vol. 544). Oxford University Press.
- Clark, William M., 1836. *Tales of the wars* (Vol. 1).
- Coghlan, B., et. al., 2003. Mortality in the Democratic Republic of Congo: An ongoing crisis. Report for International Rescue Committee, Burnet Institute, viewed on at: http://www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/migrated/resources/2007/2006-7_congomortalitysurvey.pdf
- Cohen, R., 1997. *Global diasporas*. UCL Press.
- Cohen, R., 1998. Transnational social movements: an assessment, Transnational Communities Programme (WPTC 10), University of Oxford, 19 June.
- Cohen, R. and Layton-Henry, Z. (eds.), 1997. *The politics of migration*. Edward Elgar.
- Cohen, S., 2003. *No-one is illegal: Asylum and immigration control past and present*. Stoke on Trent.
- Cohen, S. et al., 2002. *From immigration controls to welfare controls*. Routledge.
- Coker, N., 2001. Asylum seekers' and refugees' health experience. Health Care UK-London-Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy.
- Coleman, J.S., 1988. Social capital and the creation of human capital. *American Journal of Sociology*, 94, pp.95-121.
- Coleman, J.S., 1990. *Foundations of social theory*. Harvard University Press.
- Collinson, S., 1995. Europe and international migration. *International Journal of Refugee Law*, 7, pp. 545-547.

- Collyer, M., 2003. Explaining change in established migration systems: The movement of Algerians to France and the UK. University of Sussex, Brighton, Migration Working Paper 16.
- Collyer, M., 2004. *The Algerian community in Britain*. Kings College, ICAR CountryGuide, at: <http://www.icar.org>
- Collyer, M., 2005. When do networks fail to explain migration? Accounting for the movement of Algerian asylum seekers to the UK. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 31(4), July, pp.699-718.
- Collyer, M., 2008. The reinvention of political community in a transnational setting: framing the Kabyle citizens' movement. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 31 (4). pp. 687-707. ISSN 0141-9870
- Connerton, P., 1989. *How societies remember*. Cambridge University Press.
- Coventry City Council, 2003. Asylum Seeker Strategy, Coventry.
- Coventry City Council, 2006. Asylum and Refugee Strategy Draft.
- Coventry Local Strategic Partnership, 2003. at: <http://www.coventrypartnership.com/upload/documents/webpage/document4.pdf>
- Coventry (Grose 1811 dictionary). at: www.fromoldbooks.org. Retrieved 2010-07-01
- http://www.coventry.gov.uk/ccm/cms-service/stream/asset/?asset_id=20405016. Retrieved 2010-11-25)
- Cox, E., 2000. Diversity and community: Conflict and trust?, in E. Vasta (ed.) *Citizenship, Community and Democracy*, pp. 71–90. Macmillan.
- Crawley, H., 1997. *Women as asylum seekers: A legal handbook*.
- Crawley, H., 2005.. Evidence on attitudes to asylum and immigration: What we know, don't know and need to know. Centre on Migration, Policy & Society.
- Crawley, H., Hemmings, J. and Price, N. (eds.), 2011. Coping with destitution: Survival and livelihood strategies of refused asylum seekers living in the UK. Oxfam Research Report produced by Centre for Migration Policy and Research (CMPR), University of Swansea. viewed on 10 November 2015, at: <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/>
- Crisp, J., 1999. Policy challenges of the new diasporas: Migrant networks and their impact on asylum flows and regimes', Working Paper no. 7. Geneva: UNHCR.
- Crisp, J., 2004. The local integration and local settlement of refugees: A conceptual and historical analysis, new issues in refugee research, Working Paper No.102. Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit, UNHCR, Geneva.
- Crosby, A., 2006. *The boundaries of belonging: Reflections on migration policies into the 21st century*. Inter Pares.
- Daniel, E. V., 1995. *Mistrusting refugees*. University of California Press.
- de Certeau, M., 1984. *The practice of everyday life*. University of California Press.
- Demos, T. J., 2003. *Rethinking site-specificity*.

- Denham, J., 2006. Immigration control: Fifth report of session 2005-06 (Vol. 775). The Stationery Office.
- Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S., 2000. Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research, in Denzin, N.K. and Y.S. Lincoln (eds.) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, pp. 1-28. Sage.
- Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. S. (eds.), 2003. *Collecting and interpreting qualitative materials*. Sage Publications.
- de Wenden, C.W., 1994. Immigrants as political actors in France. *West European Politics*, 17(2), pp. 91-109.
- Doyle, L., 2009. 'I hate being idle': Wasted skills and enforced dependence among Zimbabwean asylum seekers in the UK. British Refugee Council, London, July.
- Duke, K., 1996. Refugee communities in the UK: The role of the community group in the resettlement process. British Sociological Association Annual Conference, University of Reading.
- Duke, K., Sales, R. and Gregory, J., 1999. Refugee resettlement in Europe. *Refugees, Citizenship and Social Policy in Europe*, 6, pp. 105-131.
- Dumper, H., 2002. Is it safe here? Refugee women's experiences in the UK. Refugee Action, London.
- Dunkerley, D., et. al., 2006. Children seeking asylum in Wales. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 19(4), pp. 488-508.
- Durkheim, E., 1893. *De la division du travail social: étude sur l'organisation des sociétés supérieures*, Paris: F. Alcan. (Translated, 1964, by Lewis A. Coser as *The Division of Labor in Society*. Free Press.)
- Düvell, F. and Jordan, B., 2002. Immigration, asylum and welfare: the European context. *Critical Social Policy*, 22(3), pp. 498-517.
- Duvell, F., 2005. Active participation of immigrants in the United Kingdom, Report of the European POLITIS research project, Universit t at Oldenburg, at: www.ini-oldenburg.de/politis-europe.
- Dwyer, P. and Brown, D., 2005. Meeting basic needs? Exploring the welfare strategies of forced migrants. School of Sociology and Social Policy, University of Leeds.
- http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/archive/urban2/urban/initiative/programmes/coventry.html
- Esterhuizen, L., 2004. Doing case studies for the refugee sector: A DIY handbook for agencies and practitioners. ICAR.
- Fairclough, N., 2000. *New labour, new language?*. Routledge.
- Faist, T., 2000. *The volume and dynamics of international migration*. Oxford University Press.
- Faist, T. and E. Ozveren (eds.), 2004. *Transnational social spaces: Agents, networks and institutions*. Ashgate.

- Farah, N. and Mama, M., 1999. *Yesterday, tomorrow*. Cassell.
- Farmanfarmaian, A. 1992. Subsystems, subjectivity and subversion: Iranian refugees in illegal transit. *History and Anthropology*, 6(1), pp.87-102.
- Ferris, E. G. and World Council of Churches, 1993. *Beyond borders: Refugees, migrants and human rights in the post-Cold War era*. WCC publications.
- Finch, N., 2001. The support and dispersal of asylum seekers. Asylum seekers a guide to recent legislation, 17-25.
- Finney, N. and Peach, E., 2004. Attitudes towards asylum seekers, refugees and other immigrants, Commission for Racial Equality, London.
- Finney, N. and Robinson, V., 2008. Local press, dispersal and community in the construction of asylum debates. *Social & Cultural Geography*, 9(4), pp. 397-413.
- Flynn, D., 2005. New borders, new management: The dilemmas of modern immigration policies. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 28(3), pp. 463-490.
- Flynn, M., 2005. Formal and informal strategies of migrant populations. Russian Civil Society: A Critical Assessment.
- Foley, M. and Edwards, B., 1999. Is it time to disinvest in social capital? *Journal of Public Policy*. 19(2), pp. 141-173.
- Fox, L., 1947. Coventry's heritage: An introduction to the history of the city. Coventry Evening Telegraph.
- Franklin, J., (ed.), 2004. Politics, trust and networks: Social capital in critical perspective, Families and Social Capital ESRC Research Group, London South Bank University, London.
- Fuglerud, Ø., 1999. *Life on the outside: The Tamil Diaspora and long distance nationalism*. Pluto Press.
- Gabrielatos, C. and Baker, P., 2008. Fleeing, sneaking, flooding a corpus analysis of discursive constructions of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK press, 1996-2005. *Journal of English Linguistics*, 36(1), pp. 5-38.
- Geddes, A., 2000. *Immigration and European integration: Towards fortress Europe?* Manchester University Press.
- Geddes, A., 2003a. *The politics of migration and immigration in Europe*. Sage.
- Geddes, A., 2003b. Migration and the welfare state in Europe, in S. Spencer (ed.), *The Politics of Migration: Managing Opportunity, Conflict and Change*. Blackwell.
- Gibney, M. J., 2001. *The state of asylum: democratization, judicialization and evolution of refugee policy in Europe*. UNHCR.
- Gibney, M. J., 2004. *The ethics and politics of asylum: liberal democracy and the response to refugees*. Cambridge University Press.
- Giddens, A., 1984. *The constitution of society*. Polity Press.
- Giddens, A. and Pierson, C., 1998. *Conversations with Anthony Giddens: Making sense of modernity*. Stanford University Press.

- Gilbert, P. A. and Koser, D. K., 2006. Coming to the UK: What do asylum-seekers know about the UK before arrival?. *Journal of ethnic and migration studies*. 32(7), pp. 1209-1225.
- Gilroy, P. and Ouseley, H., 2005. *Is faith redefining the race equality project? Islam, race and being British*. Guardian/Barrow Cadbury Trust.
- Gold, S. J., 1992. *Refugee communities: A comparative field study* (Vol. 4). Sage Publications, Inc.
- Goodman, N., 1978. *Ways of worldmaking*. Hackett Publishing Company Incorporated.
- Goodson, L. J. and Phillimore, J., 2008. Social capital and integration: the importance of social relationships and social space to refugee women. *International Journal of Diversity in Organisations, Communities and Nations*, 7 (6), pp. 181-94.
- Goodson, L. and Phillimore, J., 2012. *Community research for participation: From theory to method*. Policy Press.
- Granovetter, M.S., 1973. The strength of weak ties, *American Journal of Sociology*, 78(6), pp. 1360-1380.
- Granovetter, M.S., 1983. The strength of weak ties. A network theory revisited. S. 201–233 in: Randall Collins (Hg.). *Sociological Theory*, 1.
- Greater London Authority, 2005. *Into the labyrinth: Legal advice for asylum seekers in London* Mayor of London Office.
- Griffiths, D., 2002. *Somali and Kurds refugees in London*. Ashgate.
- Griffiths, D., Sigona, N. and Zetter, R., 2005. *Refugee community organisations and dispersal*. Policy Press.
- Griffiths, M., 2005. *Encyclopedia of international relations and global politics*. Routledge.
- Grenier, G. J., Pérez, L., Chun, S. C. and Gladwin, H., 2007. *There are Cubans, there are Cubans, and there are Cubans: Ideological diversity among Cuban Americans in Miami. Latinos in a changing society*. Praeger.
- Grillo, R., 2005. 'Saltdean can't cope': Protests against asylum-seekers in an English seaside suburb. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 28(2), pp. 235-260.
- Grose, F., 1811. *Dictionary of the vulgar tongue. A dictionary of buckish slang, university wit and pickpocket eloquence*. Unabridged from the original.
- Grzymała-Kazłowska, A., 2005. From ethnic cooperation to in-group competition: Undocumented Polish workers in Brussels. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 31(4), pp.675-697.
- Hacking, I., 1999. *The social construction of what?*, Harvard University Press.
- Hacking, I., 2002. *Historical ontology*. Harvard University Press.
- Hacking, I., 2004. Between Michel Foucault and Erving Goffman: Between discourse in the abstract and face-to-face interaction. *Economy and Society*, 33(3), pp. 277-302.
- Hakim, K., 2000 (May). *Research design: Successful designs for social and economic research* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

- Hammersley, M., 1998. *Reading ethnographic research*. Longman.
- Hammersley, M. and Atkinson, P., 1983. *Ethnography: Principles in practice*. Tavistock.
- Hanifan, L. J., 1916. The rural school community center. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, pp. 130-138.
- Hansen, A. and Oliver-Smith, A., 1982. Involuntary migration and resettlement: the problems and responses of dislocated people.
- Hansen, R. and King, D., 2000. Illiberalism and the new politics of asylum: liberalism's dark side. *The Political Quarterly*, 71(4), pp. 396-403.
- Harrell-Bond, B., 1986. *Imposing aid: Emergency Assistance to Refugees*. Oxford University Press.
- Harrell-Bond, B., 1999. Refugees' experiences as aid recipients. Refugees: perspectives on the experience of forced migration, pp. 136-68.
- Harrell-Bond, B. E. and Voutira, E., 1992. Anthropology and the study of refugees. *Anthropology Today*, pp. 6-10.
- Harrison, M. and Phillips, D., 2003. Housing and Black and minority ethnic communities. Review of the evidence base.
- Harvey, C. J., 2000. Gender, refugee law and the politics of interpretation. *International Journal of Refugee Law*, 12(4), pp. 680-694.
- Hayes, D., Humphries, B. and Cohen, S., 2004. *Social work, immigration and asylum: Debates, dilemmas and ethical issues for social work and social care practice*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Heath, T., Jeffries, R. and Pearce, S., 2006. Asylum statistics United Kingdom 2005. Statistical Bulletin-Home Office Research Development and Statistics Directorate, p. 14.
- Hein, J., 1993. Refugees, immigrants and the state. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 19, p.43.
- Hek, R., 2005. *The experiences and needs of refugee and asylum seeking children in the UK: A literature review*. DfES Publications.
- Hek, R. and Sales, R., 2002. *Supporting refugee and asylum seeking children: an examination of support structures in schools and the community*. Middlesex University, Haringey and Islington Education Departments.
- Hewitt, R., 2005. *White backlash and the politics of multiculturalism*. Cambridge University Press.
- Hills, J. et al. (eds.), 2002. *Understanding social exclusion*. Oxford University Press.
- Home Office, 1999a. Asylum seekers support: An information document setting out proposals for the new support scheme for asylum seekers in genuine need and inviting expressions of interest from potential support providers. Immigration and Nationality Directorate, London.
- Home Office, 1999b. Fairer, faster and firmer: A modern approach to immigration and asylum. HMSO, London.
- Home Office, 2001a. Bridging the information gaps: A conference of research on asylum and immigration in the UK, report of proceedings, London.

Home Office, 2001b. Report of the operational reviews of the voucher and dispersal schemes of the national asylum support service, 29 October, London.

Home Office, 2001c. Secure borders, safe haven: Integration with diversity in modern Britain, HMSO, London.

Home Office, 2005. Controlling our borders: Making migration work for Britain – Five Year strategy for asylum and immigration. HMSO, London.

<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com>

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/archive/urban2/urban/initiative/programmes/coventry.html

http://www.coventry.gov.uk/ccm/cms-service/stream/asset/?asset_id=20405016. Retrieved 2010-11-25)

House of Commons, 2006. House of Commons Home Affairs Committee: Immigration Control, Fifth Report of Session 2005 – 2006, Volume 1, Report together with minutes. London: The Stationary Office Limited.

"Housing Corporation Assessment" 2006. Housing Corporation, August, viewed on 27 March 2002, at:

http://www.housingcorp.gov.uk/upload/pdf/HCA_Whitefriars_Housing_Group_20060808093326.pdf.

Hughes, J. and Sharrock, W., 1990. The philosophy of social research. Longman.

Human Rights Watch, 2002. Commentary on the United Kingdom Home Office White Paper: Secure Borders, Safe Haven, viewed on 27 March 2002, at:

<http://www.asylumsupportinfo/whitepaperreponses/humanrightswatch.htm>

Humphries, B., 2004. An unacceptable role for social work: Implementing immigration policy. *British Journal of Social Work*, 34(1), pp. 93-107.

Hynes, P., 2003. Experts in their own environments? Issues of trust and considerations for researchers, at 1st Annual Forced Migration Student Conference, University of Oxford, UK, February.

Hynes, P., 2007. Dispersal of asylum seekers and processes of social exclusion in England (Doctoral dissertation, Middlesex University).

Hynes, P. 2011. *The dispersal and social exclusion of asylum seekers: Between liminality and belonging*. The Policy Press.

Hynes, T., 2003. The issue of 'trust' or 'mistrust' in research with refugees: choices, caveats and considerations for researchers, New issues in refugee research, Working Paper no. 98. Geneva: UNHCR.

<http://www.icar.org.uk/9602/about-us/publications.html>

Immigration & Nationality Directorate (IND), 2003. Section 55 (Late Claims) 2002 Act Guidance, viewed on 21 January 2003 at:

<http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/default.asp?PageId=3653>

Indra, D., 1987. Gender: A key dimension of the refugee experience. *Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees*, 6(3).

- Indra, D. M., 1989. Ethnic human rights and feminist theory: Gender implications for refugee studies and practice. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 2(2), pp. 221-242.
- IOM, 2005. Viewed on http://www.iom.int/jahia/webdav/site/myjahiasite/shared/shared/mainsite/published_docs/books/wmr_sec03.pdf
- Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI), 2002. *Immigration, nationality & refugee law handbook*. JCWI, London.
- Joly, D., 1996. *Haven or hell? Asylum policies and refugees in Europe*. MacMillan.
- Joly, D., 1998. *Scapegoats and social actors: The exclusion and integration of minorities in Western and Eastern Europe*. Macmillan Press Ltd.
- Joly, D., 2001. Convergence towards a single asylum regime: A global shift of paradigm. *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 5(4), pp. 1-17.
- Jordan, B. and Duvell, F., 2002. *Irregular migration: The dilemmas of transnational mobility*. Cheltenham.
- Kabuya, Kamitanji, 2008. The social integration of Congolese refugees in a town in southern Norway. University of Tromsø.
- Kaye, R., 1994. Defining the agenda: British refugee policy and the role of parties. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 7(2/3), pp. 144-59.
- Kaye, R., 1998 Redefining the refugee: The media portrayal of asylum seekers. In K. Koser and H. Lutz (eds.) *The New Migration in Europe: Social Constructions and Social Realities*. St Martin's Press.
- Kelly, L., 2003. Bosnian refugees in Britain: Questioning community. *Sociology*, 37(1), pp. 35-49.
- Kelly, P. and Lusic, T., 2006. Migration and the transnational habitus: Evidence from Canada and the Philippines. *Environment and Planning A*, 38(5), pp. 831-48.
- Knudsen, J.C., 1995. When trust is on trial: Negotiating refugee narratives. In Daniel, E.V. and J.C. Knudsen (eds.), *Mistrusting Refugees*. University of California Press.
- Kofman, E., 2000. The invisibility of skilled female migrants and gender relations in studies of skilled migration in Europe. *International Journal of Population Geography*, 6(1), pp. 45-59.
- Kofman, E., 2002. Contemporary European migrations, civic stratification and citizenship. *Political Geography*, 21 (8), pp. 1035-54.
- Kofman, E., Phizacklea, A., Raghuram, P. and Sales, R., 2000. *Gender and international migration in Europe: Employment, welfare and politics*. Routledge.
- Koopmans, R. and Statham, P., 2000. Migration and ethnic relations as a field of political contention: an opportunity structure approach. In Koopmans, R. and Statham, P. (eds.), *Challenging immigration and ethnic relations politics*, pp. 13-56. Oxford University Press.
- Koopmans, R. and Statham, P., 2003. *How national citizenship shapes transnationalism: a comparative analysis of migrant and minority claims-making in Germany, Great Britain and the Netherlands*. In Joppke, C. and Morawska, E. (eds.), *Toward Assimilation and Citizenship: Immigrants in Liberal Nation-States*, pp. 195-238. Palgrave.

- Korac, M., 2003. Integration and how we facilitate it: A comparative study of resettlement experiences of refugees in Italy and the Netherlands. *Sociology*, 37(1), pp. 51-68.
- Koser, K., 1997. Social networks and the asylum cycle: The case of Iranians in the Netherlands. *International Migration Review*, 31(3), pp.591-611.
- Koser, K. and Lutz, H., 1998. *The new migration in Europe: Social constructions and social realities*. Macmillan Press Ltd.
- Koser, K. and Pinkerton, C., 2002. The social networks of asylum seekers and the dissemination of information about countries of asylum. Home Office, London.
- Kruger, N., 2010. *The politics of legal status for Zimbabweans in South Africa. Zimbabwe's new diaspora: Displacement and the cultural politics of survival*. Berghahn Books.
- Kumlin, S. and Rothstein, B. 2005. Making and breaking social capital the impact of welfare-state institutions. *Comparative Political Studies*, 38(4), pp. 339-365.
- Kunz, E. F., 1973. The refugee in flight: Kinetic models and forms of displacement. *International Migration Review*, 7(2), pp. 125-146.
- Kunz, E. F., 1981. Exile and resettlement: refugee theory. *International Migration Review*, pp. 42-51.
- Kushner, T. and Knox, K., 1999. *Refugees in an age of genocide*. Frank Cass.
- Kyambi, S., 2005. Beyond black and white: Mapping new immigrant communities. IPPR, London.
- Lamba, N. K. and Krahn, H., 2003. Social capital and refugee resettlement: The social networks of refugees in Canada. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 4(3), pp. 335-360.
- Lammers, E., 2005. Refugees, asylum seekers and anthropologists: The taboo of giving. *Global Migration Perspectives*.
- <http://www.lankellychase.org.uk/>
- Layton-Henry, Z., 1992. *The politics of immigration: Immigration, 'race' and 'race' relations in post-war Britain*. Blackwell.
- Layton-Henry, Z., 1994. Britain: The would-be zero-immigration country. In W. Cornelius, P. Martin and J. Hollifield (eds.), *Controlling Immigration: A Global Perspective*, pp. 273-96. Stanford University Press.
- Leonard, M., 2004 Bonding and bridging social capital: Reflections from Belfast. *Sociology*, 38(5), pp. 927-44.
- Leudar, I., Hayes, J., Nekvapil, J. and Baker, J. T., 2008. Hostility themes in media, community and refugee narratives. *Discourse & Society*, 19(2), pp. 187-221.
- Levitas, R., 1998. *The inclusive society? Social exclusion and new labour*. Palgrave.
- Levitas, R., 2000. What is social exclusion? In Gordon, D. and P. Townsend, (eds.), *Breadline Europe: The Measurement of Poverty*. Policy Press.
- Levy, C., 1999. European asylum and refugee policy after the Treaty of Amsterdam: the birth of a new regime. *Refugees, Citizenship and Social Policy in Europe*, London.

- Lewis, H., 2005. Ethics and access in researching migrant populations, postgraduate 'Talking Head', Training Workshop for Postgraduates, King's College London, for the Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees in the UK (ICAR), Centre of Migration Policy & Society, University of Oxford (COMPAS), Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), 23 June.
- Lewis, H., 2007. *Destitution in Leeds. The experiences of people seeking asylum and supporting agencies*. Joseph Rowntree Trust.
- Lewis, M., 2005. *Asylum: Understanding public attitudes*. IPPR, London.
- Lin, N., 2001. *Social capital: A theory of social structure and action*. Cambridge University Press.
- Lister, R., 1998. From equality to social inclusion: New Labour and the welfare state. *Critical Social Policy*, 18(55), pp. 215-225.
- Loizos, P., 1999. Ottoman half-lives: Long-term perspectives on particular forced migrations. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 12(3), pp. 237-63.
- Long, L.D., 1993. *Ban Vinai: The refugee camp*. Colombia University Press.
- Lupton, R. and Power, A., 2002. Social exclusion and neighbourhoods. In Hills, J. et al., (eds.), *Understanding Social Exclusion*, Oxford University Press.
- MacDonald, J.S. and MacDonald, L.D., 1974. Chain migration, ethnic neighbourhood formation and social networks. In Tilly, C. (ed.) *An Urban World*, pp 226-36. Little and Brown.
- Malfait, R. and Scott-Flynn, N., 2005. Destitution of asylum-seekers and refugees in Birmingham. Birmingham Churches Together and the Church Urban Fund.
- Malkki, L., 1995a. Refugees and exile: From 'Refugee Studies' to the national order of things. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 24, pp.495-523.
- Malkki, L., 1995b. *Purity and exile*. The University of Chicago Press.
- Malkki, L., 1997a. National geographic: The rooting of peoples and the territorialization of national identity among scholars and refugees. In Gupta, A and J. Ferguson, (eds.), *Culture, Power, Place. Explorations in Critical Anthropology*, pp. 52-74. Duke University Press.
- Malkki, L., 1997b. Speechless emissaries: Refugees, humanitarianism, and dehistoricization. In Olwig, K. F. and K. Hastrup, (eds.) *Siting Culture. The Shifting Anthropological Object*, pp. 223-254. Routledge.
- Malkki, L. H., 2002. News from nowhere: Mass displacement and globalized 'problems of organization'. *Ethnography*, 3(3), pp. 351-360.
- Mantel, H., 2009. *Wolf Hall*. Fourth Estate.
- http://mapsof.net/uploads/static-maps/United_Kingdom.gif
- Marett, V., 1993. Resettlement of Ugandan Asians in Leicester. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 6(3), pp. 248-259.
- Marshall and Batten, 2004- power imbalance in research
- Marshall, G. and Scott, J., 2005. *Oxford dictionary of sociology*. Oxford University Press.

- Marx, E., 1990. The social world of refugees: A conceptual framework. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 3(3), pp. 189-203.
- Mason, J., 2002. *Qualitative researching*. Sage Publications.
- Mason, J., 2006. Mixing methods in a qualitatively driven way. *Qualitative Research*, 6(1), pp. 9-25.
- Massey, D., 1992. *Space, place and gender*. Polity Press.
- Maughan, B., 2010. *Tony Blair's asylum policies*.
- May, T., 2001. *Social research: Issues, methods and process*. Open University Press.
- Mayor of London, 2004. Safe and sound: Asylum seekers in temporary accommodation, Greater London Authority, London.
- Mbiba, B., 2011. Beyond abject spaces: enterprising Zimbabwean diaspora in Britain. *African Diaspora*, 4(1), pp.50-75.
- McDowell, C., 1996. *A Tamil asylum diaspora: Sri Lankan Migration, settlement and politics in Switzerland*. Berghahn Books.
- McFarland, E., Dalton, M. and Walsh, D., 1989. Ethnic minority needs and service delivery: The barriers to access in a Glasgow inner-city area. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 15(3), pp. 405-415.
- McGregor, J., 2008. Abject spaces, transnational calculations: Zimbabweans in Britain navigating work, class and the law. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 33(4), pp.466-482.
- McGregor, J. and Primorac, R., 2010. *Zimbabwe's new diaspora: Displacement and the cultural politics of survival* (Vol. 31). Berghahn Books.
- McGrory, D., 1993. *Coventry: History and guide*. A. Sutton.
- MORI (2002), <http://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/researcharchive/poll.aspx?oItemId=1061>
- Morris, B., 2002. *The birth of the Palestinian refugee problems, 1947-1949* (Tel Aviv).
- Morrison, J., 1998. The cost of survival: The trafficking of refugees to the UK. Refugee Council, London.
- Moustakas, C., 1994. *Phenomenological research methods*. Sage Publications, Incorporated.
- National Association of Citizens Advice Bureau (NACAB), 2002a. Process error: CAB clients' experience of the National Asylum Support Service, CAB, London.
- National Association of Citizens Advice Bureau (NACAB), 2002b. Distant voices: CAB clients' experience of continuing problems with the National Asylum Support Service, CAB, London.
- Nauck, B., 2001. Social capital, intergenerational transmission and intercultural contact in immigrant families. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*.
- Newton, K., 2006. Social trust and politics, conference presentation, ESRC Research Methods Festival, Oxford, 17-20 July.

- Nyers, P., 2003. Abject cosmopolitanism: The politics of protection in the anti-deportation movement. *Third World Quarterly*, 24(6), pp.1069-1093.
- Oakley, A., 1992. *Social support and motherhood: the natural history of a research project*. Blackwell.
- Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2004. Tackling social exclusion: Taking stock and looking to the future, Social Exclusion Unit (SEU), London.
- O'Leary, Z., 2004. *The essential guide to doing research*. Sage.
- O'Neill, M. and Spybey, T., 2003. Global refugees, exile, displacement and belonging. *Sociology*, 37(1), pp. 7-12.
- Palloni, A., et al, 2001. Social capital and international migration: A test using information on family networks¹. *American Journal of Sociology*, 106(5), pp.1262-1298.
- Papadopoulou, A., 2005. Exploring the asylum-migration nexus: A case study of transit migrants in Europe. *Global Migration Perspectives* (23), viewed on at:
<http://www.gcim.org/gmp/Global%20Migration%20Perspectives%20No%2023.pdf>
- Pasha, T., 2003. Support and benefits for asylum seekers: Section 55 and Human Rights, conference presentation at Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Human Rights – the Balance Sheet So Far, Co-organised by British Institute of Human Rights and JCWI, 11 November, King's College, London.
- Pearl, M. and Zetter, R., 2002. From refuge to exclusion: housing as an instrument of social exclusion for refugees and asylum seekers in the UK. *Race, housing and social exclusion*, pp.226-44.
- Phillimore, J., 2011. Refugees, acculturation strategies, stress and integration. *Journal of Social Policy*, 40(3), pp.575-593.
- Phillimore, J., 2012. Implementing integration in the UK: Lessons for integration theory, policy and practice. *Policy & Politics*, 40(4), pp.525-545.
- Phillimore, J. and Goodson, L., 2005. *West Midlands Regional Housing Strategy West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy shared evidence-base Asylum seekers and refugees*. University of Birmingham.
- Phillimore, J. and Goodson, L., 2006. Problem or opportunity? Asylum seekers, refugees, employment and social exclusion in deprived urban areas. *Urban Studies*, 43(10), pp.1715-1736.
- Phillimore, J. and Goodson, L., 2008a. Making a place in the global city: The relevance of indicators of integration. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 21(3), pp.305-325.
- Phillimore, J. and Goodson, L., 2008b. *New migrants in the UK: Education, training and employment*. Trentham Books Ltd.
- Phillimore, J., Goodson, L., Beebeejaun, Y., Ferrari, E., Aldridge, F., Roy, K. and Dutton, Y., 2004. The access, learning and employment needs of newcomers from abroad and the capacity of existing provision to meet those needs. Learning and Skills Council, Birmingham and Solihull.

Phillips, D., 2006. Moving towards integration: the housing of asylum seekers and refugees in Britain. *Housing Studies*, 21(4), pp.539-553.

Piacentini, T., 2008. Contesting identities in exile: an exploration of collective self-understanding and solidarity in Refugee Community Organisations in Glasgow. *ESharp*, (11).

Piacentini, T., 2012. Moving beyond 'refugeeness': Problematizing the 'refugee community organisation'.

Piacentini, T., 2015. Missing from the picture? Migrant and refugee community organizations' responses to poverty and destitution in Glasgow. *Community Development Journal*, 50(3), pp.433-447.

Portes, A. (ed.), 1995. *The economic sociology of immigration: Essays on networks, ethnicity, and entrepreneurship*. Russell Sage Foundation.

Portes, A., 1998. Social capital: Its origins and applications in modern sociology. In Lesser, E.L. (ed.), *Knowledge and Social Capital*, pp. 43-67. Butterworth-Heinemann.

Portes, A. and Rumbaut, R.G., 2006. *Immigrant America: A portrait*. University of California Press.

Purvis, T. and Hunt, A., 1993. Discourse, ideology, discourse, ideology, discourse, ideology *British Journal of Sociology*, pp.473-499.

Putnam, R.D., Leonardi, R. and Nanetti, R.Y., 1994. *Making democracy work: Civic traditions in modern Italy*. Princeton University Press.

Putnam, R.D., 2001. *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. Simon and Schuster.

Putnam, R.D., 2007. E pluribus unum: Diversity and community in the twenty-first century the 2006 Johan Skytte Prize Lecture. *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 30(2), pp. 137-174.

Ramazanoglu, C. and Holland, J., 2002. *Feminist methodology: Challenges and choices*. Sage.

Randall, C., 1994. An Asylum-Policy for the UK. *Strangers and Citizens: A Positive Approach to Migrants and Refugees*, pp.202-31.

Refugee Action, 2003. Section 55: Witness statements, viewed on 2 December 2003, at <http://www.refugee-action.org.uk/> .

Refugee Council, 1998. Briefing on the Government's immigration & asylum, White Paper, Refugee Council, London.

Refugee Council, 1999. Immigration & Asylum Act 1999: The New Support System for Asylum Seekers, Refugee Council, London.

Refugee Council, 1999 (October). Some Thoughts on Clusters, Refugee Council, London.

Refugee Council, 2000. The Immigration & Asylum Act 1999: What you can do now. Refugee Council, London.

- Refugee Council, 2001. Refugee Council's response to the new asylum system proposals, viewed on 9 November 2001 at: <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/infocentre/asylumpropos/proposals.htm>
- Refugee Council, 2002a, *The Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002: Changes to the Asylum System in the UK*, Refugee Council, London.
- Refugee Council, 2002b. Response to the Government's Consultation on the White Paper Safe Haven, Secure Borders, viewed on 27 March 2002, at: http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/infocentre/asylumprops/cons_response/regionalisation.htm
- Refugee Council, 2002c. Government announcement and proposals since its White Paper on Asylum: A summary, Refugee Council, London.
- Refugee Council, 2002d. Withdrawal of in-country asylum support, Refugee Council briefing, London.
- Refugee Council, 2002e. Asylum by numbers: An analysis of available asylum data from 1985 to 2000, Refugee Council, London.
- Refugee Council, et al., 2003a. Joint Statement on the Withdrawal of Asylum Support for In-country Applicants, Refugee Council, Shelter, Amnesty International UK, Asylum Rights Campaign, CRISIS, JCORE, JCWI, Maternity Alliance, Medication Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture, Migrant Helpline, Oxfam, Refugee Action and Refugee Arrivals Project, London.
- Refugee Council, 2009. Basis Project, viewed on at: <http://www.refugee-action.org.uk/ourwork/documents/projects/Basis%20Project%20-%20Final%20Evaluation%20Report.pdf>
- Refugee Strategy Network, 2004. Refugees and asylum seekers in the West Midlands: Issues and actions for 2004 onwards. Refugee Strategy Network: Birmingham.
- Rein, M. and Schön, D.A., 1977. Problem setting in policy research. In Weiss, C. (ed.), *Using Social Research in Policy Making*. Lexington Books.
- Rex, J., Joly, D. and Wilpert, C., 1987. *Immigrant associations in Europe*.
- Richmond, A.H., 1988. Sociological theories of international migration: the case of refugees. *Current Sociology*, 36(2), pp.7-25.
- Richmond, A.H., 1993. Reactive migration: Sociological perspectives on refugee movements. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 6(1), pp.7-24.
- Richmond, A.H., 2002. Social exclusion: belonging and not belonging in the world system. *Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees*, 21(1).
- Richmond, A.H., 2005. Citizenship, naturalization, and asylum: the case of Britain. *Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees*, 22(2).
- Richmond, A.H. and Valtonen, K., 1994. Global apartheid: Refugees, racism, and the new world order. *Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees*, 14(6).
- Ritchie, J., Lewis, J., Nicholls, C.M. and Ormston, R. (eds.), 2013. *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers*. Sage.

Robinson, V., 1998. The importance of information in the resettlement of refugees in the UK. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 11(2), pp.146-160.

Robinson, V., 1999. Cultures of ignorance, disbelief and denial: refugees in Wales. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 12(1), pp.78-87.

Robinson, V., 2002. Doing research with refugees and asylum seekers. *Swansea Geographer*, 37, pp.61-67.

Robinson, V., Anderson, R. and Musterd, S., 2004. Spreading the burden? A review of policies to disperse asylum seekers and refugees. *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, 23(3).

Robinson, V. and Coleman, C., 2000. Lessons learned? A critical review of the government program to resettle Bosnian quota refugees in the United Kingdom. *International Migration Review*, pp.1217-1244.

Robinson, D. and Reeve, K., 2006. *Neighbourhood experiences of new immigration*. Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Rodgers, G., 2004. Hanging out with forced migrants: methodological and ethical challenges. *Forced Migration Review*, (21), pp.48-49.

Rotberg, R., 2004. *When states fail: Causes and consequences*. Princeton University Press.

Rothstein, B. and Kumlin, S., 2001. Democracy, social capital and trust. *Blessed Country, Report*, 26, pp.49-63.

rsablogs.org.uk/2009-social capital social networks

Ryan, L., 2007. Migrant women, social networks and motherhood: The experiences of Irish nurses in Britain. *Sociology*, 41(2), pp.295-312.

Ryan, L., Sales, R., Tilki, M. and Siara, B., 2008. Social networks, social support and social capital: The experiences of recent Polish migrants in London. *Sociology*, 42(4), pp.672-690.

Sales, R., 2002. The deserving and the undeserving? Refugees, asylum seekers and welfare in Britain. *Critical Social Policy*, 22(3), pp. 456-478.

Sales, R., 2005. Secure borders, safe haven: A contradiction in terms?. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 28(3), pp. 445-462.

Sales, R., 2007. *Understanding immigration and refugee policy: Contradictions and continuities*. The Policy Press.

Sales, R. and Hek, R., 2004. *Dilemmas of care and control: the work of an asylum team in a London borough. Social work, immigration and asylum: Debates, dilemmas and ethical issues for social work and social care practice*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Sales, R. and P. Hynes., 2004. In and against the state again? The voluntary sector and refugees in the UK, Middlesex University, UK, November.

Salinas, M., Pritchard, D. and Kibedi, A., 1987. Refugee-based organisations: their function and importance for the refugee in Britain. Refugee Studies Program, Queen Elizabeth House.

Salvation Army, 2008. The seeds of exclusion, viewed on at:
<http://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/seeds>

- Savage, M. and Bennett, T., 2005. Editors' introduction: Cultural capital and social inequality. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 56(1), pp.1-12.
- Schaefer-McDaniel, N.J., 2004. Conceptualizing social capital among young people: Towards a new theory. *Children Youth and Environments*, 14(1), pp.153-172.
- Schellekens, P., 2001. *English language as a barrier to employment, education and training*. DfES.
- Schuster, L. and Solomos, J., 1999. The politics of refugee and asylum policies in Britain: historical patterns and contemporary realities. In *Refugees, Citizenship and Social Policy in Europe*, pp. 51-75. Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- Schuster, L., 2000. A comparative analysis of the asylum policy of seven European governments. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 13(1), pp. 118-132.
- Schuster, L., 2003. a Common sense or racism? The treatment of asylum-seekers in Europe. *Patterns of Prejudice*, 37(3), pp. 233-256.
- Schuster, L., 2003b. *The use and abuse of political asylum in Britain and Germany*. Psychology Press.
- Schuster, L., 2004. The exclusion of asylum seekers in Europe. Centre on Migration, Policy & Society, University of Oxford.
- Schuster, L., 2005. The realities of a new asylum paradigm, viewed on at: <http://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/16272258.pdf>
- Schuster, L., 2011. Turning refugees into 'illegal migrants': Afghan asylum seekers in Europe. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 34(8), pp. 1392-1407.
- Scott, J. and Carrington, P.J., 2011. *The SAGE handbook of social network analysis*. SAGE publications.
- Sen, A., 1992. *Inequality reexamined*. Clarendon Press.
- Sen, H.T. and Vernooy, R., 2006. Creating opportunities for change-strengthening the social capital of women and the poor in upland communities in Hue, Viet Nam. Social and gender analysis in natural resource management-learning studies and lessons from Asia., pp.155-179.
- Shah, P. and Blake, N.J., 1999. *United Kingdom asylum law in its European context*. Platinium.
- Sigona, N. and Torre, A. R., 2006. *Positive contributions: Being a refugee in Britain*. RHA.
- Sigona, N. and McNeil, R., 2011. Irregular migrant children and public policy. Policy Primer. Oxford: The Migration Observatory, viewed on 31, at: <http://www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/sites/files/migobs/Irregular%20Migrant%20Children%20Policy%20Primer.pdf>
- Silver, H., 2007. The process of social exclusion: The dynamics of an evolving concept. Available at SSRN 1087789.
- Silverman, D., 2006. *Interpreting qualitative data: Methods for analyzing talk, text and interaction*. Sage.
- Silverman, D., 2007. *A very short, fairly interesting and reasonably cheap book about qualitative research*. Sage.

- Silverman, D., 2013. *Doing qualitative research: A practical handbook*. SAGE Publications Limited.
- Sitaropoulos, N., 2000. Modern Greek asylum policy and practice in the context of the relevant European developments. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 13(1), pp. 105-117.
- Smith, L.T., 1999. *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples*. Zed books.
- Smith, M.P., 2005. Transnational urbanism revisited. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 31(2), pp.235-244.
- Unit, S.E., 2004. Tackling social exclusion: Taking stock and looking to the future (Emerging Findings). A Publication of the Social Exclusion Unit, Office of the Deputy Minister, London.
- Social Exclusion Unit, 2003. A new commitment to neighbourhood renewal - National Strategy Action Plan ODPM: London.
- Social Exclusion Unit, 2005. Multiple disadvantage. ODPM: London.
- Sokolowski, R., 1999. *Introduction to phenomenology*. Cambridge University Press.
- Solomos, J., 2003. *Race and racism in Britain*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Somerville, W., 2007. *Immigration under new labour*. Policy Press.
- Soysal, Y.N., 1994. *Limits of citizenship: Migrants and postnational membership in Europe*. University of Chicago Press.
- Spencer, S. (ed.), 1994. *Strangers & citizens: a positive approach to migrants and refugees*. Rivers Oram Press.
- Spencer, S., 1998. The impact of immigration policy on race relations. *Race relations in Britain: A developing agenda*, pp.74-95.
- Spencer, S. ed., 2003. *The politics of migration: Managing opportunity, conflict and change*. Blackwell Publishing.
- Spencer, S., Ruhs, M., Anderson, B. and Rogaly, B., 2007. Migrants' lives beyond the workplace. The experiences of Central and East Europeans in the UK. Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- Squire, V., 2009. *The exclusionary politics of asylum*. Palgrave Macmillan Ltd.
- Strand, P.J. and Jones, W., 1985. *Indochinese refugees in America: Problems of adaptation and assimilation* (Vol. 1). Duke University Press.
- Stanley, K., 2001. *Cold comfort: young separated refugees in England*. Save the Children, London.
- Stansfield, R., 2001. *Another Country, Another City*, Nottingham Asylum Seekers, Nottingham.
- Stevens, C.A., 1998. Migration category and labour force status: policy implications of the performance of refugees. *People and Place*, 6(1), p.34.
- Stratham, P., 2003. Understanding anti-asylum rhetoric: Restrictive politics or racist publics?. *The Political Quarterly*, 74(s1), pp.163-177.

- Summerfield, D., 1999. Sociocultural dimensions of war, conflict and displacement. *Refugees: Perspectives on the Experience of Forced Migration*, pp.111-135.
- Sword, K., Davies, N. and Ciechanowski, J.M., 1989. The Formation of the Polish Community in Great Britain 1939-1950: The MB Grabowski Polish Migration Project Report. School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University of London.
- Szakolczai, A., 2009. Liminality and experience: Structuring transitory situations and transformative events. *International Political Anthropology*, 2(1), pp.141-172.
- Talai, V.A. and Amit, V., 1989. *Armenians in London: The management of social boundaries* (No. 4). Manchester University Press.
- Taylor, J., 2011. The intimate insider: negotiating the ethics of friendship when doing insider research. *Qualitative Research*, 11(1), pp.3-22.
- Temple, B., 1997. Watch your tongue: issues in translation and cross-cultural research. *Sociology*, 31(3), pp. 607-618.
- Temple, B. and Young, A., 2004. Qualitative research and translation dilemmas. *Qualitative Research*, 4(2), pp.161-178.
- Temple, B. and Moran, R., 2006. *Doing research with refugees: Issues and guidelines*. Policy Press.
- The Cattle Report, 2001. Community cohesion: A report of the Independent Review Team. Home Office, London
- Thomson, M., 2003. Images of Sangatte: Political representation of asylum seeking in France and the UK. Sussex Centre for Migration Research.
- Thomas, W.I. and Znaniecki, F., 1918. *The Polish peasant in Europe and America: Monograph of an immigrant group* (Vol. 2). University of Chicago Press.
- Thomassen, B., 2009. The uses and meanings of liminality. *International Political Anthropology*, 2(1), pp.5-27.
- Thrandhardt, D. 1999. Germany's Immigration Policies and Politics. In G. Brochmann and T. Hammar (eds) *Mechanisms of Immigration Control: A Comparative Analysis of European Regulation Policies*, pp. 29-57. Berg.
- Tilly, C. and Brown, C.H., 1967. On uprooting, kinship, and the auspices of migration. *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, 8, p.139.
- Töennies, F., 1887. *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, Leipzig: Fues's Verlag. (Translated, 1957 by Charles Price Loomis as *Community and Society*, East Lansing: Michigan State University Press.)
- Togebly, L., 2004. It depends... how organisational participation affects political participation and social trust among second-generation immigrants in Denmark. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 30(3), pp.509-528.
- Tuitt, P., 1996. *False images: Law's construction of the refugee*. Pluto Pr.
- Turner, S., 1999. Angry young men in camps: gender, age and class relations among Burundian refugees in Tanzania. UNHCR, Geneva.

- Turner, V.W., 1967. *The forest of symbols: Aspects of Ndembu ritual* (Vol. 101). Cornell University Press.
- Turton, D., 1996. Refugees and Migrants. In Allen, T. (ed.) *Search of Cool Ground: War, Flight and Homecoming in Northeast Africa*, pp. 96-110. James Currey.
- Turton, D., 2003, January. refugees and 'Other Forced Migrants': Towards a unitary study of forced migration. In *Workshop on Settlement and Resettlement in Ethiopia*, pp. 28-30, January.
- Turton, D., 2005. The meaning of place in a world of movement: Lessons from long-term field research in Southern Ethiopia. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 18(3), pp.258-280.
- UNHCR, 2000. *The State of the World's refugees: Fifty years of humanitarian action*. Oxford University Press.
- UNHCR, 2002. Statistical yearbook 2001: Refugees, asylum seekers and other persons of concern – Trends in displacement, protection and solutions, October 2002, Geneva.
- UNHCR 2006. <http://www.unhcr.org/478cda572.html>
- UNHCR 2011 <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c4d6.htm>
- Valtonen, K., 1998. Resettlement of Middle Eastern refugees in Finland: The elusiveness of integration. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 11(1), pp.38-60.
- van Hear, N., 1998. New Diasporas: The Mass Exodus, Dispersal And Regrouping Of Migrant Communities (Global Diasporas).
- Van Maanen, J., Manning, P.K., Miller, M.L. 1993. Editors' introduction. In Kleinman, S. and Copp, M. A. (eds.) *Emotions and Fieldwork*. Sage publications.
- Van Manen, M., 1977. Linking ways of knowing with ways of being practical. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 6(3), pp.205-228.
- Van Manen, M., 1990. *Researching lived experiences*. State University of New York Press.
- Van Manen, M. 2002. Phenomenology online. Retrieved Feb, 3, 2005.
- Van Manen, M., 2003. *Writing in the dark: Phenomenological studies in interpretive inquiry*. Left Coast Press.
- Van Manen, M., 2007. Phenomenology of practice. *Phenomenology & Practice*, 1(1).
- Vertovec, S., 2001. Transnational social formations: Towards conceptual crossfertilization (WPTC-01-16). *Transnational Migration: Comparative Perspectives*, 30.
- Vertovec, S., 2006. The emergence of super-diversity in Britain. Centre of Migration, Policy and Society, University of Oxford.
- Vincenzi, S., 2000. Italy: A newcomer with a positive attitude?. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 13(1), pp.91-104.
- Voutira, E. and Harrell-Bond, B., 1995. In search of the locus of trust: The social world of the refugee camp. *Mistrusting Refugees*, pp.207-224.
- Wahlbeck, Ö., 1999. *Kurdish diasporas: A comparative study of Kurdish refugee communities*. Macmillan.
- Waldron, S., 1987. Blaming the refugees. *Refugee Issues*, 3(3), pp.1-7.

- Walton-Roberts, M., 2012. Regional immigration and dispersal: Lessons from small-and medium-sized urban centres in British Columbia. *3 Cities and Immigrant Integration: The Future of Second-and Third-Tier Centres*, 1(1,920,773), p.158.
- Ward, K., 2004. Key issues: UK asylum law and process, ICAR Navigation Guide, viewed on 20 May 2005 at: <http://www.icar.org.uk/res/nav/ng002/ng002-01.html>
- Ward, K., 2008. *Local experiences of migration: Consulting Coventry*. London: Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees, City University.
- Wasserman, S. and Faust, K., 1994. *Social network analysis: Methods and applications* (Vol. 8). Cambridge University Press.
- Weissman, F., 2004. *In the shadow of 'just wars': violence, politics, and humanitarian action*. Cornell University Press.
- Wellman, B., 1979. The community question: The intimate networks of East Yorkers. *American Journal of Sociology*, pp.1201-1231.
- Wierzbicki, S.K., 2004. *Beyond the immigrant enclave: Network change and assimilation*. LFB Scholarly Publishing.
- Wilkinson, R.G. and Marmot, M.G., 2003. *Social determinants of health: the solid facts*. World Health Organization.
- Williams, L., 2006. Social networks of refugees in the United Kingdom: tradition, tactics and new community spaces. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 32(5), pp. 865-879.
- Williams, K. and Durrance, J.C., 2008. Social networks and social capital: Rethinking theory in community informatics. *The Journal of Community Informatics*, 4(3).
- Wilson, R., 2001. *Dispersed: A study of services for asylum seekers in West Yorkshire December 1999-March 2001*. Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust.
- WMCARS
http://www.wmcouncils.org.uk/media/upload/Library/Migration%20Documents/Regional%20Strategy/WMSPARS_Final.pdf
- West Midlands Consortium for Asylum and Refugee Support , 2005, *Regional Media/Communication Strategy*. WMCARS: Birmingham.
- Woodhead, D., 2000. *The health and well-being of asylum seekers and refugees*. King's Fund.
- Yépez del Castillo, I., 1994. Comparative Approach to Social Exclusion: Lessons from France and Belgium, A. *Int'l Lab. Rev.*, 133, p.613.
- Young, K., Ashby, D., Boaz, A. and Grayson, L., 2002. Social science and the evidence-based policy movement. *Social Policy and Society*, 1(03), pp. 215-224.
- Zetter, R., 1985. Refugees—Access and labelling. *Development and Change*, 16(3), pp.429-450.
- Zetter, R., 1988. Refugees and Refugee Studies—A label and an Agenda. *J. Refugee Stud.*, 1, p.1.
- Zetter, R., 1991. Labelling refugees: Forming and transforming a bureaucratic identity. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 4(1), pp. 39-62.

Zetter, R., 1999. International perspectives on refugee assistance. *Refugees: Perspectives on the Experience of Forced Migration*, pp.46-82.

Zetter, R., 2007. More labels, fewer refugees: Remaking the refugee label in an era of globalization. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 20(2), pp.172-192.

Zetter, R. and Pearl, M., 2000. The minority within the minority: refugee community-based organisations in the UK and the impact of restrictionism on asylum-seekers. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 26(4), pp.675-697.

Zetter, R., Pearl, M., Griffiths, D., Allender, P., Cairncross, L. and Robinson, V., 2002. Dispersal: Facilitating effectiveness and efficiency—Final report. London: Home Office Research Paper.

Zetter, R., Griffiths, D., Sigona, N. and Hauser, M., 2002. Survey on policy and practice related to refugee integration. Conducted by Department of Planning, Oxford Brookes University, Commissioned by European Refugee Fund.

Zetter, R., Griffiths, D., Ferretti, S. and Pearl, M., 2003. An assessment of the impact of asylum policies in Europe, 1990-2000. Home Office Online Report 17/03.

Zetter, R., Griffiths, D., Sigona, O., Flynn, D., Pasha, T. and Beynon, R., 2006. Immigration, social cohesion and social capital: What are the Links?, Joseph Rowntree Foundation. In *Reconsidering the Role of Conflict in the Lives of Refugees: The Case of Somalis in Europe*. MICROCON Research Working Paper.

Zolberg, A.R., 1983. The formation of new states as a refugee-generating process. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 467(1), pp.24-38.

Zolberg, A.R., Suhrke, A. and Aguayo, S., 1992. *Escape from violence: Conflict and the refugee crisis in the developing world*. Oxford University Press on Demand.

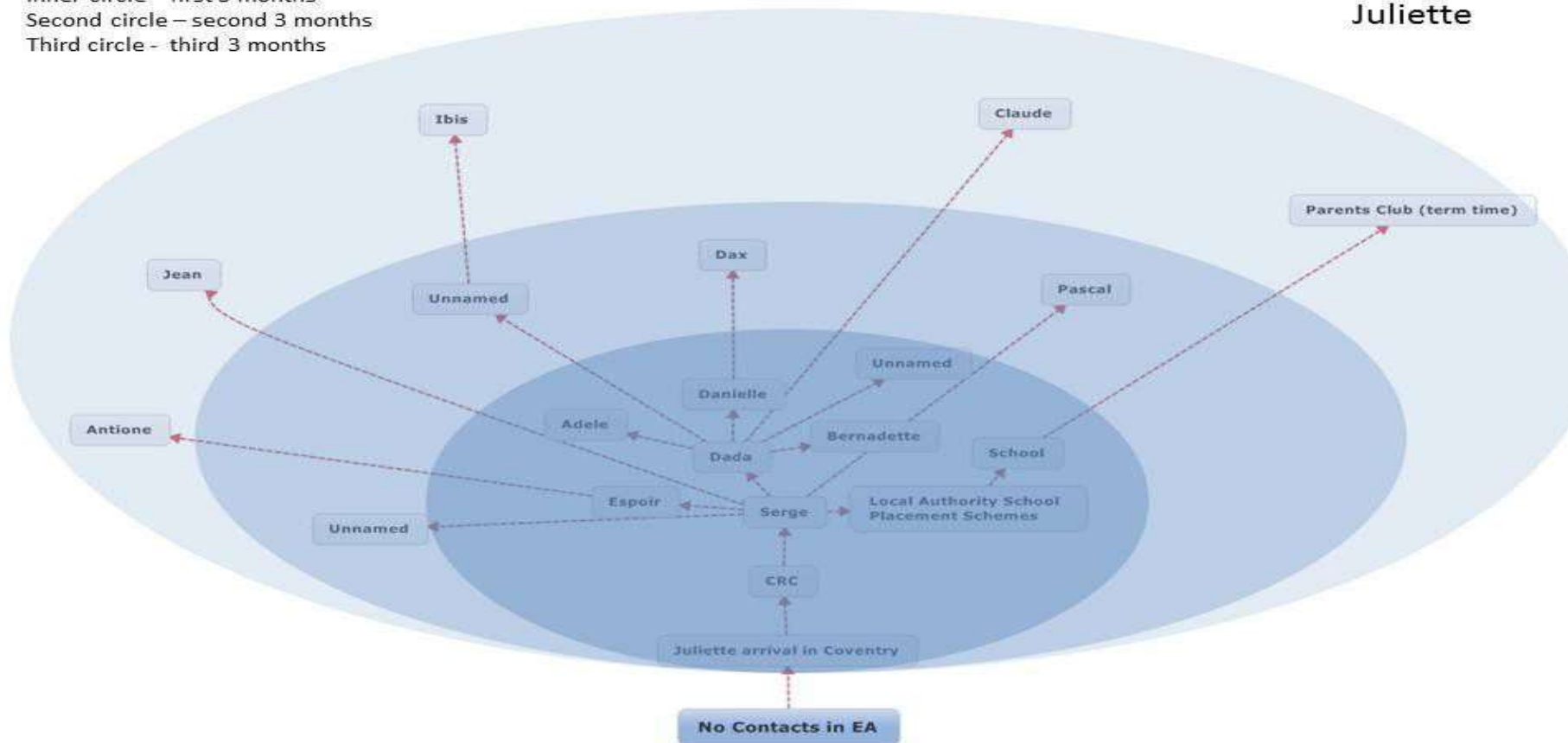
Zolberg, A.R. and Benda, P.M., 2001. *Global migrants, global refugees: Problems and solutions*. Berghahn Books.

"2011 Census: Key Statistics for Local Authorities in England and Wales". ONS. Retrieved 25 December 2012)

Appendix: Examples of Friendship Trees

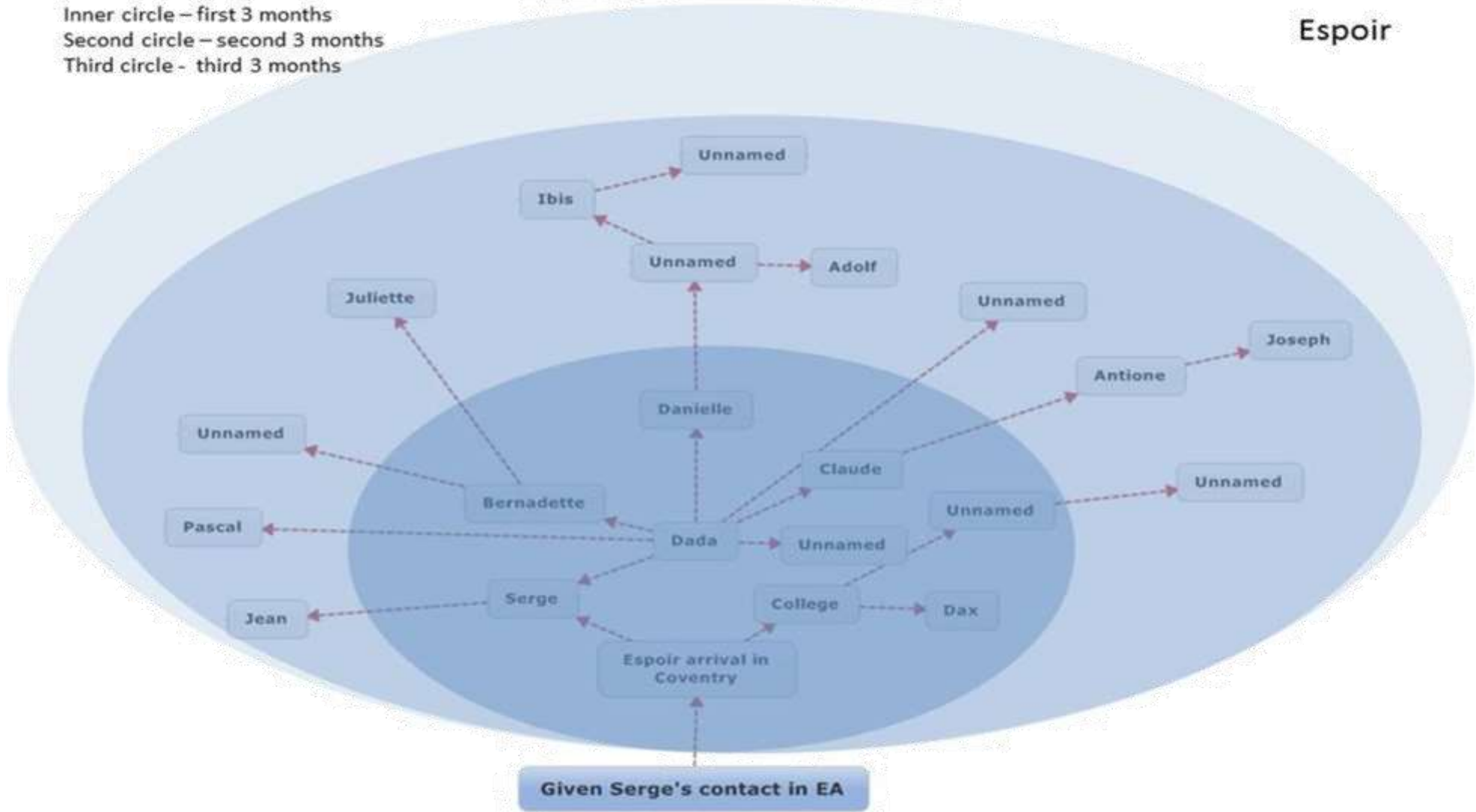
Inner circle – first 3 months
Second circle – second 3 months
Third circle – third 3 months

Juliette



Inner circle – first 3 months
Second circle – second 3 months
Third circle - third 3 months

Espoir



Inner circle – first 3 months
 Second circle – second 3 months
 Third circle - third 3 months

Serge

